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RIVEREAST

News Bulletin

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

Volume 46, Number 46

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December 2, 2022



The Hebron Lions' "Lights in Motion" show has returned for the season. The event features 1.2 million lights spread over a course of more than one mile – all synchronized to music.

Hebron Light Show Rings in Holidays

By Michael Sinkewicz

The Hebron Lions Club has brought back its extravagant light show for the holiday season, bringing joy to families across the state and providing a needed boost for local children's charities who receive the net proceeds.

Running through New Year's Day, the "Lights in Motion" event features one million lights spread over a mile-long course running through the Lions Fairgrounds on Route 85.

It is the second time the Lions are putting on the event. Net proceeds are donated to charities including The Hole in the Wall Gang Camp, Wishes on Wheels and Make-A-Wish CT.

Among the many sights on the course are a 200-foot light tunnel, a nearly 20-foot snowflake and a brand-new snowman that's over 30 feet tall.

Those who attend should tune their radio to 90.9 FM as they drive through, to hear the music all of the lights are synchronized to.

This week, the *Rivereast* was able to catch up with the event's organizers and some of the charities who are helping facilitate the event.

"Our show is more than just a light show – it really is a light experience," said Lion Krystin Strumskas, who handles promotions and marketing. "You really feel the music because you're seeing the music through the light effects."

She said some of the special parts of participating in the event are simply observing how much people embrace the holiday spirit and the

course itself.

"One of the fun things for us as Lions is when we're out there working the course, you hear the carloads of families singing every lyric to the songs and pointing out the 'Grinches,'" she said. "It just really warms your heart."

Strumskas stated that admission is \$40 per vehicle, but there's occasional flash sales on social media.

John Johnson Jr., the Lions member who's credited as the mastermind behind the course, explained that this wasn't quite as simple as hanging a few lights in front your yard.

"It's very difficult," he conveyed. "This is to a whole different scale. We're doing 1.2 million lights."

This year, the Lions and their partners included an additional 150,000 bulbs throughout the course. Johnson said that the giant snowman – who they call George – is responsible for half of that new number.

"It's worth it in the end," he said, regarding the painstaking effort to construct everything.

The process, Johnson shared, began on Oct. 1 when the Lions start taking certain props out of storage and new items are ordered. In general, the course is organized into sections, including one highlighting the military and first responders.

One of the distinguishing features is the music itself, because the overall course experience changes based on what song is playing.

"Every song is sequenced differently, so as long as you don't start with the same exact song, it'll look completely different every time you go through," Johnson said.

There's a mix of classic holiday songs and
See Hebron Light Show, page 32

Scrambling to Save Senior Center Project

By Michael Sinkewicz

With Colchester facing a nearly \$1 million shortfall in the construction of a new senior center, town officials are scrambling to finalize a plan that would keep the project afloat and moving forward.

Last week, Tony Tarnowski, chairman of the Senior Center Building Committee, outlined the nature of the shortfall during a joint meeting between the boards of selectmen and finance and offered potential solutions.

While the boards were expected to reconvene this week to discuss the issue further, and potentially vote on their decision, that meeting was canceled.

Instead, First Selectman Andreas Bisbikos sent an email on Monday to local officials, outlining a proposal on how the town should proceed.

Bisbikos said money from the undesignated fund balance and capital reserve accounts will not be needed, which eliminated the urgency of a joint meeting between the boards.

Instead, he said, \$575,000 from the Bendas estate, donated to the town, along with money

from the project's contingency fund will cover the shortage.

Bisbikos told the *Rivereast* that "The senior center building project will live within the means approved by the taxpayers."

He added that "once the contract is signed, I will immediately push to have the project value engineered and I will be presented with weekly reports to ensure that costs are held accountable."

In November 2021, residents voted overwhelmingly in favor of constructing a new senior center.

The potential legal ambiguity involves the language put on the ballot, which states that the town shall "expend a sum not to exceed \$9.5 million for costs related to the design and construction of a new senior center and authorize the issuance of bonds and notes to finance the portion of the appropriation not defrayed from grants."

As Tarnowski explained last week, the town is currently projected to exceed that total. Specifically, the construction budget is responsible

for the overage he said. The original estimate in 2021 was for \$7.4 million. However, when the bid opening began on Oct. 13, BRD Builders LLC was the apparent low bidder at \$8.9 million.

After \$370,000 in alternates to the bid were accepted, the final construction cost came in at just over \$8.6 million, leaving a \$976,030 shortfall.

Tarnowski told the *Rivereast* that "as of this moment, we cannot move forward with the apparent low bidder because we do not have enough in the budget to cover the contract."

However, Tarnowski continued, if the Bendas estate money was transferred to the Building Committee, it would "be enough to work a contract with BRD Builders LLC."

Still, it would leave some of the project's budget lines thin, and the committee may have to cut certain features such as furniture or kitchen supplies.

"The crux of the matter is that people are claiming the referendum said you can't spend
See Senior Center Project, page 33

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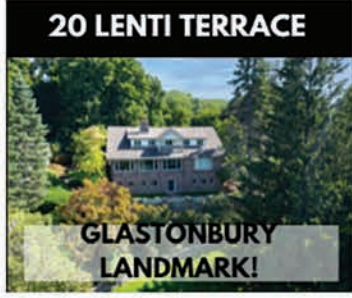
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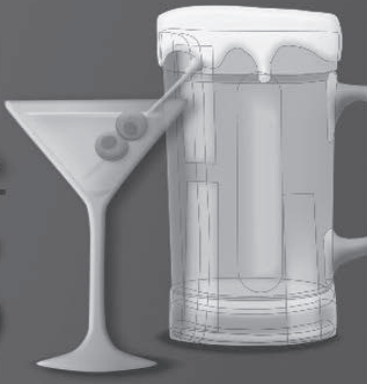
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From the Editor's Desk

Observations & Ruminations

By Mike Thompson

This is a great time of year for several reasons – most of them holiday-related. But if you, like me, are a bit of a word nerd, it's also a fun time because it's when Merriam-Webster chooses its word of the year.

The word of the year for 2022? Gaslighting.

Merriam-Webster defines gaslighting as “psychological manipulation of a person usually over an extended period of time that causes the victim to question the validity of their own thoughts, perception of reality, or memories and typically leads to confusion, loss of confidence and self-esteem, uncertainty of one's emotional or mental stability, and a dependency on the perpetrator.”

In short: it's pretty vile stuff.

According to the Associated Press, lookups for the word on merriam-webster.com increased 1,740 percent in 2022 over the year before. But, interestingly, there wasn't a single event that drove the lookups, as it usually goes with the chosen word of the year.

“It's a word that has risen so quickly in the English language, and especially in the last four years, that it actually came as a surprise to me and to many of us,” Peter Sokolowski, Merriam-Webster's editor at large, told the AP. “It was a word looked up frequently every single day of the year.”

The term was popularized by a 1944 Ingrid Bergman film titled, simply, *Gaslight*. The movie is about a young woman, Paula, whose husband, Gregory, slowly manipulates her into believing that she is descending into insanity.

One of the ways Paula is tricked into thinking she's going mad is that she notices the gaslights in the house dim for no apparent

reason when Gregory is not home. He assures her this is only her imagination, but – spoiler alert for a 78-year-old movie – when Gregory leaves the house he actually sneaks up to the attic and turns on the lights, reducing the gas to the downstairs lamps.

The movie was a critical and box office hit, and is justly celebrated today as one of the great film noirs of the mid-20th century. The expressions ‘gaslight’ and ‘gaslighting’ started to catch on – and while they were often used to describe manipulations used by abusers in relationships, its usage began to expand.

These days, the term is also associated with tactics used by politicians and other newsmakers, including corporations wishing to mislead the public. There's also “medical gaslighting,” when AP describes as when a health care professional dismisses a patient's symptoms or illness as “all in your head.”

“There is this implication of an intentional deception,” Sokolowski told the AP. “And once one is aware of that deception, it's not just a straightforward lie, as in, you know, I didn't eat the cookies in the cookie jar. It's something that has a little bit more devious quality to it. It has possibly an idea of strategy or a long-term plan.”

Merriam-Webster chooses its word of the year based solely on data – there's no editorializing going on. Evergreen words are weeded out, to determine which word received a significant bump over the year before. And while, as Sokolowski noted, there was no one specific person or event driving the searches for “gaslighting,” most of the other words in the dictionary's 10 most-searched words list

Editor's Desk continued on page 5



Farm-to-Table... Sixty members of the Colchester community gathered at Cold Spring Farm on Nov. 20 for a completely free farm-to-table meal organized by the volunteer group Colchester is Kind. The meal was intended to build community and connection, while celebrating gratitude ahead of the Thanksgiving holiday.

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‘Almost Heaven’?

To the Editor:

Peter Kushkowski signs off all his letters to *Rivereast* with the notation “Almost Heaven.” As a neighbor, I sincerely hope that he eventually gets all the way there. However, my advice to him is that his case for entry is certainly not strengthened by narrow-minded judgments of others even when they are adorned by attempts at humor. Prejudices, whether they are heavy-handed or seemingly lighthearted, reveal nothing heavenly about those who hold them.

Stephen Markson – Portland

Big Shout-Out

To the Editor:

A big shout-out to the East Hampton Lions. Your generosity for our delicious Thanksgiving meal was much appreciated. We would also like to thank you for all that you do for us throughout the year!

Sincerely,

**Shelley Grendzinski
Tenant Commissioner for
Bellwood Court/Chatham Acres**

Consensus Needed

To the Editor:

Last week, the Colchester boards of selectmen and finance held a joint meeting to discuss the future of the Senior Center building project which faces a potential million-dollar overage in construction costs.

These overages are a huge concern, but the fact remains today that our town's current senior center is wholly inadequate to serve the needs of Colchester's senior population. That's why so many of us have fought for a new building. That's why Colchester voted ‘yes’ last year

to move forward in a two-to-one vote.

However, fiscal responsibility matters. Any solution should avoid raising taxes. Wherever possible, I hope the Building Committee can find ways to reduce projected costs with minimal impact to the vision of the project. It's also important that we have a clear understanding of the law, the charter, and the referendum question as voted upon before any decision is made. The last thing this project needs is to end up stuck in the court system as some have already suggested.

That said, fiscal equity matters too. Colchester is a town with a significant senior population. Those residents are taxpayers who pay into the system. When you look at our current senior center, I'm not convinced those residents get their fair share back. That's why this project is so important. It is about fairness and living up to the kind of community we say we are.

There are a few proposals on how to move forward. Elected leaders need to come to a consensus carefully but quickly. There are multiple deadlines looming. Getting stuck in limbo is likely to add to costs in the long run. It would be a terrible shame if today's obstacles fester into something that derails the project all together further down the line.

Bernie Denmler III – Colchester

Dictatorial, not Democratic

To the Editor:

As a suburban peasant, I find Hebron leadership's refusal to consider alternatives for the proposed Public Works Complex (PWC) diametrically opposed to small town democracy. It's dictatorial, not democratic, and counter-productive.

If Kinney Road is the only place left in Hebron for a new PWC, what will happen in 50

Bulletin Board

Recent news reports in Massachusetts media observe that the “shark problem” on Cape Cod continued to grow over the past season. Data indicates there were 541 shark sightings on the Cape through August as compared to 203 over the same period last year. I'm guessing this surge has been accompanied by a similar increase in the number of tourists who are either declining to go into water more than ankle deep or are now booking vacations in western desert states.

While I refer to this development as a “shark problem,” I would be remiss to ignore objections from the pro-shark crowd who maintain that the real problem is 1) People who go swimming in the ocean and/or 2) an overabundance of seals, which attracts the predators. Sharks, they argue, are good for the environment and, in any case, the ocean is their home, not ours. The latter argument, you may recall, is similar to one repeatedly raised by Native Americans in the 18th and 19th centuries with pretty dismal results—which is not to say it's not valid.

Recognizing that a large part of the human population is pretty stupid and will continue to insist on swimming and surfing in shark-infested waters with all the attendant bad publicity when somebody ends up as some great white's lunch, the pro-shark crowd suggests that one way to encourage the sharks to go elsewhere would be to reduce the number of seals on the Cape. This is not a novel idea. Canada, for instance, often praised for its compassionate health care system, deals with seal overpopulation by allowing people to blow their (the seals, I mean) brains out—demonstrating a cold practicality our starry-eyed progressives prefer to overlook in their interminable yapping about the sensitivity and forward-thinking nature of our flannel-loving neighbors to the north.

It occurs to me that, by reducing the seal population, you are only encouraging sharks to experiment with new sources of protein, such as people on surfboards, but I will concede that my understanding of zoological thought processes is rather limited. Nevertheless, what happens if the sharks find out that beach-goers are actually tastier than seals and you don't have to spit out a lot of unpalatable fur?

I also wonder if getting rid of the seals to encourage sharks to go someplace else isn't a bit like getting rid of your car to deter car thieves, though I suppose that's an imperfect analogy since cars don't poop all over the place and eat so much fish that professional fishermen are forced to abandon the sea to raise turnips, or embark on new careers as Walmart greeters.

However, as it turns out, the seals, being cuter than sharks, also have their fans. And, once again, this being America, these folks, hoping to avoid any bloodshed and with no regard whatsoever for practical convenience, suggest that we take a more humane approach to controlling the seal population ...with contraceptives.

My initial vision of this process involved a bunch of lab-coated technicians enticing seals to the shore with beach balls (as anyone who has ever been to a water park knows, seals love beach balls) in order to hand out birth control pills disguised as tiny baitfish. (I'm going with pills here because condoms would only add to the litter already polluting our oceans and, in any case, would probably be difficult to put on with a pair of flippers, particularly when you're a seal in a hurry.)

As this approach still seemed a bit cumbersome, I went online to investigate “seal contraception.” There I learned (on one of several fascinating tangents) that in some parts of South Africa, they give elephants vasectomies in order to control the population, a process the writer acknowledged “is no small task” (go figure).

Anyway, after a concerted search, I learned that “a single-administration birth control vaccine based on liposome delivery of porcine zona pellucida antigens reduced pup production in grey seals (*Halichoerus grypus*) by about 90%.” There was quite a bit more, most of it in language I didn't understand, but as far as I could tell, none of it involved luring the seals to shore with beach balls and then sticking them with a needle. Surprise!

I may write to the appropriate scientists with the beach ball idea. I realize that based on my IQ they'd probably consider me about as advanced as some lost species of ape, but sometimes it's the simple stuff that makes the most sense.

Jim Hallas

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years when the PWC needs to be replaced or if a major hurricane levels the site polluting the neighborhood beforehand!

Initial discussions about a new PWC started around 2003! Given how much land the town has acquired since then, it seems illogical to argue that there is only one site available in Hebron. To do so, admits to major failings in town government as “stewards of the town and agents of the people.” Can it be that for almost 20 years the town has subjected its road-crew to substandard working conditions?

In 2004-2008, the town bulldozed an archaeologically rich, historic landscape to create Burnt Hill Park. Part of the park was purchased for a PWC site. The town decided to put in playing fields instead. To insist now that Burnt Hill Park can’t accommodate the PWC testifies to a catastrophic misuse of land. Perhaps relocating a playing field for a portion of the PWC would be a pragmatic solution. Improving salt-storage at the current facility and Saltbox Road would not jeopardize polluting other sites and locate salt where it’s needed.

With rampant inflation and threats of recession, this is not the time to undertake an expensive building project. Hebron taxes are high. Horton Boulevard hasn’t increased new businesses offsetting property taxes. Public opinion doesn’t support the current Master Plan – it’s out of date for 2022!

To consider multiple PWC sites is a logical consideration to better preserve Hebron’s environment and cultural heritage.

John Baron – Hebron

Senior Luncheon Thanks

To the Editor:

Thank you to the following people who continue to help the senior luncheon program run in the town of Andover. Without the kindness and caring of these people we would not be able to continue this self-supporting program: Town Administrator Eric Anderson, Tiiu and Ylo Anson, Frank and Pat Chaves, George and Judy Knox, Tom Pearl, Lois Popoff, Scott Person and Ellie Skoog.

Also, I want to thank my helpers: Carol Lee, Alicia Lee, Andi Lee, Carol Kukucka and Robert Dougherty. A special thank you to Mike Palazzi for setting up tables and cleaning up.

Thank you everyone.

Cathy Palazzi

Andover Senior Coordinator

Turkeys Over Seniors

To the Editor:

Another month in Colchester and another debacle. This time the senior center with the same First Selectman Bisbikos playbook. Backroom deals? Check. Betraying promises? Check. Selectively releasing emails? Check. Calling lawyers for everything? Check. Hostile town meetings? Check. Negative news stories? Check. Costing taxpayers money? Check.

Oh, but don’t worry, Butterfluff the turkey got a pardon, and Mr. Bisbikos got a nice photo shoot out of it.

John Farrell – Colchester

Ungracious

To the Editor:

Shrouded in secrecy, the Middle Haddam library board recently revealed plans – for the fifth time since 2009 – to expand the historic library building. The board proposes to add a 240-sq. ft. elevated porch and cement ramp with stone veneer and metal railing, which will dominate and detract from the elegant simplicity of the building.

Everyone agrees that handicapped-accessibility is desirable – but it can be accomplished in a way that preserves the building’s historic integrity. A sloped walkway can be constructed from the parking area to the ell, which would be a much more efficient, cost-effective and attractive alternative. To that end, I hired a preservation architect to produce a rendering that I

hope the community will convince the board to accept.

Meanwhile, since the board expressed urgency for handicapped access, I purchased and delivered a high-quality metal ramp that fits the side door and can be easily deployed during public events, and as needed. Regrettably, Donna Roberts, the board president, requested that I remove it from library property.

The incompatible porch addition serves no appreciable purpose for usable space and will further encumber the tiny lot that already contains a well, septic tank, cesspool for a neighboring property, another easement for well and stream rights, and 500-gallon propane tank – none of which meet setback requirements from each other, the watercourse, or the current building.

Most importantly, expansion in any direction makes no sense as there are only 5-7 viable parking spaces, one of which will need to meet handicapped requirements. Patrons currently park on the narrow roadways, sometimes on both sides, which makes the passage of fire trucks impossible.

Accept the library for what it is – a small lending library offering small programs – and except for a tasteful unobtrusive ramp, please leave the property in its current form!

Sincerely,

Margaret McCutcheon Faber –

Middle Haddam

12-year member of Connecticut’s Historic Preservation Council

The Fifth

To the Editor:

Donald J. Trump pleads the 5th 440 times in a New York deposition where Attorney General Tish James is investigating the Trump Organization for fraudulent valuations schemes. Trump overvalued his properties for loans and undervalued his properties for taxes.

“Only the mob pleads the 5th. If you’re innocent, you don’t plead the 5th.” - Donald J Trump.

Annie Steinbrecher – Marlborough

Saddened and Angered

To the Editor:

As a longtime citizen of Hebron and, as a result, the RHAM community, I was saddened and angered to read the report of a noose found in a locker room at RHAM recently.

There can be no doubt as to the message being sent by the hateful person who perpetrated this overt act of racism.

There can be no excuse for the statement made by the racist who did this:

It was not an “act of ignorance,” because the use of a noose shows just the opposite of ignorance; the person knew what it meant and meant to do what s/he did by putting it up.

It was not an instance of “boys will be boys,” unless, of course, the racism displayed was trivialized, or worse, validated in the environment of the perpetrator’s home.

Yes, sadly, it was an expression protected by our commitment to freedom of speech. But even if protected by the Constitution, the speech

(and by extension, the speaker) is not immune from being criticized and called out for what it is: “Hate Speech.” It is speech that is vile and disgraceful, even if it is protected.

The very faint silver lining in this whole affair is the opportunity for the regular writers of political comment on these pages to publicly unite behind an unqualified condemnation of this action and the ideas that it represents. If all who regularly comment on issues of the day can find common ground on this issue (which shouldn’t be a very high bar), then maybe we can work to find similar common ground on others. If we’re

incapable of that – even on this issue – then we’re in more trouble than I thought.

Kevin Connors – Hebron

Overreacting!

To the Editor:

I recently read that the NAACP and another “do good” organization is insisting that some student be charged with a hate crime because he hung a noose from the ceiling in a gym room. What is the crime? Who was hurt? All he did was take a rope and tie a make-shift knot! Is

See Letters, page 6

Editor’s Desk continued from page 4

are distinctly connected to 2022. They are:

“Oligarch” – which Merriam-Webster said was driven by Russia’s invasion of Ukraine.

“Omicron” – which is the persistent COVID-19 variant.

“Codify” – which took off when folks started talking about turning abortion rights into federal law.

“Queen consort” – which is what King Charles’ wife, Camilla is now known as.

“Raid” – as in the search of former President Donald Trump’s Mar-a-Lago home.

“Sentient” – interestingly, Merriam-Webster said lookups for this word were brought on by Google firing the engineer who claimed an unreleased artificial intelligence (AI) system had become sentient.

“Cancel culture” – I’m sure you all know what this is.

“LGBTQIA” – as in, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning, intersex, and asexual, aromantic or agender.

Lastly, the 10th-most-searched word on Merriam-Webster stems from one of the great 2022 fads – and a game I still play every day: Wordle. The word is “loamy,” which the dictionary maker says many Wordle users tried back in August, even though the right word that day was “clown.”

In closing, let me offer big kudos to folks in Colchester, East Hampton and Marlborough. In partnership with 41 local Rotary Clubs – including the ones in those three towns – and the Community Foundation of Middlesex County (CFMC), Liberty Bank announced last week that over \$917,000 was raised during its 19th annual Thanksgiving Drive.

The total amount raised encompasses \$250,000 in matching funds provided by Liberty Bank Foundation, including a \$2,000 bump in funding provided to each participating Rotary to support even more families in need this holiday season. Donations were collected by mail and online through the Community Foundation of Middlesex County’s website.

