



You're a Mean One, Mr. Grinch... Possessing all the tender sweetness of a seasick crocodile, the Grinch greets passers-by at the Hebron Lions' Lights in Motion. The drive-thru Christmas lights display runs at the Lions Fairgrounds, 347 Gilead St. (Route 85) in Hebron, through the end of the month. For more information, visit www.lionslightsinmotion.org.

Hundreds of Toys, One Big Heart

By Toriana Wiliams

Snow had quietly settled over Colchester last weekend, the kind that turns a small town softer and slower, when Patricia Neer was already thinking about Christmas. Not the decorations or the dinners – but the children who might wake up wondering if anything would be waiting for them at all.

Neer, 77, has lived in Colchester since 1983. With an accent as thick as eggnog, she described her love for Colchester – that she likes that it's a small town, the kind of place where people remember you, where the local police barracks knows your car when it pulls in heavy with boxes. For years now, she has made that drive with a singular purpose: to make sure children she may never meet still feel the magic of Christmas morning.

Her reason is simple and deeply rooted. "I had a very privileged childhood, and I'm paying it back," she said. "I feel that every child should have a Christmas."

She doesn't wait for December to act on that belief. As soon as one Christmas passes, she begins preparing for the next. Throughout the year, whenever she sees a toy she thinks a child would love, she buys it and tucks it away. This steady, thoughtful approach allows her to give generously without overwhelm, and it has grown into something remarkable.

When asked how many toys she donates each year, she paused, then answered plainly, "Hundreds."

The numbers are impressive, but it's the care behind them that stands out. One year it was bicycles – nearly 20 of them. Another year, battery-operated ride-on toys. Neer makes sure none of them arrive in boxes on Christmas morning. She believes a child should be able to play right away, without disappointment or delay. Friends, family members and neighbors step in to help assemble the toys, turning the process into a quiet community effort.

A 16-year-old neighbor named Simon has become the go-to expert for putting together the more complicated items. Neer's grandchildren also pitch in, loading trucks and making multiple trips to deliver donations. What begins in her attic ends at the police barracks of the Connecticut State Police, where the toys are collected and distributed to families in need.

Neer doesn't receive stories or thank-you notes from the families who receive the gifts, and she doesn't ask for them.

"I don't do it for anything in return," she said. "I don't do it for the accolades or anything. I just do it because it makes me feel good inside."

She added, simply, "It brings me a lot of joy."

That joy traces back to her own upbringing. Raised primarily in Boston, she never wanted for anything. Her father worked for the Internal Revenue Service, her mother stayed home and their stability gave Neer a lasting sense of gratitude. As an adult, she followed her father's

See Hundreds of Toys, page 7

Hall of Fame Coming to Colchester

By Josh Howard

With a vast history of athletic achievements and beyond, the Bacon Academy Hall of Fame was recently established to celebrate those who have left a lasting legacy in Colchester.

Bacon Academy principal Amy Begue expressed that it was time to formally recognize the school's expansive achievements.

"There are so many people that have contributed to Bacon Academy's success since its establishment in 1803," stated Begue. "We have so many things to be proud of [and] this was something we wanted to organize because these are the types of things that should be celebrated."

Nominations are currently being accepted through Monday, Jan. 12, with the inaugural class set to be inducted in the spring.

According to the school's website, Bacon Academy Hall of Fame was "established to recognize contributions to athletics, academics, associated student body activities (the arts, student government, clubs), and community service. Recognition is also given for career contributions and accomplishments. Inductees

include alumni who have graduated, employees who have retired from Bacon Academy, retired coaches and individuals who have made extraordinary contributions to Bacon Academy and may or may not have been an alumnus or employee of Bacon Academy."

Colchester Superintendent of Schools Daniel Sullivan helped in the efforts to get the ball rolling on what will be a landmark moment.

"This is an exciting initiative and I look forward to celebrating the accomplishments of generations of Bacon Academy graduates and staff," stated Sullivan. "I think we will all be surprised to learn the amazing accomplishments that some have achieved."

Previously, both Begue and Sullivan worked in districts that had already established a Hall of Fame, and both believed that a local one was overdue.

"Knowing that Bacon Academy has a really proud history, we thought it would be absolutely an opportune time to gather community input," noted Begue, who is in her 11th year at Bacon Academy, previously serving as an assistant

principal for seven years.

Once the seed was planted, bylaws were drafted and a selection committee of six members was put in place, featuring graduates of Bacon Academy, current and former employees within Colchester public schools, and long-standing members of the community.

Along with a half dozen selection committee members, Begue and Bacon Academy's director of athletics, Kevin Burke, are serving as liaisons to help with the logistical part of gathering the nominations for the selection committee and with helping set up the first induction ceremony, tentatively slated for April 2026.

Begue noted that they have already received several nominations, yet they are looking to collect as many as possible, spanning a wide variety of achievements.

According to the bylaws, "Individual contributions to scholastic, athletics, and Associated Student Body (ASB) activities, career, community service, and society as a whole" will be considered by the selection committee.

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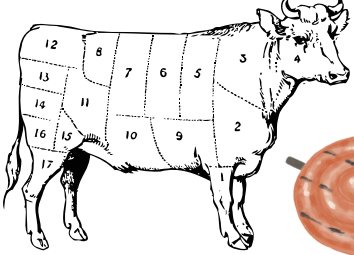
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Standout Athletes of the Week

By Josh Howard

Here are the *Rivereast* Standout Athletes of the Week:

Marissa Nudd – Bacon Academy (Basketball): Nudd, a 2023 graduate of Bacon Academy, leads the Warriors of Eastern Connecticut State University in points and rebounds this season. Nudd, now a junior at ECSU, is averaging 17.2 points and 7.3 rebounds per contest though the first 10 games. She scored a season-high 26 points in a game against Western New England on Nov. 14 and then hauled down a career-high 12 rebounds in a game against Salve Regina on Nov. 18. Prior to ECSU, Nudd was a two-time all-state and three-time all-conference selection, starring as a four-year starter for the Bobcats where she scored over 1,000 career points in high school.

Michael Sitaro – Cromwell/Portland (Football): Sitaro, a senior quarterback, was named the Pequot Conference Player of the Year following a season in which he tallied 47 total touchdowns. Sitaro threw for 1,638 yards and 23 touchdowns and added 1,072 yards and 24 touchdowns on the ground to lead the Cromwell/Portland co-op to a 9-1 record in the regular season and a spot in the playoff. He also earned All-Pequot first-team and was one of nine Panthers named all-conference as teammates Cole Leavitt (first-team), Logan Quick (first-team), Tyler Cipolla (first-team), Ralph

Mendez (first-team), Zhyair Brown (first-team), Izaiah Sanchez (first-team) and Jayden Augustine (honorable mention) were also recognized.

Isabelle Sobieralski – RHAM High School (Basketball): Sobieralski helped power the Raptors to a season-opening, 55-49, victory over Somers at RHAM High School on Dec. 12. Sobeieralski, a senior captain, scored 20 points, including hitting a big shot at the end of the half that gave the Raptors a four-point lead and momentum going into halftime. She was also a standout on the defense end as the Raptors opened the season with the out-of-conference victory.

Sophia Snyder and Alivia Bairer – East Hampton High School (Powderpuff): Snyder and Bairer coordinated a Powderpuff game as part of their Senior Capstone project. The pair spent the months leading up to the game — which featured a flag football game between the seniors and juniors — designing uniforms and organizing the activities before and after the game. Along with bringing a fun and spirited flag football game to EHHS, the intent was to raise money for the East Hampton Food Bank. The bake sale and donations collected raised \$200 for the food bank.

To nominate an athlete as a Standout of the Week, email joshhowardsports@gmail.com. Please include as many details about the athlete or performance as possible.



Bacon Academy Class of 2023 graduate Marissa Nudd leads ECSU basketball in both points and rebounds this season.

Top Sports Moments of 2025 Nominations

With the end of the year rapidly approaching, this is the “last call” to submit top sports moment nominations for 2025.

Nominations are being accepted through Friday, Dec. 19 for any team or individual athletic accomplishment from any level (youth, high school, or adult). The performance did not have to take place locally, but must include a local team, player, or resident that ac-

complished the feat.

Submissions can be sent to joshhowardsports@gmail.com for consideration. Please include as many details (names, dates, statistics, scores, etc.) as possible.

The Top 25 Moments will be revealed in the Jan. 2, 2026 edition of the *Rivereast News Bulletin*.

Fundraiser for Ukrainian Family

The Ukrainian American Youth Association of Hartford, Inc will hold a fundraiser Sunday, Dec. 21, from 10:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m., at the Ukrainian American Cultural Center, 5 Commerce St., Cromwell.

The fundraiser is to help the Kulikovskiy family of Ukraine rebuild their lives. On Nov. 19, the apartment of the Kulikovskiy family on Stusa Street, in Ternopil, Ukraine, was completely

destroyed by a Russian missile strike.

At the fundraiser, youth-crafted Christmas ornaments and homemade baked goods will be available as a token of appreciation for your donation. Donations benefit the Ukraine Humanitarian Aid Fund.

For more information, and to donate online, visit bit.ly/ua-hum-aid.





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From the Editor’s Desk

Observations & Ruminations

By Mike Thompson

Welp, this is it, folks. Christmas is here. Hopefully you’ve all been good boys and girls this year and will receive everything you want from Santa.

If you’re a little unsure of your standing with the big guy, though, I’ve got one thing that I know for a fact will put you on the “nice” list.

You can make the early deadline next week.

Due to the holiday, **all copy** – that means everything: letters, event listings, press releases, and general pieces of news – **must** be submitted by **noon Monday, Dec. 22**.

No exceptions will be made.

Nor will any exceptions be made the following week, when once again there will be an early deadline. All copy for the Jan. 2 *Rivereast* **must** be submitted by **noon Monday, Dec. 29**.

To recap: it’s Monday noon for the next two weeks. Not 1 p.m., not 12:30, not 12:15. And check your ‘sent’ folders to make sure the emails have actually sent! (Yep, I hear it all, folks.)

All news items can be emailed to bulletin@glcitizen.com.

