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News Bulletin

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

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The Incredible Journey of a Dog Sled Racer

By Michael Sinkewicz

In 2008, Becki Tucker was gravely injured in an all-terrain vehicle (ATV) accident. Her skull was smashed. At one point, she was pronounced dead. But she “wanted to live.”

For Tucker, surviving an ordeal that she acknowledges should’ve killed her, or at least left her significantly compromised, cemented the outlook that she would obey for the rest of her life.

“After being someone who died, I never say ‘no’ to doing something new,” she said.

Tucker is the founder of the Outlaw Ridge Sled Dogs, a team that competes in what become often ruthless treks expanding upwards of 250 miles. The group takes its name from Tucker’s first puppy, who was named Outlaw.

Originally from Voluntown, Tucker officially moved to Hebron — where her boyfriend lives — on New Year’s Eve. While she’s taking a well-earned break from racing, her family of loyal athletes will likely become a fixture in the community. In March, for example, residents will be able to check out the team at the annual Hebron Maple Festival.

Anyone who swaps stories with Tucker will be inspired — and possibly frightened — by her sheer determination, which could only belong to someone who’s endured frigid temperatures and howling winds in the middle of a grueling sled race. But they’ll also be taken aback by the loyalty and trust required to be successful in her unique line of work.

Group of Misfits

Tucker’s career began with short distance races — known as sprint racing — in 1995, before she got into longer-form competitions beginning in 2000.

Her journey initially started off in Connecticut, but she moved to New Hampshire in 2015 to be closer to the action; most serious sled races are hosted in northern New England, she said.

Instead of making the march every Thursday



Hebron resident Becki Tucker was pronounced dead following a brutal 2008 ATV accident. She survived, though, and has continued her passion of racing sled dogs. She’ll bring some of those pooches to the Hebron Maple Fest next month.

and coming back down on Monday, she decided to just move closer, a choice that signaled her full commitment to preparing and participating in the most demanding events.

Her residences included Dorchester and Milan in New Hampshire, and most recently Fort

Kent, Maine, home of the Can-Am Crown International Sled Dog — the longest and highest caliber event in the eastern U.S., spanning 250 miles.

A devotion to the training and execution of sled racing doesn’t happen by accident, and it’s

more than a hobby; her dogs are truly her obsession.

“This is my family,” Tucker said. “I have to trust them and let them lead the way.”

The bond she has with her dogs, Tucker continued, is almost indescribable.

“It makes me feel like I found a place in the world,” she said. “It’s loyalty, commitment and love.”

Over two decades ago, Tucker was working in an animal shelter when an individual wanted to euthanize a husky, which made her embark on a newfound effort to rescue dogs. She had a vision that perhaps others couldn’t fully see — a recognition of the qualities of animals that otherwise were unwanted.

Tucker explained that through her own childhood experiences, she was able to relate to the dogs better than most people. Together, they formed a “misfit crew of dogs” that dipped into short races — ranging from five miles to 30 miles; the shortest races featured teams of 8 dogs, while the 30-mile races were with 10 dogs. “We needed a way to burn energy,” she recalled.

At one point, Tucker owned 34 dogs; she currently has 25.

Her initial batch of dogs were Siberians, but now after breeding, her fleet is comprised of Alaskan Huskies, which resemble wolves. Tucker expressed that she knows each individual dog’s howl; they’re all distinct. (She also apologized to any Hebron residents who’ve been awakened by her dogs.)

While she doesn’t have a favorite — typical parent talk — one dog, Frenzi, is identified as Tucker’s “heart dog.” Frenzi was adopted when she was eight months old and is the leader of the group.

“We’re beyond connected,” Tucker said.

She instills certain traits and commands to

See *Dog Sled Racer*, page 8

Colchester Nixes ‘Unauthorized’ New Ambulance

By Michael Sinkewicz

Colchester First Selectman Bernie Dennler III informed the boards of selectmen and finance last week that the town was canceling an order for a new ambulance, claiming that the purchase was “unauthorized.”

Dennler stated that a \$386,750 contract that would’ve added a third ambulance to the local fleet was voided. However, a separate \$60,785 charge to refurbish the cab and chassis for one of the town’s current trucks, ambulance 528, has not been resolved — representing another payment Dennler said wasn’t formerly approved.

“I do not have a funding source that I can identify for you today where that would come from,” he told the Board of Finance (BOF) on Jan. 24. Dennler added that he is optimistic that the vendor will potentially take the apparatus back due to high demand in the industry, which would essentially spare the town of any linger-

ing cost.

This week, Dennler told the *Rivereast* that those conversations are still ongoing, and that no official agreement has been made to unload the apparatus.

The cancellation of the ambulance along with the likely annulment of the repairs on the current vehicle does not eliminate the possibility that the town will ultimately move forward with the purchases at a future date.

It’s possible, Dennler explained, that Colchester Fire & EMS members will pitch the justification for a new ambulance at a later meeting. The issue surrounding the present circumstances, he added, was strictly related to the proper process being adhered to.

“If you follow the purchasing policy, you’re not going to end up in situations like this,” Dennler told the finance board.

The problem, he indicated, was that the boards were not presented with the plan, which did not receive board authorization.

Fire Department Memo

On Jan. 17, Fire Chief Steve Hoffmann sent a memo to the Board of Selectmen (BOS), which was subsequently reviewed at its meeting the following day.


The memo provided background and context for the ambulance purchase, and acknowledged that proper protocol was apparently passed over.

Colchester Fire & EMS, the memo stated, has considered the acquisition of a third ambulance since April 2023, and a meeting was scheduled last August with then-first selectman Andreas Bisbikos, the finance director, fleet maintenance supervisor, deputy chief and the fire chief to discuss a potential plan to move forward.

See *‘Unauthorized’ Ambulance*, page 15

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COVID-19 Vaccine Myths VS Facts


MYTH COVID-19 vaccines can alter DNA.
 Fact: The genetic material delivered by mRNA vaccines never enters the nucleus of your cells, which is where your DNA is kept, so the vaccine does not alter your DNA.

FACT The ingredients in COVID-19 vaccines are safe.
 Nearly all the ingredients in COVID-19 vaccines are also ingredients in many foods – fats, sugars, and salts.

MYTH COVID-19 vaccines can affect fertility.
 Fact: Currently no evidence shows that any vaccines, including COVID-19 vaccines, cause fertility problems.

FACT Getting a COVID-19 vaccine is a safer and more dependable way to build immunity to COVID-19 than getting sick with COVID-19.
 COVID-19 vaccines causes a more predictable immune response than an infection with the virus that causes COVID-19.

For more information, please visit the CDC:



Para la versión en español

CHATHAM HEALTH DISTRICT

Please contact info@chathamhealth.org with any questions!

This educational campaign is supported by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services as part of a financial assistance award totaling \$51,788 with 100% funded by CDC/HHS. The contents are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the official views of, nor an endorsement, by CDC/HHS or the US Government.

RE2-24

From the Editor's Desk

Observations & Ruminations

By Mike Thompson

Happy Groundhog Day!

Hopefully, Chuckles – Connecticut's official state groundhog, who makes his home at the Lutz Children's Museum in Manchester – didn't see his shadow this morning, thus ensuring spring is just around the corner. Given that the sun is basically on the state's missing persons list these days, I'd say it's fairly likely he didn't.

I know it hasn't been an overly brutal winter this year, but I'm pretty much done with the highs in the 30s – or even the highs in the 40s. I'm ready for warmth.

If you're like me – and let's face it, wouldn't that be wonderful? – than you might be wondering where this whole Groundhog Day tradition comes from. Well, the answer lies across the pond – in Germany, to be exact.

Here in the U.S., Groundhog Day got its start in Pennsylvania, specifically among the Pennsylvania Dutch. According to Wikipedia, the Pennsylvania Dutch were largely immigrants from German-speaking areas of Europe. The Germans had a tradition of marking Candlemas (Feb. 2) as "Badger Day" (Dachstag). As per that German tradition, if a badger emerging from its den encountered a sunny day, thereby casting a shadow, it heralded four more weeks of winter.

The "Badger Day" component of Candlemas was itself an extension of the simpler tradition that if the weather was sunny and clear on Candlemas Day, winter was expected to continue.

Interestingly, the original weather-predicting animal in Germany was the bear. But when those grew scarce, a new animal was adopted – the friendly badger.

So, now you know. Isn't your life more enriched?

Congratulations to the Kansas City Chiefs,

who are headed to the Super Bowl on Feb. 11 to take on the San Francisco 49ers. I was rooting for the Lions instead of the 49ers this past Sunday, if only for fact that they'd never ever been to the Big Game.

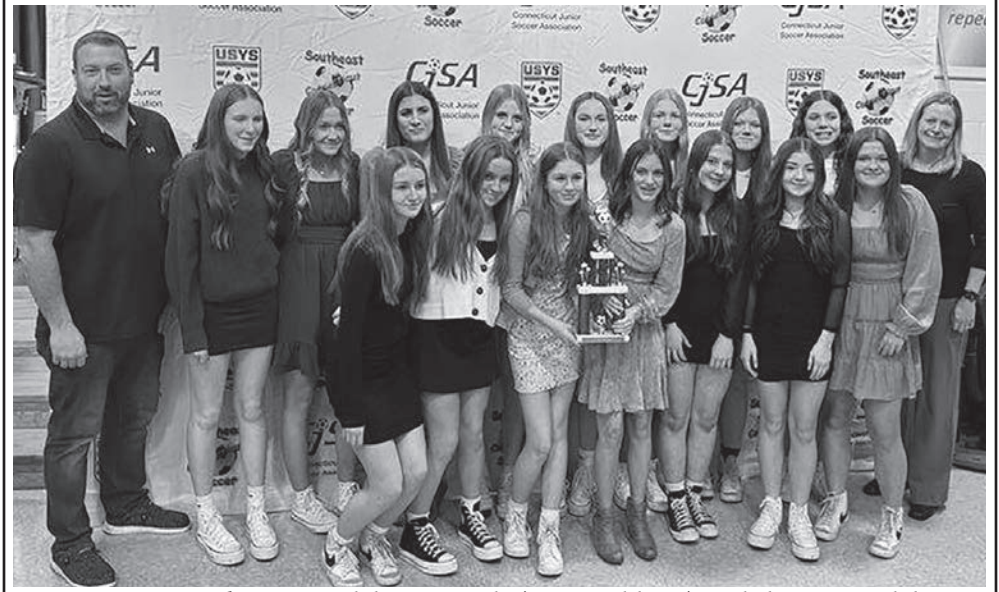
Alas, it wasn't in the cards for Motor City this year. The Lions are an impressive team, so hopefully they'll be back in the postseason mix next season – and hopefully their coach will remember it's okay to try for a field goal. (It's the playoffs; take the easy points.)

One positive about the Lions not making it, at least for me, is that I won't be conflicted with who to root for on Super Bowl Sunday. The last few seasons, I've really taken a shine to the Chiefs. The New York Jets are and will remain my main team (as the song goes, "when you're a Jet you're a Jet all the way, from your first cigarette to your last dying day"), but since they also have this strange allergy to making the playoffs, I need someone to root for once January comes along. Enter the Chiefs.

Yes, the team has a rather un-P.C. name (though not nearly as bad as "Redskins" was – a moniker that took way too long to be retired), but the players seem like a likeable bunch of folks. Plus, star quarterback Patrick Mahomes' father, Pat, was a relief pitcher on two of my all-time favorite Mets squads – the 1999 and 2000 editions – so I was predestined to root for his son.

And, let's face it, the midseason addition of Taylor Swift to their fanbase helped too. I've been a Taylor fan since the very beginning, her country music days (I rather enjoyed country music in the '90s and '00s; then it became way too reliant on that sophomoric "bro-country," so I jumped ship). So when she began dating Travis Kelce and became a regular fixture at the games, well that just added another com-

Editor's Desk continued on page 5



Soccer Stars... The U15 Colchester Girls (pictured here) and the U13 Colchester Boys were finalists in the Southeast Connecticut Soccer League for the fall 2023 season. Colchester individual awards were also given to Jacob Blanda, Abby Floyd and Coach Chris Gauthier.

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Historical Society Thank You

To the Editor:

The Hebron Historical Society would like to thank those who responded to our request for help in repairing a caned chair seat. The fine oak chair will rejoin its mates in the Peters House this spring.

We are currently seeking someone to help with communications and bookkeeping, if you can offer your time please contact us at info@hebronthistoricalsociety.org.

Please visit us at Old Town Hall during Maple Fest and plan to participate in our April walking tours of Hope Valley/Reidy Hill mill sites.

Thank you again to those who offered their support, Hebron Historical Society

Maple-Flavored Roots

To the Editor:

I am thrilled to read that Hebron's beloved Maple Fest will be returning to its roots. As reported in last week's Rivereast, Holly Habicht, president of The Town Center Project, Inc., stated it is time to "resuscitate" the historic charm of the festival." This is great news for Hebron's residents and businesses.

Last year's event brought the sour taste of backroom political maneuvering by Hebron's town officials and harmful public diatribes by the former managing partner Windham Chamber of Commerce. All in an effort to silence the sharing of historical facts and educating the residents of Hebron about the risks of development on the Raymond Brook Watershed and unique historic farm fields at 17 Kinney Road. I remain committed to providing the important documented information that has been confirmed by numerous professors from UConn, a distinguished Yale University history professor and several preservation organizations, as well as the town's own Hebron Green Committee. It is only with accurate information that Hebron can move forward with understanding and integrity.

I remember meeting Selden Wells and standing in his Sugar House on Kinney Road. The sweet steam of boiling maple sap and the lure of timeless stories filled the air. They were moments that define Hebron as a town full of "rural historic character." I look forward to enjoying the maple-flavored roots of the Maple Fest and I am grateful for The Town Center Project's efforts to support a positive change for the residents and businesses in Hebron.

We Have to be Heard

To the Editor:

Hold on to your hats and don't let the tsunami of a tax increase knock your socks off either.

Folks, we have to be heard. We have to voice our opinions about this fiscal atrocity coming to grab whatever money we have to feed its coffers.

All I can say is be prepared for the financial hit that will be a hardship for many and put many more in financial ruin.

Stay tuned for all the ways you can speak and be heard if you don't want to attend a meeting in person. It's important that our voices be heard and to those in charge recognize that this budget is out of line and puts the residents/taxpayers of East Hampton close to financial ruin.

**A concerned citizen,
Alison Walck – East Hampton**

Bulletin Board

As an alleged hoarder (according to my lovely wife) one of my quaint (if apparently less than endearing) habits is to tear various articles out of the newspaper and file them away for future reference. This practice might cause a little less friction if I had an orderly filing system rather than tucking the clipping (or, more accurately, "the tearing") into the nearest book, adding it to the nearest pile of "whatever," stowing it behind the couch cushion or simply leaving it on the floor.

Anyway, the other day one of these hoarded pieces of so-called "trash" (I prefer to refer to them as archived intellectual properties) surfaced as (in the pursuit of marital harmony) I was transferring a pile of "whatever" to "wherever." Upon examination, I found myself fascinated anew by the odd mental processes of some of those who are allowed to walk amongst us without stricter supervision. (I know, I know, look who's talking.)

The article was a guest opinion piece written some years ago (judging by the yellowing of the thing) by an assistant professor of education at Endicott College. The assistant professor (which, I believe, is a post somewhat equivalent in stature to vice president of the public greeting department at your local bank) said that once every year he instructs his junior class education students to run out for 25 minutes and poll passers-by on what "place" from their past has special significance for them. (I don't know what tuition is at Endicott, but I'm thinking it's probably too much.)

The answers, he reveals in his opinion piece, are "fascinating but tragic." Most folks polled list places like the house they grew up in, a special beach, a mountaintop, the old family kitchen or even their basement, he laments.

This is tragic? My idea of "tragic" is learning that someone who owes me a lot of money has just passed away, or being told by a waitress that they've run out of chicken gravy, but perhaps assistant professors of education are less self-absorbed.

As for someone listing a basement as having special significance to them, I would not be so dismissive. Let me just say that during my hormonally chaotic teenage years, a variety of basements were the scene of both great exhilaration and (more regularly) great personal disappointment and leave it at that.

The assistant professor, who apparently grew up in a house without a basement, expresses bewilderment that one place is always missing from everyone's list of memorable favorites. School. It's never mentioned.

"When my teachers-in-training first become aware of what's missing, their mouths drop open," he says.

It may be that their mouths dropped open because they were yawning, but perhaps I'm just jaded.

The professor continues, "So the tragic question is this: Why does school never make the list as a special place? Why don't we remember our fifth-grade classroom as fondly as we remember our kitchen, or any other place we have spent a lot of our time?"

I'm thinking maybe it's because eating raisin bread toast in the kitchen or fooling around in the basement is a lot more fun than struggling with trigonometry? Just a thought.

Nevertheless, the professor, who seems to have a tendency toward hysteric hyperbole, finds this lack of nostalgia for the classroom "shocking."

He suggests that school would be remembered more fondly if educators took steps to implement smaller class sizes, allow kids to get out of their seats to perform "their own stories and plays," and promote "more joy and less conformity."

It's been my experience that getting out of your seat to spontaneously perform your own "stories and plays" is a pretty fast track to an after-school detention, but I'm all for "more joy and less conformity."

Maybe we could start with making subjects like trigonometry optional. Speaking strictly for myself, that would have made my school experience, if not "more joyful," certainly less tragic.

Jim Hallas

Rivereast Hours of Operation

The offices of the *Rivereast News Bulletin* and *Glastonbury Citizen*, located at 87 Nutmeg Lane, Glastonbury, are open Monday through Thursday from 9 a.m.-4 p.m. The *Rivereast* can be reached any time via email at bulletin@glcitizen.com.

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Letter Writers: Letters must be 300 words or less, and must be submitted by Tuesdays at noon. Email is preferred; send to bulletin@glcitizen.com. All letters must be signed, and include the writer's town of residence and daytime contact phone number. Writers are limited to one letter per week. Anonymous letters will not be published. All letters are subject to editing for grammar, spelling and clarity, and are also subject to fact-checking. No form of harassment or personal attack (such as bullying or name-calling) will be tolerated. There is no guarantee that all letters will be published.

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For more information on the efforts to preserve the Raymond Brook Watershed, our finite supply of clean drinking water, and the irreplaceable historic features at 17 Kinney Road, please visit Save Hebron Center on Facebook and #Save17.