“Every community has families who are struggling to put food on the table. With the leadership of our local Rotarians and their ‘Service Above Self’ motto, the Community Foundation of Middlesex County and our generous community, we are able to give more deserving families a wonderful holiday to remember as they sit down to enjoy a delicious meal,” said David W. Glidden, president & CEO of Liberty Bank and president of the Liberty Bank Foundation.

Beginning in 2004, local Rotary Clubs, Liberty Bank and their new partner in 2022, CFMC, have raised nearly \$6 million to supply warm holiday meals to families. Each year, the goal is also to stock food pantry shelves with enough food in preparation for the long winter months.


“We are so grateful for the generosity, and feel so fortunate to have such dedicated and kind individuals in our area who want to pitch in,” said Cynthia H. Clegg, president & CEO, Community Foundation of Middlesex County. “We are truly humbled to play a small part in helping all of our friends and neighbors enjoy this wonderful holiday.”

See you next week.

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★ Letters cont. from page 5

it against the law to try to tie a knot? Maybe he was just inquisitive. Was there any real evidence of a hate crime?

When I was a youngster I tied about a half dozen hangman's nooses. I also tied flies and made fishing lures. Later I built fishing rods. I was just inquisitive and wanted to see if I could make one.

Later on, while aboard ship, somewhere in the South China Sea with my platoon, waiting to go ashore, I had some idle time. I came across a piece of rope and tried to see if I re-

membered how to tie a hangman's noose. I tied one and hung it from a rafter with no malice or evil thoughts.

When a Naval officer asked who had done it I told him that I had. He informed me that to do what I had done was an act of mutiny. I simply told him I was unaware of what that meant and was told not to do it again. I also learned that a hangman's noose required a certain number of loops to be considered a hangman's noose. Now that I understood what it meant, I have not done it since.

Give the boy a break!

Frank Blume – Colchester

Noise

To the Editor:

Eugene Jarecki had an interesting conversation with news correspondent Dan Rather. They discussed the deliberate secrecy of our politicians to block the public from the truth. "Belief that the public doesn't need to know. Limiting access, limiting information to cover the back sides of those in charge...is extremely dangerous and cannot and should not be accepted." – Dan Rather.

Unfortunately, it is accepted. Modern political tactics involve misleading information, deliberately avoiding the truth, advertising catch-

words, mocking, bullying and "political actors" who create noise to distract us from the truth.

At a recent Hebron Board of Selectmen meeting, Town Manager Andrew Tierney made a flip comment suggesting they could move the proposed Public Works driveway from 17 Kinney to, instead, pass through the Church Park, exiting onto Church Street itself. Knowing how passionate people are, about the park and #Save17, why would Tierney mock the public by suggesting they move the driveway? Moving the driveway will not change the proposed building location, it will not remove the fractured bedrock aquifers that feed our wells, it will not buffer the noise or pollution from trucks entering and exiting over a sizable wetland area. An area that will be flushed with treated storm drain waters. An area that sits directly above a family's home and private well. Just exactly what is in this treated water? If we cannot swim in it nor drink it, why would we flush it into wetlands that flood private property and wells?

We must pursue information, educating ourselves on the legal and environmental ramifications of Industrial Development as we pull together defending our neighborhood, democracy and water. Pushing aside conflicting information, focusing on truth, decency and common sense, "hopefully we can build a safe harbor amidst a sea of noise." – Dan Rather.

#Save17

Jean Tulimieri – Amston

It Was Predicted

To the Editor:

A member of the Colchester Board of Selectmen made the following quote in last week's *Riverast* about the cost overruns on the Senior Center Project:

"No one could've predicted the economic times we're in," she said. "No one could've predicted the inflation."

The fact is that every conservative voter in 2020 predicted this economy and inflation.

Rob Misbach – Colchester

Understanding Trans

To the Editor:

I'd like to credit the "My Trans Moments" letter-writer for reminding us that progress is still needed in understanding the trans experience.

I'm not trans. But friends who are have described years of not being comfortable in their own skin.

Science is starting to uncover why: The Medical College of Georgia at Augusta University published "Gene variants provide insight into brain, body incongruence in transgender." In summary, from the moment we're born, both brain and body separately signal our gender.

For most of us, those signals match. For a trans person, they don't. Politics or religion were not consulted, nor was a choice offered. Let me also be clear, it is not a defect or a mistake; it is simply an expression of the variety that fills creation.

While we as a society debate how this is addressed, may I suggest the guidance many young people use, which is simply, "You do you." Some listening and understanding go a long way.

Sincerely,
Andy Bauer – Portland

Moral Superiority

To the Editor:

Shameless intellectual arrogance has been replaced by a corrupted sense of morality as the most endearing quality of progressive liberals. Never before have progressive liberals labored so hard to define and command moral superiority, mostly because they have become hypnotized by political horse thieves masquerading as the Democratic leadership. That...and they're phony. Annie Steinbrecher needs to jettison her virtual reality...and her virtual morality. Like most liberals, she has a list of naughty things for which Republicans are "responsible". Mention Donald Trump, and she breaks out in hives. But like most liberals, she possesses an inability to consider actual reality. For starters, China owns Joe Biden. So does Ukraine. China is guilty of so many human rights violations that it makes the KKK look like a college fraternity. And Joe keeps pumping billions into a war that Ukraine will never win. Thousands of innocent people are dead and the cities are pulverized. When does the winning start? Curiously, under Trump, goods and services were cheaper for the middle class, and more Ukrainians were alive. Apparently, those statistics are not vital to Annie.

Instead of owning up to the reality of abysmal
See Letters, page 33

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From the First Selectman's Desk...

It's a wonderful time of year in Portland and the holidays are right around the corner. The annual Tree-Lighting will take place this Sunday, Dec. 4, at 5 p.m. in front of the Brownstone Intermediate School (BIS), 314 Main St. This year also marks the return of the Holiday Light Parade and rumor has it that Santa Claus will be will stopping by the BIS for a visit as well. I hope to see you there!

Also this Sunday, the Economic Development Commission is sponsoring a "Christmas on Main Street" event with many Portland restaurants and stores open throughout the day. I encourage you all to shop local.

Portland CT Mailing List: A new mailing list has been created for the Town of Portland. Stay up to date on the latest news as well as important alerts. To sign up, text "PortlandCT" to phone number 22828. You will then be prompted to enter your email address. There is also a link to sign up on www.portlandct.org.

Board of Selectmen: The Board of Selectmen has been working on how to best utilize American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) dollars in Portland. Most recently, the board unanimously authorized the purchase of a replacement for Fire Engine No. 2 as well as the purchase of a new passenger bus for the Senior Center. I would like to thank the selectmen for recognizing the need for both of these items and funding them in a way that will not impact the mill rate.

Brainerd Place: The town continues to work with the developer as this project moves forward. The developer has most recently applied for a demolition permit to take down a later addition of the Hart-Jarvis Building (the building with the columns) with permission from the Portland Historical Society. Work is nearly completed on the retention ponds and the excavation for the foundation on the first building should start soon.

Portland Senior Center: Aresco Construction has won the Senior Center renovation project bid and the Board of Selectmen are scheduled to authorize the contract at its Dec. 7 meeting. Renovations include upgrades to the kitchen, HVAC, as well as the power capacity of the senior center. A pre-construction meeting is scheduled for Dec. 13, with construction to begin in early 2023. These improvements have been made possible by a \$725,000 grant from the CT Department of Housing.

Water Source Project: The town entered into an agreement with GZA last month to assist in evaluating the best and most affordable water options for our customers. This includes identifying, drilling, and testing new high-yield underground wells. Meetings with GZA are currently underway and there will be more details to share as this project moves forward. This project is funded by a \$250,000 grant from the CT Department of Public Health.

High School Track Replacement: SLR was selected as the landscape architect/engineer for the design of this project in late September. SLR is currently working on the design of the track now with bidding and awarding of construction scheduled to occur over the winter and early spring. The project remains scheduled to be completed by late summer/early fall of 2023.

Brownstone Avenue: The remediation of 248 Brownstone Ave. is nearly complete. Contaminated soils from this property will soon be transported out and replaced with clean fill. Once this occurs, the town will turn its attention to the other two remaining parcels, 222 and 230 Brownstone Ave. This project is funded by a \$1,125,000 grant from the CT Department of Economic Community Development.

Please don't hesitate to reach out to me if you have any questions or comments: by email at rcurley@portlandct.org or by phone at 860-342-6715. Office hours can be made by appointment or stopping by Town Hall.

Wishing you and your family a very happy and healthy holiday season,

Ryan Curley
Portland First Selectman



Portland Historical Society's 11th annual Festival of Wreaths will open its doors this weekend, Dec. 3-4, at the carriage house behind 329 Main St. Here, society member Mallory Rowley puts finishing touches on a wreath of fresh greens for the festival. Check the Society's Facebook page for more information.

Festival of Wreaths is This Weekend

The Portland Historical Society's 11th annual Festival of Wreaths "Jingle & Mingle" will be held this weekend — Dec. 3 and 4 — as part of Portland's holiday festivities.

Over 30 wreaths showcasing the talents of Portland residents, businesses, organizations and friends of the society will be offered in a teacup raffle. Raffle tickets are \$1 each and there is no admission charge. Centerpieces for your table will be available as well.

There will be reindeer food for your little ones to sprinkle outdoors. Holiday cards featuring photographs of our corncrib lit up for the

holidays and decorated sleds will be available along with other society products. Warm cider and baked treats will be available at no charge.

The festival is located in the carriage house at 329 Main St. (not at the Callander House Museum of Portland History) from noon-4 p.m., Saturday and Sunday, Dec. 3 and 4. After 4 p.m. Sunday, the winning names will be pulled before the Parade of Lights and Tree-Lighting.

All proceeds from this event will be used to preserve Portland history and to fund educational programs for the community.

Vocal Chords Holiday Concert

The Middlesex Hospital Vocal Chords (MHVC) group will present its annual holiday concert, "Let's Have a Music Celebration," on Sunday, Dec. 11, at 2 p.m., at Portland High School, 95 High St.

All are invited to see this 80-member chorus and eight-piece band perform some holiday favorites.

In addition to some holiday favorites such

as "O Come All Ye Faithful" and the classic "Please Come Home for Christmas," selections from Handel's "Messiah" for the classical lovers in the audience will round out the program.

Tickets to the event are \$20 and can be purchased from any member or by calling Joyce at 860-342-3120 or Diane at 860-347-2787. For more information, go to vocalchords20.org or look for the organization on Facebook.

Christmas Activities Sunday!

Sunday, Dec. 4, will bring the town's annual Christmas on Main Street, Light Parade and Tree-Lighting — and all are invited.

Several Main Street businesses will have extended hours Sunday. These include: Burger Heaven & Smooth Acai, Campagna Restaurant, Concentric Brewing, Dairy Queen, Fabian's Pizza, Farrell's Restaurant, Melilli Caffe and Grill, Owen's Emporium, Portland Ale House, Primavera Pizzeria, Savvy Swap, and Tommy's Pizza Palace.

Then, that evening, head down to Brownstone Intermediate School for the Holiday Light

Parade, which starts at 5 p.m. from Town Hall. There will be around a dozen vehicles, all lit up and decorated. The parade will end at Brownstone Intermediate School, where the Portland High School band and a cappella chorus will sing festive songs while waiting for Santa to arrive. Also, one lucky child will get the chance to help Santa light the Christmas tree. Attendees are asked to bring a new, unwrapped toy to help collect donations for the Portland Food Bank.

The event is sponsored by Youth & Family Services, Parks & Recreation, and the Economic Development Commission.

Trinity Episcopal Church News

Trinity Episcopal Church, located at 345 Main St., invites the community to celebrate each week.

Bible Study starts at 8:30 a.m. each Sunday. Worship is at 9:30 a.m. Sunday School is in session and held during the service. Children ages 4-12 are welcome to attend Church School.

All who are vaccinated may remove their masks. All who are not fully vaccinated are asked to wear their masks.

The church is open for prayer and meditation on Fridays from 2-4 p.m., and there will also be a gathering in the church office at the same time,

for Anglican Prayer beading. No prior beading experience is required. All are welcome.

Check out more information, the church's calendar of events, donate, or listen to past sermons at www.trinitychurchportlandct.org. If you have any other prayer requests to lift up, email the church office at trinitychurchportlandct@gmail.com.

For more information or to make an appointment with the Rev. Darryl Burke, email trinitychurchportlandct@gmail.com or call 860-342-0458.

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Exchange Club Donation... At a recent Portland Exchange Club meeting, co-presidents Heidi Abbott (far left) and Mimma Burke (second from left) along with Touch-A-Truck coordinator Jamie Leonard (far right) presented a \$5,000 donation to Dale Hourigan (center left) and James Thomas (center right) of The 100 Club of Connecticut. The funds were raised at the Exchange's Touch-A-Truck event earlier this year. The 100 Club supports spouses and families of fallen police officers and firefighters who died in the line of duty. They recently assisted the Bristol Police with donations to the families of the two fallen police officers who died in the line of duty in October.

Zion Lutheran Church News

Zion Lutheran Church, located at 183 William St., offers in-person worship Sundays at 9 a.m. Masks are optional. A recording of the service is posted to YouTube on Mondays by 9 a.m. Bulletins for the service are posted each week at zionlutheran-portland.org. Sunday School meets the first and third Sunday of the month at 10:15 a.m., following worship. Ages 3 to 16 are welcome. Adult Bible study takes place on the second and fourth Sunday of the month, following worship at 10:15 a.m. The focus is on season two of the television series *The Chosen*. Anyone may join at any time. Call the church for details.

During Advent, Zion is offering Wednesday evening Compline services at 8 p.m. These services will be preceded by a screening of an episode from *The Chosen*, starting at approximately 7 p.m. On Wednesday, Dec. 21, *The Chosen's* special episode, "The Messengers", a 39-minute show of Mary describing Jesus' birth, will be shown before the Compline service. The community is welcome to participate in all worship services and special events. For more information about any church activities, or if in need of pastoral assistance, call 860-342-2860, email zion.lutheran@snet.net or visit zionlutheranportland.org. Sara Stall-Ryan is pastor.

Parks and Rec. News & Notes

Parks and Recreation is offering the following. To register or for full program descriptions, visit portland.recdesk.com. For more information, call 860-342-6757 or email adionne@portlandct.org. **Youth Programs: Skyhawks Basketball Clinics:** Saturdays, Jan. 7-Feb. 11, at Gildersleeve School. Designed for beginner to intermediate players. Kindergarten is 8-8:45 a.m., first grade is 9-9:50 a.m.; second grade boys is 10-10:50 a.m.; and second grade girls is 11-11:50 a.m. **Recreation Youth Basketball Leagues:** Players should expect to have one practice per weeknight starting in early December and one game per week starting the week of Jan. 2. Depending on league size, some games will be played in surrounding towns. Parks and Rec. is accepting registrations for the leagues up until the day before player evaluations take place. The date of player evaluations varies depending on the age group, but all player evaluations

will be taking place during the week of Nov. 28. Age groups: Grades 3-4 Boys, Grades 3-4 Girls, Grades 5-6 Boys, Grades 5-6 Girls, Grades 7-8 Boys, and Grades 7-8 Girls. **Adult Drop-In Programs: Tai Chi at the Buck-Foreman Community Center:** Wednesdays, 10:30-11 a.m., through Dec. 7, or Saturdays, 9:30-10:15 a.m., through Dec. 10. Fee to drop in each session is \$7. Meeting location is either Portland Riverfront Park or Buck-Foreman Community Center; call Parks and Rec. for exact location information. **Volleyball:** Wednesdays at Gildersleeve School. Non-competitive play is 5-6:30 p.m., and competitive play is 6:30-8 p.m. **Men's Drop-In Basketball:** Tuesdays, 7:30-9 p.m., at Portland Middle School. Non-competitive play: 7:30-9 p.m. Watch for details on Women's Drop-In Basketball, coming soon. **Beginners' Yoga:** Wednesdays, Dec. 14-Jan. 4, 5-6 p.m., at Buck Foreman Community Center. Fee: \$65 for residents, \$75 for non-residents.

Portland Library News & Notes

Portland Library, 20 Freestone Ave., has announced the following events. Registration required for all programs unless noted. For more info, to register, and for full program descriptions, visit www.portlandlibraryct.org or call 860-342-6770. The library is also on Facebook and Instagram. **Hours:** Monday through Thursday, 10 a.m.-8 p.m.; Friday, 10 a.m.-5 p.m.; Saturday, 10 a.m.-3 p.m. Masks are optional. **Mobile Library App:** Dashing about during the holiday season? Want to avoid interaction when colds and flu are in the air? The Library Connection Mobile Library app will allow you to find materials and may reserve them for future pickup when you are notified. And at the library, you can check out books and many items, except DVDs, two ways: use the Meescan station located in the adult area near the entrance or use the mobile app. There are some items that will need staff intervention, such as items on hold for another reader. The library has another 24/7 service as well: people may send remote printing requests for later pick-up at the library. For information and access, visit the library webpage or use the Library Connection Mobile Library app. **Vaccine Clinic:** Portland Library will host a Chatham Health vaccine clinic Monday, Dec. 5, noon-2 p.m., at Portland Library. COVID-19 vaccines and flu vaccines will be available. Children must be accompanied by an adult. For more information, email info@chathamhealth.org. **Youth Programs: Drop-In Playdates:** Tuesdays and Wednesdays at 10:30 a.m., Dec. 6, 7, 13, 14, 20 and 21, for ages birth through 5 and their caregivers. This will be an hour of socialization and open play with story room toys. No registration is required. **Crafty Thursdays:** Thursdays, Dec. 8 and 15, 3:30 p.m., for grades K-5, in the Wagner

Room. Supplies provided. This is a drop-in program and no registration is required. **Celebrate Hanukkah:** Tuesday, Dec. 13, 4 p.m. Portland residents Barbara Sequenzia and Liz Hibino will present stories, songs, games and latkes. This program is geared toward kids in grades K-3, but all are welcome. **Meet and Greet with the Snow Sisters:** Tuesday, Dec. 27, at 11 a.m. Calling all fans of Elsa and Anna! The Snow Sisters will visit for a morning of songs, games, crafts and photo opportunities. Registration is required and space is limited. **Teen Programs: Teen Advisory Group:** Monday, Dec. 5, 3:30 p.m. Teens can share thoughts on what they'd like to see the library offer in terms of programs, materials and more. Snacks will be served. Teens will earn community service hours for each meeting they attend. Registration is required. **Melted Crayon Jewelry:** Monday, Dec. 12, 3:30 p.m. Learn how to make colorful pendants from discarded art supplies. This program is limited to kids and teens in grades 6 and up. **Family Craft Night: Gingerbread Houses:** Wednesday, Dec. 7, 6:30 p.m. Create a unique house to bring home with you using graham crackers, frosting and other supplies. This activity has steps that are appropriate for all ages, but a parent or guardian must be with children to help with supervision. Space is limited. **Adult Programs: Book Discussions: TAB (Talk About Books):** Tuesday, Dec. 6, 1 p.m. *The Moon, the Stars, and Madame Burova* by Ruth Hogan will be discussed. **Mystery Lovers Book Club:** Tuesday, Dec. 13, at 1 p.m. *Murder for Christmas* by Francis Duncan will be discussed. **Movie:** Wednesday, Dec. 14, 1 p.m. *Where the Crawdads Sing* will be shown. **Save the Date - Read & Recycle:** Saturday, Jan. 14, from 10 a.m.-noon. All are welcome to bring in gently used books, DVDs, CDs and puzzles.

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East Catholic Honor Roll
The following Portland residents made the East Catholic High School honor roll for the first quarter of the 2022-23 school year:
Honors with Distinction: Delaney Poach, Class of 2026.
First Honors: Ryan Farley, '26.

Fundraising Pasta Dinner
The Ladies Guild of St. Mary Church in Portland and the Knights of Columbus Freestone Council No. 7 will host a pasta dinner to raise funds for the new automatic door openers on Saturday, Dec. 3, after the 5 p.m. Mass. All are invited to attend.
Cost is \$15, and tickets are available at the door.

Holiday Book Store
The Friends of the Portland Library Holiday Book Store will be open starting Monday, Dec. 5, in the Second Hand Prose book sale area at the library, 20 Freestone Ave., during regular hours. The sale features a variety of used books and puzzles. The sale will continue for the remainder of December during regular library hours. All proceeds benefit programs funded by the Friends, such as the library's Museum Pass Program, its DVD collection, and children's, family and adult programs held throughout the year. Visit www.friendsofportlandlibraryct.org for more information or email questions to friendsofportlandlibrary@gmail.com.

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Brownstone Arts Show and Sale

A holiday show and sale sponsored by Brownstone Arts will be held in Owen's Emporium at 283 Main St. through Dec. 24. Among the items displayed and offered as holiday gifts are paintings, drawings, photographs, felt-worked scarves and table runners, jewelry, and pottery.

The event marks the 15th anniversary of Brownstone Arts, a group founded in 2007 to support, promote and encourage the arts in Portland and surrounding towns. The public

is invited to join the artists and their friends as they celebrate this anniversary year. There will be wine and munchies, musical entertainment by singer-songwriter Cathy Kreger, and a cake to be shared.

Owen's Emporium's hours for the duration of the show will be: Thursday and Friday, 10 a.m.-5 p.m.; and Saturday, 10 a.m.-4 p.m. (hours are 10 a.m.-3 p.m. Dec. 24). The Emporium will be closed Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday.

Donations Sought for Joshua's Mission

Joshua's Mission, organized by Portland resident Josh Abbott, 14, is seeking donations.

Every year wreaths are laid at veterans' graves throughout the United States on a national wreath-laying day which this year is Dec. 17. Joshua's Mission is looking for sponsors to purchase wreaths to be laid at the Connecticut State Veterans Cemetery in Middletown on that day.

Wreaths can be purchased for \$15 each or 2 for \$30 and get 3rd one free. Checks can

be made out to Wreaths Across America and mailed to Joshua's Mission, 50 Fairview St., Portland, CT 06480, before Nov. 30. People can also make donations by visiting Josh's Facebook page at "Joshua's Mission" and clicking on the link there to go directly to his Wreaths Across America website page to pay by credit card.