You don’t want to miss out on being a part of the final two issues of the year. Nor do you want a lump of coal in your stocking from old Mr. Kringle. So make those early deadlines – and have a wonderful Christmas.

This sounds like an awful lot of fun: Tonight, Friday, Dec. 19, the Portland High School Class of 2026 will hold a “Pizza Wars” fundraiser, starting at 6 p.m. at the PHS cafeteria.

This will be a pizza competition featuring local favorites like Melilli, Fabian’s, Sicily, Giovanni’s, Pizzeria DaVinci and SliceWorks. Sample the pizza and then vote on your favor-

ites. At the end of the night, the winner of the Portland’s Favorite Pizza Award will be announced!

Tickets will be available at the door, at \$15 for adults and \$10 for kids. Proceeds support the Class of 2026.

The tragic, brutal war in Ukraine seems to be never-ending. And while it’s totally understandable, living half a world away, to have a feeling of helplessness and hopelessness about the whole thing, there is something you can do this weekend to help out.

The Ukrainian American Youth Association of Hartford will hold a fundraiser Sunday, Dec. 21, from 10:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m., at the Ukrainian American Cultural Center, 5 Commerce St., Cromwell.

The fundraiser is to help the Kulikovskiy family of Ukraine rebuild their lives. On Nov. 19, the apartment of the Kulikovskiy family on Stusa Street, in Ternopil, Ukraine, was completely destroyed by a Russian missile strike.

At the fundraiser, youth-crafted Christmas ornaments and homemade baked goods will be available as a token of appreciation for your donation. Donations benefit the Ukraine Humanitarian Aid Fund. For more information, and to donate online, visit bit.ly/ua-hum-aid.

Hopefully 2026 will see an end to this dreadful war. So many lives have been destroyed.

One of my favorite Christmas songs is “Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas” – and it didn’t start life as a Christmas song at all, but rather was just one of many numbers from the 1944 movie musical *Meet Me in St. Louis*. In the film, Judy Garland’s character sings it to her little sister, played by a 7-year-

Bulletin Board

I got to thinking this past weekend about the Christmas spirit—or, if you prefer, the holiday spirit. You know, “peace on earth, goodwill toward men” and all that. And by “men” I mean men, women, transgenders, non-genders, atheists, vegetarians, NRA members, visitors from Uranus and beyond, people who think it should be legal to marry a goat, and everybody in between. So please, no outraged letters to the editor demanding my public beheading as the highlight of some festive tree-lighting ceremony.

For my own part, it seems to me that goodwill toward aging opinionated white men such as myself is in rather short supply these days, but I remain hopeful. The holiday spirit should be open to everyone, even curmudgeons.

At least that’s what I told myself a couple of weeks ago as I clung precariously to a ladder twenty feet off the ground, praying (in a rare, but nevertheless heartfelt communication) to Jesus to have mercy while I tried to hang wreaths on our second story windows under the close scrutiny of my lovely wife. As one of six children from a happy home, she is a dedicated disciple of the Christmas spirit, though I think she might show a little more consideration for an old Grinch who’s trying to adjust a wreath a fraction of an inch up or down or sideways with one hand, while clinging to the ladder for dear life with the other, all according to directives shouted through a bullhorn from someone planted firmly on the ground.

I’m kidding about the bullhorn, but my acrophobic terror is quite real. Plus, I’m lazy. Also, I don’t like being told what to do.

For reasons that are not entirely clear to me, as the holidays draw near she also insists on lighting scented candles throughout the house in a sort of indoor simulation of a California wildfire. I don’t know if this mini conflagration has some sort of religious significance or if my feet just smell worse this time of year with all the windows closed, but it does provide a certain ambience. I’d find it more appealing if scented candles didn’t cost so much, but far be it from me to diminish the Christmas spirit by carping about corporate executives who exploit the holy season to reap unholy profits.

It will probably come as no surprise to you that what holiday spirit we enjoy here in this country may be in even shorter supply in certain other parts of the world. For instance, I doubt if Vladimir Putin will be dashing downstairs in his pajamas this Christmas morn hoping to find a palomino pony. No worries, Vlad. The way things are going, President Trump appears to be on his way to handing you Ukraine, all tied up in a pretty bow. What could be more gratifying than getting the go-ahead to enslave 35 million people in the name of peace?

As for me, I like the holiday season, but you can definitely take this Christmas thing too far. My sister-in-law, for instance, has so many holiday knick-knacks underfoot—including a statue of an elf flying a kite, which I don’t get at all—that she’s going to have to rent a storage room (or a dumpster) once we all go back to hating each other after the New Year.

The fact is, not everybody gets into the spirit of the season and sometimes it’s wiser not to push it. In one of the more extreme cases, I recall reading a newspaper article some years ago that reported on the demise of a stubborn young missionary who badgered a primitive tribe on a remote island off India. They kept telling him to beat it and he kept coming back until the exasperated aborigines finally killed him. If you’ve ever been bothered by a persistent solicitor (and who hasn’t?), you can kind of sympathize with the tribesmen here. In any case, I don’t expect that an eighteen-foot inflatable Santa will be rearing his jovial head in the tribe’s village center any time soon. I guess the missionary’s head will just have to suffice in the interim.

As for me, I just hope I can get those wreaths off the windows next month without breaking my neck. In the meantime, Merry Christmas, Happy Holidays and say a heartfelt prayer for Ukraine. They’re going to need it.

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.



A Moving Performance... Members of the choir Music Moves Hartford and leaders of St. Peter’s Church in Hebron gathered for a special dinner prior to the concert on Dec. 14 as part of the Sanctuary Performing Arts concert series. Pictured is the entire group with JoAnn Osmond, front left, and Marcia Eaton, front right, of St. Peter’s presented a \$1,000 check to Marianne Vogel, director of Music Moves Hartford, front center, to continue their ministry as the only street choir in New England.

old Margaret O’Brien. The two are facing the prospect of the family moving away from their beloved home.

It’s meant to be a sad song, sung by one depressed sister to another, and neither one of them wants to leave. The original lyrics to the song, in fact, contain super-depressing lines like

“Have yourself a merry little Christmas/ It may be your last/Next year we may all be living in the past” and “Faithful friends who were dear to us/Will be near to us no more.”

Judy Garland balked at singing the song as it was originally written. Yes, the girls were meant to be depressed, but not that depressed. As Judy told the song’s writer, “If I sing that to sweet little Margaret O’Brien, they’ll think I’m a monster!” The writer, Hugh Martin, eventually gave in, and came up with a less-downbeat version to perform, with now-familiar lines such as “Have yourself a merry little Christmas/Let your heart be light/Next year all our troubles will be out of sight.”

But Martin didn’t wring all the sadness out of the piece. At the end of the song, Judy sings, “Someday soon, we all will be together/If the fates allow/Until then, we’ll have to muddle through somehow.”

In my opinion, it’s these closing lines of the song that help to make it so great. Overall, the song’s message is an uplifting one, but it ends on this somber, bittersweet note, one that works well with the way a lot of people feel this time of year. And it helps that Judy Garland sings it so powerfully. Martin himself has

described the “muddle through” sentiment as “just so kind of...down-to-earth.”

But anyone who listens to radio at Christmas-time knows that this version of the song, while it does get occasional airplay, is not the most popular variation of “Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas.” In 1957, Frank Sinatra was recording a Christmas album, and asked Martin if he could rewrite the “muddle through” line. The name of his album was *A Jolly Christmas*, and, as Martin told *Entertainment Weekly*, Sinatra said, “Do you think you could jolly it up for me?”

So, he did. The “muddle through” line was replaced with “Hang a shining star upon the highest bough.” Martin also tweaked the song a little in other ways, replacing words like “next year” with “from now on,” which gave the words more of a timeless happiness kind of feel.

The Sinatra version is what became the Christmas standard, and it’s been recorded by scores of artists over the years, including The Carpenters, who I wrote about last week. And while I’ll gladly listen to either version, I simply prefer the Judy Garland one. Like I said, she had such a powerful voice, and was able to at once convey the encouragement of the song as well as its somberness.

In many ways, it’s the perfect Christmas song. It blends happiness and sadness together in a concoction that is ultimately inspiring, with the promise that “next year, all our troubles will be miles away.”

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Kevin and Pat Rarey, Publishers

Josh Howard—Office Manager, Sports Editor

Mike Thompson, Editor

Staff Reporter:

Anne Lilburn - Portland and East Hampton

Toriana Williams – Colchester, Hebron, Marlborough & Andover

Advertising Representatives:

Jason Baran, ext. 104 • jason@glcitizen.com

Lisa Snietka, ext. 103 • lisa@glcitizen.com

Art Department

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Early Deadline for Next Two Weeks

Christmas is coming and with it, early deadlines for the *Rivereast*.

ALL copy – letters to the editor, news releases, event listings, etc. – for next week’s (Dec. 26) *Rivereast News Bulletin* **must** be in no later than **noon Monday, Dec. 22**.

Likewise, all copy for the Jan. 2 issue **must** be in no later than **noon Monday, Dec. 29**.

No exceptions will be made.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year from all of us at the *Rivereast News Bulletin*.

Holiday Wish for Todge and David

To the Editor:

I read about the closing of Ted’s IGA Market with feelings of sadness and joy. Sadness that one of Hebron’s beloved institutions will no longer be a part of our lives after all these years, and joy the Todge and David will have opportunities to experience all the wondrous adventures that await them in retirement.

One of my holiday wishes is that the brothers will not become strangers to Hebron. Todge and David, you have given so much to our community for so many years. Well done, guys! You are much appreciated! I hope you will continue to think of us warmly and will remain a part of the fabric of our town.

It is good to know the staff will remain in place. Wishing you and your families all the best!

Sincerely,
Althea Carr – Hebron
Longtime Customer

Dementia Talks No. 41

To the Editor:

Last week I touched on Mom’s reflection in the mirror and the possibility that she didn’t recognize herself; and that correcting someone with dementia may not be the best response. Rather, pause and meet them where they are.

Pulling that thought forward, I wanted to share that next month it will be 20 years since my dad floated from his hospital bed to the clouds above. At times Mom knows Dad is gone, at other times she doesn’t. Mostly she doesn’t. She has asked if Dad was on his way, or that she was going to meet him, or variations of that theme.