Sincerely,
Kevin J. Tulimieri – Amston

Get Engaged

To the Editor:
If time doesn't permit you to attend Town Council meetings or maybe you are not comfortable in speaking during a public meeting, now you have a more comfortable way to express your thoughts, concerns and to let your voice be heard! The Town Council recently implemented a way for our citizens to record an audio message or video to express their thoughts on town initiatives.

How does it work? Below is the link to access from our Town website under the tab "Submit a video or Record audio comment" to the Town Council. Your video or audio message will be read during Public Comments and recorded into Public Record.

Let your voice be heard and let the Town Council know what your thoughts are as we go through the budget season. It is up to you East Hampton to voice your thoughts and concerns this budget season.

<https://vocalvideo.com/c/town-of-east-hampton>

Remember it is your money, your family and your town! Get engaged!

Respectfully,
Deb Cunningham, Member
East Hampton Town Council

Reflection on Trump

To the Good and Decent People of America:
The "Thousand Year Reich" came out of the shadows with the Jan. 6th strike against our country. The dark army, summoned by our former president, violently marched into the Capitol with the intention to subvert the election and destroy our Constitution. Awaken and arise, beloved citizens. You cannot afford to sit this one out. We must resist the emerging Trump dictatorship. Trump has stated that martial law will be declared at the onset of his next presidency. The military shall be employed to enslave the populous, remove our freedoms. One must also assume that all personal firearms will be collected to quell any chance of revolt. This was done in 1933 when Hitler came to power in Germany.

We must stop the GOP Gestapo, which has organized to engage in retribution against all opposition against the Trump machine. We previously witnessed actions against blue states. We must condemn the Republican legislators and senators who have laid siege and stifled all progress with the goal of making a Trump administration look superior. Such blatant inaction supports the Trump-Putin alliance to destroy Ukraine. Such blatant inaction halts reasonable reform on immigration, abortion rights, and gun control etc. Inaction is dangerous to our national security. Belligerent anti-progress staged to amplify hateful conflict with the Biden Democratic Agenda threatens to nullify any semblance of government. We will soon see if the Supreme Court will buckle to the NAZI threat as Trump has claimed immunity to prosecution with both his insurrection and 14th Amendment challenges.

Our duty is clear. We must resist and oppose the Republican poison in local, state, and federal elections. Vote them out now or fight them in Civil War later. Vote for democracy, vote like hell, or you won't have a country left.

Spencer Killian – East Hampton

Liberals' Lack of Understanding

To the Editor:
Apparently having "two math degrees" is supposed to carry some kind of gravitas, like the intellectual version of urinating on a tree to mark your territory. Unfortunately, in the end, you still risk urinating on your feet. Case in point... Scott Sauyet.

Liberals consistently show a complete lack of understanding...of everything. "Most people are better off" is a Sauyet statement that will live in infamy as another fallacious liberal talking point. Scott apparently doesn't leave his house, and gets all of his information from either Rachel Maddow or from on-line, politically biased data bases.

His comments about inflation are misleading, and wrong. In 2020-23, inflation surpassed 10% (conservatively speaking) after being <2% under Trump. Did you try buying anything? Cars, groceries, garden supplies, oil, gas, electricity, a house? Now that inflation is dropping after 4

years of devastation, liberals rationalize the outcome (while blaming Trump). It's like the husband who's been sleeping with the babysitter for 4 years and tells his wife, "Don't worry, honey. I've stopped sleeping with her so let's just forget about it and move on". That requires a very dumb wife...and a really ballsy husband.

And Scott, please, don't talk about lumber. It's like you're wearing a t-shirt that says "Kick Me". You're an academic with keyboard hands. I buy lumber. A lot. Trump's tariffs had their greatest effect in 2017-19, not 2020-23, and they only scratched the surface. In 2019, 16 foot, pressure treated 2x12 boards were \$32. In 2020 they were \$84. Now, \$45. Do your math degrees cover addition and subtraction, or just integrals, second derivatives, and matrices? Your assessment of Trump's tariffs, like most liberal assessments, is biased, unfair, and misleading. But what should we expect from the co-chair of the Andover Democratic Town Committee? #phonyandclueless

Undauntedly,
Ed Kozlowski – Colchester

Our Tax Dollars at Work

To the Editor:
I recently read that a hotel in New York City had an overflow of illegal immigrants imported by that Washington idiot named Joe. I looked into it and found that the Roosevelt Hotel had 1,000 rooms booked, filled with illegal immigrants, mostly from Venezuela. Venezuela is 1,600 miles from Miami and nearly 4,000 miles from New York City! How do these "poor" people get to our country? These illegals also get three free meals a day, free clothes and a free cell phone. Now they can call their friends in Venezuela to come and join them. They have been living in that luxury hotel for six months! There is no timeline for removal. This could be their permanent home! Who would want to leave? These rooms go for \$250 a night! At that rate we taxpayers are paying about \$100,000 per year for each illegal!

That's only one hotel in one city. I spoke with a friend a few days ago that attends different fishing shows to promote his fishing lures. He told me he just tried to book a room in a city in Florida, but the rooms were all filled with you know what! How many more hotels are filled to capacity with these criminals?

Does Connecticut have any? Yes, 113,000. Most are from Mexico, Guatemala, Brazil, Ecuador, India and Asia. I don't speak Spanish but it won't be too long before we all will need to speak Spanish.

Why do our senators and other politicians allow this? Why is Joe not in prison? I could go on and on, but it's useless!

Remember to Flush the Toilet this November!
Frank Blume – Colchester

Democracy

To the Editor:
Is democracy fragile and easily destroyed, or flexible and resilient? Imagine a circle. At the top is totalitarianism. At the bottom is chaos. Through the middle of the circle is the temperate zone. It respects the concept that those ruled ought to have a say in their rulers, that rulers should be accountable to rule of law, that the judiciary, those interpreting and implementing the laws, should not be controlled by a dictator, and that freedom of religion, freedom to debate, and freedom of peaceful assembly are sacrosanct. From chaos, there are two big arrows going all the way up to dictatorship, one on the right and one on the left, you can get there either way. Witness a breakdown of the institutions that keep things running – the supply chain, the tax department, healthcare, the schools – and chaos will be the result. [Dictators] say things like, burn it all down, and only I can fix it. How close are we to the great, big arrows? In the United States, too close.

The extremist right already has a plan to make Donald Trump dictator for life, and it includes widespread purges and the bringing of all branches of government under the direct control of the president. This is to be done in the name of a faux Christian ideology, which bears as much relation to the core tenets of Christianity as gravel does to breakfast. Those working to enact this plan will attempt to weaken or abolish as many democratic institutions as they can, so they can say, look, democracy doesn't work. It's broken. What is the antidote? Educate people about the hazards, strengthen essential democratic institutions, diminish the possibility for chaos by combating the effects of climate change and enabling a more widespread material prosperity. Call the bluff. (Excerpts from *Democracy* by Margaret Atwood via Financial Times on YouTube)

Annie Steinbrecher – Marlborough

Art on the Wing

To the Editor:
Of the most beautiful mammals found in the Americas, the hoary bat should be at the top of the list. It has dark, silvery, luxuriant fur tinged with white, producing a hoarfrost effect, a buffy yellow throat patch, and a stunning two-toned wing pattern like an art-deco design.

Hoary bats (*Lasiurus cinereus*) are relatively large, weighing between 20 – 35 grams. They are uncommon but widespread throughout most of North America and ranging into Central America. They are also found in southeastern Canada, and sub-species inhabit Hawaii, Bermuda, and Iceland. They feed primarily on moths, beetles, flies, and crickets.

Except for females with young, hoary bats roost solitarily in trees. They hang out in the leaves and use their furry tail membrane to wrap themselves up, typically hanging from one foot, thus resembling a dry leaf. Their grey-white coloration and furred tail membrane are excellent adaptations for this lifestyle.

The hoary bat is a migratory species. Instead of spending the cold months hibernating in caves and such, this solitary bat travels to warmer southern states. Hoary bats undergo this seasonal migration from summer ranges across most of North America to southern and coastal winter habitats. Hoary bats will also hibernate for short periods of time.

The echolocation calls of hoary bats are just above maximum human hearing range. In addition, they produce may short 'micro calls'; they also sometimes fly and navigate without using echolocation.

Wind turbine collisions are a major conservation concern for hoary bats. They make up the largest proportion of bat fatalities at wind energy facilities in North America; the population is predicted to experience severe declines in the next 50 years, though management efforts such as turbine curtailment show promise for reducing this risk.

Other threats include deforestation and human disturbance, particularly in their southern wintering grounds.

Maureen Heidtmann – East Hampton

Conjure

To the Editor:
'Know what they say?... "Every girl's crazy 'bout a sharp dressed man." -ZZ Top. After listening to interviews with Billy Gibbons, I couldn't help but think, sharp dressed men are easy on the eyes, but intelligence, in any person, is far more appealing and Gibbons, apparently, has not only style and intelligence but kindness as well.

Anti-Hebron, a threat to the community, grotesque waste, scenic disappointment and uninformed, do these words conjure up sharply dressed thoughts or ominous associations?

#save17's agenda is crystal clear and appeals to most residents. We want to remain in our homes, in our charming neighborhoods, and with our safe well water intact. Development, of any kind, on the Raymond Brook Watershed threatens our way of life, with or without a Public Works. #save17 also feels it's time for Town Hall to initiate conversations about well water problems and remediation. Water pollution is a multi-billion dollar affliction in the USA. From plumbing to pharmaceuticals, this pollution is readily justified based on huge monetary gains.

But what about history? What kind of personalities feel threatened by town history? Can we, as a nation, justify blocking card table discussions with police cruisers? How troubling our future would look should any politician be free to halt historic discussions. What is it about Hebron's history that could justify political committees feeling uncomfortable? What do their justifications say about them? Humans have shared history for thousands of years through journals, documents, stories and art. Private homes still remain full of family dialogs pertaining to their history.

Does history block progress? Historically, developments increase taxes, destroy farmland and contaminate groundwaters. Words like uninformed, conjure up unappealing truths about mankind's progress, including unnecessarily wasting rural landscapes and drinking water that people are still crazy about all across America. #save17

JeanTulimieri – Amston

Editor's Desk continued from page 4

ponent to their likeability. I can root for the Chiefs and root for Taylor at the same time; a win-win.

Lastly, with spring – hopefully – just around the corner, it's time for high school seniors to think about college scholarships.

And if you're a current or former LGBTQ-IA2S+ student of a Middletown high school (including Mercy, Xavier, and Vinal), there's a new scholarship opportunity for you.

Middletown Pride, in collaboration with the City of Middletown's LGBTQIA2S+ Commission, is accepting applications for its first-ever Middletown Pride Scholarship Program. This will be a one-time scholarship in the amount of at least \$1,000 awarded for education expenses, including tuition, books & supplies, and/or room & board.

To be eligible, you have to be a student at one of those schools mentioned above, and are currently enrolled, or plan to be enrolled,

in an accredited college or university for undergraduate or graduate studies.

Applications will be reviewed and selected by a sub-committee of the City of Middletown's LGBTQIA2S+ Commission, involving commissioners and community members.

For applications, go to www.middletown-pride.org/middletown-pride-scholarship-program. Completed applications must be received no later than Friday, March 15.

Winners will be notified after April 19, and scholarships will be awarded during the Pride Rally at Middletown PrideFEST on Saturday, June 1. Recipients must be present in person to accept the award.

For more information, contact LGBTQ-IA2S+ Commission staff member Christopher Forte at 860-638-4820 or Christopher.Forte@MiddletownCT.gov.

See you next week.

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School Budget Q&A

The Andover Board of Education will hold a public question and answer session on the proposed 2024-25 budget on Wednesday, Feb. 7, at 7 p.m. over Zoom. The Meeting ID is 872 2061 0398, and the passcode is 200920.

Commission, Committee Members Needed

Any Andover elector interested in serving on one of the following committees or commissions should send a letter of interest via email to townclerk@andoverct.org:

Capital Improvement Plan Committee, Economic Development Commission, Ethics Commission, Inland Wetlands Commission alternate, Ordinance Review Committee.

Vendors, Bakers Needed

Vendors and bakers are needed for the annual senior luncheon fundraiser to be held Sunday, Feb. 4, from 9 a.m.-2 p.m., at Andover Elementary School, 35 School Rd.

For more information, contact Cathy at 860-916-6122 or nanasworld@comcast.net. All money received goes to supporting the senior luncheon program.

Preschool Openings

The Andover Elementary School Early Learning Center is accepting applications for preschool students for the 2024-25 school year. Andover's preschool program is full-day. Before- and after-school care is available.

Children who will be age 3 on or before Dec. 31, 2024, are eligible to attend.

The Andover Elementary School Early Learning Center receives funding for reduced tuition rates from two state grants: The School Readiness grant and the Smart Start grant.

Call Taylor Parker for more information or contact the school office at 860-742-7339 to obtain a registration packet, or download one at www.andoverelementaryct.org.

Town Hall Closed

The Town Office Building will be closed Monday, Feb. 12, for Lincoln's Birthday, and will also be closed Monday, Feb. 19, for Presidents' Day.

Scholarship Opportunity

The East Hartford Garden Club has announced the availability of one \$1,000 scholarship to any full- or part-time student who is a resident of Andover, Bolton, Bloomfield, Coventry, East Hartford, East Windsor, Glastonbury, Manchester, Middletown, Vernon, Storrs or Windsor Locks.

The student must plan on majoring in horticulture, floriculture, landscape design, conservation, forestry, environmental concerns, botany and other allied subjects.

Applications with the submittal instructions are available at the guidance department of the attending school. All completed applications must be received by April 1 to be considered.

Andover Senior Trip

The Andover Seniors will go to the Aqua Turf Club in Plantsville on Tuesday, March 12, from 11 a.m.-3:30 p.m., for a St. Patrick's Day Celebration.

The celebration will feature the McLean Avenue Band and Irish Step Dancers. Family-style corned beef and cabbage and baked cod will be served.

The cost for any Andover senior is \$30; payment must be received by Feb. 19 to reserve your seat. Transportation will be provided from the Town Office Building on School Road.

LEGAL NOTICE ANDOVER BOARD OF ASSESSMENT APPEALS

Notice is hereby given that the Board of Assessment Appeals of the Town of Andover will be in session in the Community Room, Town Office Building, 17 School Road on the dates listed below. The purpose of the hearings is to appeal assessments placed on the October 1, 2023 Grand List for Real Estate, Personal Property pursuant to Section 12-111 of the General Statutes of the State of Connecticut and Supplemental Motor Vehicles for the 2022 Grand List. Applicants must fill out an appeal form and the last day for appeal form to be received by the Town Clerk's Office is February 20, 2024.

The dates for the sessions are as follows:
Saturday, March 2, 2024, 9 a.m. to 12 p.m.
Monday, March 4, 2024, 5 p.m. to 7 p.m.
Monday, March 11, 2024 5 p.m. to 7 p.m.
Wednesday, March 13, 2024 5 p.m. to 7 p.m.
Monday, March 18, 2024 5 p.m. to 7 p.m.
Saturday, March 23, 2024 9 a.m. to 12 p.m.

All appeals are by appointment only. Appellants will be notified, in writing by mail of their appeal hearing date and time.
Andover Board of Assessment Appeals
Linda Armstrong
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Input Sought for POCD

By Michael Sinkewicz

Andover officials are looking to update the town's Plan of Conservation & Development (POCD) – and they need your help.

Every municipality across the state is required to amend or adopt a POCD at least once every 10 years, as per state statute

Andover's Planning & Zoning Commission (PZC) has initiated the process of updating its own document, and will solicit feedback from local boards, such as the Economic Development Commission and Board of Selectmen.

But community input represents a valuable asset that should also be incorporated into the final draft, according to Andover's town planner, John Guskowski.

The goal is to adopt the new plan in 2025, which ensures plenty of time to seek insight and guidance from residents, he explained. To help advance that mission, the town recently rolled out a new survey that will allow people to share their thoughts and provide "a sense of where the Andover community is."

"It's an opportunity for residents to sound off and have their voices heard," said Guskowski,

who serves as town planner on a consulting basis.

The survey, which includes 16 questions, can be found online at www.surveymonkey.com/r/AndoverPoCD and additional questions or comments can be sent to planner@andoverct.org.

Andover's POCD was last updated in 2015, and includes a "laundry list" of items that cover a variety of municipal visions and goals, addressing issues of infrastructure, housing, open space, schools and agriculture.

Developing the plan is the responsibility of each municipality, and public hearings will be held before the final version is ultimately implemented. The survey is a piece of the overall process of updating the POCD, which is part of the reason its launch is happening long in advance.

"There's a lot of time to begin the conversations and not rush it," Guskowski said.

He indicated that the survey will likely remain live for at least a few months, which will maximize community engagement. The results will hopefully lead to "prioritization" and identify areas residents want to address or focus on over the next decade.

"It forces some choices," Guskowski said.

For example, one question asks the respondent to rank seven different economic development priorities; the choices include options such as "more retail along Route 6 (grocery, pharmacy, convenience)," and "focusing on growing existing small businesses."

Others explore, "What types of housing should be provided in Andover?" and for individuals to rank different priorities for town investment, including alternative energy sources, recreational fields and upgrades to roads, bridges and culverts.

The survey allows residents to rate numerous issues, such as climate change, crime and affordability, on a scale ranging from "very concerned" to "not concerned at all."

There are also open-ended questions that allow respondents to flesh out certain ideas in greater detail. Those questions include, "What is something you hope will happen in Andover

over the next ten years?" and, "What is something you are worried about in Andover over the next ten years?"

The results will become a "data point" for officials to reference and assimilate into their work moving forward.

Upon its approval, the POCD can potentially have a major influence on town decisions. Any significant policy change, Guskowski explained, "will need to conform with the plan."

If the town attempts take actions that directly conflict with the POCD, "it'll be a problem."

"Statements of the [POCD] became policy that's carried forward," he said.

When seeking federal and state funding, "the presence of those goals goes a long way in ensuring it's delivered," Guskowski added, explaining that the town is more likely to secure grants when the project is aligned with the overarching themes outlined in a POCD.