All are invited to participate in helping place the wreaths on Saturday, Dec. 17, at noon.

Winter Soccer Registration

Portland Soccer Club's winter soccer registration is open. Sign up at clubs.bluesombrero.com/portlandsoccerclub. The last day to register is Thursday, Jan. 5. The season will run Jan. 7-March 11.

The club is offering two indoor soccer experiences this winter. They are:

U6-U8: Birth year 2015-17. Cost is \$40. Players will participate in one-hour Futsal sessions on Saturdays (at 1 or 2 p.m.) at Gildersleeve School.

U9-U14 Indoor Soccer and Futsal: Birth

year 2008-2014. Cost is \$50. Players will participate in one-hour sessions of either futsal on Saturday (Gildersleeve School), or indoor soccer on Sunday (Oakwood indoor soccer facility in Glastonbury, field number 3), or both in some weeks. Times for futsal on Saturdays are 2 p.m., 3 p.m. or 4 p.m. Times for Sunday indoor soccer are 4 or 5 p.m.

Futsal is a fast-paced, passing- and foot-skill-oriented game. Dedicated futsal Goals and a heavier ball are used.

Senior Center News & Notes

The Waverly Senior Center, 7 Waverly Ave., is open Monday-Thursday, 9 a.m.-4 p.m., and Friday, 9 a.m.-noon. For more information or to register, call 860-342-6760.

Food Bank Donations: People donating for Portland Food Bank are asked to not leave Food Bank donations at the senior center unless the food bank is open. The food bank is open Mondays and Thursdays from 9 a.m.-noon. Also, the senior center does not need any donations directed toward the center; please only leave donations for the food bank, and only during food bank hours.

Foodshare: Monday, Dec. 5, 1 p.m.

Next Week's Programs: **Monday:** Light Aerobics, 9:30-10:30 a.m. **Tuesday:** Bears on a Journey, 9:30-11 a.m. – making fleece teddy bears for cancer patients; donations are sought of light fleece, one yard or more for making teddy bears for cancer patients throughout Connecticut. If you would like to donate, call 860-342-0809; Watercolor Lessons return Jan. 17, 2023, from 9:30 a.m.-noon (to register, email bivenne@yahoo.com); Stretch & Flex: 11:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.; Coupons for Troops, 11:30 a.m.-4 p.m.; setback, 1 p.m.; Exercise Tap Class, 1:30 p.m.; Senior Jam, 6 p.m. **Wednesday:** Light Aerobics, 9:30-10:30 a.m.; SyncoCize Exercise, 10:30-11:30 a.m.; Social Duplicate Bridge, 12:30-4 p.m., multipurpose room; Tai Chi Qigong, 1 p.m.; Reiki, 30-minute sessions, register directly with Linda Haddad of Lotus Reiki at lotusreiki1@mail.com, or 860-316-7553. **Thursday:** 9 a.m., SyncoCize Balance and Core, New Cardio Drumming; 10:15 a.m., Knit & Stitch; Stretch & Flex, 11:30 a.m.;

Mahjong, 12:30 p.m.; Scrabble, 1 p.m. **Friday:** Light Aerobics, 9:30-10:30 a.m.; Family History Fun with Ken Dorsey, 10:30 a.m.

Blood Pressure Clinic: 10:30-11:30 a.m. on the first Monday of each month (unless the first Monday is a holiday; then the clinic is the following week).

Free Hearing Screenings: The second Tuesday of each month at 11 a.m., with Virginia Duclos of "All Ears" in Portland. No registration is necessary.

Medical Rides: The center provides seniors and disabled with rides to the doctor. Cost is \$5/person round trip. Two-week notice requested. Masks required.

Cans-4-A-Cause: Drop off washed cans and bottles in a bin in the rear parking lot of the center. For details or to volunteer, email Jeff Myjak at myjakjeff@gmail.com.

Trip Reminders: The center is reminding seniors about two trips happening next week. On Tuesday, Dec. 6, there is a trip to Forest Park to see the lights, with dinner at Sophia's in Enfield. Bus leaves the senior center at 4 p.m. On Wednesday, Dec. 7, there is a trip to see the Glenn Miller Orchestra at the Aqua Turf. Bus leaves the senior center at 10:45 a.m.

Volunteer Drivers Sought for Meals-on-Wheels: The senior center is currently recruiting volunteer drivers to help deliver meals to the homebound Monday-Thursday. The delivery usually takes about an hour. For full details, call Alexis at 860-342-6761.

Knights of Columbus Raffle

Tickets are now available (\$5 per ticket) for the Knights of Columbus Freestone Council No. 7 annual raffle. Proceeds from the raffle helps the Freestone Council accomplish work in the community. The prizes are:

Grand Prize: \$1,500; 2nd Prize: \$500; 3rd Prize: \$550 gift certificate to Malloves Jewelers in Middletown; 4th Prize: \$500 Gift Certificate at Adams Hometown Market, Connecticut

stores; 5th Prize: green fees for four persons for 18 holes of golf, including use of carts at Portland West Golf Course;

6th Prize: Nintendo Switch console – with 12-month membership.

The drawing will be held Saturday, Dec. 3, at 7 p.m., at St. Mary Church Hall, 45 Freestone Ave. Winners do not need to be present.

First Congregational Church News

The First Congregational Church of Portland, located at 554 Main St., is a member of the United Church of Christ. The church is an "open and affirming" congregation, welcoming everyone. Facial mask-wearing is optional. The building is accessible. The worship service is livestreamed as well as available for later viewing on the church's YouTube channel; search on YouTube for First Church of Portland CT.

On Dec. 4, the Second Sunday of Advent, the 10 a.m. worship service will include the lighting of the Advent Candle of Peace and the reception of new members. The Rev. Jane Hawken's sermon is titled "Prepare the Way," and under Kasha Breau's direction, the choir will sing the anthem "A Tiny Child Will Come" by Don Besig. Coffee hour follows the service.

During the worship service Dec. 4, childcare is available and there will be Christmas activities for children.

People are invited to contribute to several seasonal mission projects that benefit area families, and patients at the Connecticut Children's Medical Center.

First Church Nursery School offers a program for 3-year-olds on Tuesday and Thursday, and one for 4-year-olds on Monday, Wednesday and Friday. Contact Amy Jahnke at 860-342-1111 or 1stchurchnurseryschool@gmail.com for more information.

The church emails a weekly newsletter, *The Weekly Word*. To join church mailing lists (both email and regular mail), email first.church.pct@sbcglobal.net or call 860-342-3244. For more info, look for the church on Facebook at The First Congregational Church of Portland, or visit www.firstchurchportlandct.org. Those who wish to follow the church on Facebook may do so at The First Congregational Church of Portland, CT.

Holiday Shopping with History in Mind

For one weekend, the Portland Historical Society's Callander Cupboard moves to the Festival of Wreaths at the Carriage House behind 329 Main Street. There are several new products as well as restock of some classics.

Folks can adorn their dining room table or kitchen countertop with classic Westerwald handmade stoneware. Not familiar with Pennsylvania's Westerwald Pottery? Since first creating pieces for the bicentennial of 1976, they have been producing pieces modeled after early Pennsylvania stoneware, inscribed with town names and embellished with a traditional colonial style decoration. This season there are quart crocks and pitchers for \$25 each. A cutting board, measuring approximately 13.5"x9.5"x.56," is laser-engraved on one side with Portland's town seal and has a blank back side for food prep. It is made with 100% bamboo.

Also, just in time for holiday giving are two new bells produced by East Hampton's Bevin Brothers Manufacturing, makers of bells since 1832 – back when Portland was still part of Chatham along with East Hampton and Middle Haddam. A white bell ornament features a choice of three wintry images – holly, snowman or cardinal – imprinted with Portland CT

on the back. Size: 1-5/8" and \$6.50 each. And for everyone who's a kid at heart, the "Believe" sleigh bell ornament for \$4.

Also featured in the Callander Cupboard is a new children's book, *The Adventures of Nibbles Munk-Munk* by Portland resident Sarah Elliott Caratasios. It tells the tale of a curious and tiny chipmunk with a huge heart – always on the lookout for adventure. Cost is \$12.

And back in stock is *Portland Farms: Then and Now* by Portland resident Susanne Anderson, takes the reader on a journey through the farming history of the Town of Portland – includes information and photos on over 100 farms, starting with the Wangunks, a small Native American tribe that inhabited and farmed the land over 325 years ago, to the farms of the present time. Cost is \$35. Also back on the shelf is *Connecticut 169 Club* by Martin Podskoch, an East Hampton resident, who compiled interesting information on the 169 towns, cities and villages in Connecticut for his Connecticut Travel Guide Book in the hopes of encouraging people to visit them all. Cost is \$25. Two more classics making a repeat appearance at the festival are Images of Portland by resident Robert McDougall and linen tea towels picturing Portland landmarks.



Service of Lessons and Carols

All are invited to St. Mary Church, 45 Freestone Ave., at 3 p.m. Sunday, Dec. 11, for story, song and prayer celebrating the Advent and Christmas seasons. Donations of personal hygiene items for the Portland Food Bank (toothpaste, toothbrushes, shaving cream, soap, shampoo, etc.) will be accepted.

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Local Story Shared in New Hulu Series

By Michael Sinkewicz

In the weeks leading up to Christmas in 2020, Melissa Phelps wrote a letter to Santa as she had done every year.

Melissa, a 33-year-old with special needs, asked for two items – a cookbook and bones for her dogs. Both gifts were delivered to her during the middle of December, much to Melissa's delight.

Then, on Dec. 23 of that year, she developed blood clots that caused her death.

Her mom, Candace Phelps of Hebron, shared Melissa's story and the inspiring details that will be included in a new miniseries called *Dear Santa*, which can be streamed on Hulu.

Phelps revealed that Melissa's gifts were delivered through Operation Santa, a program run by the U.S Postal Service for over 100 years that allows citizens to respond to letters addressed to Santa and fulfill the wish lists.

Initially, Phelps wasn't sure where the gifts had come from. Naturally, she was aware that Melissa mailed a letter addressed to Santa, but didn't think it would lead to anything more.

When the box arrived, she opened it and saw the gifts inside, accompanied by a letter from Operation Santa that provided the explanatory information. After conducting an online search, Phelps quickly determined the legitimacy of the delivery.

Her first thought was how "selfless" Melissa was – her list only included the two items and one of them was for her dogs.

But what became even more clear was how much Melissa would embrace these simple gifts and how they would contribute to a wonderful Christmas – her favorite holiday.

"She loved cooking," Phelps expressed, adding that the book brought "pure enjoyment" for her daughter.

Phelps said that seeing Melissa's joy was a "perfect sendoff" and she was glad "knowing she had a Christmas before she passed away" made possible in part by the Operation Santa program.

Melissa always believed in Santa and her love for Christmas was not centered around gifts, Phelps expressed, but in baking, music and visiting Santa himself during the season.

Last year, Phelps was compelled to reach out to Operation Santa and thank the organization for its efforts. She also explained the impact it had on her family. The program emailed back, asking if they could pass her information along, which then turned into inquiries from the miniseries producers.

Around Thanksgiving time last year, a film crew was shuffling in and out of her house with microphones and drones, interviewing her along with her son and sister.

"It all happened so fast," she recalled, adding that the production took place as the family entered its first Christmas season without Melissa.

"It took my mind off it," she said. "It really helped me."

Being a part of the miniseries – which expands upon the film *Dear Santa* that was released in 2020 – allowed Phelps to share her daughter's story, and her "incredible" experience.

"People looked up to Melissa," she asserted, saying that the community embraced her. "She participated in every activity."

Phelps decided that she wanted to participate in the program moving forward, on Melissa's behalf. She was in contact with the program and

began sorting through letters addressed to Santa beginning in November 2021.

Her criteria were also simple – she wanted to help someone asking for dog.

There were two apparent choices, but one child from New York City emerged as the perfect candidate.

Phelps recalled reading, "dog, dog, dog," in the letter, which stood out to her. The program arranged to buy the puppy and Phelps provided the supplies and two gift baskets for Kayla, a 5-year-old girl.

Typically, the gifts are sent through the mail system, as was the case with Melissa. However, because a live animal was involved, and Kayla lived relatively nearby, Phelps was able to hand-deliver the puppy. The program also helped connect Phelps with the citizen, a California man, who gave Melissa her gift, and he got involved with this project, as well.

In full elf gear, Phelps and the film crew traveled to the city in late Dec. 2021 to surprise Kayla.

She recalled that Kayla ran into her arms and excitedly asked, "Can I keep it?"

"It was just one of the best things I've ever done in my life," Phelps stated. "It was just awesome."

As she reflected on the experience, Phelps ex-

pressed that none of what transpired with Kayla or with the miniseries would've happened if she hadn't reached out to the program.

"All of this [took place] from saying 'thank you,'" Phelps said, emphasizing that gratitude goes a long way.

Phelps intends on participating in Operation Santa again this year, and will begin looking through letters shortly.

She believes Kayla truly deserved her wish and she was beyond thankful for the gift. What stuck out to Phelps was how Kayla let her brothers hold the puppy and how she shared her joy with them; she didn't make it *her* gift.

And Phelps shared that Melissa would've wanted to support Kayla, as well.

A year later, Phelps still keeps in touch with Kayla's family to "make sure they're all good."

While she savored the interaction with Kayla, Phelps said she did all of this for Melissa.

"I know she's smiling," she said.

Phelps does many activities that help celebrate her daughter. Last year, on the anniversary of her passing, she rented out a movie theater in Manchester for Melissa's friends for a viewing of *Home Alone*, her favorite Christmas movie.

Ahead of the official launch, Phelps was able to view the episode her family is featured in and was happy with how it turned out.



Melissa Phelps wrote letters to Santa every year, leading up to her death on Dec. 23, 2020. Her story is shared in a new miniseries currently streaming on Hulu.



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Transfer Station Winter Hours

Winter hours for the town transfer station are in effect, and they are:

Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday: 7:30 a.m.-4 p.m.; and Sunday: 7:30 a.m.-2 p.m.

For more information, call Public Works at 860-228-2871.

Free CPR Classes

The Hebron Fire Department (44 Main St) is offering free AHA Heartsaver CPR classes for those who live or work in Hebron. Adult Child, Infant CPR & choking emergencies are covered.

The classes begin at 6 p.m. and will be offered Jan. 18, Feb. 15, March 15 or April 19. Call Donna at 860-228-3022 ext. 162 to reserve your seat. Classes are first-come, first-served.

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The Mohegan Pequot Model Railroad will once again chug around Old Town Hall as part of Hebron's Holiday Celebration on Saturday, Dec. 3, from 3-5 p.m.

Holiday Celebration Returns Saturday

The Hebron Holiday Celebration will be Saturday, Dec. 3, featuring activities for all ages. Most celebration activities will be located between the Douglas Library and Old Town Hall.

Starting at 2 p.m., folks can watch the Mohegan Pequot Model Railroad chugging around Old Town Hall, work on crafts in the library, play games in the parking lot, welcome the SnoFolk's return to Hebron, have cups of hot chocolate, and get your first view of Santa.

Seasonal music performances by Andrey Stolyarov, director of the Hebron Community Chorus, will begin at 3 p.m., the RHAM Carolers will share their musical spirit around 4:30 p.m., and all are invited to join the sing-along led by the RHAM Carolers at 5 p.m. Santa's arrival will be somewhere in between.

The celebration culminates with the Town Tree-Lighting at 5 p.m. This year's tree was again donated by Baldi Stone & Gravel of Colchester, and it was decorated by Christmas Decor by Picture Perfect Landscaping of Hebron.

The Holiday Celebration is free for all.

However, people are welcome to donate an unwrapped toy, winter clothing (hats, mittens), or a non-perishable food item to the Fire/Police Department's "Stuff-a-Truck."

Participating in this annual event will be the RHAM Carolers, the Mohegan Pequot Model Railroad, Hebron Fire Department, Douglas Library, Hebron Parks & Recreation Department, The Town Center Project and the Hebron Historical Society.

Trains on Sunday Too: Also, on Sunday, Dec. 4, the trains will again be running at Old Town Hall, from 10 a.m.-1 p.m. While in Old Town Hall, people looking for a gift for someone interested in Hebron's early history are invited to pick up a copy of the newly revised edition of *Lost Mill Sites in Hebron, Connecticut*, and can also purchase a copy of *Hebron* from the Images of America series. Each book is \$20, but both books can be bought together for \$35. The books were produced for the Hebron Historical Society, and all profits help with the society's building maintenance and programs.

Hebron Preschool Screening

The Hebron Board of Education, through the Hebron Early Childhood Center Program at Gilead Hill School, will hold a preschool screening Wednesday, Dec. 7, at GHS, 580 Gilead St., for children that reside in Hebron and are 3 and 4 years old by the time of the screening.

Screens in areas of speech, language, cognitive, and motor development will be provided as an opportunity for parents to learn more about

their child's development. Parents will also receive information which will assist in fostering their child's growth.

Reservations are required; to register, call the office of the Director of Educational Services at Hebron Public Schools at 860-228-2577. Additional screenings will be Wednesday, March 8, and Wednesday, May 10.

St. Peter's News & Notes

Services of Holy Eucharist at St. Peter's Episcopal Church, located at 30 Church St., are held each Sunday at 8 a.m. (Rite 1) and 10 a.m. (with music). All are invited to the Church Hall for coffee and conversation after the services. Priest is the Rev. Ron Kolanowski.

Meetings and Events: Balancing Class: Mondays, 10-11 a.m. – cost is \$5; Cub Scouts: first Mondays of the month, 5:30 p.m.; Buildings and Grounds Committee: first Tuesdays, 7

p.m.; Virtual Coffee Hours: Wednesdays at 10 a.m.; Boy Scouts: Wednesdays at 7 p.m.; Vestry: third Thursdays, 7 p.m.; Building Networks International, Fridays, 7:30 a.m.

Outreach: Food Donations: Items for various local food pantries can be placed in the brown donation box outside Phelps Hall.

For more information, visit stpetershebron.com, search for St. Peter's Hebron on Facebook, or email office@stpetershebron.com.

Senior Center News & Notes

Russell Mercier Senior Center has announced the following. For more information and full program descriptions, and to register, call the senior center at 860-228-1700. Pre-registration is required for all programs. The senior center newsletter is online at tinyurl.com/3xmf862d. For information on various other weekly classes, meetings and activities, contact the senior center or look to the senior newsletter.

Movie Mondays: Mondays, Dec. 5 and 19, 12:45 p.m. See *Where the Crawdads Sing* Dec. 5 and *Downton Abbey: A New Era* Dec. 19. Both weeks, lunch will be served beforehand at noon (cost is \$3 due the Friday prior to the Monday lunch). To sign-up for the movie or lunch and a movie, call the center.

Senior Center Holiday Party: Wednesday, Dec. 14, featuring the RHAM Middle School chorus. Wear your favorite holiday ugly sweater; there will be a vote for the best one. Doors open at 11 a.m., chorus sings at 11:30 a.m., and lunch is served after singing. Cost for lunch is \$3. Sign up by Monday, Dec. 12, for lunch, by calling the senior center.

RHAM High School Holiday Concert and Cookie & Candy Contest: Wednesday, Dec. 21, 10:45 a.m. Bring in treats (smaller sizes so they can be sampled by all in attendance) and then people will vote for their favorites in each category. After the concert, the winners will be revealed. Doors open at 10:15 a.m. Deadline to sign up for the Cookie Contest is Monday, Dec. 19. People can also stay for lunch at noon; cost is \$3 for lunch. To sign up for the cookie contest, chorus, lunch or all three, call the senior center.

RHAM Bingo: Wednesday, Dec. 21, 2:30-4 p.m. The games will be run by the RHAM National Honor Society Students. The games are free and prizes are awarded. To sign up, call the senior center.

Sunshine Singers Holiday Concert and Holiday Lunch Take 2: Thursday, Dec. 22. Doors open at 11 a.m., the Sunshine Singers will perform at 11:15 a.m., and lunch will be at noon. Cost for lunch is \$3 and registration deadline is Wednesday, Dec. 21, at 10 a.m.

Fun with Stitches Open Quilting Group: Friday, Dec. 9, from 10:15 a.m.-12:15 p.m. This will be an open time to come work on your

quilting projects or join together to work on something new. Bring your own supplies. Pre-register by calling the center.

Created to Create Open Arts Group: Friday, Dec. 16, 10:15 a.m.-12:15 p.m. This will be an open time to come work on your art projects or join together to work on something new. Bring your supplies. Pre-register by calling the center.

Grocery Shopping Trips: There will be a trip to Big Y Friday, Dec. 9; Stop and Shop Friday, Dec. 16; and North Windham Friday, Dec. 23. Pick-ups begin about 10 a.m. Pre-registration is required by the prior Wednesday at noon. To sign up, call the senior center.

Mindful Meditation: Monday, Dec. 12, 10:15-11:15 a.m. This is a mental training practice led by Mandy Rocznia. To register, call the center.

All-Levels Yoga: Mondays through Dec. 19, 10:15-11:15 a.m. Fee is \$5/class to drop in. Chairs may be used to meet all abilities. Bring a yoga mat if you will not be using a chair.

Medicare Annual Open Enrollment: Runs through Dec. 7. To evaluate your options for Medicare health and drug coverage, call the senior center to set up an appointment.

Energy Assistance Winter Heating Program: The senior center is taking applications for the Connecticut Energy Assistance Program (CEAP), which is designed to help offset winter heating costs. If a household's primary heating costs are included in rent, the household may also apply for assistance. To make an appointment, call the center.

Community Café: Onsite meals take place Monday-Thursday at noon. Reservations due by 10 a.m. the day before the meal, and by 10 a.m. Friday for Monday's lunch. Requested donation is \$3. Reservations required; call the center to register. For the full month's menu, check the newsletter, the website, or at the senior center.