How should we respond? Should we respond? In a support group, sometime ago, this was a discussion point. There were some that felt that it was important to let their person with dementia know that the loved one that they were asking about had passed away, and that it happened a long time ago.

Others felt that it was better to avoid the topic. Another person simply asked “why share such devastating news?” The group paused.

The discussion circled around a couple of times, then landed on general agreement that sharing when a family member, friend, pet recently died; or correcting them because their spouse, cousin, parent, child, friend, or Blacky the cat passed away years ago, likely wasn’t the best approach.

The rationale came as a question – would we want to feel the emotion that we felt when a loved one FIRST passes away? The answers came quickly – No, we wouldn’t.

The rationale went further as we talked about how those feelings were devastating and why would we want to put our loved one, with dementia, through those feelings every time the topic of a person, that passed so long ago, came up.

A person with dementia will connect people with emotions; if we are delivering bad news and making them feel sad – our face becomes connected to sadness. Emotions are the last to leave our loved ones.

In Mom’s situation, when she says “your father” or “he” will be home soon; I smile and say “it will be so very nice to see him.” Then we continue doing what we were doing.

I share my experiences so that you can see different perspectives, and to also let you know that you are not alone.

With much love and peace,
Tonya Maurer – Amston
Alzheimer’s Hot Line 1-800-272-3900

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RivereastNewsBulletin

An Excellent Event

To the Editor:

Saturday, Dec. 13, was a cloudy chilly day for the Wreaths Across America event held at the Andover Monument Park on Route 6. What an amazing turnout of dedicated people. Colonel Susan Camoroda (retired) was the Location Coordinator of this event. She spent hours working on this project that it would be done in a loving caring way and she succeeded!

At precisely 12:00 p.m., ceremonies are held across America for all those states and towns that are involved in this project. Our fallen soldiers are honored by our Veterans in Andover having served in one of the branches of service to our country. Amy Orlomoski was Mistress of Ceremony, our National Anthem was sung and Andover Scout Pack 124 presented the Posting of Colors and Pledge of Allegiance, followed by Wreath-laying by our veterans, representing each of these services: Army, Dominic Dericó; Navy, Mike Palazzi; Air Force, Jesse Person; Marines, Brad Kelle; Space Force, Patrick Dougherty; Merchant Marines, Richard Swartwout; POW/MIA, Scott Warren. Taps were played by Jack and Patrick Dougherty. What a moving unforgettable moment.

Following this ceremony people went to our three gravesites in town – Olde Andover Burying Ground, Townsend Cemetery, and First Congregational Church Cemetery – to lay wreaths on our Veterans graves. Celine Maurais organized the beverages and light lunch for all. Our Community Room welcomed everyone after such cold outside.

A gracious thank you to all the people who served on this committee to make this a wonderful caring event. Unfortunately, I did not have everyone’s name but want all to know how meaningful this excellent event meant to us. Thank you to all of you.

God bless everyone -- stay healthy and safe this wondrous time of year.

Sincerely,
Cathy Palazzi
Andover Resident

Ethics Complaint from a Republican

To the Editor:

The hypocrisy of the Colchester Republican Town Committee and Michael Dubreuil is something else. Last week’s article complained about the ethics of a holiday party which a former Republican member of the Board of Education, Margo Gignac, has thrown for several years, which gathered both elected officials and administrators from the school and the town. This is one of those rare attempts to create an atmosphere of cooperation, bipartisanship and levity in the holiday season. As a former BOF member, I was invited and attended. I attended another of these parties in 2021 or 2022, and I saw both John Thomas and Tim Vaillancourt at that gathering. Yet now this is an ethical issue because the party was hosted at former BOE Chairman Donna Antonacci’s business and both Debreuil and Donna have put in for the vacancy on the Board of Finance.

The same town committee that has no issues with the Trump Administration’s astonishingly brazen grift and corruption is complaining about a holiday gathering? One that Margo Gignac and Donna organized and paid for to celebrate those they worked with over the last four years as BOE members. They were not selling “Trump Meme Coins,” accepting a \$400 million 747 from a foreign government with ties to ter-

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rorist organizations (though I didn’t check the back parking lot of Lotus Games where the party was held), nor were either of them steering hundred-million-dollar contracts to their sons or son-in-law as is the current Trump administration is.

And what is up with the *Rivereast*? How many times will your reporters be led around by the nose by people like Michael Dubreuil? The voters in Colchester are sick and tired of him and the radical members of the RTC that are constantly drumming up conspiracy theories as opposed to working on and solving everyday issues like educating our kids and funding our town. The voters soundly rejected them in last month’s elections where they lost every seat by an almost two to one margin!

Mike Egan – Colchester

A Little Church Doing Big Things

To the Editor:

Christ Lutheran Church and the Early Childhood Center in Hebron may be considered small by some, relative to active membership (30-40 people worshiping typically @ Sunday services). But the group of dedicated individuals that make up our congregation and our Early Childhood Center, led by members of our social ministry/Caring Shepherds committee, by the grace of God do absolutely huge things to support our community and the less fortunate among us. Open pantry days are held throughout the year which provide food staples, personal hygiene products, cleaning supplies and other staples for life (each open pantry typically distributes goods to support 60-80 people).

We also provide special services and meals during holidays. At Thanksgiving, 22 complete Thanksgiving family meals (with turkeys or hams) were provided to families in need. For Christmas, 26 complete meals will be provided (to feed 115 people). The congregation, teachers and kids from our early childhood daycare center will donate 35 children’s gift boxes to operation Christmas child to be distributed around the world to under privileged children. The congregation also will provide 43 specifically requested Christmas gifts to people within the Hebron community.

We as a congregation thank everyone who over the year who has so generously supported out outreach and missions projects, especially our Caring Shepherds/social ministry committee members. Anyone interested in participating in or donating to our social ministry is welcome to join us and can call us at 860-228-1152.

We also invite everyone to worship with us each Sunday at our 9 a.m. services and especially at this blessed time of year for our Christmas Eve Dec. 24th 7 p.m. candlelight service at 330 Church St., Hebron (Amston) CT.

Sincerely,
Patrick Rubega – East Hampton
President, Christ Lutheran Church

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★ *Letters cont. from page 5*

Maurais, John Botti, Michelle Lorenz, Heather Johnson, and Roberta and Patrick Dougherty. I am so grateful for all of you.

I also want to thank those who participated in the opening ceremony conducted at Veterans Monument Park at noon. The WAA designates noon (local) as the time for the opening ceremony to occur at the over 5,200 locations across the United States and overseas. This year we were honored to have Amy Orlomoski, our librarian, as our Mistress of Ceremonies who read for us the message from the WAA organization; Arianna Choinski who sang the National Anthem; Andover Cub Scout Pack 124 who posted the colors and led us in the Pledge of Allegiance; ceremonial wreath layers Dominic Derico, Michael Palazzi, Brad Kelle, Jesse Person, Richard Swartwout, Rusty Billings, Patrick Dougherty, and Scott Warren; and to Jack and Patrick Dougherty for the playing of Taps.

I am tremendously thankful to all who sponsored wreaths, be it one wreath or many. And there is good news! From now until Dec. 31, the WAA is matching sponsorships. Sign up now; get ahead of the curve. This BOGO deal can't be missed! Our link is www.wreathscrossamerica.org/CT0170. Forms are at the Town Hall. See you in 2026!

Susan Camoroda
Andover Wreaths Across America
Location Coordinator

Another Loss

To the Editor:
The greatest gift we have to protect is our health. The greatest gifts we have to preserve are our natural resources. We owe the families who preserved their land, in Hebron, a great deal of gratitude. Let's hope their wisdom rubs off on the rest of us, including town hall, by respecting local land and vital watersheds.

Where to begin? For every generation I say, it's your future. Choose wisely. Look down the road. Imagine how you want your life to be ten, twenty, even fifty years from now. Then, work backwards from that point. If your vision includes safe drinking water for all, what will it take, now, to safeguard that resource? Party lawns and pollution? Or mature sacrifices? In the past few years the loudest political conversations, in Hebron and beyond, have felt confused and with almost no sustainable goals in mind.

However, there are visionary thinkers out there. Several are on Hebron's DPW Action Committee. Others have spoken to us, loud and clear, for years, in Hebron's town magazine, *Hebron Views*. Unfortunately, these clear voices from boards and committees, will now be made less accessible. Let's hope they can utilize the *Rivereast* and are not silenced altogether. These voices of "The View" repeatedly represent public opinion and the values of Hebron. Not everyone enjoys trolling the internet looking for

news. A regular publication, in our mailboxes, is entirely different. It's tangible, requires no internet and as we read, we are all "on the same page." The mail is also still the best way to reach the public. If you've ever owed taxes, the taxman will find you through the United States Postal Service, no problem.

We have lost a great deal recently, The Friends of the Douglas Library, the cozy library parking lot, corn and hay fields, the quiet in many backyards, abundant Open Space funding, a sense that our land and water are safe from pollution and now we lose Hebron Views. In a town that prides itself on education I find these losses most ironic. It's too bad we were not given the option to subscribe to "The View." With enough support, perhaps readers could have continued providing these magazines to all households, subscriptions or not. After all, isn't reading fundamental? Education, history, open land and natural resources were the heart of *Hebron Views*. This magazine will be sorely missed. #save17

Jean Tulimieri – Amston

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Festival of Wreaths Thank You
To the Editor:

On Dec. 6 and 7, the Portland Historical Society held its 14th annual Festival of Wreaths — "Jingle & Mingle" — showcasing 34 uniquely decorated holiday wreaths, swags and tabletop decorations, each demonstrating the wonderful ideas of individuals, businesses, classrooms and organizations of Portland. On behalf of the society, I would like to thank the following for their donations of wreaths for the Festival: Colleen Brede, Portland River Valley Garden Club, EverGreen Landscaping, Amy Knous, Gotta's Farm, Linda Cunningham, Rhea DeBari, Joyce Murphy, Mallory Rowley, Susan & Tom Bransfield, Denise Kately, Sarah Perruccio, Brownstone Quorum, Kathy Richards, Eileen Marino, Portland Fair Association, Martha Lutecki, Friends of the Portland Library, Portland Garden Club, Deb Freitag, Margot Chapman, St. Mary's Ladies Guild, Jane Klemba, Room 13 at Gildersleeve School, Babs & George Scheer and Sharon Paddock. We would also like to thank Linda Cunningham, Susan Alyson Young and Joan Pestritto for their financial support.