Senior Lunch Fundraiser Sunday
 Andover's annual senior lunch fundraiser will be held Sunday, Feb. 4, from 9 a.m.-2 p.m., at the Andover Elementary School gym, 35 School Rd.
 There will be vendors, baked goods, raffles, baskets, crocheted and knitted articles, jewelry, postcards, food from Chili's, and more. Money raised supports the senior luncheon program held bi-monthly.
 For more information – or if a senior and in need of transportation – contact Cathy Palazzi, senior coordinator, at 860-916-6122 or nanasworld@comcast.net.

Vacancy on Finance Board
 Any Andover elector who is interested in serving on the Board of Finance should send a letter of interest to: Town of Andover, c/o Board of Finance vacancy, 17 School Rd., Andover, CT 06232, or email a letter to townclerk@andoverct.org.

Take Your Child to the Library Day
 Andover Public Library is celebrating Take Your Child to the Library Day Wednesday, Feb. 21, at 6 p.m., at the library, 355 Route 6. Mr. Magic (also known as attorney Richard Rothstein) will perform.
 Though the show is geared more towards kids, all ages are invited to this free program. For more information, call 860-742-7428.

A History of Huskies Hoops
 All are invited to "A History of Huskies Hoops" with author Marty Gitlin on Tuesday, Feb. 13, at 6:30 p.m., at Andover Public Library, 355 Route 6.
 This presentation will celebrate the history of the UConn basketball teams. Gitlin will talk about great Huskies players over the years, and will include trivia questions and a Q&A at the end of the program.
 RSVP is requested for planning purposes, by calling 860-742-7428.

Kindergarten Registration
 Andover Elementary School is registering kindergarten students for the 2024-25 school year. Andover's kindergarten program is full-day.
 Parents of children who will be age 5 on or before Sept. 1, 2024, are asked to contact the school office at 860-742-7339 to obtain a registration packet or access it at www.andoverelementaryct.org.
 Parents choosing to have their child attend an alternative kindergarten or not attend school until the following year, and parents who will be home-schooling, are asked to inform the school of this decision.

Senior Citizen News & Notes
 The following items have been updated for Andover seniors, veterans, and disabled. If you want to attend any events, call senior coordinator Cathy Palazzi 860-916-6122 to register. Transportation is available for all events. For all Young at Heart events, including movies, call Sue Schmidt at 860-604-1057, and call Town Clerk Carol Lee at 860-742-0188 ext. 2 for all trip information. For all senior events and information, visit the senior page of the town website, andoverct.org.
 Note: Senior transportation calls are now only heard from 9 a.m.-noon. If you call at any other time, leave your name, phone number, date, time and address of your appointment. A return call will be given within 24 hours.
Senior Luncheons: Fridays, Feb. 2 and 16, at noon, at the Town Hall community room; no walk-ins accepted. On 2/2, lunch will be soup, salad, dessert and beverages. Jed Larson will

be there to speak to seniors on the town's Plan of Conservation and Development project for 2025. On 2/, the menu will be beef, shrimp and chicken, black beans, rice, dessert and beverages. Speaker will be Scott Yeomans, showing his latest photography.
Rides to Food Pantry: The bus is available for the food pantry on Mondays at 5 p.m. and for the Wednesday Foodshare or food pantry – all of which take place at Andover Congregational Church.
Transportation Available: Calling Palazzi for rides to the following: Food Pantry, on Mondays at 5 p.m.; shopping on Tuesdays to either Manchester or Willimantic; on Wednesdays to Foodshare or food pantry; to Young at Heart meetings the first and third Wednesdays of the month, and to movies once a month; and to senior lunches Fridays.

'Souper Bowl' Grinder Sale
 Andover Congregational Church, located at 359 Route 6, will hold its 31st annual Souper Bowl Grinder Sale Sunday, Feb. 11. Pick-up will be from 11 a.m.-1 p.m., at the church.
 Grinder selections are ham, turkey or tuna. Or perhaps you'd like a garden salad. All options include chips and a soda. There will also be chili, in quarts.
 Also this year, the church will offer whole

Congregational Church News
 Andover Congregational Church, UCC, located at 359 Route 6, invites all ages to worship Sundays at 10 a.m. The service also streams live on the church's Facebook page (First Congregational Church, Andover, CT). For more information, call the church office at 860-742-7696, email andoverctchurch@gmail.com or visit www.andoverctchurch.org.
Children's Church: Sunday school is provided.
Food Pantry: Mondays from 5-7 p.m. Bring your own bags. The **Foodshare Van** comes to the church every other Wednesday from 9-9:30 a.m.; the senior food pantry is open the opposite Wednesdays, also from 9-9:30 a.m.
AA Meetings: Saturdays and Mondays, 7 p.m.
Sonshine Stammers: Thursdays, 9:30 a.m.

Library Friends Annual Appeal
 The Andover Friends of the Library group is holding its annual campaign in support of the library. The Friends ask all community members, including the already lifetime members, to consider joining, renewing and donating.
 A donation is required to become a member of this 501(c)(3c) nonprofit organization: \$3 for senior or student; \$5, individual; \$10, family; \$25, business; \$150, lifetime; and \$500, patron.

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It's so much easier to prevent a dental tragedy than have to treat it when it turns serious. Place your oral health in our capable hands. We'll work together as a team with you to achieve the long-term benefits that quality dentistry affords. You can trust us to help you keep on top of a healthy dental profile that will serve you well into your future. For routine dental maintenance visits to late-breaking emergencies, give us a call.

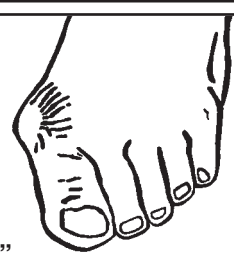
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Schools Chief Presents \$8.66M Budget Proposal

By Michael Sinkewicz

Marlborough Superintendent of Schools Holly Hageman presented her proposed budget for the 2024-25 fiscal year, requesting an \$8.66 million spending plan — a \$226,893, or 2.69%, increase over current-year spending.

In addition, Hageman called for a \$75,000 capital plan — \$10,000 less than the current budget — that would address three projects at Elmer Thienes-Mary Hall Elementary School.

Following her initial presentation in front of the Board of Education (BOE) last week, Hageman will return to answer questions on Wednesday, Feb. 7, when the school board will look to adopt its formal spending plan.

While the school chief said she hadn't reviewed what other local districts had proposed for the upcoming fiscal year, Marlborough's increase "is probably in pretty good standing relative to our neighbors."

In Hebron, for example, the superintendent submitted a proposal for a 7.35% increase, although that figure may ultimately decrease in the weeks ahead.

Hageman asserted that the main budget drivers for the 2024-25 year are health benefits, contractual increases and staffing changes.

Each of the three member towns in Region 8 — Hebron, Marlborough and Andover — rely on its regional health and medical insurance consortium, which sets health insurance premium rates. Accordingly, each town will be levied with the same figure, which increased significantly for the upcoming budget season.

For now, the rate is set to increase 16.5% due to "very heavy claims" during the 2023-24 fiscal year, according to Hageman. In total, health benefits account for 9.3% of the spending plan.

"It could go down," she said, referring to the consortium's proposed rate hike. "But I wouldn't be banking on it."

Hageman explained that in the current fiscal year, the rate increased 1.5%; it dropped by 6% in 2022-23 and it remained flat in 2021-22. In order to prevent the rate from reaching a 20% increase for the upcoming fiscal year, the consortium tapped into its reserves to mitigate the burden on the school districts.

The new rate was penciled in under the assumption that claims would remain high, Hageman added, meaning that the figure likely won't escalate further.

"I'd like to think it won't go up," she said.

Other increases packaged into the budget include contractual obligations for salaries, utili-

ties, transportation, heating oil and fuel. A new bus contract would result in 6% increase, but that figure may dip as the negotiation reaches its final stage.

There are a few notable staffing proposals that would bolster the district, Hageman said, including a part-time — .45 full-time equivalent (FTE) — pupil services director, an additional registered behavior technician (RBT) for the school's applied behavior analysis program (ABA), and two new paraeducators.

The pupil services position was eliminated six years ago, and its reinstatement would allow the administrative team to shift back to its traditional responsibilities.

"What we're seeking to accomplish," Hageman said, "is to have the building administrator's roles return to what principals do."

Principals, she explained, should be overseeing programs and interacting with students both inside and outside the classroom.

Principal Dan White and Assistant Principal Kim Kelley were tasked with overseeing certain areas, such as special education, which they did successfully. But without their institutional knowledge, Hageman said "the district might've had some difficulties and might've made some mistakes."

The additional RBT would further solidify what Hageman described as a "bonafide ABA program." Marlborough currently employs two RBTs that are fully funded through a state grant; the district had requested three positions, and ultimately received funding for two employees.

By strengthening the program, the district will be able to limit the number of student out-placements as well.

"The more we can serve our students in-house, the better; better for them, and better for the budget," Hageman said.

Over the past two years, there has been one out-of-district placement, which is expected to drop to zero for the next school year — "that's a major budget saver," she said.

"We're able to keep children at their home school with their peers exceptionally well."

In 2023-24, the district budgeted for one pre-K section, but ended up running two instead; the additional preschool teacher has been built into the upcoming fiscal year spending plan. However, the overall amount of class sections and teachers across the district will remain steady at 25, after the district shuffled the personnel in grades K-6.

The state legislature recently passed Public Act 23-208, which changed the birth cutoff date for kindergarten enrollment from Jan. 1 to Sept. 1. Accordingly, any child turning five on Sept. 2, 2024, through Sept. 1, 2025, will join kindergarten in the 2025-26 school year. Parents can also submit requests for their child to be admitted through a screening done by school personnel.

Through its expanded pre-K offerings, Marlborough will likely be able to adjust to the new legislation without significant issue. Its program incorporates space for special needs students, seats for peer models and additional room for those who are no longer eligible for kindergarten for the 2024-25 school year.

"Here we'll be in very good shape and we're fortunate for that, but it's a real challenge in other communities," Hageman said.

In total, 14 children in Marlborough could potentially fall into the time period that would impact their kindergarten enrollment.

"This is a real substantial change for the families that this impacts," Hageman said. "We're not going to force any children to stay in pre-k that otherwise would've been age-eligible because that's just not a nice way to interact with families."

Across the state, thousands of children could be affected by the change, and districts are having to work through their own transitions. Hageman expressed that perhaps the state could've provided a universal pre-K program to ease some of the expected complications.

"For families to potentially need to pay for another year of pre-K is a real hardship for a lot of families without a real backup plan on the state level," she said.

The district's overall enrollment is expected to remain relatively flat compared to the current school year before growing over the next 10 years. One BOE member asked if future apartment complexes being developed in town would affect the projections. Based on Hageman's conversations with the town planner, the projects

aren't expected to change future enrollment.

"That is a question mark," she expressed. "There's no real way to know."

For the capital plan, Hageman listed three different projects totaling \$75,000. She stated that the items were coordinated with the town manager.

The district is requesting funding to finish waterproofing the brick exterior of the elementary school; it's a four-year project that began during the 2021-22 school year and \$30,000 earmarked in the 2024-25 proposal.

Next, the district needs to replace four doors and door frames, costing \$20,000. Previously, the district spent \$51,000 to replace 10 other doors. And to repair sidewalks outside of the school, Hageman requested \$25,000.

Budget Breakdown

Contractual personnel salaries for administrators and teachers will cost the district \$4.59 million — an increase of \$142,598, or just over 3%.

Non-certified salaries, including those for office and technology support, paraeducators, custodians and nurses, spiked to \$1.55 million — 9%, or \$127,875 more than the current fiscal year.

Employee benefits went up .52%, landing at \$1.13 million.

Purchased professional services, including AHM Youth and Family Services, decreased by around 4%, for a total of \$236,942 in the 2024-25 budget.

Purchased property services — covering electricity, sewer/water and contracts for facility maintenance — accounts for \$341,090 in the budget — an increase of around \$22,000, or nearly 7%.

Other purchased services, including the bus contract, liability insurance and tuition, decreased by nearly 9%, or \$50,000, for a total of \$521,370.

Supplies account for \$276,327 — a drop of over 4%.

Cover Story • Cover Story • Cover Story • Cover Story • Cover Story • Cover

★ Dog Sled Racer cont. from page 1

her team, and over the years, Tucker has become somewhat of an expert. Training can be done on an ATV, which helps the dogs build muscle.

Tucker was on an ATV back in October 2008 when she had that near-fatal crash. While she doesn't remember any details, according to a 2013 Patch article, the accident left her "laying in a pool of blood on the road, completely non-responsive." She was rushed to the hospital and placed on a ventilator for four days. When they tried unhooking her, she crashed and was immediately put back on life support.

Tucker had bleeding in her skull, a large laceration on the outside, her brain had been pushed forward, and she'd sustained a fracture to her right clavicle bone. The prognosis, to put it bluntly, was grim.

But she somehow survived; according to Patch, "Doctors still don't know how she did it." After a recovery of several months, she was back to racing her dogs — with her ultimate goal being to compete in larger, more prestigious races.

Eventually, she was able to accomplish that mission.

The Ultimate Team Sport

Tucker competed in the Can-Am Crown International Sled Dog Race 250 eight times, with her best result coming in 2015 and a fifth place showing.

The race is entirely unassisted, meaning that for the duration of the run, it's solely the team involved.

It takes roughly two days to complete, including checkpoints, which are periods that allow the team to temporarily recharge.

"It's the ultimate team sport," Tucker said. "Winning for me is just finishing."

She recalled the 2019 contest that featured

temperatures of 25 degrees below zero and 55 mph winds that basically blew the team off the trail.

During one checkpoint, Tucker had put jackets on the dogs but the straw used to allow the dogs to comfortably lay down was also blowing away. She wondered if it would be wise to drop out of the race, but then she examined her team, who seemed to disagree.

"They looked so happy," Tucker recalled. "So I said, 'Let's go!'"

And that's why trusting your team is important, she asserted.

The decision to retreat back to Connecticut constitutes a "reset period." Tucker will hang onto her home in Fort Kent, but she needed a break from racing. On top of the toll of competitions, she also worked full-time as a veterinarian technician and handled the maintenance of her property.

After 96 total races, a recess is understandable. (Previously, Tucker's only break had been when she was recovering from her accident.) And the dogs who all made the journey south will get some extra rest as well.

"They get more time with me," Tucker explained.

Her relationship landed her in Hebron, but she knew that a return to the Nutmeg State in general was fitting.

"Connecticut is still my home," she said. "This is where we started."

Perhaps by 2025, the itch to hit the trails will start to grow and become too irresistible to pass up. Tucker expressed that she "knows I'm not done racing." But for now, it's time to reflect.

Sometimes in the moment it's difficult to fully digest what's happened and to assess the significance of her accomplishments — and the scars picked up along the way.

"I forget all the blood, sweat and tears to get here," she said. "I loved getting up at 3 a.m.; it was a passion."

In New England, you never truly know what to expect. Amongst her "priceless moments," Tucker had to include being chased by a moose.

Parks and Rec Upcoming Programs

Marlborough Parks and Recreation has announced the following. For full program descriptions or to register, visit marlboroughct.reccesk.com and click on "programs," stop by the office at Town Hall, 26 N. Main St., or call 860-295-6203. Classes subject to cancellation if minimum registration isn't met. In-person classes subject to change to virtual based on state regulations.

Youth Programs: Acrylic Landscape Painting: Wednesdays, 3:30-5 p.m., Feb. 14-March 6, at MES, for grades 1 & 2. Fee: \$90/residents, \$95/non-residents.

Safe Sitter: Saturday, Feb. 17, 9 a.m.-2 p.m., at the Marlborough Senior Center, for grades 6-8. Fee: \$110/resident, \$115/non-resident.

Adult Programs: Zumba: Thursdays through Feb. 10, 6:30-7:30 p.m., at MES. There is a \$10/week drop-in fee.

Outsmarting the Bad Guys: Cyber and Phone Security for Seniors: Tuesday, Feb. 6, 3-4 p.m., at Marlborough Senior Center. Fee: \$25/residents, \$30/non-residents.

Adult Programs: Adult Volleyball: Thurs-

days, 8-10 p.m., at MES. Fee: \$5 per week.

Adult Drop-In Basketball: Sundays, 8-10 a.m., through March 31, at MES. Fee is \$5 per week.

Trips: UConn Huskies vs. St. John's Red Storm (Men's Basketball): Saturday, Feb. 3, at Madison Square Garden. Trip includes charter bus, tickets to the game (200 level) and free time in New York. Registration fee is \$180. Bus leaves from Putnam Park and Ride in Glastonbury at 7 a.m.

Boston Bruins vs. New York Islanders: Saturday, March 2, 7:30 p.m., at UBS arena. Trip includes charter bus, cookout before the game, and tickets to the game. Registration fee is \$195. Bus leaves from Putnam park and ride in Glastonbury at 1:30 p.m.

Boston Saint Patrick's Day Parade: Sunday, March 17. Trip includes charter bus, food before the parade, food after the parade, and games and prizes on the bus. Registration fee is \$85. Bus leave from Putnam park and ride at 7:30 a.m.



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Members Sought for Arts Center

The Marlborough Arts Center is accepting renewals of membership as well as new membership registrations. Memberships are valid from Jan. 1 to Dec. 31 of each year. Information and downloadable membership forms are available on the MAC website, www.marlbrougharts.org. Payment can be made by check or by using the PayPal option. Funds collected for membership are a part of keeping the Arts Center running. The center's annual Tag Sale is scheduled

for Saturday, Feb. 3; the Student Art Show will occur in March, and will be followed by the annual Members' Art Show. Musical Fourth Fridays are on the calendar as well as historical presentations and art classes. The Arts Center is a regional nonprofit organization and includes all the towns in the Marlborough area. The Arts Center phone number is 860-467-6353.

Taxes Due

The second installment of taxes for the Oct. 1, 2022, Grand List for real estate, motor vehicles and personal property were due and payable on Jan. 1, 2024 and will be delinquent on Feb. 1. Also due are the motor vehicle supplemental taxes for the Grand List of Oct. 1, 2022. Supplemental bills were mailed in December 2023. Failure to pay on time will be subject to interest of one and one-half percent per month reverting to the due date, or 18% per year. If you do not have a bill, please check online at marlbroughct.net, bill lookup or contact the Tax Office.

Tax payments can be mailed to Tax Collector, Town of Marlborough, P.O. Box 29, Marlborough, CT 06447. They can also be placed in the drop box outside of Town Hall or delivered in person at 26 North Main St. You may also pay online at www.marlbroughct.net with Mastercard, Visa or ACH. The tax collector's office hours are: Monday, Wednesday, Thursday, 8:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m.; Tuesday, 8:30 a.m.-7 p.m.; and Friday, 8:30 a.m.-noon.