Senior Transportation: Offered to ages 60 and up and all adult disabled individuals, for medical care, personal needs care, grocery shopping, or other pre-approved needs. Transportation available Monday-Thursday, 8:30 a.m.-4 p.m., and Friday, 8:30 a.m.-3 p.m. Appointments must be scheduled a minimum of 24 hours in advance, but 48 hours is recommended – and required for new riders. For more information or to schedule an appointment, call the center.

St. Nicholas Fair

St. Peter's Episcopal Church will hold its annual St. Nicholas Fair Saturday, Dec. 3, from 9 a.m.-3 p.m., at the church, 30 Church St. (Route 85) in Hebron.

Holiday shoppers will be treated to a "Country Store" with homemade jams, jellies, breads, pies, other baked goods, and holiday treats. There will be a classic Christmas treasures tag sale, jewelry sale, homemade craft items, Rada Cutlery, and vendors. Greened cemetery boxes as well as greened centerpieces will be available for purchase.

There will also be a luncheon featuring homemade chowders, hot dogs, and freshly made sandwiches, Hot coffee, cocoa, cold drinks and other treats will be served.

There will also be holiday basket drawings. Shoppers will be able to select from over 30 holiday and non-holiday themed baskets. Tickets are \$1 each.

For more information, visit www.StPetersHebron.com.

Xavier Honor Roll

The following Amston students made the Xavier High School honor roll for the first quarter of the 2022-23 school year.

High Honors: Zachary Bulkovitch, Class of 2023.

Honors: Peyton Cruess, '23; Marcus Mangio, '24.

Town Clerk Closing

The town clerk's office will be closed Monday, Dec. 12, due to the installation of a new records management system. The department will reopen Tuesday, Dec. 13.

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Parks and Recreation News

Hebron Parks and Recreation is offering the following programs. For full program descriptions and to register, visit hebronct.recdesk.com or call 860-530-1281.

Hop, Slither and Crawl!: Saturday, Dec. 10, from 11 a.m.-noon, at Douglas Library. Embark on a journey with CZRReptiles LLC and learn about pythons, corn snakes and boa constrictors for the first half of the program, and then get hands on with opportunities for pictures during the second half. Price is \$45 per child. Pre-registration is required.

Barre Fusion: Tuesdays through Dec. 13,

6-7 p.m., at the Gilead Hill School activity room. Donna Bellmore, with Wildflower Fitness, invites all levels to this low-impact class that combines barre work with yoga. Drop-in fee of \$15 per visit.

Babysitters Training: Saturday, Jan. 7, 9 a.m.-2:30 p.m., at Douglas Library, for ages 11-17. Cost is \$80. This one-day course is intended to teach age-appropriate skills necessary to care for children of all ages using concepts focusing on safety and prevention. A two-year certificate is awarded after completion of class and test.

Douglas Library News & Notes

Douglas Library, located at 22 Main St., has announced the following. For more info and full program descriptions, and to register, call the library at 860-228-9312 or visit www.douglaslibrary.org.

Friday Films: Fridays at 1 p.m. at the library. Upcoming schedule: Dec. 9, *Amsterdam* (rated R); Dec. 16, *Call Jane* (R); Dec. 23, *A Christmas Karen* (not rated). NR. Bottled water and individually wrapped snacks will be provided. These are all shown on our 80" 4K TV with surround sound speakers.

Chess Night: The first Thursday of each month at 4:30 p.m. All skill levels welcome.

Spirited Book Club: Wednesday, Dec. 21, 7-8:30 p.m., at the American Legion, located next door to the library. Discussed this month will be *One Day in December* by Josie Silver. Copies of the book will be available for check-out at the Adult Circulation Desk. Must be over 21 years of age.

Teen Advisory Group: Will meet every

Tuesday from 2:30-4 p.m. during the month for activities. This is a way for teens to get their service hours in. Registration is not needed for any of these events.

Closed: The library will be closed on Dec. 24, 25, 26 and 27, for the Christmas holiday and will reopen on Dec. 28 at noon. All of the online services will be available.

Take & Make: Each week, during December adults and teens can pick up a craft kit from the hold shelf across from the Adult Circulation Desk while supplies last. Week 1: Ornament Sequin Kit; Week 2: Santa Diamond Art Ornament kit; Week 3: Hot Cocoa Diamond Art keychain kit.

Children's Storytime: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 10 a.m. These are family classes for children birth to 5. There are stories, crafts, songs and interactive play. No registration is required. This program is free and open to the public. Children must be accompanied by an adult.

Gilead Congregational Church News

Gilead Congregational Church, an Open and Affirming Congregation located at 672 Gilead St., has announced the following. For more info, see the church bulletin at gileadchurchucc.updates.church, email gcc@gileadchurch.net, or call 860-228-3077.

Sunday Worship: Sundays at 10 a.m., indoors, followed by Coffee Hour in the Fellowship Hall. Services are also available on YouTube at www.bit.ly/GileadChurchUCC and on Facebook at tinyurl.com/GileadChurchUCC.

Scheduled Events/Meetings: 12/2: Faith and Film; 12/3: Yoga in the Fellowship Hall, 9:30 a.m.; 12/5: Bible Study, 9:30 a.m. (via Zoom); 12/6: AA Meeting, 7:30 p.m.; 12/6: Pastoral Search Committee, 7 p.m.; 12/7: Yoga in the Fellowship Hall, 9:30 a.m.; Book Group, 10:45 a.m.; Choir Practice, 7 p.m.; 12/8: Trustees, 7 p.m.

Holiday Service Schedule: Quiet Christmas Service: Monday, Dec. 19, 7 p.m., in the church sanctuary; Christmas Eve Candlelight Service: Saturday, Dec. 24, 7 p.m., in the sanctuary; Christmas Day: There will not be a service Dec. 25; New Year's Day: Sunday, Jan. 1, 10 a.m., there will be an interactive service on Zoom, simulcast on Facebook and YouTube. Those interested in joining in person are welcome to the

sanctuary.

Christmas Flowers and Memorial Donations: All poinsettia orders must be turned in by Dec. 4. See the order form in the church's Loop Bulletin (gileadchurchucc.updates.church). Memorial donations can also be submitted using the form. Call the church office with any questions.

Angel Tag Gifts Reminder: All gifts should be returned by Dec. 4.

Advent Celebration: Sunday, Dec. 4, after worship.

Christmas Pageant: Sunday, Dec. 11, after worship.

Women's Fellowship Cookie Sale: Sunday, Dec. 11, after worship, in the fellowship hall. Pick out treats and take them home to share. Cost is \$8 per pound.

Family Movie Night: Friday, Dec. 16, at a time to be announced. All are invited for a night of holiday movies.

Yoga in the Fellowship Hall: Wednesday and Saturday, from 9:30-10:30 a.m. Contact Jennifer Goodine of Wise Warrior Yoga to register, at wisewarrioryoga@gmail.com.

Dean's List

Hebron residents Amanda Pope and Christina Vezzetti, and Amston resident Sierra Waleszczyk, made the summer 2022 Dean's List at Goodwin University in East Hartford.

Car Seat Installations

The Hebron Fire Department offers free infant and child installation/safety checks by a licensed safety technician at Station 1, 44 Main St. To schedule an appointment, call 860-228-3022 ext. 162.

Resident on Basketball Team

The Eastern Connecticut State University women's basketball team began its 2022-23 season Nov. 12 – and a Hebron resident is on the team.

Jaclyn Santella, a senior who majors in English, plays guard and wears number 4.

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Pet Photo Shoot Fundraiser

The Colchester Dog Park Committee will hold a fundraising pet photo shoot (children are welcome too) at the Colchester Fish & Game Club Saturday, Dec. 3, from 9 a.m.-3 p.m. The club is handicapped-accessible.

Cost is \$25 for five digital images, which will be emailed by Dec. 5. The committee will also sell 5x7 and 8x10 photo prints, Christmas cards, and ornaments. There is a new backdrop this year. All orders will be available for pickup at the Parks & Recreation office at Town Hall,

128 Norwich Ave., by Dec. 12.

Cash, check, Venmo and PayPal accepted. All proceeds will support the Colchester Dog Park. Sponsored by the Colchester Parks and Recreation Department. For more information, email tagnobark@gmail.com.

Appointments are recommended and can be made by calling Janice 860-537-1944 and walk-ins will be accepted if time is available.

Dogs must be vaccinated. No retractable leashes allowed.

History Museum Open This Sunday

The Colchester History Museum, located at 24 Linwood Ave., will hold its final opening of the year on Sunday, Dec. 4, from 11 a.m.-2 p.m.

The museum, adjacent to the Cragin Memorial Library, is free and offers both per-

manent and special exhibits all highlighting the people and events in Colchester's history.

For more information, contact the Colchester Historical Society at mail@colchesterhistory.org or 860-537-3240.



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Holiday Open House

Diana Tyler Watercolors



artwork by *Diana Wythe Tyler*

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Questions? Call 860-228-3966



Climb Every Mountain... For their 25th wedding anniversary, Brian and Karen Marburger recently took a trip to far northern Maine and northern New Hampshire. The two are pictured here at Mount Washington. They said it was a perfect day, with no wind and 130-mile visibility.

Where in the World is the *Rivereast*?

Hey! Are you taking a vacation or a day trip soon? Bring the *Rivereast* along with you, snap a picture with it, and email the photo and your address to bulletin@glcitizen.com.



Arabian Days... Gary Ransom of East Hampton did a little sightseeing while working in Dahrahn, Saudi Arabia – and he brought the *Rivereast*!



Making a Splash!... Jen Koziel and her children Lily and Theo Arnold, all of Portland, took the *Rivereast* with them on Splash Mountain in the Magic Kingdom in Disney World recently. The three had a great time!



Rivereast Sees the Pyramids... Barb and Cliff Libby of East Hampton recently spent 10 days in Egypt – and brought along the *Rivereast*! Here they are at the pyramids in Giza.

Where in the World?

**Going on a trip?
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Camp Wins Award... Colchester Parks and Recreation's Summer Day Camp program recently won the Inclusive or Adaptive Program of Merit Award from the Connecticut Recreation & Parks Association (CRPA). The award is given to a department that has developed an outstanding, ongoing inclusive or adaptive program which demonstrates a conscious effort to service people of all needs and abilities. Pictured from left are Valerie Stolfi Collins, executive director of CRPA; Matt Cicchese, program specialist; Eileen Cicchese, CRPA Nomination Committee; Tiffany Quinn, director, Colchester Parks and Recreation; and Andreas Bisbikos, Colchester First Selectman.

Youth Poetry Contest Deadline Approaching

The Colchester Garden Club invites area students in kindergarten through ninth grade to create an original poem for the National Garden Clubs, Inc. Poetry Contest. The theme is "Seeds, Trees and Bees, Oh My! Celebrating the Diversity of Nature."

Flyers and entry forms may be picked up at the Cragin Memorial Library Children's Circulation Desk or requested by email from

colchestergardenclub@yahoo.com. Contest deadline is Dec. 15.

In January, Connecticut state winners will move to the Northeast Regional judging. Only regional winners will be considered in the judging for national winners. All of the national winning entries will be compiled into a booklet that will be made available to the winners.

Wreaths Across America Planned for Dec. 17

Local Wreaths Across America volunteers are working hard to ensure that all veterans laid to rest Westchester Cemetery are honored this December as part of National Wreaths Across America Day – Saturday, Dec. 17.

Westchester Cemetery Association, in collaboration with Troop 109, is helping to coordinate this year's event.

"Every \$15 wreath sponsorship made is a meaningful gift from a grateful American who knows what it means to serve and sacrifice for the freedoms we all enjoy," said Karen Worcester, executive director of Wreaths Across America. "We are so grateful to the good people of this wonderful community for participating in our mission to Remember, Honor and Teach."

For more information, to donate or to sign

up to volunteer, visit wreathsassamerica.org/pages/14786/Overview, or contact Roberta Avery at 78 Northern Blvd., Colchester, CT 06415, or by calling 860-537-1889.

Wreaths Across America is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization that helps coordinate wreath-laying ceremonies in December at Arlington, as well as at thousands of veterans' cemeteries and other locations in all 50 states and beyond. Last year, ceremonies were held across the country at more than 3,100 participating locations, placing 2.4 million wreaths for interred veterans.

For more information, to donate or to sign up to volunteer, visit www.WreathsAcrossAmerica.org/CTWCCC.

Christmas Polka

The St. Joseph's Polish Society, located at 395 S. Main St., will host a Christmas Polka Sunday, Dec. 11.

Hors d'oeuvres and a baked ham dinner will be served from 1-2 p.m. Dennis Polisky and The Maestro's Men will perform from 2-6 p.m. for dancing. Tickets are \$30 per person. Stop by the club during regular business hours to purchase tickets.

For more information, call 860-537-2550.

Carol Sing and Nativity

There will be a Carol Sing and Nativity on the Town Green Gazebo Sunday, Dec. 4, from 3-4:30 p.m.

All are invited to sing some familiar Christmas Carols and listen to the Bible readings that tell the story of the birth of Jesus, as actors assemble a live nativity scene.

Cookies and hot chocolate will be available. The event is presented by Abundant Life, Christian Life and Fellowship Community Church.

President's List

The following Colchester residents made the summer 2022 President's List at Goodwin University in East Hartford:

Amanda West, Anne Pederzani, Ashlee Ringuette, Ashley Varjenski and Meghan Young.



Scouts Go Swimming... The Scout BSA units in Colchester – Troops 109, 72, and 13 and Cub Scout Packs 109 and 13 – got together at Camp Hemlocks in Hebron on Monday, Nov. 28. Trained Scout leaders served as lifeguards. For more information about these groups, email afcsere@gmail.com or visit the Connecticut Rivers Council website ctscouting.org.

Westchester Church News

Westchester Congregational Church, 98 Cemetery Rd., holds worship Sundays at 10 a.m. The services are also available on Zoom; visit westchesterconchurch.org for login information.

Sunday School meets during the worship service.

Meetings: The church hosts several groups meeting weekly: Al-Anon, Wednesdays at 7 p.m.; AA, Fridays at 7:30 p.m.; Scout BSA

Troop 109, Tuesdays at 7 p.m.; and Cub Scout Pack 109, one Thursday per month at 6 p.m.

Outreach: The church has a white wooden Blessings Box in the lower parking lot with non-perishable food items and other useful items. Anyone in need or who wishes to donate may stop by and take or leave a few items.

For more information, email westconchurch@gmail.com or call 860-267-6711.

Upcoming Senior Center Trips

The Colchester Senior Center is planning the following trips. Reservations should be made in person at the senior center, 95 Norwich Ave. Trips are available to senior center members and adult guests over the age of 18, and are on a first-come, first-served basis; space is limited. Call the senior center at 860-537-3911 for more information.

A Christmas for Carol at Newport Playhouse: Tuesday, Dec. 6, departing at 9:30 a.m. There will be a buffet lunch before the show and a cabaret show afterward. Proof of vaccina-

tion required. Cost is \$132/person and is non-refundable.

Spain & Portugal: Costa Del Sol to the Portuguese Riviera: Oct. 14-25, 2023. Taste some of the delicacies of this southern Spanish region. Includes 10 breakfasts, two lunches and four dinners. Cost is \$5,029 per person for double, if booked before March 15, 2023. You can come into the senior center to register in person or register online at gateway.gocollette.com/link/1102385.

Shelter Collection Drive

Presents for Paws will host its 15th annual Shelter Collection Drive on Saturday, Dec. 10, from 7 a.m.-2 p.m., at John Gagnon's Pet Resort, 227 Upton Rd.

The following items are requested based on shelter needs/requests: cat litter (high priority); dog food (Purina preferred, wet/dry – unopened, please no Ol' Roy or Beneful); cat food (wet/dry, any brand – unopened); kitten food/kitten formula (high priority); cat/dog treats (no rawhide); new/gently-used dog toys (especially kongs and chew toys).

People who cannot attend can purchase items online from the wish list and it will be deliv-

ered to Presents for Paws' door. The wish list is at linktr.ee/presentsforpaws501c or [fb.me/e/2itULSu1k](https://www.facebook.com/e/2itULSu1k). Monetary donations are also appreciated; they are tax deductible and 100% of your donations go to help shelter animals.

Presents for Paws is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization located in East Haddam that collects and distributes supplies to area shelters, rescues, and municipal pounds.

For more information on the shelter drive, to make a monetary donation, or to become a volunteer, visit www.facebook.com/presentsforpaws501c or www.presentsforpaws.org.

Colchester Federated Church News

Colchester Federated Church is an Open and Affirming church located at 60 Main St. Pastor is the Rev. Lauren Lorincz Ostroff. The church office is open Monday-Friday, 9 a.m.-1 p.m. The office can be reached at 860-537-5189 or cfc06415@gmail.com.

Worship services are Sundays at 9 a.m.; masks are optional. For those wishing to worship from home, the service will be broadcast via Facebook Live each Sunday at 9 a.m. Worship videos are at www.colchesterfederated-church.org under the Worship & Sermons tab. Updated information is also on the church's Facebook page.

Advent Worship Schedule: Week 2: Peace: Sunday, Dec. 4, 9 a.m. with communion; Week 3: Joy: Sunday, Dec. 11, 9 a.m.; Week 4: Love: Sunday, Dec. 18, 9 a.m., with Christmas Pageant.

Christmas Eve Services: Dec. 24: 5 p.m., Family Service; 9 p.m., Lessons & Carols.

Christmas Day: There will be no in-person worship service on Christmas Day, Sunday, Dec. 25. A virtual message will be shared on Sunday.

Christian Life Chapel News

Christian Life Chapel, located at 392 S. Main St., holds worship in person at 10 a.m. Sundays. Follow the church on Facebook for the livestream.

For more information, call Pastor Don Rivers – the church's bi-vocational pastor, who also serves as president for "Racing with Jesus, Inc." – at 860-398-9119 or visit christianlifechapel.org.

the church's Facebook page.

Sunday School: Sunday School is held during worship from September through June. Children in grades pre-K through 8 are welcome. The nursery is located just off the sanctuary. Visit the church website to register youth for Sunday School.

Twelve-Step Meetings: AA meets in the church library Monday-Wednesday and Friday at noon and Thursday at 10 a.m., and at 7:30 p.m. Mondays and Wednesdays. On Saturdays at 9:30 a.m., Al-Anon meets in the Jerusalem Room and AA meets in the Stage Room.

Boy Scout Troop 72: Meetings are held in the Stage Room every Monday at 7 p.m.

Holiday Homecoming Concert

Colchester's Holiday Homecoming Concert, featuring holiday songs performed by the Colchester Choir and Orchestra, will take place Saturday, Dec. 3, at 6:30 p.m., at Bacon Academy auditorium, 611 Norwich Ave.

The concert marks the end to the day's Holiday Homecoming celebration, sponsored by the Parks and Recreation Department, which starts on the Town Green earlier that day with a visit from Santa.

The concert is free, but donations are welcome. For concert updates, and information about joining the choir or orchestra, visit www.colchesterchoirorchestra.org or follow CCO on Facebook.

FD Not Selling Christmas Trees

The Colchester Hayward Volunteer Fire Department (CHVFD) is not selling Christmas trees this year.

Due to the high demand for live trees during COVID-19, there is a limited supply of wholesale trees available, CHFD said. This year's drought has also affected the quality of the supply, the department said.

CHVFD said it hopes to be back next year.

Bobcats Football Building Foundation

By Josh Howard

Bacon Academy football walked off the field at RHAM High School after being handed a 41-12 defeat on Thanksgiving morning. Under normal circumstances, a lopsided loss in the season finale would be tough to swallow.

But for a Bobcats program that has seen rock bottom, the 29-point defeat is just another stepping stone towards a brighter future.

"Since day one, the energy and investment into the program has been there," said first-year head coach Bill Chaffin. "I feel like we're in a better place than we were 12 months ago. They weren't even playing 12 months ago."

Chaffin took over the program that finished winless a season ago, losing their first seven games before forfeiting the final three games because of alleged Title IX violations last November.

Thanksgiving's results allowed the neighboring Raptors to retain The Rail, a trophy given to the winner of the annual matchup dubbed "The Battle for the Rail."

A year ago, RHAM was awarded The Rail after the forfeiture and 2020's game was never played because of the COVID-19 cancellation.

In 2019, the last time the teams played each other, Bacon won 32-0. But that game was a distant memory by the time the game kicked off last Thursday in Hebron.

After falling behind 20-0, the Bobcats found

rhythm offensively with running back Aidan Fritz ripping off runs of seven, eight, and ten yards.

Bacon eventually found the end zone when senior quarterback Jack Holmes scrambled to his right and lofted a pass down the sidelines to Julian Rodegher, who hauled it in and scored from 32-yards out with 8:24 left in the first half.

Holmes threw a second touchdown late in regulation when he hooked up with Jace King for a 19-yard scoring strike.

In the end, RHAM's rushing attack was too much for Bacon Academy to overcome. The loss wrapped up a 1-9 season for a team that had some bright moments this season, including picking up their first win in 1,007 days when they defeated New London on Nov. 5.

"We finally got a win and we got building blocks to build off of," said Chaffin, who started several underclassmen this fall. "We were young, inexperienced, and they got thrown into the water. The experience they gained this year will help us moving forward."

Chaffin will have starting experience returning with Rodegher, King, Brady Gould, and Kevin Claffey leading a talented group coming back after playing pivotal roles on both sides of the ball this season.

On the flip side, Chaffin will lose eight seniors – led by captain Fritz, Holmes, Aiden Holt, and Zachary Perreault – who helped him



Bacon Academy senior captains, from left, Zachary Perreault, Aidan Fritz, Aiden Holt and Jack Holmes during the coin toss at RHAM High School on Thanksgiving.

implement his culture.

Chaffin credited his departing seniors for persevering through plenty of turbulence over the last four years.

"They have been through nothing but adversity through their high school careers and for them to come out and show leadership and show some of the younger guys how to do it means a lot," added Chaffin. "They made my first year as a head coach a really good year and I'm extremely thankful to them."