We thank the people from near and far who came to see the decorated wreaths and bought raffle tickets — on Sunday afternoon many were lucky enough to go home with beautiful, fun holiday decorations. Some folks even did their holiday shopping in our Callander Cupboard Pop Up Shop. Many thanks to our volunteers, our bakers and to Hemlock Grange for the use of their hall. A heartfelt thank you goes to all the "worker bees" who make this weekend possible.


A special thank you to the Portland High School A Cappella singers and their director Samuel Tucker for their renditions of holiday songs on Saturday afternoon.

The profits from this fundraiser will help the society preserve Portland's history at the Ruth Callander House Museum of Portland History and provide educational programs for the public.

The Portland Historical Society, Inc.
Deborah Ellsworth, Ways & Means

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★ *Hundreds of Toys, cont. from page 1*

advice into federal service, working as a civilian paralegal for the United States Navy. She retired at 60, with the security of a pension and health care – benefits she recognizes are increasingly rare.

That awareness, combined with rising costs and difficult economic times, shapes how she views the impact of toy drives. She believes donated gifts don't just help children - they lift entire families. For parents struggling to make ends meet, knowing their children will have something to open on Christmas morning can



bring enormous relief.

Neer's giving doesn't stop at toys alone. She also buys children's book-and-stuffed-animal sets sold to benefit children's hospitals, allowing one purchase to support multiple causes. Still, she doesn't spread herself thin. Her focus is clear and unwavering. "Children are my passion," she said.

When she imagines the children who receive the gifts, her hope is not extravagant. She wants them to feel happy, to feel remembered and to grow up knowing that strangers cared enough to help. More than anything, she hopes that feeling stays with them - that one day, they might pass it on.

In Colchester, Neer's efforts have become quietly legendary. The police department remembers her. The truckloads of toys are expected.

And though she would never describe herself this way, it's hard not to think of her as a kind of Mrs. Claus – practical, warm and guided not by spectacle, but by steady generosity.

In a season often rushed and loud, Neer's story is a reminder that the heart of Christmas can be built slowly, year by year, toy by toy – by someone who believes, without hesitation, that every child deserves to wake up to joy.

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★ *Hall of Fame, cont. from page 1*

The biggest obstacle for the selection committee may be sorting through over 200 years of historical nominations. The history of Bacon Academy dates by to the early 1800s when a prominent Colchester farmer, Pierpoint Bacon, died and left an endowment of \$35,000. The endowment was to the inhabitants of the First Society of Colchester for the purpose of supporting and maintaining a school that was formerly established as Bacon Academy, which opened its doors in 1803.

Begue also noted that even if the person nominated is not selected for the initial class, the committee will keep their nomination on file for future consideration.

“We’ve got so many years of history, from sports teams to historical figures to people who have gone on to do great achievements in the

arts,” expressed Begue. “There are so many possibilities and so many things to celebrate.”

Nominations can be made online at ba.colchesterct.org/halloffame and paper applications can be found at Bacon Academy’s main office or at the Colchester Senior Center.

Following the initial year, Begue noted that the goal would be to complete the nomination process by Oct. 1 for any subsequent year.

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RivereastNewsBulletin



The Bacon Academy Hall of Fame is currently accepting nomination for the inaugural inductees. Nominations are being accepted through Jan. 12, 2026, with the initial class set to be celebrated in the spring of next year.

A Christmas Reminder



This holiday season makes for a valuable exercise if we would take it. We are moving in the direction of the changing world conditions. Such conditions effect and affect our daily existence – how we think and what we do and don’t do. It is too easy to get caught up in the mood and movement resulting in the absence of God’s Good News which conquers all the bad news. When God is left out of the GOOD NEWS we have only ZERO (Good – God = 0). We are left with trying to piece together, to keep together the things in and about our lives which seem to give it meaning. We need **light for the darkness; right for the wrongness; and a safe and sure WAY** through these days in which we live.

A Way is Needed

The artist’s painting of the wooded forest was not to be looked upon in comfort. It needed a way in and a way out, a path through it. Here we are on planet earth looking up into seemingly endless galaxies, conscious of timeless eternity and becoming more aware of our littleness, our limitedness. “There is A WAY which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death” (Proverbs 14:12). We could cry out with Thomas, “How can we know THE WAY?” (John 14:5).

A Way is Provided

“Jesus saith unto Him, I AM THE WAY, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me” (John 14:6). The Christ of the Scriptures is the only Christ that works and outworks God’s everpresent Person and His gracious all-wise program for Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Peter, John, Paul, for you and me. “And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord” (Luke 2:10-11).

The Way Must Be Received and Relied Upon

“Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the LIGHT of the world: he that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life” (John 8:12). “For the wages of sin is death; but the GIFT of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Rom. 6:23). “Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that BELIEVETH IN ME, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and BELIEVETH IN ME shall never die. Believest thou this?” (John 11:25-26). So that we assuredly say, “I have chosen THE WAY of truth” (Psalm 119:30) and with David, “As for God, HIS WAY is perfect” (Psalm 18:30). It is God who “maketh MY WAY (in His way) perfect [a wholeness that is safe and full of health]” (Psalm 18:32).

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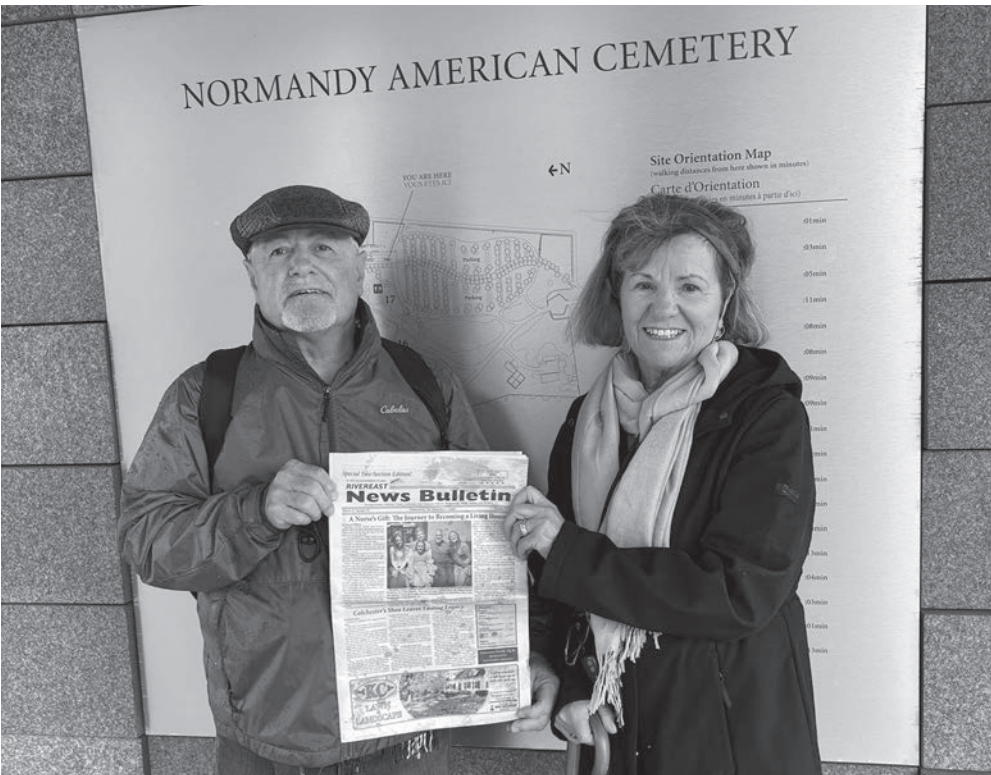
Rainy Day Fun... Colchester residents Regina Jones and Peter Siver brought the *Rivereast* with them on a recent trip to the Gifford Pinchot National Forest, along the Cascade Range in Washington. Mount Saint Helens is seen in the background. The two traveled along the Columbia and Snake rivers. During a good part of their journey, including the day they were hiking at Mount Saint Helens, it was a “typical” rainy day in the Pacific Northwest.



Seeing the Canadian Sights... Jane Muskatallo of Portland brought the *Rivereast* with her as she went sightseeing at Peggy’s Cove Lighthouse in Nova Scotia, Canada, on a windy day.

Where in the World is the *Rivereast*?

Taking a vacation or a day trip soon? Or simply going out to dinner? Bring the *Rivereast* with you! Whether it’s across the globe or across town, we want to see where you’ve been! Simply snap a photo with the *Rivereast*, send it to bulletin@glcitizen.com and, if printed, you’ll receive a gift card to Campagna Restaurant in Portland! Further details are listed below. Happy travels!



Visiting Normandy... Peter and Frances Kupczak brought along the *Rivereast* on a recent trip to American Cemetery in Normandy, France.



Rivereast in Hilton Head... Cindy & Don Biancamano enjoyed exploring Hilton Head Island in South Carolina recently – and they brought along the *Rivereast*!

Where in the World?

Going on a trip? Bring along the *Bulletin*!

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St. John Fisher Church News & Notes

St. John Fisher Roman Catholic Church is located at 30 Jones Hollow Rd. Pastor is the Rev. George S. Mukuka, Bill Gilles is deacon John McKaig is senior deacon retired. 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. The church website is www.stjfchurch.org.

Christmas Mass Schedule: Wednesday, Dec. 24, Vigil Masses at 4 p.m. and 9 p.m., and Thursday, Dec. 25, at 9:30 a.m.

Advent Extended Reconciliation Schedule: Saturday, Dec. 20, 2-3:30 p.m. and Monday, Dec. 22, 5-7 p.m.

Regular Liturgical Celebrations: Weekend Masses: 4 p.m. Saturday and 8:30 and 10:30 a.m. Sunday. **Weekday Masses:** 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.

Faith Formation Programs: Classes are underway for this season. Cindy Bryan, Eileen Gilles and Helena Thomas lead the programs

for grades K-10, to include a high school youth group. For more information, access the church website.