Arts Center Exhibit at Town Hall

The Marlborough Arts Center is holding a new exhibit at Town Hall. Featured is artwork by Dianne Gorrick. A resident of East Hampton, Gorrick is a former art teacher at Bacon Academy. Her work has been exhibited throughout Connecticut and has received various awards. Her current display presents a wide range of subject matter, from traditional landscapes to imaginative

themes. This exhibit is open to the public during business hours at the Town Hall: Monday through Thursday, 8 a.m. - 5 p.m. and Fridays from 8 a.m. to noon. The exhibit will continue through June 30. For more information, please check out the website www.marlbrougharts.org, or contact the Arts Center at 860-467-6353, or email marlbroughartscenter@gmail.com.

Congregational Church News & Notes

Sunday Worship and Sunday School at the Congregational Church of Marlborough, United Church of Christ, 35 South Main St., is at 10 a.m. Worship is streamed live every Sunday at mcc.marlbroughchurch.org and recorded for later viewing at the website. Childcare for infants and toddlers is provided downstairs in the nursery but children are always welcome at the worship service. All children in the community are invited to attend Sunday School. Contact Gwen Lawson at the church office at office@marlbroughchurch.org for more information. **Sunday, Feb. 4** is a Communion Sunday. At Marlborough Congregational Church, Holy Communion is open to all, regardless of church affiliation, including children, with parental guidance. The bread used is gluten free. The worship service will be led by the Rev. Valerie Seaver. Her sermon title is "That Is What He Came to Do." **Faith Formation (Bible Study)** is led by Seaver and meets Thursdays at 10:30 a.m. upstairs in the lounge. All are welcome. **Outreach:** Donations will be received Feb. 4 and 11 for the Church World Services blan-

ket appeal. CWS provides blankets to people in need, in the United States and throughout the world, who are affected by natural disasters. The church collects non-perishable food items year-round for Marlborough Food Bank with a basket located in the narthex for Sunday worshippers to bring their donations. The Drive-Thru Café for Marlborough Food Bank patrons with vouchers is held monthly at the church. **AA:** The church sponsors three scheduled meetings: Wednesdays and Thursdays at noon in the Youth Room, and Thursdays at 7:30 p.m. in the Great Hall. **ACA:** Meets in the Youth Room Tuesdays at 7:30 p.m. **Second Blessings Thrift Shop:** Will reopen Friday, Feb. 2, from noon-3 p.m. The shop sells year-round through eBay at bit.ly/MCCebay. **General Info:** Worship services and programs are open to all. The church is an Open and Affirming faith community. For more information on the church or its programs, call Seaver's direct line at 860-295-0432 or email pastorval@marlbroughchurch.org.

Pre-Kindergarten Screening Information

All public school systems in Connecticut are responsible for the identification of children who may be eligible to receive special education services. The Early Childhood team at Marlborough Elementary School is accepting applications for current resident children interested in its pre-kindergarten screening for the 2024-25 school year. Eligible children must be 3 or 4 years old by Sept. 1. Parents/guardians interested in their child participating in this process must com-

plete and return a questionnaire no later than Friday, March 8. An in-person screening is planned for early April. Please note that children identified as kindergarten-eligible (those turning 5 by Sept. 1) are not eligible for the pre-kindergarten program for the upcoming school year. Contact Marcy Spellman at 860-295-6236 or mspellman@marlbrough.k12.ct.us for more information or to receive a screening questionnaire.

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. Transportation is Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays; call 36 hours in advance of your appointment to guarantee a ride. **Food Bank:** Located at 3 Wilhenger Drive (860-295-6008), it 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. **Help & Support:** Offered Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday from 10 a.m.-2 p.m. **Congregate Meals:** All meals are served with milk, bread and margarine. Suggested donation: \$3 or what you can afford. Menus are subject to change. **In Case of Bad Weather:** Tune in to WFSB-TV Channel 3 or NBC Connecticut Channel 30 for news on senior center closings or late openings. **Monday, Feb. 5:** 8-Ball Pool, 10 a.m.-noon; Congregate Meal, noon. Menu: smothered

pork chop with gravy, mashed potatoes, peas and carrots, wheat bread/fresh fruit; Bingo, 1-3 p.m.; cards, 3-4 p.m. **Tuesday, Feb. 6:** Meals-on-Wheels, noon; Tai Chi, 1-2 p.m. **Wednesday, Feb. 7:** Not Just Quilting, 9 a.m.-2 p.m.; Meals-on-Wheels, noon; Congregate Meal, noon. Menu: crab cake with Old Bay remoulade sauce, tater tots/ketchup, California blend vegetables, saltine crackers, fresh fruit; Setback, 1-4 p.m. **Thursday, Feb. 8:** AARP Tax Aide, 9 a.m.-noon; Meals-on-Wheels, noon; Tai Chi, 1 p.m.; PD Exercise w/ Anne, 3-4 p.m. **Friday, Feb. 4:** Not Just Quilting, 10 a.m.; 8-Ball Pool, 10 a.m.-noon; Meals-on-Wheels, noon; Congregate Meal, noon. It's National Sweet Potato Month! Menu: grape juice, glazed baked ham w/mustard, cut-up sweet potatoes, mixed vegetables, 100% whole wheat bread, lemon pudding/topping.

St. John Fisher Church News & Notes

St. John Fisher Roman Catholic Church is located at 30 Jones Hollow Rd. Pastor is the Rev. Alvin LeBlanc, Bill Gilles is deacon John McKaig is deacon emeritus. Heather Mancini is church secretary and can be reached at 860-295-0001; hours are Monday-Wednesday and Friday, 8:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m. People are asked to call before heading over or connect via email at stjohnfisher30@yahoo.com. **Weekend Masses:** 4 p.m. Saturday and 8:30 and 10:30 a.m. Sunday. All are welcome. **Weekday Mass:** Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday, 8:30 a.m. **Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament:** Mondays at 9 a.m. **Weekly Sacrament of Reconciliation:** Saturdays, 3-3:30 p.m., or by appointment **Family Faith Formation:** Led by Cindy Bryan, this is an active family faith formation program for the church's kindergarten through elementary school population. Deacon Bill Gilles leads the middle school program. For more information, call the church office. **Confirmation Community:** Led by Helena

Thomas, this is a 9th- and 10th-grade confirmation program. For more information, call the church office. **Adult Worship Choir:** Meets Wednesdays from 5:30-7 p.m. All are welcome to join. More information is 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 is the last Thursday of the month for St. Vincent de Paul in Middletown. Other scheduled service opportunities can be found on the church website and are scheduled monthly. **Other Programs and Offerings:** For more information on other programs, seasonal offerings, adult faith formation, youth group, RCIA, Knights of Columbus or other ministries, call the office, visit www.stjfisherchurch.org, or look for the church on Facebook (Saint John Fisher Roman Catholic Church).

Tag Sale is Saturday

The Marlborough Arts Center will hold its annual Winter Tag Sale Saturday, Feb. 3, from 9 a.m.-2 p.m., in the lower level of the Arts Center at 321 N. Main St. Snow date is Saturday, Feb. 10.

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Longtime Resident Receives Community Service Award

By London Brazal

Middlesex United Way recently honored a well-known resident of East Hampton at its annual meeting. Last Thursday, Jan. 25, Kevin Reich received the Middlesex United Way's 2023 Community Service Award for his decades of volunteer work and service to the nonprofit organization.

The award recognizes individuals who have demonstrated dedication to the community by volunteering and advocating for the nonprofit's mission. The organization's goals reflect the primary concerns of residents and the most pressing human care needs within the county. They also emphasize that education, financial stability, health, housing and racial equity and inclusion serve as the fundamental building blocks essential for any individual to achieve a better quality of life.

Reich is well-known in Belltown, as he spent over four decades as an educator with East Hampton Public Schools. He began as a teacher and later became the assistant superintendent of schools, a role he held for 31 years.

Gary Wallace, the vice chair of Middlesex United Way's executive committee, presented the award. Wallace also happened to have Reich as his fourth-grade math teacher.

"I'm a product of the East Hampton school system," explained Wallace. "Like many other students from East Hampton, we not only had a teacher but we had a mentor and some of us even had a second father."

Wallace added that his parents were grateful for teachers like Reich who made sure students had the resources to become educated citizens.

"We're all friends with him on Facebook. It speaks to his integrity, his hard work and his ability to continue to engage with students and continue to look after us," added Wallace.

Following his retirement from the school system, Reich continued to be heavily involved in the East Hampton community. He dedicated a decade to serving on the East Hampton Town Council, and maintains an active role in the East

Hampton/Marlborough Rotary Club, where he served as president from 2017-2018. Reich has also contributed his time as a member of the St. John Paul II parish finance committee, among other responsibilities.

Reich has supported Middlesex United Way for over 50 years and serves on the nonprofit's Board of Directors. While accepting the award, Reich said he remembers completing the member form in 1972 and joked that it is the one paper he didn't save. "I remember all the information in that packet. I heard it, knew it, and wanted to be a part of it," said Reich.

Volunteering has always been important to him as it was a virtue taught by his parents and grandparents. "I enjoy serving others," he said.

Fellow members of United Way described that his support goes far beyond the generous financial contribution he makes each year, as Reich is usually the first to volunteer for an event, fundraiser, or to serve on a committee. He is also the chair of Middlesex United Way's Community Impact Council, a group of volunteers that oversees the distribution of hundreds of dollars in grants to community partners.

As part of the 2023-24 grant cycle, the council awarded more than \$260,000 to 16 local agencies. They also provided approximately \$8,600 in funding for Connecticut's 2-1-1 Helpline which connects callers with vital resources related to housing, employment, and mental health services.

In addition to his active volunteerism, Reich has been a financial supporter of Middlesex United Way and other nonprofit organizations for decades. Last summer, he helped organize a fundraiser for United Way in partnership with the Top Dog hot dog stand on Route 66 in Portland. He stood by the hot dog stand, holding a Middlesex United Way sign and waving to passing drivers. When patrons would stop by, he'd share United Way's mission and highlight its positive impact on the community. During the lunchtime rush that day, Reich donated a dollar for every hot dog sold. The total donation



Longtime East Hampton resident Kevin Reich received the Middlesex United Way's Community Service Award for 2023. With Reich are president and CEO of Middlesex United Way, Shawonda Swain, and vice chairman of the executive committee, Gary Wallace. Photo by William Hall.

came to \$250 – and he raised additional funds through onsite donations.

Reich said he was grateful to celebrate the work of his fellow volunteers who dedicated their time to Middlesex United Way.

"It takes a team, and this team has done it successfully," said Reich. "There is nothing better than giving; it takes all of us."

Middlesex United Way is a volunteer-driven nonprofit organization dedicated to strengthen-

ing lives, helping people and improving community conditions in the 15 towns in Middlesex County. United Way partners with local agencies and town organizations to provide needed services and programs to find solutions to chronic community problems, such as substance abuse among youth and the need for affordable housing for low-income families. For more information or to get involved, visit middlesexunitedway.org.

Kindergarten Registration

Memorial Elementary School in East Hampton is accepting applications for all children eligible to enter kindergarten in September.

Per new legislation, any child who is five years old on or before Sept. 1, 2024, is eligible to register for Memorial's kindergarten program. If your child will not be 5 by this date but will be 5 by Jan. 1, 2025, and you would like them to attend kindergarten in the 2024-25 school year, you must submit a request for early entry.

Registration packets will be available beginning Wednesday, Feb. 14, in the Memorial School lobby, at East Hampton Public Library, and at www.easthamptonps.org. Completed registration forms are due to the Memorial School office by Thursday, March 28, along with a full-size copy of the child's birth certificate and proof of residency in East Hampton.

In addition, a current health assessment form

must be on file with the school nurse's office by Friday, Aug. 9. Students may not begin kindergarten until vaccination records have been submitted.

Once all completed registration paperwork is returned to Memorial, you will be contacted to schedule a screening appointment for your child.

Screening appointments will be held Monday, May 13; Wednesday, May 15; and Friday, May 17. Appointments will be scheduled for half-hour time blocks between 9 a.m. and 2 p.m. If you have requested early entry to kindergarten for your 4-year-old, you will be also scheduled for an additional assessment on Monday, May 20, or Friday, May 24.

Contact the Memorial School office at 860-365-4020 if you have questions regarding the registration process.

Senior Center News & Notes

East Hampton Senior Center, 105 Main St., announces the following. Registration is 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 Monday through Friday, to ages 60 and up. Call 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; a \$3 donation is requested.

Weekly Activities: **Quilting Group:** Mondays, 9 a.m.; **Mexican Train Dominoes:** Mondays, 9:30 a.m.; **Setback:** Mondays and Thursdays, 1-3 p.m.; **Bible Study:** Tuesdays, 1 p.m.; **Bingo:** Tuesdays, 1-3 p.m., in person and via Zoom; **Yoga with Kitch:** Wednesdays through Feb. 21, 1 p.m. (started Dec. 27; fee is \$20); **Cross-Stitch & Embroidery with Shannon:** Wednesdays, 1:30 p.m. -- Bring projects to share and work on together; **Tai Chi:** Thursdays, 10:30-11 a.m.; **Tap Dance:** Thursdays, 11:15 a.m. **Cribbage:** Fridays, 9:30-11 a.m. -- let the center know in advance if you plan to attend; **Mahjong:** Fridays, 10 a.m.-noon -- call also to put your name on a list if interested in learning how to play; **Textile Group:** Fridays, 1 p.m.

Wii Bowling: Every other Thursday at 11 a.m.; **Cornhole:** Every other Thursday at 11 a.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. Groups meet in-person or via Zoom.

Wonderfully Wicked Women's Group (WWW): First and third Mondays of each month, at 10 a.m. This is an opportunity to meet others and share resources.

AARP Free Tax Aid Program: Appointments start Feb. 5. All appointments will be held on Mondays at the senior center through the end of March. Call or stop by the center to make an appointment. At that time you will be given an intake form to complete and bring with you on the day of your appointment.

Trip: Shop on Your Own at the Meriden Mall: Monday, Feb. 5, 11 a.m.-2 p.m. Cost is a \$4 transportation donation. Pre-registration is necessary.

The Connecticut Flower Show: Thursday, Feb. 22, at the Connecticut Convention Center, Hartford. Depart at 10 a.m. and return at 2 p.m. Cost is \$19 and includes transportation. Lunch is on your own at the event. Register in advance at the senior center.

Volunteer Shopping: The center has a program where a volunteer will shop for you. Call in your list to 860-267-4426 or email it to Jewling@easthampton.gov. The shopper will call you before the drop-off to let you know the cost of the groceries. You can write out a check for the amount, payable to the Town of East Hampton. The volunteer will drop off the groceries at your door and pick up the check in a prearranged designated spot.

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Two New Restaurants to Open in Village Center

By London Brazal

Two new culinary options are coming to the Village Center – and while they’ll feature different tastes, they’re both from the same family.

Pizza on Main and Mateo’s Tacos and Cantina are the two newest additions to the town. They become the fourth and fifth concept under Jessica’s Garden and Lobster Shack in Marlborough; the other two being Burger Heaven and Smooth in Portland.

Matt and Jessica Carroll started Jessica’s Garden 20 years ago in 2004. Jessica said that “food makes the world go round,” and she explained how she always had an interest in the industry. “I was a server, and my mom and I used to cook together,” said Jessica. Matt used to work in restaurant wholesale, and that’s how the couple met.

The Carrolls said they had no intention of expanding after starting Jessica’s Garden but found themselves adding the Lobster Shack some years later. Two years ago, they opened a second location in Portland and they are now getting prepared to open up the third. The Carrolls learned that Main Street Pizza was closing on Facebook and like many residents, were shocked by the news.

“It was a landmark stop, a centerpiece in town,” explained Matt. Being from East Hampton, Main Street was her go-to. Since the space was available, the couple thought it would be beneficial to revitalize the space. With knowledge of what the town lacked, they decided to

bring a Greek-style pizza restaurant and Mexican cantina to the town center.

“We’re local,” Matt added. The couple wanted to help bring local options to residents rather than having to go to other towns such as Glastonbury and Middletown.

Pizza on Main is expected to have a soft opening very soon, offering takeout and delivery. The couple has invested in efficient and reliable technology regarding the delivery component. People can still call in or order online and get an accurate estimated delivery time. No third parties, such as GrubHub, are involved, and all drivers are restaurant employees. There will also be an option to order from both restaurants.

“They are separate identities, but if you want tacos and pizza, you can order them in the same takeout order,” said Matt. Gift certificates will be good for all five restaurants.

Later on, the goal is for Pizza on Main to have a buffet-style pizza and Mediterranean salad bar. The Carrolls described it as a fresh and modern take, ingredients will include a wide variety. The goal of a buffet is for people to enjoy high-quality

food with reasonable prices, they said.

One of the challenges the couple has faced is the increase in costs.

“Everyone likes dining out but the cost has gotten so high. We are trying to create a formula for family dinners that doesn’t break the budget,” said Matt.

With that, a goal of the Carrolls is to highlight family-style dining. “We’re family-oriented; family matters to us,” added Jessica. One of examples of this is at Mateo’s, where folks can purchase a taco kit to bring home and put together with their families.

Though the menus are created by Jessica and Matt, they are looking to rely more on staff to help create authentic and delicious options. The two highlighted the fact that the culinary teams have a variety of strengths.

Ultimately, Matt and Jessica are very excited to open the two new restaurants. By the spring, both could be open for full service.

“We’re excited to help build on what’s already

going on here in the Village Center,” said Matt. They are very grateful for the numerous supporters that have helped them in the process from the town planner to the economic boards and committees. “We’re really grateful for the town government to have such an interest in helping small businesses.”

The Village Center sidewalks are slated to be replaced and construction could happen as early as mid-July. When that project is completed, the Carrolls would like to add outdoor dining.

Another addition the Carrolls are planning is Jessica’s Cottage in Marlborough, an event space at the original location on East Hampton Road. There, people will be able to rent out the space and can cater to any of the five food concepts they offer. There will also be a fire and patio available at the cottage.

For updates about official opening dates, visit Pizza on Main and Mateo’s Tacos and Cantina on Facebook. The restaurants are located at 87 Main St.