Chaffin said the main difference in the loss to RHAM was the strength component, with the Raptors offensive line and running backs controlling the tempo of the game.

Heading into year two, Chaffin's goal for the offseason is to ramp up the program's weight training program in order for the team to get

bigger, stronger, and faster for next fall.

"That's the difference between the type of season we had and a successful season," added Chaffin. "Getting these kids in the weight room and getting them strong will determine where we'll be in the next two to three years."

Girl Scouts Coat Drive

The Girl Scouts will hold their annual coat drive Sunday, Dec. 4, from 1-3 p.m., at St. Andrew Church, 128 Norwich Ave.

Coat donations will benefit various agencies in the area with some going directly those in need in the community. New or gently-used coats are welcome.

For more information, call Jennifer at 860-214-6619.

CBA Holiday Auction

The Colchester Business Association's annual Holiday Auction is Tuesday, Dec. 7, starting at 6 p.m., at St. Joseph's Polish Club, 395 South Main St.

Dozens of items donated by local businesses will be auctioned off, with proceeds benefiting the Colchester Food Bank, Colchester Fuel Bank, CBA Scholarship Fund and Santas Anonymous. Last year's auction raised in excess of \$6,000.

Auction items traditionally include tickets to area events, merchandise, bottles of wine, large

gift baskets and gift cards.

Appetizers will be served from 6-7 p.m. during the auction preview and silent auction, with the live auction starting at 7 p.m. Cost is \$20 for the meal and a bid number.

The event is open to the public. Reservations can be made by emailing info@colchesterctbusiness.com.

Anyone wishing to donate to the auction should call event Chairman Ash Bashir at 860-537-2331 ext. 227, or Jack Faski at 860-214-1147.



CT Lyme Riders is presenting the following great article for anyone who has a loved one, friend or family member that suffers from chronic Lyme disease, or just wants to understand more about this disease and the stress of holidays.

Facing the Holidays with Chronic Lyme

Author: Paula Jackson Jones • Orig Pub: 11/25/2017

Nothing reminds you of your illness more than when you're limited by the things that you can no longer do and the places that you can no longer go. And nothing highlights those limitations more than the holidays. Grieving the loss of holiday traditions, or feeling like you're letting your friends and family down by staying home or cutting outings short, can elicit so many difficult emotions that no one should have to deal with around the holidays.

No one ever thinks that something as tiny as a tick bite can change their life in so many ways, until it happens to them. I sit with people in person and on the phone who are struggling to understand this disease, struggling to make sense of their new normal, struggling to keep it together for their families. Struggling. It's something that chronically ill people do constantly. Everything is a struggle. Getting up in the morning, even getting through the day. Trying to plan events. Even something like going to the grocery store is taken for granted. I remember getting out and going to the store and running into people who would say things like "Oh, you look so good. You must be doing better" without realize just how much effort it took for me to pass for "good". How much energy it took just to get dressed and put on a good face and be seen in public.

While chronically ill people want to be a part of the holiday celebrations, they realize just how impacted they are by it all ~ sights, sounds, smells and overall exertion, that often exacerbates their symptoms, that they feel the only choice they have is to stay home. I recall attending church services to sing carols and being overstimulated by the sounds, smells and lighting that I had to leave and go back home before a seizure was triggered. Holding a conversation was physically and mentally exhausting. Trying to focus on who was speaking to me, what they were asking and by the time I figured out my response, they were on to another topic. I often wondered what they thought, standing there in front of me ~ did I look as disconnected as I was feeling on the inside?

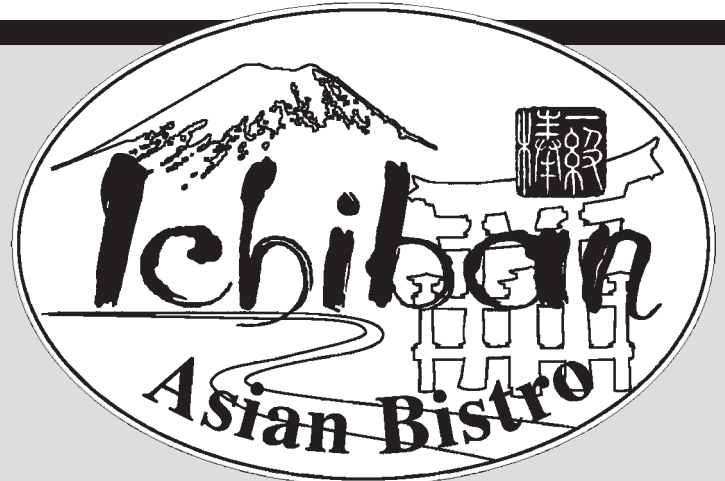
The holiday season is, and always has been, my favorite time of year and as I regained my health, I tried to re-engage with all my favorite holiday activities, but found that foods and over-stimulation were, and continued to be, a sensory trigger.

Something that I would ask of you all this holiday season ~ be kind and give grace to those suffering from chronic illness. Whether you understand their illness or not, understand this ~ they are doing their very best and that is all that can be asked of them. If they come, don't over quiz about what's been going on. Instead, welcome them into the group and make them feel as comfortable as you can. For one night, let them feel normal. Let them forget that they are ill. Understand that as the group chatter volume rises, that they may need to find a quiet reprieve to tamper down any rising symptoms. Don't be offended if they can't eat what you're serving. As much as we all love holiday goodies, chronic illness sometimes demands a change in diet to reduce symptoms during treatment. Maybe ask in advance what they can eat. Sugars and gluten are a no-no when putting together treats to give to them. Along with sounds, lighting can be a sensory issue for those suffering from neurological Lyme. Don't stare if your guest appears wearing sunglasses. I had someone approach me saying "What are you stoned? You must be to wear sunglasses at night" and I was so taken back and offended. Never judge what you don't understand.

Holidays are meant to be celebrated by families and friends, so I would ask that you please don't forget those who are chronically ill. They want to be a part of the celebration, but they know and understand all too well their limitations and they don't want to be a burden to their families, so they think staying home is the answer. Isolation is never the answer and causes more harm and damage mentally. Reach out in love, send cards, call before you visit but do visit. And if you bring a gift, leave out the sweets and gluten. Limit your use of perfume and keep the setting quiet. Limited the over-stimulation, keep the conversation light. Share what's going on with you and make them feel included. This will ensure a heartfelt and thankful visit and it will serve the one who is ill in ways that you may never understand.

This holiday season, remember those who are ill and not able to attend functions. Do your part, however small or grand, to make them feel remembered, missed and loved. This feeds their spirit and spirit is something that no disease can ever touch.

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The Coolest Spot in Colchester?

By Michael Sinkewicz

After entering the Freaks of Nature tattoo shop in Colchester, it's impossible not to be drawn in by the striking colors, the abundant amount of artwork and homemade skulls that decorate the front desk.

"We've had people come in and say we've got the coolest spot in Colchester," expressed Todd Black, the owner of the shop.

For Black, the objective was not only to make a shop that's cool, but an atmosphere that's welcoming for visitors.

Black's girlfriend, Amanda Pelletier, who also does piercings at the store, conveyed that their line of work can be "nerve-racking" for customers, and it's their job help put them at ease.

When people make an appointment, there could be a variety of fears on their mind, including the actual soreness that will inevitably accompany a new tattoo.

"We want people to walk in and instantly feel comfortable," Black said. "People walk around and look at every little thing. If someone's getting tattooed, it is nerve-racking and they're not comfortable right away because they're nervous about the pain of it or whatever else they're thinking about."

He added that the decor "distracts the mind" and "actually makes [the shop] a more comfortable environment."

After first moving into the store in February 2021 and launching a series of renovations, Freaks of Nature opened later that year on April 1.

Certain features, like a wall of skulls, took nearly two months to complete because each one was made individually. Even now, Black constantly adds new elements to the store to help coincide with his internal blueprint.

The community has seemingly embraced the shop, Black said, with "nonstop" clients stopping by and long stretches where tattoo appointments were fully booked for four months.

Still, like many small businesses, there have been some inevitable economic struggles along the way.

"People's wallets seemed to have tightened up and with winter coming, tattoos are a luxury – it's not food on the table or your electric bill," Black expressed, adding, though, that business still remains "nice and steady."

Black, who previously attended both Bacon Academy and RHAM High School, found inspiration for the store's name while reading a James Patterson novel. He views his shop as an opportunity to advertise his own artwork, which is featured on every wall and ceiling.

"I wanted a place to display my artwork and let people know," he explained. "I had this thing planned out for years."

Black's personal drawings can also be seen online and in his portfolio, which allows potential customers to scan through his prior work. Hopefully, this instills confidence in them to move forward.

"We're trying to make you feel like you made the right decision," Black conveyed, adding that he possesses the ability to accommodate any request, something other shops might not be able to do. "I'm proficient at all different styles of tattooing – I don't master one. That's why a lot of people come and see me."

For example, Black said many artists only

specialize in portrait work, which is just one of his strengths.

The clientele varies in both age and experience. Black shared that he recently did a 63-year-old's first tattoo – it's never too late to start. There's also numerous seasoned customers who are simply looking to add on, who may be saw examples of Black's work and sought him out specifically.

Part of his job, Black expressed, is to help flush out a person's idea, which is when his artistic talent and vision typically becomes most imperative.

"We have a lot of people that have ideas in their head but they're not sure exactly," he said. "That's the part I love about my job the most is having to pull an idea from someone's head and put it to fruition and bring it to life for them."

The key is to pitch the patron several different ideas, allowing them to rule out certain features they don't like. Usually, Black poses a variety of questions to help facilitate the process.

"I ask, 'What do you want to see on your body?' and, 'What kind of things are you into? Do you want it to be black and grey shaded, or do you want color?' You have to nurture their needs a little and pry into their mind because a lot of people just have a very rough idea of what they want and they expect to come in here and have the person nurture their needs into their tattoo."

Ultimately, it's this process that Black credits some of the shop's success to.

"That's why people I think like us and they like coming in here because I do come up with a lot of ideas quickly and I try pitch a couple ideas and point them in the right direction," he said.

Expectations throughout the tattoo industry have evolved, as well, according to Black. He recalled walking into a store to get his first tattoo with some artwork he hoped could be incorporated, but was told that "original art" was not allowed and that he had to pick a design off the wall.

Now, tattoos have entered mainstream culture more so than ever, with some T.V shows even dedicated to them, changing customer expectations.

"They're already coming in with a bit of knowledge and want to somebody that can draw," Black stated. "They want to see an artist."

Black revealed that he doesn't have one favorite tattoo that he's completed, but rather sev-



The Freaks of Nature tattoo shop, located on Lebanon Avenue, has been called "the coolest spot" in town. Pictured behind the counter is owner Todd Black's girlfriend, Amanda Pelletier, who does piercings at the store.

eral that stand out.

Recently, a man came into the store with a tattoo paying homage to an uncle who served in the Korean War. Unfortunately, the original tattoo was done many years ago and not to the highest standard. Black restructured the tattoo and updated certain aspects, resulting in a final product he was proud of.

Unsurprisingly, Black also had a few embarrassing tattoo stories, many not family appropriate, he joked.

However, handling bad or embarrassing tattoos is actually a major part of his job.

"I think a lot of people make bad decisions with tattoos and a lot of people rush into them," he said. "Sometimes people don't think about what they're doing or they put too much trust in someone's hands that doesn't deserve the trust."

Black explained that sometimes an 18-year-old who got a tattoo may "outgrow" it at a later age. The most common tattoo people want to fix

usually involves a name. Sometimes, a person wants their spouse's name removed – or the current significant other makes the request.

"Names are the hardest thing to cover," Black stated. "When people look at it, they'll recognize it right away. The last thing you want is somebody walking up to you and asking, 'Is that a cover-up?'"

Freaks of Nature also does piercings and sells original artwork. Moving forward, the store may expand its jewelry options and provide some airbrush work. If business continues to flourish, there could also be merchandise in the future.

"The beautiful thing about owning your own business – you can do whatever you want with it," Black said.

Freaks of Nature is located at 35 Lebanon Ave., Suite D, and can be reached at 860-204-1564.

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Parks and Rec Holiday Activities

Colchester Parks and Recreation, located at 127 Norwich Ave. (Town Hall), has announced several holiday-related items of interest. For more information, call 860-537-7297 or visit www.colchesterct.gov/recreation-department.

Holiday Homecoming: Saturday, Dec. 3, beginning at 4 p.m. on the Town Green; snow date is Dec. 4. There will be a bonfire, Bacon Academy carolers, Colchester Leos with hot cider and cookies, and Colchester Hayward Fire Department (CHFD) cadets with hot cocoa. Also, people can bring a new, unwrapped toy to "Stuff the Cruiser," mail a letter to Santa in the special mailbox (every child will receive a personal letter in return), buy a raffle ticket for a chance to win a gift card to local businesses,

and participate in holiday games and crafts. CHFD will escort Santa to the Town Green on a decorated fire truck at 4:30 p.m., and Santa will stay to visit with every child. Also, Cragin Memorial Library will be open for a story time and craft between 2 p.m. and 4 p.m.

Colchester Home and Business Holiday Display: Register your home or business online, and decorate it by Dec. 5. Then, folks can print their free map and view all of the Colchester holiday decorations. Maps will be available at www.colchesterct.gov/recreation-department or online at www.facebook.com/colchester-parksandrec. Vote for your favorite home and business decorations online. Voting runs Dec. 5-31.

Holiday Ornament: People can pick up their Colchester Holiday Ornament beginning Saturday, Dec. 3, at Holiday Homecoming. Ornaments will be available in the Parks and Rec. office throughout December. Cost is \$6 per ornament.

Gingerbread House Contest: Drop off your premade gingerbread house to Parks and Rec. by 4:30 p.m. today, Dec. 2. Gingerbread houses will be displayed throughout Town Hall from Dec. 5-22. All visitors to Town Hall will be encouraged to vote for their favorite one. Each gingerbread house will be awarded a superlative award ribbon. The "Community Favorite" will be awarded to the gingerbread house with the most votes. There is no cost to enter the contest.

Breakfast with Santa

The St. Joseph's Polish Society, at 395 South Main St., will host a Breakfast with Santa Sunday, Dec. 4, from 7-11 a.m. Santa will be available for pictures taken with your own camera.

A breakfast buffet including coffee and juice is available. Cost is \$10 for adults and \$7 for children under 12. All proceeds will be given to Toys for Tots.

Attendees are asked to bring a new unwrapped toy for Santa to put under the tree for him to deliver to Toys for Tots.

December Programs at Cragin

Cragin Memorial Library, 8 Linwood Ave., has announced the following free programs. For more information, call the library at 860-537-5752. Library hours are: Monday, Wednesday and Thursday, 10 a.m.-8 p.m.; Tuesday, 10 a.m.-5 p.m.; Friday and Saturday, 10 a.m.-4 p.m.

Fall Storytime Sessions: Run through Dec. 15. Siblings are welcome. Call the children's desk at 860-537-7201 for more information.

Sensory Table: Fridays, 10 a.m.-1 p.m.

Medicare Educational Event: Monday, Dec. 5, 11 a.m. Resident and local insurance agent Mark Macrina will go over the changes for 2023 and give an educational seminar that will explore the differences between original Medicare and Medicare Advantage. This is solely an educational event and no individual health will be discussed. For accommodations of persons with special needs at meetings call

860-338-1466 TTY 711.

Children's Take and Make Yarn-Wrapped Trees: Saturday, Dec. 3.

Hot Cocoa Bar: Saturday, Dec. 3, 10:30-11:30 a.m. All ages are invited to stop by the lobby to make take-home hot chocolate kits.

Teen Advisory Board: Tuesday, Dec. 6, 3-3:45 p.m., for grades 6-12.

Teen and Adult Take-and-Make: Yarn Hate Ornament: Wednesday, Dec. 7.

Children's Wreath Craft: Wednesday, Dec. 7, 6-7 p.m.

Elf Watch Party: Thursday, Dec. 8, 6 p.m. This 2003 holiday favorite will be shown as an interactive watch party. Snacks provided.

Foodie Fun: Graham Cracker Candy Houses: Saturday, Dec. 10, 10:30-11:30 am. Registration required; call 860-537-7202.

Senior Center News & Notes

Colchester Senior Center, 95 Norwich Ave., has announced the following. For full descriptions, call 860-537-3911, email csc@colchesterct.gov, or visit www.colchesterct.gov/senior-center.

Monday, Dec. 5: 9 a.m., Making Memories, Exercise with Anne; 10 a.m., Sittercize; 11 a.m., Learn to Sign; 12:30 p.m., Mahjong; 12:45 p.m., Setback; 1 p.m., Bridge.

Tuesday, Dec. 6: 9 a.m., Making Memories; 9:30 a.m., Newport Playhouse trip departs; 9:45 a.m., Tai Chi; 10:30 a.m., Blood Pressure Clinic; 11:30 a.m., Understanding Diabetes; 12:30 p.m., AARP Holiday Lunch at Papa Z's (pre-registration required), Pinochle; 1:30 p.m., Bingo.

Wednesday, Dec. 7: 9 a.m., Making Memories Program, Walking Group meet-up at the Air Line Trail in Amston; 10 a.m., Adult Coloring, Sit & Be Fit; 1:30 p.m., Make, Take & Give Holiday Crafts; 4 p.m., Holiday Lights evening trip.

Thursday, Dec. 8: 9 a.m., Exercise with Anne; 10 a.m., Sittercize, Wii Bowling; 10:30 a.m., Spain/Portugal trip presentation; 11 a.m., Yoga; noon, Chair Massage; 12:30 p.m., Dominoes; 1 p.m., Knit & Crochet.

Friday, Dec. 9: 9:30 a.m., wreath-making; 10 a.m., Sit & Be Fit; 10:30 a.m., Hearing Clinic; 11 a.m., yoga; 1:30 p.m., Bingo.

Upcoming Programs: Card-Writing Session: Monday, Dec. 12. 1:30 p.m. Help write seasonal cards to community partners thanking them for their partnership during the year. Sign

up in the office if you would like to assist.

Pet Therapy: Monday, Dec. 12, 10 a.m. All are invited to come get a little TLC from "Stitch," a certified therapy dog, with her owner Mary Bylone. No registration required.

Cocao and Carols Sing-Along: Tuesday, Dec. 13, 10:30 a.m. Celebrate the music of the holiday with the center's choral group, the "Senior Serenaders." There will also be a reading of 'Twas the Night before Christmas by Mrs. Claus and a hot cocoa bar. Pre-register by Dec. 6.

Reel Friends Movie Club: Wednesday, Dec. 14, 12:30 p.m. The 1945 Christmas comedy *Christmas in Connecticut*, starring Barbara Stanwyck and Dennis Morgan, will be shown. Popcorn will be served. The movie is rated PG. No registration required.

Cookie-Decorating with the Youth Action Council: Thursday, Dec. 15, 2:30-4 p.m. Learn how to decorate sugar cookies with royal icing using tipless decorating bags. Cost is \$3, with which you'll make and take three cookies home as well as decorate others for the Meals-on-Wheels program. If you wish to participate, register in the office by Thursday, Dec. 8.

Xavier Honor Roll

Colchester residents Noah Bergquist and Corbin Engleman each made High Honors on the Xavier High School honor roll for the first quarter of the 2022-23 school year.

Bergquist is a junior at the school, and Engleman is a freshman.

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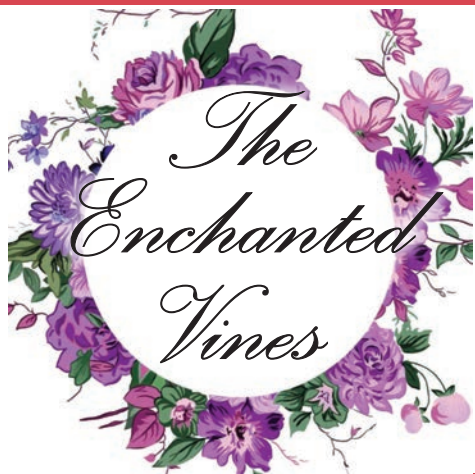
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Ukrainian Catholic Church News

All are invited to worship each week at St. Mary Ukrainian Catholic Church, 178 Linwood Ave. The church offers Eastern Rite Divine services. Church doors are open for Divine Liturgy on Saturdays at 4 p.m. and Sundays at 9 a.m.; the Sunday service is bilingual. For more information, call the church at 860-537-2069.

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December 10th Santa strolling the village 12-3, Stuff a Truck for seniors 11-3, high school jazz band performance 12-3, music boosters cookies and hot cocoa booth 11-3, gingerbread house display

December 17th Santa strolling the village 12-3, strolling Christmas carolers, gingerbread house display at the library, author signing and book sale at Belltown Therapeutic 1:30 to 4.