Ministry, Social and Parish Community Events: An adult choir practices weekly; men's and women's prayer groups, Knights of Columbus, Christian Outreach and Prayer Shawl ministry meet monthly; and an active book club meets quarterly. Social activities are planned throughout the year to provide additional parish fellowship.

Community Outreach and Service: Food drives are held weekly for the Marlborough Food Bank. Bags with specific shopping lists are available at the Masses. Sandwich-making and collection continues the last Thursday of the month for St. Vincent de Paul in Middletown. Other scheduled service opportunities can be found in the weekly bulletin.

Additional Programs and Offerings: For information on other programs, seasonal offerings, adult faith formation, youth group, OCIA, Knights of Columbus or other ministries, call the office, visit www.stjfchurch.org, or look for the church on Facebook (Saint John Fisher Roman Catholic Church).

Parks and Rec. Programs

Marlborough Parks & Recreation has announced the following. For full program descriptions or to register, visit www.marlboroughct.gov. For more information, call 860-295-6203. Note: Don't wait until the last minute to register! Most classes require a minimum registration and if that requirement is not fulfilled by a certain date, the program may be canceled.

Netto Indoor Soccer: Indoor soccer for fifth- and sixth-graders. Games will begin Jan. 7, and will be played from the end of school until 4:30 p.m. at Marlborough Elementary School. Fee for this program is \$75 and participants will receive a T-shirt.

Tiny Twirlers Dance Class: For ages 2-3 with caregiver. Tuesdays, Jan. 6 and March 24, from 5-5:30 p.m., or Saturdays, Jan. 10-March 28, 9:30-10 a.m. Children will be introduced to basic dance moves, work on their motor skills, and develop a sense of music. Class is held at Dance Dynamics in Hebron. Registration fee is \$150.

Sparkling Spinners: For ages 3-6. Thursdays, 4:30-5 p.m., Jan. 8-March 26. Classes held at Dance Dynamics in Hebron. Registration fee is \$150.

Kids Klub: For ages 4-7. Saturdays, 11:45 a.m.-12:15 p.m., Jan. 10-March 28. If your child has an interest in a variety of dance styles, movement, and the arts, this is the ideal class for them. Class is held at Dance Dynamics in Hebron. Registration fee is \$150.

Kids & Family Sewing (Microwaveable Lovey): For ages 7 and up. Thursday, Jan. 29, 5:30-7 p.m., at Marlborough Senior Center. Participants will create a stuffed animal with flax seed and lavender that you can warm up for aches and pains. Registration fee is \$55/resident and \$60/non-resident.

Crayola Imagine Art Academy – World of Design: Think It, Draw It, Make It! For grades K-6. Tuesdays, Feb. 3-March 17, 3:15-4:15 p.m., at MES. Experiment with Crayola products and many art techniques like sculpting, storyboarding, collage, and mixed media. Discover design, careers like graphic design, universal design, urban design, and produce design. Fee is \$142/resident, \$147/non-resident.

Lego – Winter Wonderland Engineering: For grades K-4. Wednesdays, Feb. 4-March 11, 3:15-4:45 p.m., at MES. Explore your snowiest ideas and learn STEM concept, with the guid-

ance of an experienced Play-Well instructor. Fee is \$139/resident/\$144/non-resident.

Mad Science – Ready STEM Go! For grades K-6. Thursdays, Feb. 5-March 12, 3:15- 4:15 p.m., at MES. Kids make mixtures and explore the science of motion and energy. Fee is \$142/resident, \$147/non-resident.

Kids & Family Sewing (Pet Snuffle): Ages 7 and up, Thursday, Feb. 12, 5:30-7 p.m., at Marlborough Senior Center. Participants will create a pet snuffle stuffed animal. Fee is \$45/resident, \$50/non-resident.

Safe Sitter: For grades 6-8. Saturday, Feb. 14, 9 a.m.-2 p.m., at Marlborough Senior Center. This class is designed to help students learn to be safe when they're home alone, watching younger siblings, or babysitting. Fee: \$140/resident, \$145/non-resident.

Kids & Family Sewing (Reusable Bunny Bag Shaped Gift Bag): For ages 7 and up. Thursday, March 5, 5:30-7 p.m., at Marlborough Senior Center. Fee is \$40/resident, \$45/non-resident.

Safe at Home: For grades 4-6. Tuesday, March 17, 5-6:30 p.m., at Marlborough Senior Center. Participants will learn skills to prepare them to be safe when home alone. Fee is \$65/resident, \$70/non-resident.

Adult Programs: Adult Ballet: For ages 18 and up. Tuesdays, Jan. 6-March 24, 6:30-7:15 p.m., at Dance Dynamics in Hebron. Fee is \$200.

Adult Tap: For ages 18 and up. Thursdays, Jan. 8-March 26, 8-8:45 p.m., at Dance Dynamics in Hebron. Fee is \$200.

Beginner and Intermediate Tai Chi: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 1-2 p.m., at Marlborough Senior Center. Fee is \$40/resident, \$45/non-resident.

Beginner Tai Chi: Mondays, 6-7 p.m., beginning in January, at Marlborough Senior Center. Fee is \$40/resident, \$45/non-resident.

Zumba: Thursdays, 6:30-7:30 p.m., at Marlborough Senior Center. Fee is \$50/resident, \$55/non-resident, or a \$10 drop-in fee. Class instruction provided by Anna Boose.

Adult Drop-In Volleyball: Thursdays, 8-10 p.m., at MES. Fee is \$5 per week. Session runs until June.

Adult Drop-In Basketball: Sundays, 8-10 a.m., at MES. Fee is \$5 per week. Sessions runs until the end of April.

Holiday Closings

Marlborough Town Hall, Senior Center, and Public Works will be closed Wednesday, Dec. 24, and Thursday, Dec. 25, for the Christmas holiday.

The following week, they will close at noon Wednesday, Dec. 31, and all day Thursday, Jan. 1.

ECHS Honor Roll

Four Marlborough residents made the East Catholic High School honor roll for the first quarter of the 2025-26 school year.

Honors with Distinction: Grade 12: Lucy DeCorleto; **Grade 11:** Kalli Bevans, Kamden Bevans.

Second Honors: Grade 10: Alexander O'Brien.

Celebrate the Arts on New Year's Eve

Marlborough Arts Center, located at 231 N. Main St., invites all art lovers to attend a New Year's Eve party on Wednesday, Dec. 31, from 6-9 p.m.

This is the last opportunity to view the arts center's latest exhibition of six local artists in the main gallery while also celebrating the coming of the new year. Feel free to BYOB and a sweet or savory finger food snack to share if you wish.

Visit www.marlborougharts.org, email info@marlborougharts.org or call 860-467-6353 for more information.

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RE12-19-25



Amy Meisner was diagnosed with MS in 1997. For someone who has always danced, MS would seem like the end. But for Amy, it means the start of a new chapter. She'll never leave the floor, still dances from her wheelchair, and is a great choreographer. Embracing Amy's undying passion, the National MS Society teamed up with LaTonya Swann to create an entirely new and inspired dance experience through virtual reality. See their experience and find out how you can share yours at WeAreStrongerThanMS.org.

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Funds for Food Bank... On Saturday, Nov. 22, the East Hartford Quilt Project drew the winning raffle ticket for the East Hampton quilt. The lucky winner was Gail Cavanaugh, owner of the Hairitage in East Hampton. Pictured here are Kim Gagliano and Joanne Barmasse, from the Quilt Project, presenting a check for just over \$9,000 to Deb Markham for the East Hampton Food Bank. The funds were raised from the purchase of the raffle tickets.

Middle Haddam Public Library News

The Middle Haddam Public Library, 2 Knowles Road, Middle Haddam has announced the following. To register or for more information on any program, email middlehaddamlibrary@gmail.com, visit middlehaddamlibrary.com or call 860-267-9093. Mailing address: P.O. Box 123, Middle Haddam, CT 06456.

Library Hours: Mondays and Thursdays, 10 a.m.-2 p.m.; Tuesdays and Fridays, 3-6 p.m.

Makers Market: Stop by the library during regular hours for a pop-up makers market featuring locally made soaps, simmer pot kits, fire starters and woven runners, placemats and tea towels. You may also fill a free bag with used books.

Featured Artist for December: Phil Barlow, a watercolor artist.

Open Mic Night: Friday, Dec. 19, 6-8 p.m. Share your talent or just come and listen to some music. Performers, please call the library to register. Beverages and snacks will be available.

Intention with Erin Day: Monday, Dec. 29, 6 p.m. Day, who leads yoga classes at the library each week, will offer a discussion on finding and

focusing on intentions during yoga practice. Setting an intention in yoga means choosing a focus or quality to guide your practice.

Book Talk: Sunday, Jan. 4, 2 p.m. *Hartford Courant* columnist Dom Amore will give a talk on his collaboration with retired UConn men's basketball coach Jim Calhoun, titled *More Than a Game: How the UConn Basketball Dynasty Was Built on a Culture of Caring*. Please call the library to reserve a seat.

Mahjong: Mondays, 10:30 a.m. All levels of experience welcome.

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

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

Chair Yoga with Kathleen: This 'gentle yoga' program is held Fridays at 9 a.m. Cost is \$15 per class. Register by emailing zenlotus860@yahoo.com or calling 860-638-9097.

VITA Seeks Volunteers

Since 2009, the Middlesex VITA Coalition has helped thousands in Middlesex County file their taxes at no cost. As part of the IRS-sponsored Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program, the coalition is seeking volunteers to help continue the mission.

Middlesex VITA specializes in maximizing tax credits for families and individuals with incomes under \$70,000. No prior tax preparation

experience is required, as training is provided. You will collaboratively prepare client returns, ensuring you're never working alone.

Middlesex County includes the *Rivereast* towns of Portland and East Hampton.

Training begins in early January. If interested in volunteering, email MiddlesexCT.Vita@gmail.com, or connect on Facebook at "Middlesex CT VITA."

Congregational Church News & Notes

East Hampton Congregational Church, located at 59 Main St., will share the annual all-church Christmas pageant Sunday, Dec. 21, at 10 a.m., along with Christmas carols to be sung. After the pageant there will be a luncheon for all to enjoy downstairs in Fellowship Hall.