Technology Tutoring Sessions

Middle Haddam Public Library, located at 2 Knowles Rd., Middle Haddam, will offer One-on-One Technology Tutoring Sessions with members of the East Hampton High School Interact Club on Tuesdays, Feb. 13 and Feb. 27, from 3-6 p.m.

Sign up for your individual session in advance by calling or emailing the library and bring your cell phone or tablet to the session.

To register or request more information, email middlehaddamlibrary@gmail.com or call 860-267-9093.

Mad Hatter Tea and Paint Party

Epoch Arts will hold a Mad Hatter Tea and Paint Party for students in grades 1-5 on Saturday, Feb. 3, from 1-3 p.m., at Epoch, 27 Skinner St.

Kids will create a painting, dance to music, and eat some food with Alice and her Wonderland friends. Feel free to come dressed as your favorite Wonderland character.

Register at www.epocharts.org/classes-registration.

Bethlehem Lutheran Church News

Sunday services at Bethlehem Evangelical Lutheran Church, located at 1 East High St., are held Sundays at 10 a.m. Bible study precedes the services at 9 a.m., in the Church Hall. Church pastor is Jamie Stall-Ryan.

Boy Scout Bottle Drive

Boy Scout Troop 57 has rescheduled its bottle drive for this Saturday, Jan. 27, from 9 a.m.-noon, at the American Distilling parking lot at 31 East High St., Route 66.

For more information, call Annette Kowalczyk at 860-267-2962.

Future bottle drives will be March 16 and May 18. For updates due to inclement weather, visit tmweb.troopmaster.com/Login/PickSite (choose CT and Unit 57).



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W I N E	Cavit Wines \$12²⁹ (1.5 L)	Stimson Wines \$15⁹⁹ (1.5 L)	Woodbridge Wines \$11⁹⁹ (1.5 L)
	Bota Wines \$19⁹⁹ (3 L box)	Kendall Jackson Vint. Chard. \$12⁹⁹ (750 mL)	Liberty Creek Wines \$8⁹⁹ (1.5 L)

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Federal Funds Available for Local Water

By London Brazal

Recently, U.S. Rep. Joe Courtney's office contacted the town regarding a federal funding opportunity. Specifically, the office was seeking proposals for Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) funding.

The WRDA is a comprehensive water resources development law that authorizes studies and projects within the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Civil Works mission areas. Those include navigation, flood damage reduction, hurricane and storm damage reduction, shoreline protection and ecosystem restoration.

Through WRDA legislation, Congress also provides the Corps with the authority to address water supply needs for cities, agriculture and industry, to support hydropower production, to manage a national recreation program and to address local environmental infrastructure needs, including projects that may be considered non-traditional under the Environmental Infrastructure Authority. The proposed projects would require a 25% non-federal cost share. The town manager's office has put forward three potential projects for funding consideration under the legislation. Courtney will select a few projects from the district to propose, but Congress will make the ultimate decision.

The first proposal was for the East Hampton Water Source Implementation, with an estimated cost of \$28 million. The town operates two small water systems; however, these systems lack the adequate water supply needed to extend water

services to additional customers relying on private wells that face inadequate supply from their ground sources. Additionally, the town's existing water supply for its municipal systems is compromised by contaminants, including PFAS. To address these challenges, the town has conducted extensive studies, modeling, and conceptual design to establish a new water source with sufficient supply to replace the existing sources. This new source aims to facilitate interconnection and expansion of its systems, providing service to thousands of additional households and residents.

The proposed solution involves implementing a water source near the Connecticut River at 49 Oakum Dock Rd. The town has already secured permits for water diversion for this location. A new water treatment facility would be constructed, capable of processing the initial flow of 0.9 million gallons per day from the wells. This source would be interconnected with the existing systems and serve as the foundation for a major expansion, creating a system that caters to the most densely populated areas of town.

The second proposal was for the East Hampton/Colchester Joint Facilities Middletown Avenue Pump Station Rehabilitation project, estimated at \$20 million. This initiative, between East Hampton and Colchester, partners in a regional wastewater treatment facility serving five communities. The Middletown Avenue Pump Station (MAPS) serves as a pivotal component, collecting

and transporting nearly all flow from the five municipalities to the wastewater treatment plant for processing. MAPS handles between one and four million gallons per day but has seen minimal upgrades beyond maintenance and pump replacements since its installation in 1983. The project aims to enhance the station's storage capacity, replace controls and pumping equipment with advanced technology and accommodate current wastewater flow. Additionally, safety measures will be implemented to prevent untreated wastewater backups and surges into the environment.

The last proposal was for the East Hampton Hales Brook Crossing Rehabilitation project, estimated at \$1.5 million. The town intends to replace the current system for Hales Brook crossing under Lake Drive, located on the north side of Lake Pocotopaug. The existing crossing has three grooved metal pipes that have surpassed their service life and are significantly deteriorated, leading to erosion of road material and periodic road failures. Furthermore, the stream crossing's capacity is inadequate, resulting in frequent flooding of the roadway and adjacent residential areas. Construction efforts are further complicated by the presence of other utilities in the vicinity.

The project, identified in the town's FEMA-approved Multi-Hazard Mitigation Plan, entails the removal and replacement of the system for channeling Hales Brook under the roadway. The replacement system will be designed to accommodate a 100-year rain event, thereby enhancing capacity and preventing upstream flooding. This proactive measure will also deter roadway dete-

rioration and alleviate flooding concerns in the area.

Update on Collapsed Culvert

The metal culvert carrying the Safstrom Brook beneath Wopowog Road collapsed following multiple precipitation events in early January. This culvert was deteriorating rapidly and a significant capital project was proposed for the upcoming fiscal year to either line or replace these pipes.

Public Works staff has collaborated with engineering consultants to design a complete replacement using a box culvert system instead of metal pipes. The design and permitting process is being expedited, aiming to produce construction plans, project specifications and a cost estimate within four weeks. Once these documents are ready, the staff will commence pricing the project for prompt construction. The staff has identified a suitable precast concrete box culvert available at a discounted rate from a local firm, as it was left over from a canceled project in another municipality. Furthermore, since the culvert is already manufactured and in stock, the typically lengthy lead times associated with procurement will be bypassed.

Public Works crews continue to regrade and repair roads that were damaged by flooding. However, the onset of icy and freezing conditions has hindered efforts to fully restore the roads. Despite this challenge, all gravel roads remain passable. Further work will be conducted as weather conditions permit.

Haddam Neck Covenant Church News

Haddam Neck Covenant Church, located at 17 Haddam Neck Rd. in East Hampton, invites all to online or in-person worship Sundays at 9 a.m. Pastor is the Rev. Tom Cowger. Refreshments are served after the service. Communion will be served.

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

Children's Ministry: For children in grades K-5, held in Fellowship Hall during the worship

service. The theme is "Friends with God." A toddler nursery is also available. All are welcome.

Vocal Choir: Choir rehearsals are held Wednesdays at 7 p.m. New members are welcome.

Adult Bible Study: Sundays at 10:30 a.m. in the Music Room. The study is on "Fruits of the Spirit."

Office Info: The office can be reached at 860-267-2336; hours are Tuesday and Thursday, 8 a.m.-4 p.m. The church website is www.hncovenantchurch.org.

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 us at easthamptonpubliclibrary.org, or on Facebook at facebook.com/EastHamptonLibrary.

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: Bubbles & Beats!: Mondays, 10:30 a.m., for ages 18 months to 5 years (drop-ins and siblings welcome.); **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 years; **Baby Rhyme Time:** Thursdays, 10:15 a.m., for ages birth to 24 months, and their caregivers.

Nintendo Switch Game Play: Grades 1-5: Saturday, Feb. 10, 2-3:30 p.m. All skill levels welcome. This month, play *Mario Strikers: Battle League* (rated E 10+). This event is free.

Take Your Child to the Library Day: Saturday, Feb. 3. All are invited for a day of hands-on activities and prizes. From 10:30-11 a.m., Family Storytime will take place, for ages 2-6. Read, dance and sing! Then from 1-2 p.m., there will be Ice Cream in a Bag, for all ages. Make your own ice cream.

Teen Programs: Nintendo Switch Game Play: Saturday, Feb. 3, 2-3:30 p.m. Teens in grades 6-12 are invited to pull up a beanless bag chair in the

community room for a big-screen Nintendo Switch hang out. All skill levels welcome.

Lessons in Culinary - A Teen Cooking Class: Tuesday, Feb. 6, 5 p.m., for grades 6-12. Make macaroni and cheese and try a variety of mix-ins.

Middle Grade Dungeons & Dragons One Shot: Wednesday, Feb. 7, 4:30-6 p.m., for grades 5-7. No previous playing experience or past participation required; every program event is a new standalone game in a new world. The library will provide basic, fifth-edition characters; all supplies included.

Teen Movie Matinee: Friday, Feb. 16, 2 p.m., for ages 13 and up. The 2004 movie *Mean Girls* will be shown. Popcorn will be served.

Adult Programs: Cookbook Club - Tea Time: Tuesday, Feb. 6, 6:30 p.m. Come to Wildcraft Herb Shoppe at 70 Main St. in the Village Center for a taste of tea time. Bring a dish you might enjoy with tea at any time of day to share, along with a dozen copies of the recipe.

LibrarYoga with Amie Meacham: Tuesday, Feb. 13, 6:30 p.m. Meacham, a Yoga 200 certified instructor, will lead this hour of gentle yoga. All levels welcome; bring your own mat if you have one and wear comfortable clothes.

Tech Help with Sam & Nicole: Thursday, Feb. 15, 2-4 p.m. Have your technology questions answered. No registration required; just bring your device with you.

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Man Found with Heroin, Cocaine

Upon responding to a report of an unresponsive male, East Hampton Police last week arrested an East Haddam man on drug-related charges.

According to police, officers were dispatched to the Citgo gas station at 32 East High St. (Route 66) on Sunday, Jan. 21, to investigate a report of an unresponsive male slumped over the wheel of his vehicle. Upon arrival, police said, officers spotted a tray of what appeared to be white powder resting on the male's lap.

Officers were able to wake the man, who

was identified as Charles McMahon, 48, of 19 Old Acres Rd., East Haddam. During the investigation, police said officers recovered the following items from McMahon's vehicle:

A plastic tray with loose powder cocaine; a plastic bag containing a 4.02-gram rock of cocaine; a plastic container with razor blades, a metal spoon and straw; and 159 colored wax paper bags (35.61 grams) of heroin.

McMahon was arrested and charged with possession of drug paraphernalia and possession of a controlled substance, police said.

Middle Haddam Public Library News

Middle Haddam Public Library, 2 Knowles Rd., Middle Haddam, has announced the following. To register or more information on any program, email middlehaddamlibrary@gmail.com, visit middlehaddamlibrary.com or call 860-267-9093. The library's P.O. Box number is 123.

Library Hours: Monday and Thursday, 10 a.m.-2 p.m.; Tuesday and Friday, 3-6 p.m.

Mahjong: Mondays at 10:30 a.m. Experienced and new players welcome.

Fiber Arts: Thursdays, 10 a.m.-noon. Bring your spinning wheel, knitting, weaving, embroidery, etc. All are welcome.

Yoga: With Erin Day of Ten Summit Yoga. Mondays at 9 a.m., Tuesdays at 7 p.m., Saturdays at 9 a.m. Cost is a \$15 drop-in fee. Register at tensummitst@gmail.com.

Introducing Pilates: Thursdays at 6 p.m. Cost is \$10 per class. To register, call 203-592-4448 or email abstitt@sbcglobal.net.

Joint Worship for Congregational Churches

Second Congregational Church of Middle Haddam and Haddam Neck Congregational Church will hold joint worship services during February at 10:30 a.m. Sundays at Haddam Neck Congregational Church., 408 Quarry Hill Rd.

On Feb. 4, the Rev. Jack Zappula will preach. Zappula, of Windsor, has served as an ordained minister in the United Church of Christ for 45 years, providing spiritual leadership at local churches in Connecticut and Massachusetts.

On Feb. 11 and 18, guest preacher will be the Rev. John Shaw of Southbridge, Mass., who has provided pulpit supply for local churches in the greater Massachusetts area and served as an in-

tern for United Church of Christ and American Baptist churches. He holds a bachelor's degree in education, a master's degree in education, and a master's degree of divinity.

On Feb. 25, guest preacher will be seminarian Jeff Birch. Birch is a student at Lexington Theological Seminary in Kentucky, where he is in his fifth and final year in the Master of Divinity program there. He is a member of The First Congregational Church in Essex, and the student minister at Niantic Community Church. He lives in Flanders with his partner, Mike, and their two cats.

All are welcome. Visit www.haddamneckcongregationalchurch.org for more information.

Congregational Church News & Notes

The Congregational Church of East Hampton, UCC, located at 59 Main St., is open for 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.

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.

Knights of Columbus State Raffle

The St. John Paul II Council 6190, Knights of Columbus is again offering Connecticut State Council raffle tickets.

There are 10 prizes to be awarded. First prize is \$5,000; second is \$3,500; third is \$2,000; fourth is \$1,500; fifth is \$1,000; sixth is \$600; seventh is \$500; eighth is \$400; ninth is \$300 and tenth is \$200.

The drawing will be held Saturday, April 20, at 9 p.m., at the Hartford Marriott Downtown, 200 Columbus Blvd, Hartford, CT. Ticket holders need not be present to win.

Tickets are \$10 each and may be purchased through any of the Knights of Columbus members or by calling Bob DeMarchi at 860-267-5978.

Police News

1/18: John R. Forbes IV, 36, of 759 Norwich Ave., Colchester, was arrested and charged with violation of a protective order and interfering with an officer, East Hampton Police said.

1/21: Gregory Dixon, 76, of 20 Colchester Ave., was arrested and charged with driving under the influence, police said.

1/29: Kerri Devine, 36, of 4 Summit St., was arrested and charged with third-degree larceny, second-degree identity theft and second-degree failure to appear, police said.

From Jan. 15-28, officers responded to 32 medical calls, 10 motor vehicle crashes and 10 alarms, and made 29 traffic stops, police said.

Local Potter in Exhibit

East Hampton potter and resident John Macomber is participating in the 78th annual Connecticut Artists Juried Exhibition at the Slater Memorial Museum, located at 108 Crescent St. in Norwich.

This exhibit features the best of Connecticut's artists in all forms of media, styles and expressions, both 2-D and 3-D. Macomber's 4 1/2 foot tall, 3-D ceramic sculpture has won the Mary-Ann Hall Prize at the show and will be on exhibit through Feb. 29.



The East Hampton Arts & Culture Commission (EHACC) recently donated a painting titled "The Passage," by East Hampton artist Geralyn Yocher, to Memorial Elementary School. Pictured are Yocher, her daughter Sherisa Yocher and husband Ed Yocher, and EHACC members Mindy Maynard, Melissa Pionzio, Elizabeth Sennett and Carol Lane.

EHACC Donates Painting to Memorial School

The East Hampton Arts & Culture Commission (EHACC) recently donated a painting titled "The Passage," by East Hampton artist Geralyn Yocher, to Memorial Elementary School.

The donation is part of the EHACC Art Purchase Award program, through which a piece of artwork that is created by an East Hampton artist, or depicts an East Hampton scene, is purchased by the commission and then donated to a Town of East Hampton building.

The purpose of the program is to support local artists, while sharing their work with the East Hampton community in public spaces.

In addition to Memorial Elementary, the EHACC has donated paintings to the Historic

Middle Haddam Public Library, East Hampton Youth & Family Services, East Hampton Senior Center, East Hampton High School and Center School.

"The Passage," a whimsical watercolor painting of a hot air balloon hovering over a stand of trees, will be hung in the hallway of Memorial Elementary School near the main office, where students, their families and members of the school staff can enjoy it.

To become a member of the East Hampton Arts and Culture Commission, please email arts@easthamptonct.org or pick up an application at the town manager's office at Town Hall.

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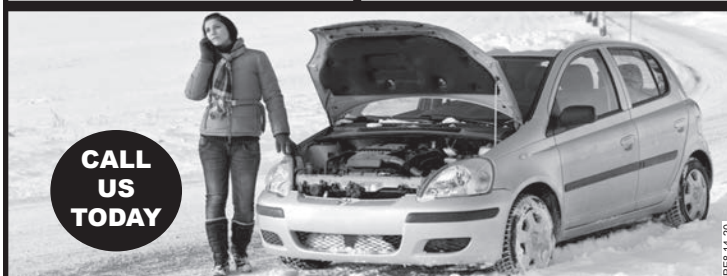


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What a Grand View of the Canyon... The Macdonalds (Rod and Amy) and the Schlossers (Teri and Rod), all of East Hampton, recently visited the Grand Canyon East Rim.



Hello, Orlando!... Nancy, Rachel and David Rumph, of Colchester, brought their *Rivereast* with them on a recent trip to Universal Studios in Orlando, Fla.! They're shown in their hotel room, overlooking the Volcano Bay water park.



To Market, To Market... Claudia Riley and Isabel Tejada of Amston toured central Europe during the festive time of the Christmas markets of Austria, Germany and Switzerland. Here they are standing at the entrance of the Rathaus, the central government building in Munich, Germany's Marienplatz.



From Belltown to Bermuda... Douglas and Laura Harbec of East Hampton recently took a cruise to Bermuda - and brought along the *Rivereast*!

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★ *'Unauthorized' Ambulance cont. from page 1*

The lead time for a new ambulance was roughly two years, the chief wrote, and in its plan, the fire department would look to refurbish ambulance 528 — by changing out the cab and chassis and updating the “box” — in the meantime. Afterwards, the department would look to complete the same refurbishment for its other vehicle, ambulance 628. Those upgrades would be cheaper than replacing those entire trucks.

Overall, if executed in its entirety, the plan would include the renovation of two current vehicles while adding a new ambulance to the fleet.

“The first selectman was in support of the plan moving forward and gave approval to obtain the costs on the cab/chassis as well as the contract costs for the work,” Hoffmann wrote.

During another meeting in September, the need for a purchase order in the amount of \$60,785 to cover the cab and chassis was discussed. On Oct. 16, a purchase order was secured for the cab and chassis and the order was placed. During that meeting, the finance director, according to the memo, indicated that the funding for the new ambulance would come from the ambulance fees account.

Later that month, an updated contract was received, placing the cost of the new vehicle at \$386,750, with a deadline of Oct. 30; afterwards the cost would increase. The document was reviewed and signed by the first selectman, authorizing the process to move ahead.