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– Lunch Menu –

STARTERS

RUSTIC ITALIAN BREAD
six slices of baked seasoned bread with garlic and herb dipping oil 3

MEATBALLS
two meatballs with Zina's marinara sauce and grated cheese 12

SEMOLINA FRIED CRISPY CALAMARI
calamari & hot cherry peppers in a semolina flour with Zina's marinara 19

STUFFED PORTOBELLO
large portobello mushroom, stuffed with gorgonzola, spinach, and roasted peppers with balsamic drizzle 13

SICILIAN ARANCINI
crispy rice ball stuffed with bolognese and peas, mozzarella cheese over Zina's marinara 14

CHICKEN CAPRESE FLATBREAD
Zina's bruschetta blend and fresh mozzarella with balsamic drizzle 13

BRUSSELS WITH PANCETTA
crispy brussels sprouts topped with pancetta, crumbled goat cheese, candied walnuts and balsamic reduction 14

LOBSTER & CORN FRITTERS
with chipotle aioli 16

MUSSELS FLORENTINE
whole mussels, roasted fennel, spinach, in a light cream sauce with crispy baguette 16

GRILLED TUNA CROSTINI
with hot cherry peppers, garlic, basil, olives, and capers, drizzled with a wasabi aioli 16

HOUSE MADE EGGPLANT ROLLATINI
sliced fresh breaded eggplant rolled with ricotta, parmigiana, mozzarella and fresh herbs with Zina's marinara 14

ZINA'S SLOW SIMMERED CAPONATA
eggplant, celery, carrots, assorted olives, red wine vinegar, diced tomatoes and capers, with crispy baguette 12

CRISPY PORK BELLY
portobello mushroom, white bean and caramelized onion ragout 14

SHORT RIB FLATBREAD
with Zina's bruschetta blend and balsamic drizzle 15

GOLDEN BROWN SMOKED MOZZARELLA
Zina's marinara. Topped with roasted peppers and balsamic onions with a balsamic reduction 10

SALADS

→ Dressings →
SHERRY VINAIGRETTE, PANCETTA VINAIGRETTE, BALSAMIC VINAIGRETTE, ITALIAN VINAIGRETTE, GARLIC RANCH, CREAMY GORGONZOLA

HOUSE SALAD
mixed greens, tomatoes, kalamata olives, cucumber, red onion 5 6 / L 12

WALDORF SALAD
baby spinach, apples, dried cranberries, candied walnuts, red onion, shaved fennel, gorgonzola, house made sherry vinaigrette 12

WEDGE SALAD
with crispy bacon, Zina's tomato, basil and kalamata olive bruschetta blend balsamic reduction and house made gorgonzola buttermilk dressing 12

ARUGULA SALAD
white beans, tomatoes, kalamata olives, feta, portobello mushrooms, warm house made pancetta vinaigrette 12

WALNUT CRISPED GOAT CHEESE
baby spinach, shaved fennel, red onion, house made balsamic vinaigrette 12

OUR CLASSIC CAESAR SALAD*
romaine lettuce, kalamata olives, crunchy croutons, shaved parmigiana, house made white anchovy caesar dressing 8 9 / L 10

ZINA'S ORANGE CUCUMBER SALAD
fresh cut oranges, cucumbers, red onion, fennel, and red wine vinegar 10

PICK YOUR PROTEIN

SEARED TUNA* 10.5 • GRILLED CHICKEN 5 • CRISPY CHICKEN 6.5
SEARED SCALLOP 16.5 each • STEAK* 12 • GRILLED SALMON 11
JUMBO SHRIMP 4 each • MEATBALL 6 • SAUSAGE 5

SOUPS

NEW ENGLAND CLAM CHOWDER
creamy, hearty clam chowder with bacon 8

CHEF'S FRESH BAKED 7 ONION SOUP
with crispy baguette & topped with gruyere cheese 8

CLASSIC ITALIAN WEDDING SOUP
house made chicken stock, meatballs, escarole, vegetables, macaroni 8

BURGERS* 12
ADD HAND CUT FRIES 2 OR ROASTED VEGGIES 4

CRAFT YOUR OWN
BEEF, BEYOND BURGER, or WHOLE PORTOBELLO served on a roll with lettuce, tomato and red onion

Pick your Possibilities .75/each
bacon, sautéed portobello mushroom, caramelized onions, Cheese: American, gorgonzola, provolone, goat cheese, boursin, gruyere

SANDWICHES
ADD HAND CUT FRIES 2 OR ROASTED VEGGIES 4

ROAST BEEF MELT
with Gruyere cheese on sourdough 14

PORTOBELLO MELT
spinach, roasted peppers, gorgonzola and balsamic glaze on sourdough 14

OPEN FACED SICILIAN PULLED PORK
slow roasted in Zina's marinara, on sourdough with caramelized onions and cheddar cheese 14

CHICKEN SALAD
with lettuce and tomato on grilled sourdough 14

GRILLED CHICKEN
bacon, cheddar and apple compote on grilled sourdough 14

EGGPLANT PARMIGIANA
thinly sliced, breaded eggplant, mozzarella and Zina's marinara on a Portuguese roll 14

CHICKEN PARMIGIANA
breaded cutlet, roasted peppers, caramelized onions, and Zina's marinara on a Portuguese roll 14

ZINA'S SPECIAL
sausage and meatball, roasted peppers, mozzarella and Zina's marinara on a Portuguese roll 14

FRENCH DIP
sliced roast beef, provolone cheese, caramelized onions, on baguette with Au Jus 14

½ SANDWICH WITH SOUP OR SALAD
select one of our soups or a small house of Caesar salad and a half sandwich (burgers not included) 14

*Thoroughly cooking meats, poultry, seafood, shellfish or eggs reduces the risk of foodborne illness

ENTREES

CHICKEN POT PIE..... 14
onions, carrots, celery, potatoes and corn, topped with Maggie's house made pie crust

MEATBALL POT PIE..... 14
onions, carrots, celery, potatoes, mushrooms and peas, topped with Maggie's house made pie crust

CHICKEN PARMIGIANA..... 22
breaded boneless breast, Zina's marinara, mozzarella, served over thin spaghetti

CHICKEN MARSALA..... 22
seasoned chicken breast, cremini mushrooms and Marsala wine sauce tossed with penne

CHICKEN MILANESE..... 23
breaded chicken breast, in lemon white wine sauce topped with an arugula and tomato salad

SHRIMP SCAMPI..... 26
olive oil & garlic sauce over thin spaghetti

LEMON BAKED COD..... 26
over broccolini cheddar risotto

BROCCOLI RABE & SAUSAGE..... 21
tossed with white beans, shaved fennel, caramelized onions, served over ziti

ZINA'S LASAGNE..... 22
layered lasagne noodles, meatballs, ricotta, mozzarella, and Zina's marinara

ZINA'S SPAGHETTI & MEATBALLS..... 21
with Zina's marinara

ZINA'S HOUSE MADE EGGPLANT ROLLATINI..... 23
served over linguini with Zina's marinara

CHEESE RAVIOLI BOLOGNESE..... 21
with Zina's meat sauce and ricotta cheese

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Ambulances Face a Crisis; Belltown No Exception

By Jack Lakowsky

Over the past year the volunteer East Hampton Ambulance Association (EHAA), a long-time town service, has been struggling with recruitment, and could soon face a severe crisis.

The EHAA previously requested a few hundred thousand from the town's pandemic relief allotment.

The local Town Council wasn't warm to this idea, and after a process that, at times, got prickly, the town's executive board asked the ambulance association to hire a consultant and comprehensively analyze their operation.

Some council members, including chair Mark Phillower, have said they believe switching to a private service the best option.

Ambulance chief Donald Scranton has said this would impact service quality and remove the personability and comfort locals take from a hometown, volunteer service. At first Scranton painted a grim picture of the EHAA's future,

that its days were surely numbered, but luckily this hasn't been the case.

Bob Holdsworth, the EHAA's consultant from an EMS services consultancy in Cromwell, said the Belltown ambulance's struggles are hardly unique.

"The ambulance industry is approaching a crisis state," Holdsworth told town councilors in a meeting last Tuesday.

Holdsworth said in Connecticut, the number of ambulance personnel has dropped below 20,000, and turnover's proving hard to keep up with. Compounding the issue are rising costs.

"The industry is being squeezed tightly," said Holdsworth. "All parts of the Connecticut aid industry are stretched."

To chart a path forward, the EHAA first had to look back at its recent past. Holdsworth analyzed data – bylaws, financials, call volumes – going back to May 2019, looking up through

July of this year.

Holdsworth said the EHAA's finances are among the best he's seen, and that the couple hundred thousand figure the EHAA quoted the council was accurate. He said, should the EHAA make that request again, it will first find ways to reduce the cost.

One issue that came up in past discussions was the lack of cohesion between the EHAA itself and its executive board. Holdsworth said they're working to revamp their internal communication.

Holdsworth didn't offer a fleshed-out solution to the EHAA's main bane – recruitment, or lack thereof.

He said the EHAA has publicized their need, but that the available workforce is "finite," with a large majority of EMT class graduates – 75%

– not renewing their licenses, which must be done every three years.

Of his customers, Holdsworth said, "I don't have anyone at this point who doesn't have a personnel problem."

As Scranton has previously observed, Holdsworth said limits on how much ambulances can charge Medicaid and Medicare patients takes a large bite out of their revenues.

"We want to see a strategic alignment with the town," said Holdsworth.

Holdsworth said the council should keep an eye out for a subsidy request. It will be "substantially" reduced, he said, and while not a long-term fix, it "settles the problem for now."

Whether the council will grant this request is yet to be seen.

Oil-Painting Demo at Art Meeting

The East Hampton Art Association will hold its monthly program Wednesday, Dec. 7, at 7 p.m., in the East Hampton Community Center at 105 Main Street.

This month, the association will welcome professional artist Christopher Z Y Zhang, of Zhang Studio. Zhang will perform a demonstration on portrait painting in oils.

Zhang is a realist painter in style and technique. His paintings are bright and delicately detailed. Zhang graduated with a B.F.A. from East China University, and went on to earn an M.F.A. at Rhode Island College. In the United States, he studied Western art theories and many original masterpieces from the Renaissance to modern ages. He was fascinated by Rembrandt's unique lighting and shading, Velazquez's fluent brushwork, Monet's and Renoir's brilliant coloring, and Ruben's and Delacroix's magnificent composition.

Zhang has served as a visiting professor at the University of Connecticut and Harvard University, along with numerous museums and art associations. Also of note, Zhang is a: Master Signature member of Oil Painters of America, since 2012; Copley Master of Copley Society of Art, Boston, since 2005; Artist member of Salmagundi Club, New York, N.Y., since 2006; Elected artist member of Connecticut Academy of Fine Art, board member 2010-13; Elected artist member of Lyme Art Association, Lyme, since 1999; artist member of Academic Art Association, Massachusetts, since 1999; member of the Board of the Trustees of The Griffiss International Art center since 2002.

His website is www.chriszhangstudio.com.

Attendance is free to students and members,



Christopher Z Y Zhang will be the guest artist at the Dec. 7 meeting of the East Hampton Art Association. He will perform a demonstration on portrait painting in oils. Pictured is one of his portraits, "Summer Job," an oil on canvas.

with a suggested donation of \$4 for non-members. The art association's January meeting will be Jan. 25, and will feature Amy Ordonez of Studio 13 in East Hampton. She will do a demonstration on Soul Painting. Other dates in 2023 include: Feb 22, March 22, April 26 and May 24.

Foodshare Returns Dec. 9

The East Hampton Lions remind all residents that the Foodshare mobile food pantry will be at St. Patrick Church's parking lot next Thursday, Dec. 9, from 9-10 a.m. The truck leaves promptly at 10 a.m., so people shouldn't come at the last minute, the Lions said.

The food pantry is open to all; no proof of residency and no income requirements. A minimum of 50 people need to attend each time to sure Foodshare returns. At its first visit there were 122 visitors, and at the last time there were 148, the Lions said.

The last time Foodshare visited, by 9 a.m. there was a line of over 70 people. The Lions said they later heard a few criticisms that some found it difficult to stand in line that length of time. The Lions said that if the line is long when you arrive, stay in your car until the line goes

down some. Please be certain, however, that you are in line by 9:45 a.m. The other option is to come early so you will be one of the first in line, the Lions said. At the last visit, they said, the line started forming at about 8:30 a.m. The Lions said they will be working on a viable solution if there is the same issue next week.

The Lions said they never know what food the Foodshare truck will be offering. At its first distribution, the Lions said, there was primarily produce. Last time, there were produce, bread, milk, butter, creamer, pickles and some other miscellaneous products.

The Lions thanked local Food Bank volunteers for assisting us with this venture.

For more information about the mobile food pantry visits, call Lion Mary Krogh at 860-977-5760.

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Joe & Pam Rinaldi and Donna Bonito & David Shulman (l-r), two families who own a long strip of lakeshore property on Lake Drive between West Str and Otis Avenue, recently received the Lake-Smart Award from the East Hampton Conservation & Lake Commission. Marty Podskoch Photo.

Local Families Get Lake-Smart

Joe & Pam Rinaldi and Donna Bonito & David Shulman, two families who own a long strip of lakeshore property on Lake Drive between West Street and Otis Avenue, recently received the Lake-Smart Award from the East Hampton Conservation & Lake Commission (C&LC).

Bonito and Shulman are also members of the Anthony Cove II Homeowners Association of West Street.

Both families won the award for managing their lake shore property to benefit Lake Pocotopaug by not using fertilizers or pesticides, using a mulching blade when mowing their lawn, and maintaining a buffer zone that prevents nutrients from flowing into the lake and helps to prevent soil erosion.

As winter approaches there is still time for lake and watershed property owners to do improvements to their lake or watershed property in order to have a cleaner Lake Pocotopaug. Property owners can also be evaluated for a Lake-Smart Award.

Those wishing to be evaluated for the award, should contact Jeremy Hall of the Parks & Recreation Department (860-267-7300 or jhall@easthamptonct.gov) or Jeremy DeCarli of the Planning & Zoning Department (860-267-7450 or jdecarli@easthamptonct.gov), or any members of the C&LC. An appointment will be arranged for a C&LC member or members to visit the owners and help them evaluate their property.

Lake and watershed property owners can also apply for the Lake-Smart Award Grant Program, sponsored by the Friends of Lake Pocotopaug. The Friends group is offering resident grants of up to \$150, to make one or more Lake-Smart improvements. Property owners can apply after they have been evaluated and must show a need for improving their property.

Dean's List

East Hampton residents Chelsea Krzeminski, Stephanie Kimball, Taylor Hamlin and Veronica Tozzi made the summer 2022 Dean's List at Goodwin University in East Hartford.

Local, State Police Accuse Two of Driving 100+

By Jack Lakowsky

In three separate incidents both Connecticut State Police and the East Hampton Police Department arrested two young adults each accused of driving more than 110 miles per hour and a third accused of unreasonable speed.

On Nov. 28 on Route 2 near exit 16 in Colchester, state troopers clocked a 2014 Range Rover allegedly driving 130 mph. Police said the vehicle got off the highway, nearly hitting a highway work crew member, then passing vehicles in "No Passing" zones on Old Hartford Road.

Police then lost sight of the vehicle, eventually discovering it the garage of a local business.

The driver, identified as 23-year-old Faizal Fasasi of Manchester, was then arrested and charged with multiple accusations, including reckless driving in a construction zone and endangering a highway worker, trespassing, interfering with an officer and second-degree reckless endangerment, among several other charges.

Fasasi told police he was at the business to try and hide and remained there despite employees asking him to leave.

Fasasi was brought to Corrigan prison in Montville until his arraignment in Norwich court.

A few days earlier, on Nov. 26, a 17-year-old Colchester juvenile was allegedly driving 112 in a 50-mph zone, according to East Hampton police, who arrested the teen on Route 16 near Gulf Road.

Police charged the teen with reckless driving, possession of a dangerous weapon and possession of alcohol by a minor.

The alleged weapon, said East Hampton police chief Dennis Woessner, was a set of brass knuckles.

And on Nov. 23, East Hampton police arrested James Charland, 21, of New London, with traveling unreasonably fast and operating under the influence near East High Street, sent to Middletown court on Nov. 29 to answer to the accusations.

East Hampton Library News & Notes

East Hampton Public Library, 105 Main St., has announced the following. Registration required unless noted; to register, or for full program descriptions, call 860-267-6621 or visit easthamptonpubliclibrary.org.

Library Hours: The library is open Monday-Wednesday, 10 a.m.-8 p.m.; Thursday-Saturday, 10 a.m.-5 p.m.

Children's Programs: Toddler Time: Wednesdays, 10:15 a.m., for children ages 18 months to 3 years. **Stories & Songs:** Wednesdays, 11:15 a.m., for ages 3-5.

Mindful Movements: Mondays, 10:30 a.m., in the library community room, for ages 18 months and up; siblings welcome.

Baby Rhyme Time: Thursdays, 10:15 a.m., in the library community room, for children age birth to 18 months and their caregivers.

STEM Project Bags – Oil Spill Science: Monday, Dec. 5; recommended for ages 6 and up. First-come, first-served, while supplies last. No registration required.

DIY Days – Friendship Bracelets: Saturday, Dec. 10, 11 a.m.-4 p.m. Ages 5-14 are invited to create a different toy, game or treat together. These activities are available while supplies last. No registration required; just drop in.

Kids Comic Creators: Cat Kid Comic Club: Wednesday, Dec. 14, 4:30 p.m., for grades 2-5. Make your own Cat Kid Comic Club by using unconventional materials and thinking outside the box. This program includes

read-alouds, drawing, games and prizes.

Teen Programs: Nintendo Switch Tournament: Saturday, Dec. 3, 2-3 p.m., for grades 6-12. All skill levels welcome.

Teen Advisory Board: Wednesday, Dec. 7, 4 p.m. Teens are invited to share their knowledge, creativity and interests with each other and the library. Earn community service hours. Drop-ins welcome.

Family Programs: Jingle Bell Begins at the Library! Friday, Dec. 9, 4:30-5:30 p.m. The library is kicking off the party with crafts, music from the high school Jazz Band, and a bake sale run by the Teen Advisory Board. Pick up your Jingle Bell kit as well.

All-Ages Book Bingo: Tuesday, Dec. 13, 6:30 p.m., in the library community room. Play bingo to win free books. All are welcome.

Adult Programs: Cookbook Club: Tuesday, Dec. 6, 6:30 p.m. Bring a favorite dish that's special to your family – appetizer, dinner or dessert. Bring 10 copies of the recipe to share. Dishes should arrive ready to eat; plates and forks will be provided. People will sample and talk about each recipe.

Chatham Historical Society Cabin Fever Series: Saturday, Dec. 10, 1 p.m. On select Saturdays through the winter, enjoy the return of the Cabin Fever series, presented by Chatham Historical Society. Sponsored by East Hampton Public Library.

Belltown Book Blast!: Thursday, Dec. 15, 10 a.m. or 6:30 p.m. Meet in person with adult librarian Keri Blanda for coffee or tea and bookish banter at 10 a.m., or hop on Zoom in the evening at 6:30 p.m. from the comfort of your home. No registration needed for the in-person meeting; just drop in. For Zoom, register online to get the link.

Bethlehem Lutheran Church News

Bethlehem Evangelical Lutheran Church holds live in-person services Sundays at 10:45 a.m. All are welcome. Enter via the front door and ushers will assist you. The church is located at 1 East High St.

There is also a livestream link at the church's Facebook page, www.facebook.com/BethlehemEH.

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Pulled Pork and Mac & Cheese Dinner
The Congregational Church of East Hampton, located at 59 Main St., will hold a takeout pulled pork on roll and mac & cheese dinner Friday, Dec. 2, from 4:30-6:30 p.m. The menu will include pulled pork on roll, mac and cheese, coleslaw and seasonal pie for dessert. Price is \$14, cash or check, made out to CCEH. Pre-order at 860-267-4959 (church office) or 860-918-1170 by Friday, Dec. 2, at noon.

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Over \$2 Million for New EHMS Roof

By Jack Lakowsky

After approval from the East Hampton Town Council and discussion among the East Hampton school board, town officials set for 6 p.m. on Dec. 13 a town meeting to discuss spending \$2.3 million on a new roof at the middle school.

This week school district head Paul Smith said the roof is over 30 years old and moribund. The school's a little over catching leaks with buckets, he told the school board on Monday.

An anticipated state grant will go towards about 50% of the cost, said Town Manager

Dave Cox in his written report to the council.

Now set aside, the reserved money opens the district up for state grants and possible reimbursement. The town side of government will fund a little over \$1 million.

The \$2 million figure makes for a cost of about \$25 per square foot for the 76,000-sq. ft. roof. The town will foot the \$2.3 million at first, expecting a \$115 million reimbursement from the district.

On whether the schools get the grant, the town expects to hear back early next year.

Belltown Winter Wonderland

On Tuesday, Dec. 6, the Belltown Garden Club will open its 12th annual Winter Wonderland Silent Auction at the East Hampton Public Library, 105 Main St.

A variety of items will be auctioned off between Dec. 6 and 16. Various local and area businesses have been solicited to supplement the gifts donated by club members. Gift baskets, gift cards, decorated Christmas trees, wreaths, centerpieces, artwork, jewelry and other holiday-themed items will be on display in the library for bidding. Proceeds from this community-wide fundraiser will benefit East

Hampton Food Bank, the annual student scholarship, and other projects that serve the town. This is a major annual fundraiser for the club.

All donated items will be on view at the library through Dec. 16. The public is invited to leave bids during regular library hours. The event culminates at the close of library hours on Friday, Dec. 16. Winning bidders will be contacted by phone and will be able to pick up items on Saturday, Dec. 17, and Monday, Dec. 19.

For more information, call JoAnn Hewett at 860-267-4129.

Police News

11/15: Robert Walton, 43, of 1 Wilkes Rd., was issued a summons for operating an unregistered motor vehicle, operating a motor vehicle under suspension and misuse of a marker plate, East Hampton Police said.

11/19: Jeffrey Howlett, 63, of Wethersfield, was arrested and charged with criminal violation of a protective order, police said.

11/22: Christopher Scaplen, 37, of 24 Flinders Rd., was arrested and charged with criminal trespass and sixth-degree larceny, police said.

Also, from Nov. 14-27, officers responded to 25 medical calls, 10 motor vehicle crashes and seven alarms, and made 95 traffic stops, police said.

Breakfast with Santa

The East Hampton/Marlborough Rotary Club will sponsor its annual Breakfast with Santa Saturday, Dec. 3, from 7:30-11 a.m., at the East Hampton High School cafeteria, located on North Maple Street.

As in the past, breakfast will be served to all that attend and the children will be able to have a picture taken with Santa Claus as a keepsake. There will also be face-painting and other children's activities.

Those planning to attend are asked to consider donating non-perishable food items for the East Hampton and Marlborough food banks. Monetary donations to support the food and fuel banks in each town will also be accepted. For more information, call Kevin at 860-754-8137.

Christmas Fair

On Saturday, Dec. 3, from 9 a.m.-2 p.m., there will be a Christmas Fair at the Second Congregational Church of Middle Haddam, at 52 Middle Haddam Rd.