Office hours are Monday and Wednesday, 9 a.m.-2 p.m., and the telephone number for church is 860-267-4959. Pastor Robin Blundon is usually available at that time for anyone's

needs.

Christmas Eve service will be held at 7 p.m. Dec. 24. There will be inspirational music by the choir, Christmas carols, and traditional lessons of the real meaning of Christmas. At the end of the service candles will be lit for all congregants, with "Silent Night" sung.

Calendar: Sunday, 7 p.m., AA Meeting; Monday, 5:30-7:30 p.m., Cub Scouts; Tuesday, 7-8 p.m., Scouts.

Taxes Due Jan. 1

The second installment of real estate, personal property, motor vehicle taxes over \$500, and supplemental motor vehicle taxes on the Grand List of Oct. 1, 2024 is due and payable on Jan. 1. Payments made or USPS-postmarked by Feb. 2 will be considered on time.

Real estate and personal property taxes are billed at 39.71 mills; motor vehicle and supplemental motor vehicle taxes are billed at the state-capped rate of 32.46 mills. Supplemental motor vehicle bills will be mailed on or about Dec. 12.

Late payments accrue 1.5% interest per month (18% annually) with a \$2 minimum, as

required by state law. A \$20 returned-check fee applies. Failure to receive a bill does not exempt taxpayers from payment or interest.

Checks should be made payable to Town of East Hampton. Payments may be mailed to: Collector of Revenue, 1 Community Drive, East Hampton, CT 06424. Payments may also be made online at www.easthamptonct.gov.

If dropping off in person, hours of collection are: Monday, Wednesday and Thursday, 8 a.m.-4 p.m.; Tuesday, 8 a.m.-6:30 p.m.; and Friday, 8 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

Email taxcollector@easthamptonct.gov with any questions or concerns.

Haddam Neck Covenant Church News

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

Message Series: The message each Sunday will focus on the Advent topics of Hope, Peace, Joy and Love.

Christmas Concert: The Christmas Concert, with Vocal Choir and musicians, will be held Sunday, Dec. 21, at 9 a.m.

Christmas Eve: All are invited Dec. 24 at 5 p.m. for the family candlelight service with traditional Christmas carols and music by the Bell Choir

Children's Ministry: Children's Ministry, for children in kindergarten through fifth grade,

is held in Fellowship Hall during worship. The theme is "Friends with God" and is taught through Bible stories where the characters are friends with God. A toddler nursery is also available. All are welcome.

Choir: Vocal Choir rehearses Wednesdays at 6:30 p.m. Bell Choir rehearses Wednesdays at 5 p.m. New members are always welcome.

Adult Bible Study: Sundays at 10:30 a.m. in the Music Room. The study is the Book of Psalms.

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

Candlelight Christmas Eve Service

A Candlelight Christmas Eve Service with traditional Christmas carols and Bible readings will be held at 5 p.m. Wednesday, Dec. 24, at Haddam Neck Congregational Church, 408 Quarry Hill Rd., Haddam Neck.

All are welcome. For more information, visit www.haddamneckcongregationalchurch.org.

Bingo at VFW Post

All are invited to bingo every Thursday at VFW Cobra Post 5095, located at 20 North Maple St. Doors open at 5:30 p.m. Early Bird Bonanza will be at 6:20 p.m., with regular game play starting at 6:30 p.m. There will be a progressive jackpot and cash prizes.

The Auxiliary Café will be open before games and during intermission, offering hot snacks.

Christmas Tree Pick-Up

Christmas Tree Pick-Up by East Hampton Boy Scout Troop 8 will conduct a Christmas tree pick-up on Saturday, Jan. 10. Reserve a pick-up at: www.troop8.net.

After registering online, place the tree at the end of your driveway by 7 a.m. on Jan 10. Suggested donation is \$15 per tree. Check or cash can be left in an envelope and taped to your door. Checks should be made out to Boy Scout Troop 8.

If not able to register online please send an email message with name, address and phone number to trees@troop8.net

No wreaths or garland will be accepted. Also, this pick-up is available to East Hampton, Middle Haddam and Cobalt addresses only. Registrations are due Jan. 5.

Gingerbread House Decorating Contest

The Village Center merchants present the fourth annual Village Center Gingerbread House Decorating Contest. East Hampton Public Library is serving as the display location and helping to promote the contest to the community.

Community voting runs through Dec. 19, with winners announced Dec. 20. Prizes will be awarded in two age groups – under 15 and 16+.

The contest is made possible through local businesses, who contribute prizes ranging from restaurant and activity gift certificates to retail merchandise and more. The collaboration between the merchants and the library helps spotlight these businesses during a key shopping season.

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Local Author Spins a Pirate Tale in New Novel

By Anne Lilburn

East Hampton resident Bill Meyers never thought he'd be a novelist. The grandfather of 10 had always made up stories for his children, and later his grandchildren, but he never thought he'd publish them.

"I never saved any of them," Meyers said, adding that most of them he never even wrote down.

That changed about 10 years ago, when he was walking on a beach on Nantucket with three of his grandchildren. The kids had wanted him to tell them a story, so he did. He made it a pirate story, remembering a trip to the Whydah Pirate Museum in Cape Cod where he learned about Black Sam Bellamy and the wreck of the Whydah pirate ship. Meyers told bits of the story, then embellished it as he went on and the kids asked

questions. When he got back home, he decided to put down his story on paper.

That was about ten years ago, Meyers said, and the 30 pages he wrote sat untouched until sometime last year. Meyers and his wife were eating breakfast at Sweet Jean's Cafe when they crossed paths with local author Jack Matthews, whom they had met years ago and who had also written a book that took place on Cape Cod. The two got to talking about Meyers' pirate story and Matthews told Meyers to bring him what he had written. The next weekend, he did. It was the beginning of a mentorship, with Matthews providing guidance as Meyers continued to build on his story with internet research.

Meyers' historical and fictionalized novel, *The Wreck of the Whydah*, tells the story of Bellamy,

a pirate during the golden age of piracy in the 18th century. His ship, the Whydah, wrecked off the coast of Cape Cod in 1717, and its wreckage was found in 1984. Meyers' book tells the story of Bellamy's days of piracy and imagines him surviving the wreck and going on to marry a girl he left behind on the Cape when he headed south to seek treasure.

Meyers' book then jumps forward a few hundred years to modern times, where some young teen siblings discover long-lost journals from the Whydah and begin to explore the history of the pirate ship themselves.

Meyers said that he enjoyed the writing process, and managed to keep some of his grandfatherly traditions as he wrote, even naming characters after each of his ten grandchildren, something he said they enjoyed — though he did have to modify his story a bit to suit them.

He said he based one character off of his granddaughter, Grace.

"I told her how I included her in the book and she said, 'Oh, what did I do? What happened?'" he said, "and I hated to tell her: I just used her name as one of the passengers. So I felt bad about it, when she thought she was going to be a big part of the book, so I started elaborating on her character, and I wound up writing about three chapters with her in it, and how she met one of the other people and eventually, she got married to him. And so she got a big kick out of that."

Another time, he modeled two characters af-

ter another two of his grandchildren, but made them a mother and daughter, because he said the two, who are eight years apart in real life, always used to joke that they were like mother and daughter.

Meyers said that Matthews' mentorship really got him through the challenging process of putting together an entire novel.

"Jack gave me a lot of insight," he said, noting that it was a continuous process over many revisions. "As I would write, I'd give them a few more pages and he'd read them and make some comments, make some suggestions about what I should do, what I shouldn't do."

Eventually, it came time to publish the book, and Matthews helped Meyers navigate the self-publishing process. By October, he had a book available for sale on Amazon.

Meyers said he's gotten great feedback from friends — and friends of friends — who have read and shared the book. He says that while the book is intended for a young adult audience, many of his early readers who have left him comments are closer to his age, proving that a good story is a good story, no matter how old you are.

He also says he's gotten a lot of support from his fellow regulars at Sweet Jean's, and he says he owes a special thanks to the owner, Angie, whose recipes he even included at the end of his book.

The Wreck of the Whydah is currently available for sale on Amazon.

EHVFD 'Santa Runs' Return

The members of the East Hampton Volunteer Fire Department have announced the schedule for this year's annual "Santa Run" visits to various neighborhoods in town.

Weekend routes start at approximately 4 p.m. on weekends and at 5 p.m. during the week. The routes will be conducted in accordance with the schedule shown below and will follow the approximate order in which the streets are listed. A GPS tracker will enable children of all ages to locate Santa at any point along that evening's route.

Important Note: For safety reasons, Santa will not be able to stop and greet people along the state-controlled roads in town. If you live along routes 16, 66 or 196, please consult the schedule below and arrange to meet Santa at a convenient nearby location.

Inclement weather or emergency calls could

potentially result in curtailment or cancellation of a particular evening's activities and cannot be rescheduled. Any changes or updates to the established schedule will be posted on the EHVFD Facebook page as soon as practicable.

These Santa Run events are sponsored, staffed and funded by the members of the fire department, which remains a 100% volunteer organization. No taxpayer or department budgetary funds are utilized to defray expenses; donations offered along the routes are accepted. The remaining schedule is:

Dec. 19: Main Street (between Barton Hill and Route 66), North Main, Christopher, West Dr., Bellwood Court, Lake Drive, Lakewood, Candlewood, Raymond, Pocotopaug Drive, Auburn Knoll, Island View, Blue Heron, Eastham Bridge, Seven Hills Crossing.

Police News

11/30: William Norton, 32, of East Hampton, was issued a summons for misuse of 911 and interfering with an officer, East Hampton Police said.

12/4: Anthony Fazio, 23, of Meriden, was arrested and charged with second-degree breach of peace and violation of a protective order, police said.

12/5: Huertas Moncada, 29, of Hartford, was issued a summons for operating a motor vehicle while under suspension, police said.

12/5: Joshua Bradley, 21, of East Lyme, was arrested and charged with two counts of second-degree failure to appear, police said.

12/9: Kian Lister, 35, of East Hampton was arrested and charged with two counts of third-degree assault, two counts of disorderly con-

duct, second-degree criminal mischief, second-degree reckless endangerment and third-degree strangulation/suffocation, police said.