On Jan. 12, the cab and chassis arrived at the vendor for the new ambulance. Hoffmann reached out to the finance department to follow up on the purchase order for the remainder of the project, since there was now a new administration in town hall.

“During the search for those documents, it was determined that no money had been allocated or allotted for the requests,” he wrote.

On Jan. 17, Dennler and Maggie Cogrove, the town’s finance advisor, met to review the project.

“It was confirmed that a purchase order was issued, but from a 2009 bond account that was no longer valid,” Hoffmann wrote in the memo. “Additionally, there was no general funding allocated for the remainder of the project.”

He added, “It appears this process was never vetted or approved through the Board of Selectmen or Board of Finance but was solely authorized by the prior first selectman and finance director. Upon that determination, it was agreed that the current authorization be canceled immediately due to the lack of appropriate process and funding for the project.”

Hoffmann stated in the memo that the project did not appear to have followed the “normal process.”

“However, for the last two years the policies and normal process previously in place have not been strictly followed and department heads have been navigating the arena as it dynamically changed,” he wrote.

Not an Emergency

This week, Hoffmann told the *Rivereast* that the plan to move forward with the ambulance wasn’t a town secret, and that his department received the authorization it believed was needed at the time. However, the BOS and BOF apparently never reviewed the plan or authorized the project.

In the weeks leading up to the 2023 municipal election, the BOS and BOF rarely convened. According to the meeting schedule posted on

the town website, the BOS met on Oct. 5 and didn’t reconvene until after the election over two months later on Dec. 7. The BOF met on Sept. 27, and didn’t meet again until December, as well.

It appears that there were never properly allocated funds for the project. Hoffmann expressed that “not all cylinders were clicking” with financing the new apparatus.

The cancellation of the ambulance will not
See ‘Unauthorized’ Ambulance, page 26



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Funds Approved for New Firetruck

By London Brazal

After a public hearing and special town meeting, Portland residents last week approved the necessary funds to purchase a new firetruck at Company 3.

On Wednesday, Jan. 24, the Board of Selectman hosted a public hearing and special town meeting at the Buck-Foreman Community Room on Main St regarding the proposed supplemental appropriation of funds.

In October, Engine #3 experienced a catastrophic tank failure while returning from a call. The truck, housed at Portland Fire Company 3 on Great Hill Rd., is the primary fire protection vehicle for the town's countryside. The garage has three bays and also houses a newer tanker. After disassembling the tank, it was discovered that extensive repairs would be necessary, estimated to cost between \$100,000 to \$250,000. Considering the truck's age, which now exceeds 30 years, the Board of Selectmen deliberated carefully and determined that investing a significant amount in its repair was neither practical nor financially responsible for the town's taxpayers.

Working closely with former Portland fire chief Robert Shea, current chief Rob Puida and other members of the Fire Department, the selectmen have initiated the process of seeking a suitable replacement for Engine 3. The endeavor posed initial challenges, primarily stemming from a competitive market and the distinctive specifications demanded by the garage bay at

Fire Company 3.

Timing also plays a crucial role, with a six-month lead time for any vehicle purchased, extending the timeline to this June at the earliest. Fortunately, the contractor has recently identified a truck that fulfills all the required specifications and criteria. The complete expense for the replacement engine, including contingency, totals to \$525,000. Multiple officials firmly said that acquiring this vehicle is in the best interest of the town, guaranteeing sufficient protection for its residents.

In addressing the funding for this emergency expense, officials have also collaborated with Finance Director Tom Robinson. The identified funding sources comprise \$367,112 from unanticipated revenues received in the current fiscal year, along with a transfer of \$157,888 from the unassigned fund balance in the general fund.

Officials said they understand the significance of unforeseen purchases. However, considering the safety concerns and the paramount importance of protecting residents, the board deemed the decision "imperative" for the well-being of the town.

Residents were able to voice their opinions at a public hearing last Wednesday. After hearing the resolution, no one had participated in the public hearing. When the special meeting began, there were no public comments either. However, the count by moderator Mike Pelton

and Town Clerk Michael Tierney announced the resolution was approved 55 in favor to 0. Many residents who attended were also members of the fire department.

The resolution approves funding for the supplemental appropriation through an increase in estimated revenue to the Municipal Revenue Sharing of \$236,112, an increase in estimated revenue to Investment Income of \$130,000 and from the unassigned fund balance of the General Fund of \$157,888. The Board of Selectmen then approved the transfer of \$525,000 to the Fire/Fire Marshal Department to purchase a suitable replacement for Engine #3.

In the meantime, the Town of East Hampton has offered Portland one of its spare engines as a loaner while the officials work toward purchasing the new truck. With the loaner, the fire department can return its tanker to mutual aid service. "We extend our sincerest gratitude to the

Town of East Hampton, especially to Fire Chief Robert Rainville and Town Manager David Cox, for their invaluable support during this challenging time," said First Selectman Ryan Curley.

The East Hampton Fire Department has agreed to loan a reserve engine it maintains, under the condition that Portland responds to assist when the engine is required in East Hampton. The engine is set to be stationed in Portland for approximately six months.

The current apparatus fleet consists of three emergency medical services flag cars, one ladder truck, two fire engines, one loaner reserve engine, one tanker, one UTV, one ATV, three fire boats, one brush truck and one repurposed rescue truck for the dive team and Fire Police that cover the Town of Portland.

Any questions can be emailed to Curley at rcurley@portlandct.org or Puida at rpuida@portlandct.org.

PVFD Pancake Breakfast

The Portland Volunteer Fire Department invites everyone to an All-You-Can-Eat Pancake Breakfast Sunday, Feb. 4, from 7-11 a.m., at Engine Company No. 1, 7 Middlesex Ave., right behind the Post Office.

The breakfast will feature sausage, all-you-can-eat pancakes (chocolate chip, regular, and, for Valentine's Day, strawberry), and assorted beverages. Cost is \$8 for adults and \$4 for children.

PVFD will also have ceramic pancake coffee

cup for sale, featuring the PVFD logo and a cartoon character squirting syrup on a stack of 'cakes. The mugs are \$20, and each time you return to one of the monthly breakfasts with the "clean" cup, PVFD will subtract one dollar from your breakfast total.

For more information or to be placed on an email notification list (there is also a sign-up list at the door), call Wayne Mergel at 860-759-6921.

Coaches vs. Cancer

The Portland Travel Basketball Club (PTBC) will hold its 2024 Coaches vs. Cancer fundraising event on Saturday and Sunday, Feb. 17 and 18, from noon-5 p.m. both days, to coincide with the club's home games that weekend.

The club will divert 100% of the collected donations to the Jahnke family, whose teenage son, a PTBC alum, continues his battle with leukemia. A collection table will be set up at the en-

trance to the Portland Middle School basketball court on both days.

Donations are also currently being accepted through Venmo: @John-Thompson-788. Additional methods to donate may also be presented to club president John Thompson, who can be contacted at for arrangements at thompsonj963@yahoo.com.

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 Donation Info: The senior center asks that residents 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 senior center. People are asked to only leave donations for the Food Bank, and only during food bank hours.

Next Week's Programs: **Monday:** Light Aerobics: 9:30-10:30 a.m.; SyncoCize Exercise: 10:30-11:30 a.m.; Blood Pressure Clinic, 10:30-11:30 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 bears (to donate, call 860-342-0809); Watercolor class, 9:30 a.m.-noon - to register, email bivenne@yahoo.com; Coupons for Troops, 1-4 p.m.; Setback, 1 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. on the second and fourth Wednesday, multipurpose room.

Thursday: Stretch & Tone, 9:30 a.m.; Knit & Stitch, 10 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 Doney, 10:30 a.m.

Trips: Tuesday, Feb. 6, 11:30 a.m. Trip to Sadler's Restaurant in Marlborough for lunch. Call Sarah or Alexis at 860-342-6761 to register.

Blood Pressure Clinics: 10:30-11:30 a.m. on the first Monday of each month (note: if that day is a holiday, the clinic is the following week).

Free Hearing Screenings: The second Tuesday of each month at 11 a.m., with Virginia Dulos 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.

Volunteer Drivers Sought for Meals-on-Wheels: Meals would be delivered to the homebound Monday-Thursday. The delivery usually takes about an hour. For full details, call Alexis at 860-342-6761.

Vocal Chords Seek Tenors, Basses

The Middlesex Hospital Vocal Chords group is looking for men and women to enhance their growing tenor and bass sections.

There are no auditions and no experience necessary, and you do not have to be affiliated with Middlesex Health in order to join. Rehearsals are Tuesdays, 6:45-9 p.m., at St. Francis Church, Msgr. Fox Parish Hall, 10 Elm St., Middletown, for the upcoming spring concert, which will take place Saturday, May 4, at Portland High School. New members will be accept-

ed through Feb. 4.

Proceeds from the concerts and MHVC's annual patron drive are given back to the community in the form of scholarships given to Middlesex County high school seniors planning on majoring in nursing or music.

For more information, visit on the web at vocalchords20.org or call 860-342-3120. The group can also be found on YouTube and Facebook.

Scholarship Applications Available

The executive board of the Middlesex Hospital Vocal Chords is accepting applications for its annual scholarships to be awarded to students from Middlesex County graduating seniors pursuing a career in nursing or music. Applicants must have been accepted at an accredited college or university.

The Review Committee will consider academic records, extracurricular and community

service activities, the student's ability to articulate his/her career goals and the recommendations of references.

The \$1,500 scholarships will be paid directly to the recipients at the spring concert at Portland High School, Saturday, May 4, at 7 p.m. Applications are available at vocalchords20.org, or at your school guidance office. Applications must be submitted by March 15.

Dean's List

Megan H. Kostraba of Portland made the fall 2023 Dean's List at the University of New Haven. Kostraba is an English major.

Cailen Fienemann of Portland made the fall 2023 Dean's List at Le Moyne College in Syracuse, N.Y.

Fienemann is a senior communications and English major.

Dean's List

Carlie Hasselman of Portland made the fall 2023 Dean's List at Siena College in Loudonville, N.Y.

Portland residents Jenna Lagana and Leah May made the fall 2023 Dean's List at Springfield College in Springfield, Mass.

Lagana is majoring in health science/pre-PT, and May is majoring in exercise science/pre-AT.

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Inspired by chef Emeril Lagasse (right), Portland resident Jeff Fraulino (left) will create a New Orleans lunch at the Mardi Gras Fest at the First Congregational Church of Portland on Feb. 3.

Mardi Gras Café at Portland Church

First Congregational Church of Portland (located at 554 Main St.) will hold a Mardi Gras Fest Saturday, Feb. 3, from 9:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m., in the church's Fellowship Hall.

A variety of activities and treats will be available, with one highlight being the Mardi Gras Café, featuring a luncheon of authentic red beans and rice as well as chicken and andouille gumbo, both for eating in and taking out.

The Mardi Gras Café will be open at 9:30 a.m. for muffins and coffee. As the morning progresses, the New Orleans lunch cuisine will appear. This food is the "real deal," prepared by church member Jeffrey Fraulino and his kitchen helpers. Several New Orleans inspired desserts including King's Cake and New Orleans bread pudding will top off the delicious luncheon.

Fraulino is no stranger to the kitchen and preparing New Orleans style meals is one of his passions. His career in commercial real estate afforded him many opportunities to eat all over Louisiana and actually find himself in the kitchens of John Besh, Emeril Lagasse, John Folse and others. A self-described foodie and classically untrained in the culinary arts, he would love picking the brains of these well-known

chefs, particularly Susan Spicer of the well-known Bayonna Restaurant.

Fraulino notes, "No shortcuts, a proper roux, and authentic ingredients such as Camillia red beans, a New Orleans staple, and Jacob's andouille from LaPlace result in a great outcome. I do skip the okra as I have found it to be an acquired taste up here in the Northeast."

If you haven't eaten these dishes in New Orleans and don't plan to go there anytime soon, plan to head down to First Congregational Church for authentic Louisiana cuisine. For the purists who know that red beans and rice is a dish meant for Mondays, the church says it guarantees the dish will taste just as good on a Saturday! Servings will be \$10 for a pint container. Gumbo will be topped with rice.

The Mardi Gras Fest will also feature a basket raffle with 21 overflowing themed gift baskets, a room filled with home-baked goods and candies, as well as gifts and the church's line of photo greeting cards. There will be a Kids' Corner with crafts for children.

A portion of the funds raised at the Mardi Gras Fest will be donated to the Portland Fuel Bank.

Portland Library News & Notes

Portland Library, 20 Freestone Ave., has announced the following events. Registration is required for all programs unless noted. To register and for full program descriptions, visit portlandlibrary.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. **Holiday Closing:** The library will be closed Monday, Feb. 19, for Presidents Day.

Winter Reading Challenge for Kids - Reading is Fun Any Way You Slice It: Runs through Friday, March 1. This year's theme is Pizza. Visit the library and get a pizza tray to hang on our bulletin board. Each time you check out materials in February (up to once per day), you'll receive a slice to color and add it to your pizza. Once you've added eight slices and have a full pizza, you will have completed the challenge and will win a small prize.

Youth Programs: LGBTQ+ Social and Support Groups: Teens are invited to social meet-ups at the library on the first Wednesday of the month at 6:30 p.m. Support groups will meet on the third Wednesday of the month, with a parent and caregiver support group running concurrently in another room at the library. For more information, contact Jenn Renk at 860-342-6770.

Family Fort Night and Hibernating Animal Hunt: Friday, Feb. 9, 5:30-6:30 p.m. Stop by after the library has closed to create a reading den, enjoy a bear-themed snack, and search the library once the lights go out for some hibernating animals hiding in the book stacks. Space is limited.

Snow Day: Tuesday, Feb. 20. Drop in during the day for a variety of snow day fun. Practice ice skating, have a snowball fight, create some winter-themed crafts, and sip on some hot cocoa. No registration is required.

Pizza and Puzzles - Jigsaw Puzzle Competition: Saturday, Feb. 24, 10:30 a.m. Create a team with friends and family. Teams may consist of 2-4 people who will compete to finish the same 500-piece puzzle in the least amount of time. Space is limited to seven teams so register early.

Teen Event: Portland Pizza: Who's the GOAT?: Tuesday, Feb. 27, 3:30 p.m. Sample slices from local pizza places and choose and decide who is the champion. Space is limited. (Note the date change!)

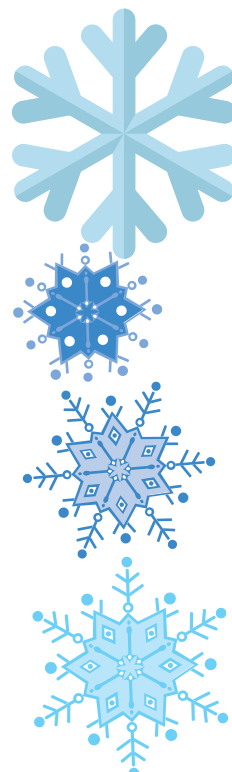
Adult Programs: Art Exhibit Reception - Jennifer Hart: Snowpaintings: Saturday, Feb. 10, 1 p.m. Hart says, "Snowpaintings are an original style of painting created in snowstorms that begin with falling snow on canvas." The exhibit runs Feb. 3-28.

Movie: Wednesday, Feb. 14, 1 p.m. *A Haunting in Venice* will be shown.

Monthly Writers' Café: Saturday, Feb. 17, 12:30 p.m., in the Van Beynum Room. Due to popular demand, the library will host a Writers' Cafe on the third Saturday of each month. The first hour will be quiet, communal writing time, with the final 30 minutes set aside to chat about your project with fellow writers.

February Book Clubs: Talk About Books: Tuesday, Feb. 6, 1 p.m., *First Ladies* by Marie Benedict will be discussed; Mystery Lovers' Book Club: Tuesday, Feb. 20, 1 p.m., *Down the River Unto the Sea* by Walter Mosley will be discussed.

Gallery of Portland: A Black History Month Panel: Saturday Feb. 24, 1 p.m., at the Brownstone Intermediate School auditorium. The Portland Historical Society, Town Committee on Solidarity, and Portland Library present a panel discussion to commemorate and honor the Black community members who have helped to shape Portland's history. Registration is not required but is requested, by signing up or a reminder on the library event calendar.





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Penne Alla Vodka Asparagus, sun dried tomatoes in a vodka blush sauce

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Stuffed Pork Chop Stuffed with

Eggplant Rollatini Rolled eggplant stuffed with ricotta, prosciutto and roasted peppers

broccoli, gorgonzola cheese and ritz crackers in a brown cognac sauce

Chicken Marsala Sautéed with mushrooms, shallots in a marsala wine sauce

Stuffed Sole Crab meat stuffing served over spinach

Balkan Meatballs Beef meatballs sautéed with scallions, roasted red peppers, grape tomatoes in a marsala cream sauce

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Second-Hand Prose Bookshop at Library

The Second-Hand Prose Bookshop at Portland Library is open during normal library hours, for anyone looking to pick up something to do during these dark winter months.

Whether you are seeking Valentine Day romance, gardening tips, jigsaw puzzles, or books on audio CDs that you can listen to while you do other tasks, The Friends of the Portland Library bookshop has an array of offerings. There are fiction, romance, teen, and children's used books as well as DVDs available during regular library hours. Books are

50 cents for paperbacks and children's books, \$1 for trade paperbacks and \$2 for hardcover. DVDs are 50 cents each disc unless marked otherwise.

There are also large print mystery and general fiction books that have been removed from the library collection for 50 cents, as well as TV series on DVD for 50 cents each disc.

Visit www.friendsofportlandlibrary.org for more information or email questions to friendsoftheportlandlibrary@gmail.com.

St. Mary Church News

St. Mary Roman Catholic Church is located at 45 Freestone Ave. The church office can be reached at 860-342-2328. Office hours are 9 a.m.-3 p.m. Monday-Friday. For more information, visit www.stmaryportlandct.org. Pastor is the Rev. John Antonelle. Masks are strongly recommended.

Weekend Mass: 5 p.m. Saturday and 8 a.m. and 10:30 a.m. Sunday. The 10:30 a.m. Sunday Mass is livestreamed each week; visit the parish website for more information.

Weekday Mass: Monday and Tuesday at 8 a.m., and Friday at 12:10 p.m.

Confession: Saturday at 4-4:45 p.m., or call Antonelle for an appointment.