The items for sale include the church's famous peanuts, baked goods, Rada cutlery, seasonal baskets on a silent auction, Christmas tag sale items, hand-painted glass ornaments and special hand-painted bottles with mini light-bulbs.

A light lunch will be served of sandwiches, desserts, coffee, tea and punch.

Handicapped-accessibility is available.

Resident on Basketball Team

The Eastern Connecticut State University men's basketball team began its 2022-23 season Nov. 8 – and an East Hampton resident is on the team.

Thomas Close, a senior who majors in sport leisure management, plays guard and wears number 10.

Haddam Neck Community Tree-Lighting

The Haddam Neck Community Tree-Lighting will be held Saturday, Dec. 3, from 4-8 p.m., with a rain date of Dec. 4. This event will be held in the church field at 17 Haddam Neck Rd.

The event will include a Christmas tree-lighting, tractor parade, hayrides, Christmas carols, craft table, a visit from Santa, puppet show, s'mores at the fire, hot cocoa and cider,

a food vendor, and other seasonal fun. All are invited.

Attendees are asked to bring a donation of non-perishable food for the East Hampton Food Bank. Also, the children's book *The Land of the Walpoles* will be sold for \$10 each, with 100% of the proceeds going to the East Hampton Food and Fuel Banks to help families in need this Christmas season.

Senior Center News & Notes

East Hampton Senior Center, 105 Main St., is open. Registration required for all programs unless noted; register at myactivecenter.com or by contacting the center at 860-267-4426 or seniorcenter@easthamptonct.gov. Senior center hours are Monday-Thursday, 8:30 a.m.-4 p.m.; Friday, 9 a.m.-4 p.m. Masks are encouraged, but not required. Visit the senior center online at www.easthamptonct.gov/east-hampton-senior-center.

Lunches: Served at the center Monday through Friday, to ages 60 and up. Call the center to reserve a meal or sign up online. Reservations for the next day's meal are due by 11 a.m. the day before. Meals are free, though a \$3 donation is requested.

Weekly Activities: Quilting Group: Mondays, 9 a.m. **Mexican Train Dominoes:** Mondays, 9:30 a.m. **Setback:** Mondays, 1 p.m., and Thursdays, 1:15 p.m. **Bible Study:** Tuesdays, 1 p.m. **Bingo:** Tuesdays, 1-2 p.m., in person and via Zoom. **Tap Dance:** Thursdays, 11:15-11:45 a.m.; **Game Day:** Fridays, 10 a.m.-noon – space will be available and open to Mahjongg, cribbage, Mexican Train and setback players. Registration required. **Textile Group:** Fridays, 1 p.m.

Writing Our Lives to Open Our Hearts: There are two groups; one meets Thursdays, 10-11 a.m., and one meets every other Thursday, 11:15 a.m.-12:15 p.m. The group will meet outdoors, weather permitting; otherwise it will be indoors or via Zoom.

Wonderfully Wicked Women's Group (WWW): Mondays, Dec. 5 and 19, 10 a.m. There will be discussion of current events, holistic medicine, entertainment, support systems,

Candlelight

Christmas Eve Service

Haddam Neck Congregational Church will hold a traditional Candlelight Christmas Eve Service Saturday, Dec. 24, at 5 p.m., in the church sanctuary, 401 Quarry Hill Rd., Haddam Neck.

The service will feature traditional Christmas Bible readings and carols. All are welcome. The church will not hold services on Sunday, Dec. 25, Christmas Day.

CDHR Holiday Open House

All are invited Saturday, Dec. 3, from 11 a.m.-3 p.m., for the annual Holiday Open House at the Connecticut Draft Horse Rescue, 113 Chestnut Hill Rd. All are invited to meet the horses of CDHR, check out the raffle baskets, and take a photo with Santa and Mrs. Claus. Admission is free.

The CDHR horses have a holiday wishlist, at www.ctdraftrescue.org/wish-list.

CDHR is a nonprofit organization dedicated to saving the lives of neglected or abused draft horses as well as draft horses headed to slaughter. For more information, volunteer opportunities or to donate, visit www.ctdraftrescue.org or www.facebook.com/ctdraftrescue.

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Children's Author Donates Books

Dale Ursin of East Hampton is the author of *The Land of the Walpoles*, a children's book that teaches the importance of kindness and not judging others. This is a family read with illustrations designed to open up dialogue for family discussions.

Ursin has donated several of the books to Haddam Neck Covenant Church; the donated books will be sold for \$10 each, with 100% of the proceeds going to the East Hampton Food

and Fuel Bank to help children and families in need.

The books will be sold at the Haddam Neck Community Tree-Lighting, on Saturday, Dec. 3, from 4-8 p.m. This event will be held in the field at 17 Haddam Neck Rd. and will include a Christmas tree, tractor parade, Christmas carols, crafts, a visit from Santa, s'mores, hot cocoa and cider, a food truck and more. All are invited.

Congregational Church News & Notes

The Congregational Church of East Hampton, UCC, located at 59 Main St., is open for in-person services with the Rev. Amie McCarthy every Sunday at 10 a.m. All services can also be accessed via Zoom by going to cc-eh.org. There are Advent readings and a candle-lighting every Sunday celebrating the Advent season.

Church school classes meet every Sunday. The Yarners meet every Thursday from 10:30 a.m.-noon in the Fellowship Hall. All knitters

and crocheters are welcome. **Christmas Eve Candle-Lighting Service:** Saturday, Dec. 24, at 7 p.m., in the sanctuary.

Christmas Day: There is no in-church Sunday service, but one is available on the church website.

For more information about CCEH and its activities, visit cc-eh.org or call the church office at 860-267-4959 during office hours: Tuesday-Friday, 8 a.m.-noon.

Haddam Neck Covenant Church News

Haddam Neck Covenant Church, located at 17 Haddam Neck Rd., invites all to Sunday Worship at 9 a.m. each week. Pastor is the Rev. Tom Cowger. Refreshments are served after the service.

Puppet Ministry: Each Sunday, the church's Puppet Ministry features Digger the Dog and friends from Farmer M's Red Barn to help explain the meaning of the message topic.

Kids Church: Kids Church, featuring music and hands-on interactive activities, is held in Fellowship Hall during the worship service. All are welcome.

Adult Bible Study: Sundays in the chapel at 10:30 a.m. The study traces God's covenant with his people.

Choir Rehearsal: Wednesday at 6:30 p.m. The Christmas Concert will be held Sunday, Dec. 11, at 9 a.m.

Zoom Bible Study: Thursdays, 7-8 p.m. The study looks at various ways to approach Bible reading.

Office Info: The office can be reached at 860-267-2336; hours are Monday-Friday, 12:30-4:30 p.m. The church website is at www.hncovenantchurch.org.

Epoch Arts' Upcoming Activities

Epoch Arts is offering a variety of youth programming this season. All activities are held at 27 Skinner St. For more information, visit www.epocharts.org.

Kids' Christmas Party: Thursday, Dec. 15, at 4-6 p.m., for grades 1-6. Kids can paint an original piece of holiday. After that, the elves will be on hand to help make a special Christmas ornament to hang on the tree, followed by treats in the café. Cost is \$25; register online.

The Ugly Sweater Party: Friday, Dec. 16, 7-9 p.m., for grades 6 and up. Come wearing your best, ugliest Christmas sweater. Dance all night to a live DJ, take your photo in the photo booth, and eat some festive snacks in the café. Cost is \$7; no registration required.

Winter Classes: A variety of artistic classes will be offered for preschool through 12th grade. Sign up for classes like improv theater, ceramics, polymer clay and art, and sign up to perform in an original two-act play! Classes begin Jan. 9 and run for eight weeks. Register online.



Epoch Arts will hold its Kids' Christmas Party again this year, on Thursday, Dec. 15. Pictured at last year's party is Emily Baker.

Parks and Rec. News & Notes

East Hampton Parks and Recreation has announced the following pieces of news. For more information, call 860-267-7300 or visit easthamptonct.myrec.com.

Paint Class: Tuesday, Dec. 6, 3:30-4:30 p.m., at Center School.

Holiday Cookie Decorating: Wednesday, Dec. 7, 3:30-4:30 p.m., at Center School, for grades four and five. Cost is \$25.

Jingle Bell Parade: Friday, Dec. 9, at East Hampton Public Library. At 4:30 p.m. there will be a craft and refreshments, and at 5:30 p.m. Santa will arrive to lead the parade to the gazebo for the tree-lighting.

New York on Your Own - Bus Trip to

NYC: Saturday, Dec. 10. The bus leaves East Hampton Town Hall at 7:30 a.m. and will depart NYC at 6 p.m. Cost is \$70/person.

Holiday Bingo and Craft: Wednesday, Dec. 14, 3:30-4:30 p.m., at Center School, for grades four and five. Cost is \$20.

Craft Fair

VFW Post 5095 will hold a Christmas Craft Fair Saturday, Dec. 3, from 8 a.m.-3 p.m., at the post, located at 20 N. Maple St. For more information, email amandascherpvm5095@gmail.com.

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Tree-Lighting, Clothing Drive

Marlborough Congregational Church, 35 S. Main St., will hold a Tree-Lighting and Winter Clothing Drive Friday, Dec. 9, starting at 5:30 p.m.; rain date is Sunday, Dec. 11, at the same time.

There will be music, a carol sing, hot cocoa, and at 6:15 p.m. the church will light a Christmas tree on its new deck facing the parking lot.

The church will also collect donations of new or gently used coats, hats, mittens, scarves and any other winter gear, for all ages and sizes. People are welcome to come decked out in festive holiday apparel.

President's List

Marlborough residents Kayla Porter and Melissa Gosselin made the summer 2022 President's List at Goodwin University in East Hartford.

Artisan and Crafts Sale

Marlborough Arts Center will hold an Artisan and Crafts Sale through Dec. 18 at the center, located at 231 N. Main St.

Featured will be local creations, all under \$100, made by artists in the surrounding communities. These will include handmade gifts such as pottery, paintings, sculptures and other forms of art.

The Arts Center will be open every Friday, Saturday and Sunday, from 1-4 p.m.

Dean's List

The following Marlborough residents made the summer 2022 Dean's List at Goodwin University in East Hartford:

Andrew Marocchini, Cody Porter, Drew Hunter, Kayla Porter and Melissa Gosselin.



Celebrating CERT... Pictured are this year's Marlborough CERT (Community Emergency Response Team) graduates, Kerri Barella, Diane Cavander, Becky Campbell, Donald Campbell, David Jones, Scott Worthen, Matt Warren, and Judy Benson Clarke. They recently committed to classes every Sunday with a total of 16 hours. Some of the topics covered were emergency preparedness, various types of disasters, and medical and fire emergencies.

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Emmy Winner to Play Arts Center Benefit

By Jack Lakowsky

After experiencing the bright lights and grandeur of global cities in the United States and Europe, Emmy-winning composer Charles Denler has returned to his hometown.

“Four generations of my family have lived in Marlborough,” Denler told the *Rivereast* recently, “starting with my great-grandfather. I really feel welcomed back. I’m so grateful to my little town; it’s home.”

Denler will receive an additional welcome home later this month, when he plays a concert at Marlborough Arts Center, 231 N. Main St.

Denler’s illustrious career as a music composer for TV and films began in 1998 with a dream-literally.

Back then, Denler “dreamt of a purple piano, a baby grand.”

Denler said when he saw the piano, he knew he had to build it himself. He spent that winter building his instrument – which, for its comeliness, has since been seen on TV and magazines – going on to release an album in 2000.

“Nothing was really happening career-wise,” Denler said. Then, a pair of producers working for *National Geographic* happened upon the album. Impressed, they contacted Denler and requested his services.

Since then, Denler’s career has thrived. Critics have called his music “a national trea-

sure.” With over two hundred film and television scores and thousands of concerts to his credit, Denler’s multiple Emmy-winning fusions of classical and modern composition can be heard globally.

Denler has collected three Emmys: one in 2004 for his work on the PBS film *Bentley Creek*, a second in 2005 for another PBS film, *Beyond the Medal of Honor* and a third in 2019 for his album *Wild Mustang Suite*.

Denler has also won many other awards over the years, has worked with superstars like Creed, Cyndi Lauper and Paul Simon, and collaborated with companies from Disney to the New York Yankees.

Denler has also conducted and played piano with the City of Prague Philharmonic Orchestra.

In 2014, he was asked to compose a new theme for the Colorado Rockies baseball team. The music was recorded at Boettcher Concert Hall with the Colorado Symphony and premiered live at Coors Field on opening day. Denler conducted the ensemble.

According to the *Denver Post*, his music helped to bring an estimated \$1.8 billion dollars of new tourism to Colorado with his symphony in tourism commercials.

In addition, Denler has lectured at film festi-

vals and universities across the United States. He is also a professor, teaching composition, music theory, and music production.

All these accolades, and he has not a day’s formal schooling. Denler is that rarest of artists: the autodidact. He said his music strikes a balance between epic and drama, with a neoclassical bend. Currently, Denler told the *Rivereast*, he’s working on a film score. Of all this work, and of all the types of productions he’s written for, Denler said his favorite medium is documentary.

“I just finished up a two-hour nature special for PBS,” said Denler. He’s also “starting work on a new documentary about Woodstock.”

Not only using his talent and art to serve big studios, Denler also plays to help the locals. Recently he took a brief jaunt out to Cape Cod, helping a charity raise money for Ukraine.

Then, “the Marlborough Arts Center got in touch with me, and it’s literally like three minutes from my house; they contacted me and asked if I’d give a benefit concert.”

Hometown boy at heart, Denler eagerly agreed to help the local organization, and on Friday, Dec. 16, starting at 7:30 p.m. at the arts center, he’ll perform a medley of Christmas tunes and other old staples. Tickets are available for purchase at the center during weekend hours, from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m.



Head over to the Marlborough Arts Centre and get your tickets for a benefit concert performed by a multiple Emmy-winning composer and Marlborough native! Curtain’s 7:30 p.m. on Dec. 16. Head to the center on weekends from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. to get your tickets.

Parks and Rec Programs

Marlborough Parks and Recreation has announced the following. For full descriptions or to register, visit marlboroughct.recdesk.com and click on “programs,” stop by the office at Town Hall, 26 N. Main St., or call 860-295-6203.

Youth Programs: Sixth Grade Dance: Friday, Dec. 16, 6:30-8:30 p.m., at Marlborough Elementary School. Registration fee is \$10.

Family Sew: Fleece PJs: Wednesday, Dec. 14, 5:30 p.m., at Marlborough Senior Center. Fee: \$48/resident, \$53/non-resident. (Must sign each participant who is sewing up individually.)

Netto Indoor Soccer: Indoor soccer for fifth- and sixth-graders. Games will begin week of Jan. 9, and will be played afterschool on Mondays and Wednesdays at MES. Games will conclude at 4:30pm. Fee for this program is \$75 and participants will receive a T-shirt.

Adult Programs: Pickleball: Wednesdays, 9-11 a.m., at Blish Park tennis courts. The program is free.

Adult Volleyball: Thursdays, 8-10 p.m., at MES. Fee is \$5 per week to drop-in.

Adult Pick-Up Basketball: Sundays, 8-10 a.m., at MES, for ages 18 and up. Fee: \$5. Session begins Dec. 4.

Adult Sewing 202: Wednesday, Dec. 7, 5:30 p.m., at tMarlborough Senior Center. Students will create a lined valance with rod pocket for a

kitchen, hallway or bathroom window. All participants must bring sewing machine. Material list provided upon registration. Fee: \$38/resident, \$43/non-resident.

Trips: New York City for The Holidays: Saturday, Dec. 10. Explore New York on your own, or take in a Broadway show. Bus will drop at Central Park, Times Square, Rockefeller Center, Bryant Park and Grand Central. Pick-up point is New York Public Library. Broadway show tickets available to *Come From Away* or *A Christmas Carol*. Showtime is 2 p.m. Registration fee is \$70 if no show or \$180 with the show. Bus leaves from Glastonbury Park and Ride.

New York Rangers vs. New Jersey Devils: Saturday, Jan. 7, 1 p.m., at the Prudential Center. Trip includes charter bus, tickets to the game (lower bowl seating). Registration fee is \$235. Bus leaves from Glastonbury Park and Ride.

Driveway Reflective Number Signs: Cost of the sign is \$35. Vertical sign is double-sided 8” x 24” with 4” numbers on blue highway reflective metal. Order forms are online and at Town Hall.

Santa Breakfast

St. John Fisher Church and its Faith Formation program and Knights of Columbus invite everyone to a Santa Breakfast Saturday, Dec. 3, at 8:30 a.m. in the church hall. The church is located at 30 Jones Hollow Rd.

Cost is \$7 per person and under 2 is free and registration is required. The menu will be pancakes, sausage, juice and coffee, and there will be crafts and coloring for children as well.

To register, email Melissa Jordan at salvia601@aol.com or call the parish office 860-295-0001.

Senior Center News and Notes

Marlborough Senior Center, 17 School Dr., is open for activities. Call 860-295-6209 for the center’s hours and more information.

Commission on Aging Meet-and-Greet: Saturday, Dec. 3, 10 a.m.-noon, at the senior center. Bring your ideas and help create programming for Marlborough’s older population. Light refreshments and coffee will be served and door prizes will be awarded.

Monday, Dec. 5: Transportation, 8 a.m.-4 p.m.; Quilting, etc., 9 a.m.-1 p.m.; Assistance, 10 a.m.-2 p.m.; 8-Ball Pool, 10 a.m.-noon; Meals-on-Wheels, noon; Congregate Meal, noon. Menu: Swedish meatballs/gravy, parslid egg noodles, green beans, rye bread, fresh fruit; setback, 1-3 p.m.

Tuesday, Dec. 6: Transportation, 8 a.m.-4 p.m.; Quilling, 9 a.m.-noon; Meals-on-Wheels, noon.

Wednesday, Dec. 7: Grocery Shopping, 8:30 a.m.-noon; “Not Just Quilting” Christmas Party, 10 a.m.-3 p.m.; Assistance, 10 a.m.-2 p.m.; 8-Ball Pool, 10 a.m.-noon; Meals-on-Wheels, noon; Congregate Meal, noon. Menu: chicken pot pie, boiled potatoes, glazed carrots, dinner roll, fresh fruit; cards, 1-3 p.m.; Sophisticated Ladies Tap Dancing, 5-6:30 p.m.

Thursday, Dec. 8: Tai Chi, 10:30-11:30 a.m.; PD Exercise with Anne, 3-4 p.m.

Friday, Dec. 9: Transportation, 8 a.m.-4 p.m.; Not Just Quilters, 9 a.m.-noon; 8-Ball Pool, 10 a.m.-noon; Congregate Meal, noon. Menu: grilled salmon with sauce, tartar sauce, mashed potatoes, yellow squash, oatnut bread, fresh fruit; Cards, 1-4 p.m.

Congregate Meals: All meals are served with milk, bread and margarine. Suggested donation: \$3 or what you can afford.

Transportation: Available Monday through Friday, 8 a.m.-4 p.m. Transportation available to the senior center, shopping, and medical and non-medical appointments. A 36-hour advance registration is required. Masks are also required, as well as appropriate distancing.

Food Bank: Located at 3 Wilhenger Drive (860-295-6008), the food bank is open every Tuesday from 10 a.m.-noon and 3:30-5:30 p.m. The food bank is open to qualified residents in need of food. Transportation for seniors and/or physically challenged individuals is available; call the senior center if you need a ride.

Weather-Related Closings/Late Openings: In instances of inclement weather, tune to WFSB-TV 3 or NBC Connecticut for the latest.

Town Clerk’s Office Closing

The Marlborough town clerk’s office will be closed Wednesday, Dec. 7, so that the clerks can attend a continuing education class. The office will open again Dec. 8 for regular business hours.



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Lowrey Hints at Future Bid for Town Manager

By Jack Lakowsky

Marlborough Board of Selectmen member and former town first selectman Greg Lowrey said last week he may, in the future, consider applying for the new town manager's position.

Lowrey was clear he'd finish his current elected term, which ends next November.

Acting board chair Deb Bourbeau canvassed selectmen, all of whom but Lowrey explicitly said they wouldn't apply for town manager.

"What happens in the future, someday, possibly, maybe," said Lowrey, "but not this go-round."

Before that time, the town has to hire its first ever town manager, the result of a charter change approves last year.

Right now, it's Amy Traversa filling the interim town manager role. At the end of that tenure, she will resume her chairwomanship of the selectboard.

The selectboard is about eight months into the process of hiring a town manager, a process rife with ire and contention, with board members often at odds over minutia and essentials alike. Progress has been slow.

Last week the board made some progress, forming a search committee out of a hand-picked group, filtering them from a larger list of names the selectpersons gathered. Because it's currently a board of four, each member had to agree on each selectee.

Now, after selectmen hire a consultant, the town manager search will be directed by locals Pat Fritton, Danny Larson, Dan Lawrence, Babara Lazzari, Susan Lesser, Mike Nastri, Mike O'Neil, Torrey Trzcieski and Marcus Wilkerson.

They chose from 26 people. Among the denied were son of selectperson Joe Asklar and local fire chief Kevin Asklar (due to his relationship with his father), as well as Board of Finance member Ken Hjulstrom and Zoning Commission member Mark Merritt – both of whom have been outspoken about town politics.

In this assortment are former and current town officials (for both Marlborough and others), first responders, businessowners and long-

time residents. Selectmen, especially Betty O'Brien, said they wanted to choose people who haven't expressed overtly their politics on social media.

Each selectperson chose their own candidates. Selectman Joe Asklar, pointing to the board's frequent split votes, suggested each member submit two names to be put on the committee automatically. This did not go forward.

"There are some people I feel would not be good on the committee," said O'Brien, saying "people who've been on Facebook saying negative things about this board, I can't vote for someone that'd do something like that.

"It takes integrity," she added, adding she wants people not "actively political," and specifically people not on the charter commission.

"I would like people who live in town," O'Brien said.

O'Brien, a Democrat, led the veto of Hjulstrom, a Republican, saying he's too vocal on Facebook.