12/10: Raul Medina-Alvarez, 45, of Amston, was arrested and charged with sixth-degree larceny, police said.

12/15: Matthew Bouthot, 22, of Moodus, was arrested and charged with two counts of second-degree burglary, two counts of sixth degree larceny, first degree criminal trespass, first-degree criminal mischief, risk of injury to a child and disorderly conduct, police said.

From Dec. 1-14, officers responded to 34 medical calls, five motor vehicle crashes and seven alarms, and made 24 traffic stops, police said.

Local Art on Display

Local artist Tom Swimm has an oil painting titled "Afternoon At The Griswold" as part of the Lyme Art Association "Inside Story" exhibit. The show will run until Jan. 1 at the Lyme Art Association, 90 Lyme St. in Old Lyme.

For more information, please visit lymeartassociation.org.

Quilt Show Save the Date

Save the date for the 37th annual Haddam Neck Congregational Church Quilt Show, coming up April 11, 2026, from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and April 12, 2026, from noon to 4 p.m. at the church, 408 Quarry Hill Rd., Haddam Neck.

Submit a patriotic-themed or red white and blue quilt for the show, to celebrate the country's 250th year.

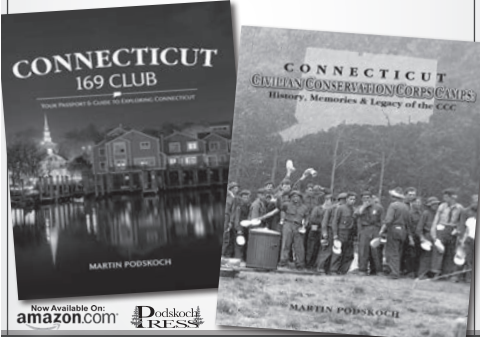
Donations of fabric and notions are being accepted for the show's Bits and Pieces sale. Tea room, raffles and dozens of handmade quilts featured. Suggested donation is \$8.

Call 860-993-5311 for more information, or email mapionzio@comcast.net.

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John H. Porter, Esq.

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Winter Classes Coming... Epoch Arts is offering a variety of classes and programs this winter. Students in grades pre-K through 12 can register online to take classes like art, ceramics, theater, improv, theater productions and more. Classes begin the week of Jan. 5, and will be held at Epoch, 27 Skinner St. For full class descriptions and to register, visit www.epocharts.org/classes-registration.

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. Visit www.easthamptonct.gov/east-hampton-senior-center for more information and a list of regular weekly and monthly activities, including games, quilting, Bible study, monthly men's and women's groups, and more.

Holiday Closings: The Senior Center will be closed on December 25 in celebration of the Christmas Holiday and will be open on December 26.

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 10:30 a.m. the day before. Meals are free; a \$3 donation is requested. A Form 5 document must be completed before registering for lunch; stop by the senior center to complete and submit the form.

Trailblazers Walking Group: Monday, Dec. 22 at 9 a.m. Air Line State Park, 69 Smith Street, East Hampton. All paces are welcome.

Café Conversations with the Coordinator: Tuesday, Dec. 23 at 12:15 p.m. Come chat with Senior Center Director Holly Marrero, share ideas and feedback.

Chatham Health Chat: Tuesday, Dec. 30 at 11:30 a.m. featuring a talk on Mental Health with a representative of Chatham Health.

Trips: Lunch for Seniors at Windham Tech: Wednesday, Jan. 14 leaving the Senior Center at

10 a.m. for an 11 a.m. seating. Enjoy a delicious lunch prepared by Windham Tech Culinary students. Cost is \$19 and includes lunch and transportation.

Friendship Tours Irish Celebration with Andy Cooney: March 10, at the Danversport Yacht Club, Danvers, Mass. Depart from Stop & Shop at 7:30 a.m. Enjoy the sounds of Ireland with Andy Cooney, special guest comedian George Casey, the Guinness Irish Band and Emerald Fire Irish Dance. Choice of Scrod or corned beef. Cost is \$185.

Friendship Tours Fairytale Lunch: Held at Pickity Place, Mason, N.H., on May 7. Visit the 1786 cottage for lunch followed by time to stroll the grounds and shop. Cost is \$167.

Volunteer Opportunities: Volunteers are needed to answer phones and grocery shop for senior center members. Stop by the center Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., to fill out the volunteer form. Call 860-267-4426 for more information.

Bethlehem Lutheran Church News

Services at Bethlehem Evangelical Lutheran Church, located at 1 East High St., are held Sundays at 10 a.m. There is Sunday school every week following the sermon.

The church sanctuary is handicapped-accessible by using the lift.

For more information, call 860-267-1248 or visit www.facebook.com/BethlehemEH or www.bethlehemeh.org.

St. Patrick Church News & Notes

St. Patrick Church, 47 West High St., is a member of St. John Paul II Parish, along with St. Bridget Church in Moodus.

Masses are celebrated Saturdays at 4 p.m. at St. Patrick and 5:30 p.m. at St. Bridget, and on Sundays at 7 and 11:30 a.m. at St. Bridget and 8:30 a.m., 10 a.m. and 7 p.m. at St. Patrick.

During the week, Masses are celebrated at 8 a.m. on Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays at St. Patrick, and on Wednesdays and Fridays at St. Bridget.

Parks and Rec News & Notes

East Hampton Parks and Recreation has announced the following items of interest. For full program descriptions or more information, or to register, call 860-267-7300 or www.easthamptonrec.com.

Wolf Pack Tickets Now Available: At PeoplesBank Arena in Hartford (formerly XL Center) on Saturday, Jan. 10, from 6-8 p.m. Tickets are \$25 each and are in the lower level, Section 109. Register online.

Hebron Artist on Display

The East Hampton Art Association is currently showing the oil paintings of Nancy Perkins at the Town Hall gallery through the end of January.

Perkins is an artist specializing primarily in landscape scenes that evoke memories from her travels throughout New England, the western U.S. and Europe.

Perkins holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in interior design from Iowa State University. She currently resides in Hebron and is a member of the East Hampton Art Association.

Christ Episcopal Church News

Christ Episcopal Church, 66 Middle Haddam Rd., Middle Haddam, holds in-person and Zoom services at 10 a.m. on Sundays. All are welcome. To connect electronically, go to www.christchurchmiddlehaddam.com for directions. The Holy Eucharist will be celebrated with the Rev. Diana Rogers, priest-in-charge.

Donations: Food items for the East Hampton Food Bank may be placed in the black totes at the rear of the church.

Returnable Bottles and Cans: Are collected in cans by the shed.

Bible Study: Contact Bobette Reed Kahn at bobette@khan.com if you are interested in participating.

Cards for Holiday Giving: A wide variety of gift cards are available. For each card sold, the church receives a percentage of the sale. Email Bobette at bobette@khan.com to place your order.

Clothing Donations: The church is collecting clothing for the area unhoused in conjunction with FOOD4LIVES. Please check your closet for surplus warm clothing in good condition; adult sizes only. A box will be placed in the Parish Hall for donations.

Christmas Pageant: Sunday, Dec. 21, at the

10 a.m. service. The Sunday School children will enact the story of the Holy Family's journey to Bethlehem for the birth of Jesus.

Christmas Gifts for Children in Need: The Missions Team is coordinating with the church's Covenant to Care-matched DCF social worker to provide gifts for ten children on their caseload this Christmas. See the sign-up sheet in the Parish Hall to sign up to help a local child.

Information/Assistance: Contact Senior Warden Donna Hryb at 860-633-0472 or donnaadubehryb@gmail.com for more information.

EHMS Volleyball Registration

East Hampton Middle School student/athletes in grades 7 or 8 who are interested in playing for the boys or girls volleyball teams can register at arbitersports.com.

Athletes must have a physical within a 13-month period in order to participate. Registration is limited to the first 60 girls registered.

Deadline for registration is on Sunday, Jan. 25. For more information, call EHMS athletic director Michael Mercaldi at 860-463-6837.



Wreath for the Bridge... The Belltown Garden Club creates a holiday wreath annually for the Salmon River State Park covered bridge. The members have also cultivated a native plant and shrub garden nearby, establishing a native habitat. The club noted that the cut twigs in the front of the garden, however, deprive the hiking community of viewing gorgeous red berries for the season and birds of their favorite winter treat.

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Holiday Giving Tree

The third annual Holiday Giving Tree is set up at the Andover Community & Senior Center. Each tag on the tree represents a gift wish from a local family in need this holiday season.

To participate, select a tag from the Holiday Giving Tree, purchase the requested gift item, and return it to Community & Senior Center Director Tess Grous by 4 p.m. Friday, Dec. 19.

For more information, contact Grous at 860-742-7305 ext. 4510 or Tgrous@AndoverCT.org.

Need Holiday Assistance?

Does your family need help with gifts this holiday season? Do you know an Andover family who could use a little help?

Please reach out to either Roberta Dougherty, Town Clerk, at 860-742-7305 ext. 4218 or townclerk@andoverct.org, or Tess Grous, Social Services Director and Municipal Agent, at 860-742-7305 ext. 4510 or tgrous@andoverct.org.

Holiday Sing-Along

The Andover Rec Commission will host its annual Holiday Sing-Along Sunday, Dec. 21, from 4-7 p.m., at the Andover Community & Senior Center. All residents are invited.

Indoor family fun includes hot cocoa & cookies, kids' ornament decorating, and a photo booth with Santa. There will also be a gingerbread house competition. Adults and children should bring their premade, decorated gingerbread houses to the community center at 4 p.m. All entries will be displayed during the event; prizes will be awarded.

Amston Artists in Local Show

From now through Dec. 28, Amston artists Elizabeth Dougherty and John Ros will have an exhibition of mixed media works entitled "Over Here" at Over Andover Barn-tique, 415 Route 6, Andover, as part of Artist Open Studios of Northeast CT.

For more information, visit aosct.org.

Basketpalooza is Here!

All are invited to support the Andover Friends of the Library and the Andover Public Library this season in the fifth annual fundraiser Basketpalooza.

Between now and Dec. 22, you can purchase tickets for a chance at winning any one of the 46 theme baskets, which are filled with toys, homemade jams, baking supplies and more.