Other Programs: For information on faith formation programs, baptisms, blessings of marriages, Knights of Columbus, the St. Mary Ladies Guild and more, call the church office.

Bereavement Support Group: The group meets every second Monday of the month at 6:30 p.m. in the Church Hall. All are welcome to attend. For more information, call Susan Bongiorno at 860-685-1966.

Dean's List

Portland residents Rowan Bell, Julianne Favale, Carly Graves, Brandon Masal and Jenna Randazzo made the fall 2023 Dean's List at the University of Rhode Island.

Preschool Screening

Valley View School in Portland will conduct a preschool screening Friday, Feb. 2, for children ages 3-4. The screening is designed to answer any questions or concerns about a child's development as well as identifying children who may be eligible for the preschool selection process.

During the screening your child will meet with members from our preschool team and participate in a variety of activities. These activities assess different developmental areas including cognition, communication, fine and gross motor skills and social interaction. During this

time, the parent/caregiver will meet with another member of the team to discuss your child's adaptive and personal social skills.

Following the screening you will receive a letter stating your child's results. In order for your child to attend Valley View's preschool program they must participate in the screening process. Peer role models are determined on a year-to-year basis. For more information and to schedule an appointment, call Valley View School at 860-342-3131.

First Congregational Church News

The First Congregational Church of Portland, located at 554 Main St., holds Sunday worship at 10 a.m. each week. Communion is offered the first Sunday of the month. This Sunday, Feb. 4, the service will be led by Intentional Interim Minister the Rev. Barry McCarthy, with his sermon titled "You Make a Difference." All are in-

vited; coffee hour follows the service.

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.

Carpino Office Hours

State Rep. Christie Carpino (R-32) will host Legislative Office Hours Monday, Feb. 5, from 6-7:30 p.m., at the Cromwell Belden Public Library, 39 West St., Cromwell.

All residents of the 32nd District, which includes Cromwell and Portland, are invited to register for a 10- to 15-minute one-on-one meeting with Carpino. Register for the event at www.tinyurl.com/CarpinoFeb5.

For more information, contact Press Secretary Joseph Coss at joseph.coss@cga.ct.gov or Outreach Coordinator, Joseph Garabedian at joe.garabedian@cga.ct.gov.

Kindergarten Registration

Valley View School is holding Kindergarten Registration for the 2024-25 school year.

Parents/guardians whose children will be 5 years of age on or before Sept. 1, 2024, should contact Valley View School at pgross@portlandct.us to indicate if you will be registering your child for kindergarten. Please provide your child's full name, date of birth, phone number and address.

Further information regarding kindergarten registration will be provided once you contact the school.

Concert Coming

The Excuses will kick off their 2024 World Happiness tour in Rome's hometown of Portland on Saturday, Feb. 17, at 2 p.m., at Concentric Brewing, 91 Main St.

It is a free show, to benefit Portland Food Bank. Any donations can be sent to or dropped off at the food bank, 7 Waverly Ave. The band will perform two sets.

The Excuses feature Tony Rome on vocals, Ed Misenti on guitar, Doug Mentlick on bass, and Glen Carta on drums.

Free Tax Prep at Senior Center

AARP will be offering free tax return preparation at the Portland Senior Center every Wednesday, from Feb. 7-April 10, from 9 a.m.-noon each week.

Anyone interested must sign up at the Waverly Center in advance by calling 860-342-6760.

POWER Up Portland

The POWER Up Portland Prevention & Wellness Council will meet Tuesday, Jan. 30, from 6:30-7:30 p.m., on the first floor of the Buck-Foreman Community Center, 265 Main St.

All are invited to stop by and help work as a community on youth substance use prevention, positive mental health, and becoming a recovery friendly community.

Exchange Club Bingo Night

The Portland Exchange Club will hold its final Bingo Night on Thursday, Feb. 8, at Concentric Brewing, located at 91 Main St. Card sales start at 6 p.m., and games start at 7.

Admission is \$20 for four cards to be used for all 10 games, with prizes for the winner of each game. Proceeds from the night will go towards the continuing work the Portland Exchange Club does in Portland. Cash, credit, and debit cards are accepted. Last month the Exchange Club donated \$300 to the Portland Fuel Bank.

For additional information, go to www.portlandexchange.org.

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 zionlutheranportland.org.

All are welcome to all worship services and special events. For more information 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.

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At Jan. 28's annual meeting of the Portland Historical Society, Portland resident Mary Dickerson was presented a Certificate of Appreciation by outgoing society president Julie Macksoud, for her program, "The Irish and the Portland Brownstone Quarries: 3 Stories." Dickerson shared family stories as well as research she has done both in the U.S. and Ireland about why the Irish came to the Portland area to work in the brownstone quarries.

Historical Society Holds Annual Meeting

The Portland Historical Society held its annual meeting at 2 p.m. Sunday, Jan. 28, at the Portland Senior Center, with over 80 attendees. Highlights of the meeting included the election of the following slate of officers: Susan Bransfield, President; Amy Knous, 1st Vice President; Linda Cunningham, Corresponding Secretary; Linda Prelli, Recording Secretary; David O'Brien, Treasurer and Susan Young, Director. They were all elected to terms beginning this year. Awards were announced by Robert McDougall, chair of the Trustees. Accepted by Jim and Carol Hill, Trinity Church was presented an Award of Recognition for its 235th anniversary celebration and for the parish's integral role in the communities of Portland and Middletown. Photographer Joe Gowac was recognized for his photography of the Arrigoni Bridge and the honor of having his photo selected by the USPS to be included in their historic Bridges stamp series that was released August 24, 2023. The Society also expressed appreciation for Gowac's generosity in allowing the Society to offer prints of his original photo to the public.

Certificates of Appreciation were given to Julie Macksoud for her service as a director, Vice-President and as President for the last three years and to James McCabe for his service as treasurer for over 20 years. On behalf of the trustees and the executive board, Deborah Ellsworth and Amy Knous presented gifts to outgoing President Julie Macksoud. Society member Mary Dickerson provided a program, "The Irish and the Portland Brownstone Quarries: 3 Stories." Dickerson presented background history of three ancestors who traveled from Ireland to the United States in the 1800s to work in the brownstone quarries. Along with family anecdotes, facts researched on trips to Ireland and in Russell Library's Penny Press collection, Dickerson shared family photos, schoolbooks and even a child's chair that her family has preserved. Dickerson received a Certificate of Appreciation for her program that shared a family's history, and allowing us to better understand a piece of Portland's past and relate it to the present day.

'Chill for Change' Coming Soon

All are invited to join Middlesex YMCA and Camp Ingersoll for the tenth Chill for Change on Saturday, Feb. 10, at Jobs Pond. At 1 p.m. that day, folks will take dip in the icy waters to raise money for scholarships for YMCA Camp Ingersoll. The goal for this year is a record of \$35,000 raised, with over 70 jumpers. All funds raised go directly to supporting camp scholarships. Sign up and create a team at campingersoll.org/chill-for-change, and then ask friends, neighbors, coworkers and family members to

either join your team or support your jump by donating online. All jumpers must preregister. Awards are given for Best Costume, Best Team Theme, and Biggest Piggy Bank (most funds raised). The individual who raises the most money will receive a certificate for a free session of camp. This certificate can be used for your own family, or gifted to anyone you know. Contact Ben Silliman at bsilliman@mid-yymca.org or 860-342-2267, or search 'YMCA Camp Ingersoll' on Facebook.

Trinity Episcopal Church News

Trinity Episcopal Church, 345 Main St., holds Bible Study at 8:30 a.m. each Sunday, and services are held at 9:30 a.m. All are invited. Children, ages 4 to 12, are welcome to attend Church School. The church will offer "Ashes to Go" on Ash Wednesday, Feb. 14, from 7-9 a.m. and 4-6 p.m. Simply drive into the driveway in front of the church to receive a blessing and ashes. There is a change to the Friday schedule. The church will now be open for prayer and medi-

tation, and for Anglican Prayer beading, from 11:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m. All are welcome; no prior beading experience is required. For more information, the church's calendar of events, to donate, or to listen to past sermons at www.trinitychurchportlandct.org. If you have prayer requests, email the church office at trinitychurchportlandct@gmail.com. To make an appointment with the Rev. Darryl Burke, email trinitychurchportlandct@gmail.com or call 860-342-0458.

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BOF Finalizes Budget Schedule

By Michael Sinkewicz

The Colchester Board of Finance (BOF) last week cemented its 2024-25 fiscal year budget season calendar, agreeing to a comprehensive and demanding timeline in the upcoming months.

Overall, the schedule was slightly pushed back compared to what officials had initially proposed; BOF budget forums — preliminary meetings held before any hard numbers are released — will begin on Feb. 21, a date that was delayed a week due to Valentine's Day. Both the school and town budget proposals will be jointly presented to the BOF and community on April 3, with a referendum date targeted for June 11.

Meanwhile, Colchester Superintendent of Schools Daniel Sullivan III is expected to present his 2024-2025 school budget proposal to the Board of Education (BOE) on Feb. 13. The BOE will then make its own modifications before officially adopting a spending plan that will be submitted to the BOF.

The ultimate goal, outlined by BOF Chairman Scott Chapman, is to have both the municipal and school budgets approved at referendum before the start of the upcoming fiscal year on July 1. Chapman had previously speculated that a May referendum date might be achievable, which would allow the BOF extra time to repackage the budgets if one, or both, fail at the ballot box.

Featuring budget forums, workshops, special meetings and public hearings, along with regu-

lar bimonthly meetings, the BOF schedule is crowded.

"I know I'm putting a lot on our board and there's a lot of dates on there because we all have to agree that giving what we're up against, having a healthy amount of workshops to really go over everything and make sure that we're putting everything out to the public is paramount," Chapman said during the Jan. 24 meeting.

Last month, First Selectman Bernie Dennler III announced he was implementing a soft budget freeze due to "concerning" spending trends and accounting issues in the finance department; all town purchases must be approved by the first selectman and nonessential spending will be limited.

The freeze was enacted because MUNIS reports that are used by officials to track monthly town expenditures appeared inaccurate, and expenses were either were "double-booked" or needed to be reclassified into the correct accounts. Dennler had informed the BOF that the financial reports "don't paint an accurate picture for your decision making."

During an earlier meeting on Jan. 10, Michelle Marceau, the acting director of finance, warned the BOF that it would take time to fully remedy the issue. Her focus during the month had been on W-2s and 1099s, which were due Jan. 31.

While updates to the expenditures reports could start to materialize in the weeks ahead,

Dennler indicated that they "really have not moved much" so far. Some expenses, however, have been reclassified to correct accounts.

MUNIS reports help inform and update the BOF regarding all town spending trends. While department heads are able to provide insight into their own budgets, the absence of correct reports underscores the challenges the board will encounter moving forward.

In a prior Facebook post in January, Dennler stated that "it is difficult to say at this point where the town's spending year-to-date truly lies and even harder to project where things will land when the fiscal year ends."

At the latest meeting on Jan. 24, Chapman stated that resolving the concerns within the finance department was "definitely a concern," especially when considering the board's budget timeline.

The town is also working on the 2022-23 financial audit, which will be due at the end of June as well. Failure to do so, Dennler reported, may result in state oversight.

When the BOF's budget forums commence, they will likely include community feedback as

the officials review their top priorities.

One potential subject that may be assessed is the budgetary needs for the town's new senior center, which will likely be completed by the end of next summer or earlier autumn — well into the 2024-25 fiscal year.

Because the new facility will be larger than the current senior center, officials may consider whether budget hikes are required to cover any anticipated cost increases or staffing needs.

"There's a lot of unknowns when it comes to the cost of that," Dennler said.

The BOF could decide to keep the upcoming senior services budget aligned with current spending, and absorb any overages that may or may not arise.

Under the current 2023-24 fiscal year, the school budget is slated at \$43.98 million — around \$1.95 million above the 2022-23 fiscal year. Municipal spending is \$15.66 million — just shy of \$40,000 more than the previous fiscal year. Both spending plans were approved at a second referendum in August — a month into the fiscal year they funded.

Abundant Life Church News & Notes

Abundant Life Church, a Christ-follower church that believes salvation through Jesus Christ, is located at 85 Skinner Rd. For more information, call 860-537-3082 or visit AbundantL.com.

Sunday Services: Sunday School is at 9:30 a.m. and the main service is at 10:30 a.m. There is also Children's Church available for ages 4-11. All are welcome. The main service is also broad-

cast live each week on Facebook. Visit www.facebook.com/groups/abundantlifeCT or look for the church on Facebook. For more information, call the church.

Power of Prayer: If in need of prayer, call the church to be placed on the prayer list. You may also ask about the various days and times the prayer groups meet and come at that time.

Colchester Federated Church News

Colchester Federated Church is an Open and Affirming church located at 60 Main St. Pastor is the Rev. Lauren Ostrout. 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. For those wishing to worship from home, the service is broadcast via Facebook Live each Sunday. Worship videos are at www.colchesterfederatedchurch.org under the Worship tab. Updated information is also on the church's Facebook page.

Sunday School: 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 for more information and to register for Sunday School.

Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper: Tuesday, Feb. 13, 5:30-7 p.m., in the Stage Room. There will be beads, music, and pancakes for dinner. There will be a free-will offering for this event.

Ash Wednesday, Feb. 14: Ostrout will offer Ashes to Go from 7-9 a.m. outside in front of the church. There will also be an Ash Wednesday service at 7 PM, led by the Discipleship Class. All are welcome to attend.

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. from September through June.

Dean's List

The following Colchester residents made the fall 2023 Dean's List at Springfield College in Springfield, Mass.:

Kevin Giuliani, who is majoring in criminal justice; Skylar Gustavsen, who is majoring in health science; Paige Lawrence, who is majoring in exercise science/pre-AT; Sarah Newton, who is majoring in health science/pre-PT; Julian Prignano, who is majoring in business management; Jessica Schuth, who is majoring in health science/pre-OT.

Members Sought for Honor Guard

Members are sought for the Colchester Veterans Honor Guard, which provides military funeral honors for a veteran's families and friends.

The Colchester Honor Guard meets the first and third Tuesdays of every month from 7-8 p.m. in the Veterans Room of the Colchester Senior Center, 95 Norwich Ave. Most funeral honors are performed between 9 a.m. and 2 p.m. Monday to Saturday.

Contact Al Letendre at 860-917-9391 or letendrej@sbcglobal.net for more information.

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.

Bible Study for Men: Mondays at 6:30 p.m. and Saturdays at 8 a.m.

Women's Bible Study: Tuesdays at 10 a.m.
Community Bible Study and Prayer: Wednesdays at 7 p.m.

Donuts with Don: Fridays at 10 a.m. This is an open discussion on how God fits into your life.

Community Theatre to Get Kinky

Colchester Community Theatre (CCT) will present *Kinky Boots* through special arrangements with Music Theatre International, Feb. 16-18 at Bacon Academy.

Kinky Boots won six Tonys including Best Musical, the Grammy for Best Musical Theatre album and London's Olivier Award for Best Musical. The play features a Tony-winning score by pop icon Cyndi Lauper, and a book by four-time Tony winner Harvey Fierstein. Billy Porter won a Best Actor Tony Award for his portrayal of Lola.

In the musical, Charlie Price has reluctantly inherited his father's shoe factory, which is on the verge of bankruptcy. Trying to live up to his father's legacy and save his family business, Charlie finds inspiration in the form of Lola, a fabulous entertainer in need of some sturdy stilettos. As they work to turn the factory around, this unlikely pair find that they have more in common than they realized... and discover that when you change your mind, you can change your whole world.

Performance dates are Friday, Feb. 16, at 7 p.m., Saturday, Feb. 17, at 2 p.m. and 7 p.m.; and Sunday, Feb. 18, at 2 p.m. All shows are at

the Bacon Academy auditorium, 611 Norwich Ave. Tickets are \$18 for adults and \$14 for seniors (65+) and children (age 12 and under). Preferred seating tickets (a maximum of 60 each performance) are available for \$28 each. Preferred seating ticketholders will be asked to arrive at least a half hour before performance times as entrance to obtain seats of their choice will be allowed before the general audience. Seating for the general audience will take place 20-30 minutes before the performance time.

Several ticket purchase options are available: 1) Online ticket sales (Credit Card only) are available through ShowTix4U — see additional information on the 'Buy Tickets' page at www.colchestercommunitytheatre.com.

2) In-person ticket sales (cash and check only) are available at Wagging Tails Pet Shop (95C Linwood Ave.) and Gifts On The Green (44 Main St.) during their regular business hours.

3) Tickets will be available at the door (Cash, Check, or Venmo) on performance days subject to availability.

Advance ticket purchase is recommended. All ticket sales are final — no refunds or exchanges. Make checks payable to Colchester Community Theatre, Inc.

CCT is selling advertisement space in its digital program as well as sponsorship levels to offset the cost of costumes, sets and props construction. For more information, call producer Donna Brown at 860-639-9315.

In case of inclement weather, visit CCT's Facebook page and website for updates.

President's List

Elijah Blanchard of Colchester made the fall 2023 President's List at Nichols College in Dudley, Mass.

Dean's List

Davin Roy of Colchester made the fall 2023 Dean's List at Commonwealth University of Pennsylvania.

Roy is a student at the Lock Haven campus.

Dean's List

Colchester residents Liah Brown, Andrew Navickas and Reina Spearin made the fall 2023 Dean's List at Lasell University in Newton, Mass.

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.

Dean's List

Loudon Chupas of Colchester made the fall 2023 Dean's List at American International College in Springfield, Mass.

Chupas is majoring in criminal justice.

Dean's List

The following Colchester residents made the fall 2023 Dean's List at the University of Rhode Island:

Quinn Clark, Mackenzie Dean, Gracy Kane, Justin Kelsey, Matt McCune, Morgan Merchant.

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Ahavath Achim News

Congregation Ahavath Achim, 84 Lebanon Ave., has announced the following schedule:

Tuesday: Aggadata class, 6 p.m.; Talmud class, 6:30 p.m.; Kabbalah class, 8 p.m. on Zoom; call for link.

Shabbat Schedule: Friday at 6:30 p.m., live and on Zoom – Shabbat; Saturday morning, 10

a.m., live and on Zoom – Shabbat service. There are daily Facebook Live classes on Ken Alter's Facebook page; Ask the Rabbi – Bible Portion is also featured.