Bourbeau said she wanted a "fresh group of people" not serving agendas, but only what's best for the town.

Bourbeau removed local Superintendent of Schools Holly Hageman from consideration, even though the new charter advised including the schools chief on the search committee.

O'Brien agreed, saying she wants to keep separation between the school and the town.

"People voted for town manager government because they wanted something fresh," said Bourbeau.

Lowrey said a perspective from a town that's been through a town manager could be beneficial.

The board discussed each candidate individually, going through work histories, personal relationships and why each one would fit.

Now, the newly formed committee must determine meeting dates, then officers, then it begins its work finding Marlborough's first town manager.



Lions Make Donation... The Marlborough Lions recently donated 180 children's blue light-blocking glasses to CREC schools. These glasses are for use by children when working with computers and other devices to reduce glare and help with eye strain. The glasses were originally donated by a Marlborough resident to the Marlborough Lions Club so they could be passed along to others who could make use of them. Pictured are Kathy Randall and Kevin McNally of the Lions Low Vision center. The Lions also collect used eyeglasses and hearing aids, which are then provided to people in impoverished countries all around the world. Drop boxes are located at Town Hall, Liberty Bank, the Marlborough Senior Center and at the office of Dr. Steven Rafalowsky on Saner Road. Eyeglass cases are also appreciated. For more information on the Lions, call secretary Ken Hjulstrom at 860-490-9116 or president Megan Lloyd at 413-687-5537.

Community Nativity Festival

As part of its yearlong 275th Anniversary Celebration, Marlborough Congregational Church, located at 35 South Main St., will host a Nativity Festival on Friday, Dec. 2, from 6-8 p.m., and Saturday, Dec. 3, from 11 a.m.-2 p.m.

The community is welcome to view a collection of nativities that will be on display in the sanctuary, which will be adorned for Christmas. Live holiday music will be provided

by harpists Jason Castonguay and Carolyn Brodinski.

There is no charge for the event, but proceeds from a free-will offering will go to the Connecticut Chapter of Casting for Recovery, an organization that enhances the lives of women with breast cancer by connecting them to each other and nature through the therapeutic sport of fly fishing (castingforrecovery.org).

Richmond Library News & Notes

Richmond Memorial Library, located at 15 School Drive, has announced the following. Registration required unless noted; to do so, call the library at 860-295-6210 or email richmondprograms@gmail.com.

TWOsdays: For children 18-36 months and their caregivers on Tuesdays through Dec. 20. There will be songs, stories and hands-on-learning.

Fall Storytime Wraps Up: Wednesday, Dec. 7, 10 a.m., in the Storytime Room.

Lego Club: Tuesday, Dec. 13, 4 p.m., for children age 5 and up. The library will offer STEM-based challenges involving Legos.

Kids Crafting Club: Tuesdays, Dec. 6 and 20, 4 p.m. Kids will learn new techniques and project ideas.

Old-School Gamers Club: Friday, Dec. 2, 4 p.m. The library will break out the Super Nintendo, PSOne, Xbox360 and more for some old-school gaming for ages 12-18. Registration is recommended.

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Selectmen: School Board Will Pay for Guard

By Jack Lakowsky

Save a 10% contribution from the town side of government, this week the Marlborough Board of Selectmen voted 3-1 to have the local school board repay the town 90% of the cost of the incoming school guard.

Also, Marlborough Superintendent of Schools Holly Hageman said the school resource officer (SRO) won't start until the 2023-24 school year. Previously she'd said she expected to hire one this year, but she's since learned the hiring market isn't so friendly.

The SRO's estimated cost is \$104,000 for a full school year. As things stand, the school will reimburse the town 90% of that figure, with the town tossing in 10%.

"This is not something the town asked for," said acting selectboard chair Deb Bourbeau, "it was asked for by the school."

Bourbeau said she's "very very stubborn" about funding the SRO, that she "truly believes" the school should foot the bill.

She said if the school's worried about public blowback for the cost hike, "that can be very easily explained the public in a presentation."

Bourbeau said the school putting the SRO in the town budget equates to surreptitiousness, and that all the SRO's duties are within school grounds.

"I can't see people going against it," Bourbeau eventually said, mentioning that many

locals supported adding the SRO.

The town's plan – which is technically cost-sharing – is something of an outlier, according to information Hageman provided.

Reading a survey the state conducted, Hageman learned in a sample of around 60 school districts, a majority of school guards are funded by their towns, with 12 funded totally by the district itself and fewer than five splitting the cost.

Selectman Betty O'Brien, who originally wanted the school to pay the whole bill, said if those 12 are doing it "then it must be working out really well, I assume." O'Brien said she wanted the school to pay because the town has significant incoming costs.

O'Brien said, "I really believe the people will pass your [the school board's] budget." O'Brien also said she would like to send the question to the Board of Finance and "let them move things around" if they wanted, an idea Bourbeau quickly iced.

Selectperson Joe Asklar advocated for a 50/50 split with the school, saying public safety is very much a duty of the town's, that the cost will come out of taxpayer pockets regardless of where the item's listed, adding the board was "debating a null point."

When O'Brien asked Hageman if she was happy with the decision, Hageman said she was "just glad we have an SRO."

St. John Fisher Church News & Notes

St. John Fisher Roman Catholic Church is located at 30 Jones Hollow Rd. Pastor is the Rev. Thomas J. Sas, John McKaig is deacon emeritus and the pastoral assistant is Holly Bangham. The church office can be reached at 860-295-0001; hours are Monday-Thursday, 8:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m. People are asked to call before heading over or connect via the phone or email at stjohfisher30@yahoo.com.

COVID-19 Protocol: For the fully vaccinated, masks are not required. For the unvaccinated, masks continue to be encouraged. Call the office for more information.

Weekend Masses: 4 p.m. Saturday and 8:30 and 10:30 a.m. Sunday. All are welcome. **Weekday Mass:** Monday-Thursday, 8:30 a.m.

Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament: Sundays, 4-4:45 p.m.

Advent and December Programs: Knights of Columbus Poster Contest: "Keep Christ in Christmas" registration forms and entry deadline information available at church or on the church website for grades K-8 with prizes awarded for each division; K-2, Grades 3-5 and Grades 6-8; Christmas Giving Program: Runs through Dec. 11, with all unwrapped gifts due back by Dec. 11 for distribution to various organizations. More information is available on the church website.

Family Faith Formation: This is a new program to focus on active faith formation within the family is underway for families of kindergarten through middle school students; registration is required on the church's Faith Formation website and will close at the end of September.

Confirmation Community: The church's active 9th- and 10th-grade confirmation program continues. Registration is required as well.

Adult Worship Choir: Meets Wednesdays

from 5:30-7 p.m. All are welcome to join. More information can be found on the church website.

Community Outreach and Service: Food drives are held the second full weekend of each month for Marlborough Food Bank; you may also bring non-perishable food or household donations directly to the Marlborough Food Bank Monday and Tuesday mornings. Sandwich-making and collection continues on the last Thursday of the month for St. Vincent de Paul in Middletown. The Community Garden to benefit Marlborough Food Bank continues to supply fresh produce each week and volunteers are always welcome. Other scheduled service opportunities can be found on the church website and are scheduled monthly.

Other Programs and Offerings: For more information on such programs as adult faith formation, youth group, RCIA, Knights of Columbus or other ministries, call the office, visit the church website at www.stjchurch.org, or look for the church on Facebook (Saint John Fisher Roman Catholic Church).

Gathering on the Green

The town will hold its annual Gathering on the Green Saturday, Dec. 3, from 4:30-6:30 p.m., on the town green.

Santa will come to town to visit all the boys and girls of Marlborough. The gathering will feature a lighted fire truck parade, tree-lighting, pictures with Santa, holiday games and activities, refreshments, music and a fireworks display. Rain date is Sunday, Dec. 4.

Breakfast with Santa

The East Hampton/Marlborough Rotary Club will sponsor its annual Breakfast with Santa Saturday, Dec. 3, from 7:30-11 a.m., at the East Hampton High School cafeteria, located on North Maple Street in East Hampton.

As in the past, breakfast will be served to all that attend and the children will be able to have a picture taken with Santa Claus as a keepsake. There will also be face-painting and other children's activities.

Attendees are asked to donate non-perishable food items for the East Hampton and Marlborough food banks. Monetary donations to support the food and fuel banks in each town will also be accepted. For more information, call Kevin at 860-754-8137.



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Obituaries

East Hampton

Michael J. Bartolotta

Michael J. Bartolotta of East Hampton and Bradford, R.I., passed away unexpectedly Wednesday, Nov. 23, at the age of 77. He was affectionately known as "Butch" and worked for the Town of West Hartford for over 30 years until his retirement.



He served his country honorably as a United States Marine with tours in Vietnam. He had a deep bellowing laugh and lightened the load of everyone he encountered. Michael was an avid fisherman, incredible vegetable gardener and great cook who had the utmost respect for the environment. He was also an excellent auto and truck mechanic who prided himself on his ability to literally build his own trucks from scratch. And when he wasn't working on anything mechanical or fishing, you could find him cutting wood. But no hydraulic cutters for Michael; just a good old-fashioned axe!

He was predeceased by his wife, Gloria Bartolotta; parents, Josephine (Augeri) Bartolotta and Anthony Bartolotta; two brothers, Salvatore Bartolotta and John Bartolotta; and a sister, Josephine Cornell.

He is survived by his son, Michael Bartolotta Jr.; a granddaughter, Olivia Bartolotta; a sister-in-law, Theo Bartolotta; an uncle, Frank Augeri; and many other nieces, nephews and family members. He was much-loved and is sorely missed already.

Contributions to "Save the Sound" at savethesound.org may be made in his honor. A celebration of life will be held at a later date.

Portland

Carolyn Ann Milardo

Carolyn Ann Milardo passed away Saturday, Nov. 19, at the age of 76. May she find eternal peace and happiness in God's Hands. Carolyn was born in Mars Hill, Maine, and grew up in Hotton, Maine. She was the daughter of Alton and June (Bulley) Weeks.

Carolyn was a resident of Portland, CT for 49 years. Carolyn retired from Brown & Williamson Tobacco Company many years ago. When she was able, Carolyn loved spending time with her family and grandchildren; she was their Grammy/Meme. She loved going to Cape Cod; it was at the beach she found the most peace, reading her books and taking in the ocean air. She was an avid fan of the New York Yankees and New York Giants. She loved to do her crossword puzzles and word games.

Her favorite holiday was Christmas and when her children were younger, she would always display the magic of Christmas with her beautiful Christmas tree, Christmas village, outdoor Christmas lights and her full variety of cookies. Her family, each of them, have their own special memories of Carolyn - too many to mention. In her younger years she enjoyed traveling with her sister Annette and always enjoyed spending time with her sister Charlene and husband Willard. She was fun, full of energy and a woman of many stories, some with exaggeration believable or not.

Carolyn is survived by her four children and their spouses, Lauralee Kelley (John), Barbie

Donoghue (Timothy), Lisa Catanzaro (Kevin Daly), Joseph Milardo (Michelle); and her eight grandchildren, Jack, Jimmy & Micayla Kelley, AJ (wife Ally) Catanzaro, Mikey Catanzaro, Timmy Donoghue Jr., Sophia & Alexander Milardo; her mother, June Weeks; five siblings and spouses, Alton Weeks (Ruth), Charlene Walker (Willard), Cynthia Blanchette, Beverly Griffin, Annette Aribas (Vencente); her Aunt Laverna Williamson; and several nieces and nephews.

There will be no calling hours and a private ceremony will be held by the family at a later date.

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

Portland

Jean Michelson Brookes

Jean Michelson Brookes, 94, of Portland, widow of Thomas Brookes, passed away Tuesday, Nov. 22. Born in Higganum on June 13, 1928, she was the daughter of the late Elizabeth (Berrigan) and Andrew E. Michelson.

She leaves two sons, Michael A. Brookes of Greensboro, N.C., and Thomas K. Brookes of Troy, Vt.; a daughter, Susan B. Barksdale of Portland; four grandchildren, Kevin Brookes, Sara Brookes, Timothy Barksdale and Justin Barksdale; and her extended family of Maurice Barksdale, Elizabeth Brookes, Edwin Johnson, Jeffrey Michelson, Linda Prue and Julia Barksdale.

She was predeceased by her brothers, Andrew E. Michelson Jr. and Merlin L. Michelson, and her sister, Gladys E. Michelson.

She was a member of the First Congregational Church of Portland. Funeral services will be private. Donations in her memory may be sent to First Congregational Church of Portland.

The family would like to thank the exceptional staff of Portland Care and Rehabilitation. To share memories or express condolences online, please visit www.biegafuneralhome.com.

Portland

June Paulson

June Anne (Lundberg) Paulson, 92, of Portland, wife of the late Everett L. Paulson, passed away peacefully Sunday, Nov. 27, at Portland Care and Rehabilitation Centre. Born in Middletown, she was the daughter of the late Eric and Edna (Lucas) Lundberg.



June grew up in Middletown, graduating Middletown High School Class of 1948 where she was a member of the Rifle Team. She went on to graduate Ona M. Wilcox School of Nursing and began a career of nursing at Middlesex Hospital and Wesleyan University's Infirmary for many years. She was also a teacher for over 20 years at the Christ Lutheran Church Nursery School, which she was instrumental in creating. June was a longtime member of Christ Lutheran Church now Faith Lutheran Church.

June was an avid collector of eagles, gnomes and coins. She enjoyed camping in New Hampshire and trips to Pemaquid, Maine, where she loved visiting Pemaquid Lighthouse. June also known as MorMor, June Bug, and JP, was especially known for her Swedish rosettes that were enjoyed by so many.

June is survived by her daughter, Heidi P. Abbott and her husband Al of Portland; the light of her life, her grandson, Joshua Lucas Abbott; niece and goddaughter, Deborah Kulpik and her husband John of Middlefield and their children, Nico and Kiyah; and her nephew, Christopher Paulson and his wife Fran of Middlefield and

their children Alex and Luke.

Along with her husband and parents, June was predeceased by her daughter, Holly P. Stevens, and brother-in-law and sister-in-law, Robert and Elizabeth Paulson.

Funeral services will be held Tuesday, Dec. 6, at 11 a.m., at Faith Lutheran Church, 300 Washington St., Middletown. Burial will be at the convenience of the family. Family and friends may call on Monday evening, Dec. 5, from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m., at the Doolittle Funeral Home, 14 Old Church St., Middletown.

In lieu of flowers, donations in June's memory may be made to Faith Lutheran Church, 300 Washington St., Middletown, CT 06457.

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

Hebron

Louis A. Menard

Louis A. Menard, of Hebron, passed away at Hartford Hospital Wednesday, Nov. 23. He was 77 years old.



Louis was born Nov. 24, 1945, in East Broughton, Canada. He married his beloved wife, Lisette Couture, on July 13, 1968 and the very next day the couple emigrated to New Britain, and in 1974 they relocated to Hebron, where they settled in to raise their two children.

Louis was a hardworking man who was a master carpenter working for New Field Construction and also as an entrepreneur. He was a handyman and craftsman, there were no jobs

Cover Story • Cover Story • Cover Story • Cover Story • Cover Story • Cover

★ Hebron Light Show cont. from page 1

recent hits, but most are "upbeat" because that works best with the light synchronization.

Strumskas said a Lions committee determined that the event proceeds should go to children's charities.

She said that hosting something that actually makes a difference for kids "adds a bonus to why we do what we do" and that the decision "just seemed right."

Mark Picard, president of Wishes on Wheels, which serves as an external fundraiser for Make-A-Wish CT, shared that his organization helped setup and breakdown the course last year and jumped on the opportunity to be involved again.

"When they asked us to partner on this, it was a no-brainer," he said.

Picard emphasized that unlike other events across the state, Hebron's is unique because of its unwavering commitment to local charities.

"The difference is, you can go to any of these other light shows and they're good, but this is the only light show that all the proceeds are going to children's charities," he expressed.

Leading up the official start date, Picard was also heavily involved with building the course. Specifically, he felt a special bond with the new snowman.

"I'm very intimate with George," he joked. "I had the only bucket truck that would reach to put the top together."

He added that overall, "it's an incredible show."

Last year, Wishes on Wheels raised \$27,000 from the event.

Kristen Moran, the director of marketing and communications at Make-A-Wish CT, shared that donation amount would cover at least two wishes.

Moran expressed that Lights in Motion was a "great opportunity to engage our alumni," and Make-A-Wish families will be at the fair-

grounds to interact with the community. "We'll have Wish kids here almost every Saturday to thank everybody for coming through and helping making wishes come true," she said.

For the Make-A-Wish alumni, the event can also be a special moment.

"They get to meet each other and share their stories and there's an immediate connection because they've all been through a similar thing," Moran said.

The Hole in the Wall Gang Camp will also have volunteers at the fairgrounds to help out the Lions.

Andrea Keefe, director of community and corporate partnerships at the camp, said her organization provides its programs free of charge thanks to events such as Lights in Motion.

"We're able to do that because of folks like the Lions Club, who create these opportunities to help raise funds and that allows us to create these magical moments for children with serious illnesses and their families," she said.

"For every car that goes through, 100% of the proceeds are going back to amazing children's charities and we're grateful to be one of them." Keefe pointed to the hundreds of volunteers who made this event possible, and that everyone involved shares the same objectives, especially in regard to helping those in need.

"It takes a village and it really is a community event for so many reasons," she asserted. "The members here have been working tirelessly, but they keep saying it's for the kids and I think that's such a special sentiment that everyone here holds. Whether it's with Make-A-Wish or Hole in the Wall Gang Camp, we're giving back to families who are in need of that support."

Keefe shared that during the past few years, it's been challenging to raise the same volume of money compared to pre-pandemic levels, but that Hebron is helping turn the page.

"We're thrilled that Lights in Motion is sort of taking that first step last year to say, 'we're here, we want to help and we're going to do it safe and we're going to be this light in the community.'"

Johnson said he used to do a light show at his business Brain Freezers in Hebron. For years, Lions members urged him to bring his talents to the fairgrounds. During the pandemic, the Lions invited people to decorate trucks and compete, which the community seemingly embraced.

That event indicated that a larger-scale event might be possible, and Johnson was convinced to give it a try.

"Coming out of COVID, it was sad not having the lights up," he said, expressing that he then became motivated to create a unique show.

Organizers estimated that last year, close to 7,000 vehicles participated in the event.

For more on Lights in Motion, including a schedule and tickets, visit www.lionslightsinmotion.org.

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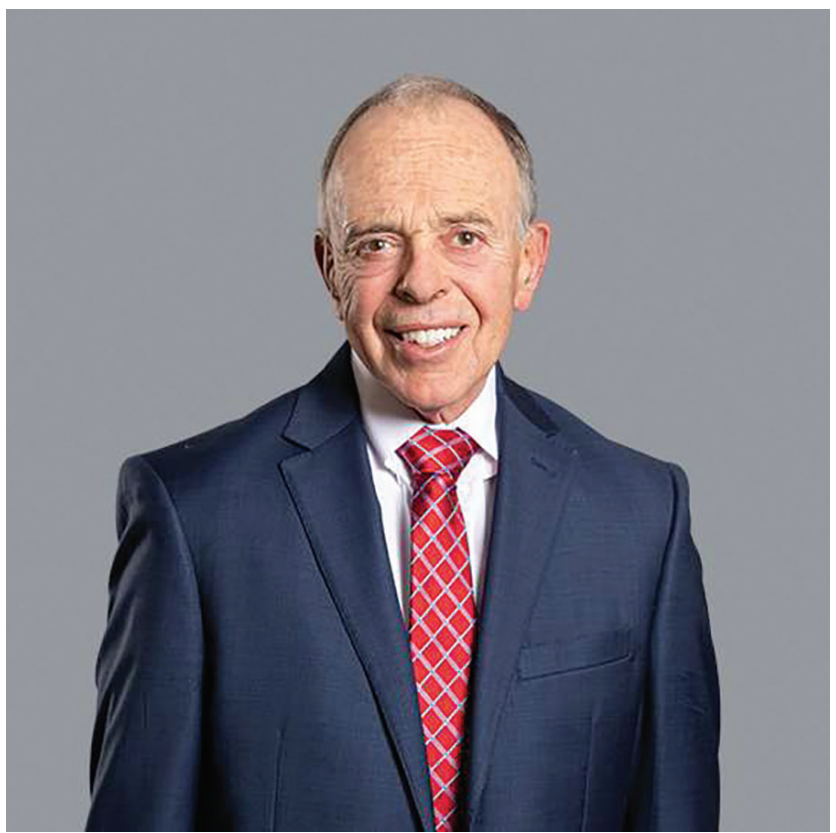


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Fresh Grade A All Natural

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\$4.68 /lb.
14 – 19 lb. Average

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- 8 Lbs. Center Cut Pork Chops 100% Pure Pork No Additives
- 10 Lbs. Boneless Skinless Chicken Breast Fresh Grade A All Natural
- 3 Lbs. Beef Chuck Stew Meat 100% Pure Beef No Additives
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- 10 Lbs. Chicken Thighs Bone In Fresh Grade A All Natural
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Consists of Eye Round Steak & Roast

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Also Sold in 5lb Bags \$4.48 /lb

100% Pure Beef No Additives

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Consists of Porterhouse Steak

\$6.98 /lb.
20 – 25 lb. Average

100% Pure Beef No Additives

Whole Sirloin Tips
Sirloin Tip Steaks & Roasts

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8 - 10 lb. Average

100% Pure Beef No Additives

Whole Top Rounds
Top Round Steaks & Roasts

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20 – 25 lb. Average

Fresh Grade A All Natural

40LB Chicken Thighs Bone In
Sold In 40lb Box Not Further Processed

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Also Sold in 10lb Bag \$1.98.

Lessor Amounts \$3.99 /lb

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10 – 15 lb. Average

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Consists of Spareribs & Riblets

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10 - 12 lb. Average

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While Supplies Last

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Sold In 40lb Box Not Further Processed

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