For more information, or a link for services or classes, call 860-537-2809. Office hours are Wednesday, 9 a.m.-4 p.m.

Parks & Rec News & Notes

Colchester Parks and Recreation has announced the following programs and events. Registration required unless noted. For full descriptions and to register, visit www.colchester-ct.gov/recreation-department. Parks and Rec. can also be reached at 860-537-7297 or at Town Hall, 127 Norwich Ave.

Puzzlepalooza: Fridays, Feb. 23 and March 22, from 6-8 p.m. each night, at Town Hall. Cost is \$25/team. Children can be on a team, but there must be at least two adults on each team.

Family Cross-Country Skiing: Runs through March 7, weather permitting, at Elizabeth and Ruby Cohen Park. Hours are: Fridays/Saturdays, 11 a.m.-noon, and Sundays, 1-2 p.m. Must provide own equipment. You will receive updates upon registration to when program will meet.

Colchester Choir and Orchestra: Visit www.colchesterchoirorchestra.org for more information. Rehearsals are: Thursdays, 6-7:30 p.m. for choir and 7:30-9 p.m. for orchestra, at Bacon Academy. Fee: \$35 for ages 18 and up; \$15 for students and youth under 18. There will be a **spring concert**, free for all to attend, on Sunday, March 10, also at Bacon.

Summer Day Camp Registration: Returning camper early bird registration begins Feb. 19, and new camper registration starts March 4. The summer day camp, for kids entering grades K-7 in the fall, will run June 24-Aug. 16, Monday through Friday, from 8 a.m.-3 p.m. each day. The weekly themes and field trips will be announced in mid-February. Cost per week is \$170/child. Aftercare is available from 3- p.m., for an additional \$45 each week. Cost includes

all activities and field trips but does not include food. All snacks and lunches must be sent with your camper.

CT Safe Boating Class: May 14 and 16, 5-9 p.m., at Town Hall. While there is no minimum age requirement to take the class, students must be able to attend all eight hours and take a 60-question multiple choice test. Fee for class: \$25.

Pre-Teen Leadership Camp: For youth entering grades 6-7 in the fall. There will be one-week sessions, with new groups each week, from June 24-Aug. 16 (no camp July 4 or 5). Hours are Monday-Friday, 8 a.m.-3 p.m. Fee is \$170/week, with aftercare available each day until 5 p.m., for an additional fee.

Counselor-in-Training (C.I.T.) Leadership Program: For ages 14 and up. Session 1: June 24-July 12 (no camp July 4 or 5); Session 2: July 15-Aug. 2. Hours are: Monday-Friday, from 8 a.m.-3 p.m. each day. Fee: \$125. Upon successful completion of the program you can volunteer as a **Junior Counselor** at day camp from July 15-Aug. 16. You'll attend camp for free.

Colchester Youth Theatre Camp: For kids entering grades 2-7 in the fall. The two-week session runs Aug. 12-23, Monday through Friday, from 8:30 a.m.-3 p.m. This two-week camp is designed to immerse kids in the world of theatre, culminating with performance of a play on Friday, Aug. 23. No acting experience necessary. Fee: \$300/camper. A minimum of 20 campers is required, with a maximum of 40 campers.

Honoring Black History Month

Colchester's Openness to Respecting Equity (CORE) Commission and the Colchester Senior Center are hosting a Community Book Club all February in honor of Black History Month, and the public is welcome to participate. The book selected is called *The Sum of Us: What Racism Costs Everyone and How We Can Prosper Together*.

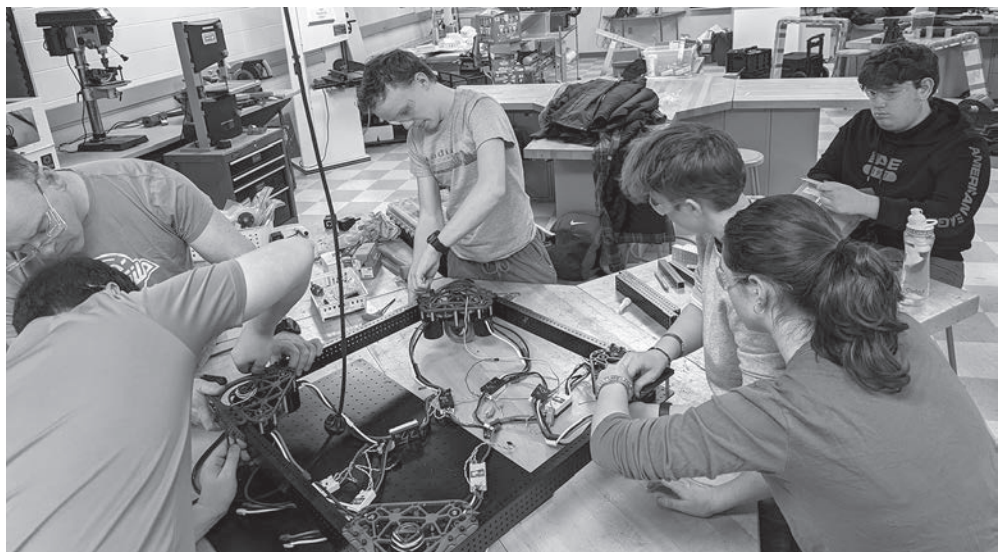
Copies are available at Cragin or can be purchased through Amazon. There will be three dates in February to discuss the book, including daily trivia questions about the 2024 Black History Month theme, African American and the Arts, and a calendar of events on the town website, www.colchesterct.gov.

Boy Scout Pasta Dinner

Boy Scout Troop 13 will hold its second annual Pasta Dinner Saturday, March 2, from 4-7 p.m., at the St. Andrew Parish Center, located at 128 Norwich Ave. In case of inclement weather, the date will be moved to Sunday, March 3.

Both dine-in and take-out meals will be available. Preorder your meal at troop13pastadinner.square.site for a discounted rate. Meal prices at the door are \$15 for adults and \$12 for seniors; children under 5 are free. The meal will include a salad, bread, and dessert. Drinks are available for dine-in patrons only.

Proceeds help support the various troop activities throughout the year.



A storytelling show to benefit the Bacon Academy FIRST Robotics Team will be held Wednesday, Feb. 21, at Bacon. Pictured here, hard at work, are Robocats members (from left) Miles Viggiani, mentor Brian Reas, Sam Ringuette, Taylor Gerst and Abby Belding. John Dalton is in back right.

Bacon Storytelling Show to Benefit Robotics Team

Bacon Academy will host a storytelling show Wednesday, Feb. 21 (snow date is Feb. 22) at 7 p.m., in the school auditorium. The show will benefit the school's FIRST Robotics Team. The Robocats won the New England District Championship last year and are currently working to meet the challenges of the 2024 season.

The show will be headlined by storytellers Arnie Pritchard and John Melmed who will re-

late true personal stories from their school years and adult lives. Stories are best suited for ages 12 and over.

Tickets are \$10 per adult and \$5 per student, and additional donations are welcome. Donations of \$100 or more will purchase priority seating for six.

Find out more at team1699.org/storytelling-night-bacon.

Incoming Kindergarten Story Time

Colchester Elementary School will host the Incoming Kindergarten Story Time program Thursdays, Feb. 15, March 14 and April 18, for 4- and 5-year-old Colchester children who will be entering kindergarten during the 2024-25 school year.

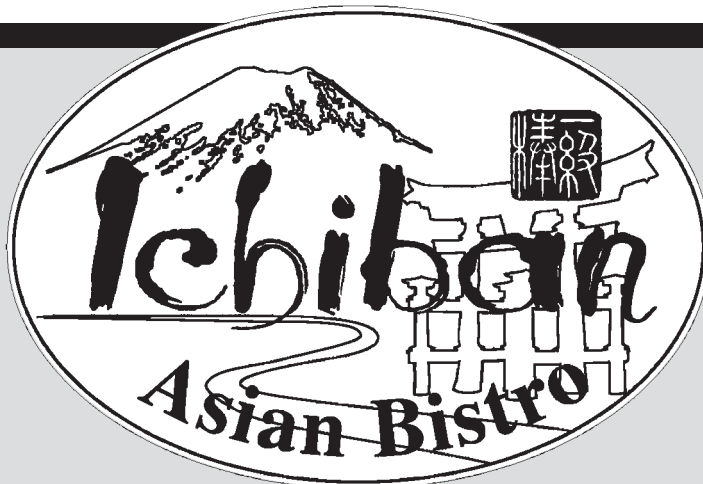
During each of the three sessions, children will listen to books read by kindergarten teachers, while parents learn about the registration process, the kindergarten curriculum, readiness expectations, the school day, school policies and

transportation. A question-and-answer period will be available at each session.

The program will be held each month from 11-11:30 a.m., in the CES media center. Parents and children are invited to attend multiple story times. Topics for parent information change each month. No pre-registration is required.

President's List

Torje Seidler of Colchester made the fall 2023 President's List at the University of Alabama.



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Meet Troop 72's newest Eagle scouts – Brendan Reas, left, and Connor Denecour. Troop 72's Newest Eagle Scouts

Troop 72 recently held an Eagle Court of Honor at Colchester Federated Church for its newest Eagle scouts – Connor Denecour and Brendan Reas.

They join 91 other Eagle scouts in the troop's 85-year history. The Scouts must have earned 13 required merit badges and at least eight elective merit badges, served in Troop leadership positions for at least 16 months, and spent at least 13 hours on service projects, not including the many hours spent on their own Eagle Scout service projects. In all, they have each completed approximately 325 different requirements.

Denecour crossed over from Pack 109 in 2015 and graduated from Bacon Academy and is in his second year at the University of Connecticut in Storrs, where he enjoys rowing with the crew team and is majoring in digital media and design and history.

Reas crossed over from Pack 13 in 2016 and graduated from Bacon Academy in 2023 and was accepted into an Army ROTC Scholarship Program upon graduation and is attending Norwich University in Northfield, Vt. He is studying Criminal Justice and is a member of the Corps of Cadets and Army ROTC.

The Eagle project is the highlight of the path to Eagle. Its focus is for the scouts to be the project manager for a service project that benefits the community. The scouts are responsible for

the entire project, from concept to funding and completion, including proposals, budgets, and writeup. All physical work for the projects was done by troop scouts, leaders, and some friends of Troop 72.

The Eagle projects were completed during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Denecour's project was the restoration a storage shed used by the Colchester Giving Garden. The project consisted of leading volunteers from Troop 72 to replace the failed siding and roofing, replace the swinging double doors, and install a small ramp. A bench was also built and nestled near the garden so the volunteers and gardeners could take a break.

For Reas's Eagle project, he worked with the Colchester Land Trust to design, build, and install five benches on their hiking trails at Bulkeley Hill Preserve. He sourced wood for the project from JN Webster Scout Reservation and his own front yard. Workdays took place in his driveway at home to prepare the benches and at various locations in the preserve to install the benches.

The new Eagle scouts have much to be proud of and this achievement will follow them the rest of their life.

Troop 72 meets at Colchester Federated Church. For more information about Troop 72, email Scoutmaster@Troop72ct.org.

Residents with Special Needs

The Colchester Department of Senior Services is working to update its list of residents with special needs.

These are people who self-identify as needing additional assistance or support in the event of a town-wide emergency, such as a power outage or mass evacuation. Special needs can pertain to a number of things, such as mobility issues, health complications or mental health needs,

and apply to residents of any age.

If you wish to have your name on this list, contact Patty Watts at the Colchester Senior Center at 860-537-3911. If your name is already on the list, you will be contacted to ensure that your information is up to date.

Once completed, this directory is shared with the director of emergency management and the fire chief.

Senior Center News & Notes

Colchester Senior Center, 95 Norwich Ave., has announced the following. Unless noted, registration is required for all programs. For full descriptions and to register, call 860-537-3911, email csc@colchesterct.gov, or for a full list of activities, visit www.colchesterct.gov.senior-center.

Monday, Feb. 5: 9 a.m., Making Memories, Exercise w/Anne; 10 a.m., Sittercize; 11 a.m., Learn to Sign; 12:30 p.m., Mah Jongg, Bridge; 12:45 p.m., Setback.

Tuesday, Feb. 6: 9 a.m., Making Memories; 9:45 a.m., Tai Chi; 12:30 p.m., Pinochle; 1:30 p.m., Bingo.

Wednesday, Feb. 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; 10:30 a.m., Life Review Writing; 1 p.m., Backus Stroke Survivors Program; 1:30 p.m., Line Dancing.

Thursday, Feb. 8: 9 a.m., Exercise w/Anne; 10 a.m., Sittercize, Wii Bowling; 10 a.m., Card-Making; 11 a.m., Yoga; noon, Chair Massage; noon-3 p.m., Senior Benefits Counseling; 12:30 p.m., Dominoes; 1 p.m., Knit & Crochet.

Friday, Feb. 9: 8:30 a.m.-2 p.m., AARP Tax Aide, by appointment only; 10 a.m., Sit & Be Fit; 10:15 a.m., Across the Ages; 10:30 a.m., Choral Group; 10:45 a.m., Blood Pressure Clinic; 11 a.m., Yoga; 11:15 a.m., Chatham Health Education Series' noon, Souper Bowl Luncheon; 1 p.m., Tech Time with Harry; 1:30 p.m., Bingo.

Experiencing Culture Through Cooking & Crafts – Chinese New Year Fortune Cookie Food Demo: Monday, Feb. 12, 10:30 a.m. Learn how to make a simple fortune cookie at home. Each person will leave with three personalized cookies. Cost is \$5/person. Space is limited.

Experiencing Culture Through Cooking & Crafts – Hand-Painted Chinese Fans: Monday, Feb. 26, 10:30 a.m. Paint a bamboo folding fan with a cherry blossom pattern following along with Jodi or do your own design. Cost is \$5/person.

Ham Radio Meeting: Friday, Feb. 16, 2 p.m. Learn about the hobby and chat with those that are already ham radio operators. All are welcome.

Love Boat Luncheon: Wednesday, Feb. 21, 11 a.m. Sail off on a tropical cruise, even if it is only in your imagination. Jose Paulo returns to the senior center with his enthusiastic multicultural performance. A menu of glazed ham with pineapple, mashed sweet potatoes, green beans, rolls & butter, and chocolate cake will be served. Cost is \$9/person. Space is limited.

Ballpark Movie Event: Wednesday, Feb. 28, 11:30 a.m. See *The League*, a documentary film about Negro League Baseball's triumphs and challenges through the first half of the 20th century. Have some ballpark favorites including hot dogs, popcorn, Cracker Jacks, and a soda or water while viewing this film. Cost is \$6/person and space is limited. Register by Feb. 21.

Wills & Trusts Seminar: Tuesday, Feb. 27, 10 a.m. This is the same presentation that was done in September. Priority will be given to those that were on the September waitlist. Additional openings will be made available if space permits. Call the senior center to inquire about space and to register. Registration is required.

Town-Wide Book Discussion for Black History Month: Thursday, Feb. 29, 1 p.m. The senior center will collaborate with the town's CORE Commission for a community book read in honor of Black History Month. *The Sum of Us: What Racism Costs Everyone and How We Can Prosper Together*, by Heather McGhee, will be discussed. Two books are available at the senior center to borrow, and others are available at Cragin Library. This will be one of three town-wide discussions of the book.

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 for children meets during the worship service.

Meetings: 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.

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

Free Polka Lessons

St. Joseph's Polish Society, located at 395 South Main St., will offer free polka dance lessons Saturday, Feb. 10, and Friday, Feb. 16, at 7 p.m. both nights.

The lessons are for beginners and anyone wanting fun and exercise.

For more information, call Carol Carlson at 765-730-6206.

50 Years of Bacon Wrestling

2023-24 is Bacon Academy Wrestling's 50th varsity season. All are invited to The Matt Bishel Bobcat Classic on Saturday, Feb. 3.

This is an all-day tournament at which Bacon Academy Wrestling will honor former alumnus Matt Bishel, who passed away in 2011. Wrestling starts at 10 a.m.

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Martinis and Jewelry

The St. Joseph's Polish Club's annual Martinis and Jewelry fundraiser is Sunday, Feb. 4, from 1-5 p.m., at the club, 395 S. Main St.

This year's event will benefit the Colchester Veterans Honor Guard. Have martinis and appetizers while you shop the Touchstone Crystal Jewelry by Swarovski, with their representative Patricia Welch.

For more information, call 860-537-2550.

Lions' Breakfast Buffet is Back

The Colchester Lions will hold a Breakfast Buffet at the St. Joseph's Polish Society, 395 S. Main St., on Sunday, Feb. 25, from 7:30-11:30 a.m.

This is a full breakfast with eggs, bacon, sausage, toast, home fries and pancakes, with juice, coffee, tea and water. Prices in advance are \$9 for adults, \$7 for seniors, \$6 for ages 5-12, and free for children 4 and under. At the door, tickets are \$10 for adults, \$8 for seniors, \$6 for ages 5-12, and free for children 4 and under.

Tickets may be purchased in advance at Dime Bank in Colchester, or call 860-537-1093 and leave a message for Julie.

Dean's List

Sarah Vilardo of Colchester made the fall 2023 Dean's List at Siena College in Loudonville, N.Y.

Dean's List

Colchester residents Sean Baldyga, Ryan Claffey and Jordan Malloy made the fall 2023 Dean's List at Stonehill College in Easton, Mass.

Police News

1/11: Ryan Gordon, 36, of East Hartford, was arrested and charged with second-degree failure to appear, according to police.

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Colebrook Village at Hebron: NOW HIRING! Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN) We are seeking family oriented, fun, and dedicated people to join our team! Shifts: 7a-3p, 3p-11p, 11p-7a. Colebrook Village is a proud community and home to Independent, Assisted Living, and Memory Care Residents.

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The Town of Marlborough is accepting applications for part-time Board Clerks for approximately 3 to 6 hours per month. This position is responsible for producing minutes for boards and commissions.

Colebrook Village at Hebron: NOW HIRING! Certified Nurse Aide (CNA) We are seeking family oriented, fun, and dedicated people to join our team! Shifts available for hire: 3p-11p & 11p-7a!

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1TB 2/2

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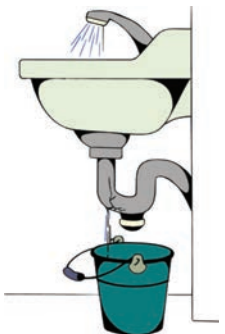
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