Tickets are \$1 each, \$5 for 6 tickets and \$10 for 13 tickets. Credit cards will be accepted using Square (\$5 minimum) for ticket purchases. One winning ticket for each basket will be drawn Monday, Dec. 22, at 5 p.m.; winners will be notified that evening.

Homework Club

A Homework Club for students in grades 6-10 will be offered Tuesdays, 3-4:30 p.m., through Dec. 30, at the Andover Community and Senior Center, 25 School Rd.

Students are invited to a free space to complete assignments, study and build strong habits. Staff and volunteers will be on hand.

Consent forms are required. Call the center for more information, at 860-798-6862.

Library Friends Book Fair

All are invited to join the Friends of the East Hampton Public Library at Rule of 3 Brewing, 201 West High St., on Saturday, Dec. 13, from 2-5 p.m., for a curated used book fair.

The Friends will sell books in like-new condition and other fun swag. Beverages will be available for purchase from the brewery, with a discount available for those who show their library card at the bar.

For more information, email friendsofephpl@gmail.com.

Holiday Toy Drive

VFW Post 5095 is holding a Holiday Toy Drive, to support the dependents of currently deployed active-duty service members and veteran families in need.

The VFW is collecting toys for children and adults of all ages.

Drop-off locations: VFW Post 5095, 20 North Maple St. – hours are Monday-Friday from 4-9 p.m., and Saturday and Sunday from noon-7 p.m.; and The Dublin, 42 E. High St.

Final day to drop off: Dec. 20.

For more information, call the post at 860-267-8837.

Summer Cultural Trip to France for Students

This is an opportunity for high school students from East Hampton to participate in a nine-day guided educational tour to Southern France and Paris from June 22 to June 30. It is run by Jumpstreet Tours and chaperoned by certified Connecticut teachers.

If interested, email Scott Minnick at tripto-france26@gmail.com ASAP to get more information and a detailed itinerary.

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Selectmen Address Grants, Bridge Reopening

By Toriana Williams

The Andover Board of Selectmen held its regular meeting on Dec. 8, with discussion focused on infrastructure projects, grant administration, staffing and salary matters. Public comment opened the meeting with residents expressing strong reactions to recent town actions, particularly the reopening of the Bunker Hill Bridge.

‘Peace of Mind’

The moment prominent comments centered on the reopening of the Bunker Hill Bridge, which residents described as having a significant impact on daily life and safety.

Katherine Hutchinson, a resident of Bunker Hill Road, described the effects of the bridge closure on her routine. She stated that her normal “three-tenths of a mile” route to Route 6 had required roughly an additional five miles each way “instead of half a mile” for the past eight months and shared that it had been “extremely trying.” She thanked the BOS for “remaining steadfast” and “holding the contractor to the contract.” She described the moment the bridge reopened as “the greatest feeling in the world.”

Scholarship Announced

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 and is majoring in horticulture, floriculture, landscape design, conservation, forestry, environmental concerns, botany and other allied subjects.

Students from Bolton, Bloomfield, Coventry, East Hartford, East Windsor,

‘Christmas in New England’

“Christmas in New England” will perform for the first time at Andover Congregational Church, 359 Route 6, on Friday, Dec. 19, at 7 p.m.

All are invited to this night of traditional and contemporary Christmas music with a touch of bluegrass, old time, and country music styles. Amy Gallatin, Roger Williams, JD Williams, Dave Orlomoski, Karen Wilber, and Krissy & Bob Dick will perform on acoustic instruments and vocals. There will be songs you know, and some new ones as well.

This event is presented in the spirit of good-

Vacancies on Community Fund

The Andover Greater Together Community Fund at the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving is accepting applications to fill vacancies on its Greater Together Community Fund committee.

The Andover Greater Together Community Fund Committee is responsible for selecting and distributing funds awarded by the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving to local nonprofits to assist in projects that will help enhance and benefit the residents of Andover. In June, the Hartford Foundation awarded over \$40,000 to seven local nonprofit organizations recommended for funding by the Andover Greater Together Community Fund Committee.

For more information on the Andover Great-

er Together Community Fund, go to www.hfpg.org/andovercf.

Veterans Memorial Field Improvements

The most detailed and discussed agenda item concerned the Veterans Memorial Field improvement project, which involves multiple state grants, a town contribution and private funding.

Town officials outlined that the project is funded through: a \$500,000 STEAP grant, a \$250,000 Legislative Appropriation grant, a town match of approximately \$150,000 and an additional \$10,000 contribution from the Hartford Foundation.

The Legislative Appropriation grant is time-sensitive and must be expended during the current fiscal year. Interim Town Administrator Jim Bellano explained that the state Department of Economic and Community Development

Glastonbury, Manchester, Middletown, Vernon, Storrs and Windsor Locks are also eligible for the scholarship.

Applications with the submittal instructions are available at the guidance department of the attending school. All completed applications must be received by April 1, 2026 to be considered.

will by the Andover Friends of the Library, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, so while there is no admission charge, you are still welcome to make a donation to the Friends group.

Parking is available at the Andover Congregational Church parking lot, or across the street at the Andover Public Library. At intermission, you will be able to purchase tickets for the Friends of the Library’s Basketpalooza event, as all 46 baskets will be moved to the church for display.

For more information, contact the library at 860-742-7428.

er Together Community Fund, go to www.hfpg.org/andovercf.

The Andover Greater Together Community Fund committee meets monthly via Zoom. Application forms can be found on the interested volunteer page of the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving website, www.hfpg.org/gtcfvolunteer, or by emailing the committee at andover@hfpgcommunityfunds.org.

Please note: elected officials, individuals campaigning for office, or their immediate family members are not eligible to serve on this committee. Volunteers must be at least 14 years of age to serve.

Interested community members should apply by Jan. 2 to be considered.

other Wednesday), Sewing, Various Exercise Programs, and more. For a full schedule of all weekly offerings, contact the center.

Upcoming Special Events: Transportation available for all programs. For full event descriptions, call the senior center or see the online newsletter.

Shopping Trips: Tuesdays, 8:30 a.m. – to Willimantic on Dec. 30, and Manchester on Dec. 23. Contact Linda to reserve your ride.

Christmas Carols with RHAM High School: Monday, Dec. 22, 11:30 a.m. Enjoy classic carols, as well as a few surprises. Hot cocoa and sweet treats will be served.

Hair Care with Helen: Monday, Dec. 29, 10 a.m.-2 p.m. Cost is \$20. Need a trim? Sign up for a dry haircut. Hair must be clean and dry before your appointment. Transportation is available if needed. Space is limited; call the center at 860-798-6862 to reserve your spot.

New Year’s Eve Brunch: Monday, Dec. 31, 11 a.m. Join the celebration with food, friends and fun, and a countdown to noon toast. Call the center to sign up.

Special Luncheon: Wednesday, Jan. 14, noon. Cost is \$5. Lunch catered by Cheney Tech Culinary School. Special guest speaker Erin Congdon from Collaborative Natural Health will discuss healthy living and the benefits of drinking tea.

(DECD) required three items to proceed: a resolution, a budget and a project narrative limited to the \$250,000 portion of the project.

To lock in construction pricing amid anticipated cost increases, the town issued a purchase order for playground equipment and was asked by the contractor, Millennium, to issue an additional purchase order totaling \$705,151.05 for the remaining project components. Officials clarified that purchase orders were being used to secure pricing and did not represent new or additional spending beyond approved funding.

Several board members questioned how reimbursements would be handled, when funds would be received and which town accounts would ultimately be used for the local match. Selectwoman Carol Lee, a Republican, asked directly which fund the \$150,000 town contribution would come from, and noted the need to keep the BOF informed. Bellano responded that, to his understanding, the funds would come from the general fund, though he noted that the original town meeting vote did not specify a particular account.

Senior Transportation Garage

Another significant item involved the Senior Transportation Garage, also referred to as the Andover Municipal Parking Hub. Elevation drawings were presented in lieu of full render-

ings, and officials noted that adding a full second floor for storage increased the project cost by \$83,880.27 over the original DECD budget estimate of approximately \$390,000.

The additional cost was discussed in the context of structural changes, including roof height and framing adjustments. Board members discussed the long-term value of added storage space for recreation, senior services and public works operations.

Staffing and Salary Matters

Staffing at the Community and Senior Center emerged as a recurring theme throughout the meeting. At the start of the meeting, during public comment, resident Joanne Hebert noted that Marlborough’s senior center that operates with a single full-time staff member, despite serving “a town almost double our size.”

The board added a late agenda item to revisit the salary and employment status of Heley Proto, the assistant to the community and senior center director.

Board members noted that while a prior motion had been made to Proto’s contract, no contract had been signed. Questions were further raised regarding her salary. The issue remained unresolved as of press time, and is set to be discussed during a special meeting of the Board of Selectmen on Monday, Dec. 22, at 7 p.m.

Residents Sought for Search Committee

The Andover Board of Selectmen seek two registered voters of Andover that are interested in serving on the Town Administrator Search Committee (TASC).

Pursuant to the town charter, the TASC is charged with the recruitment, screening, and presentment of candidates for the position of

town administrator to the Board of Selectmen. Interested voters cannot hold any public office or serve on any other board or commission.

Please submit statements of interest no later than Dec. 19 to adminassistant@andoverct.org or by mail to administrative assistant, 17 School Rd., Andover, CT 06232.

Congregational Church News

Andover Congregational Church, UCC, located at 359 Route 6, invites all to worship, held Sundays at 10 a.m. All are welcome. 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: Is provided. **Choir:** At 9 a.m. Sundays in the sanctuary.

Food Pantry: Mondays from 5-7 p.m. Bring your own bags. The **Foodshare Van** comes to the church every other Wednesday from 8:30-10 a.m.; **Senior Pantry** is on the opposite Wednesdays.

AA Meetings: Saturdays and Mondays, 7 p.m.

Sonshine Stampers: Tuesdays, 9:30 a.m.

Christmas Eve Candlelight Service: Dec. 24 at 6:30 p.m.



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Resident Continues Push to See 2024 Ballots

By Toriana Williams

A prolonged dispute between Colchester resident Jason LaChapelle and the Town of Colchester appears to finally be over, as the town registrars of voters Wednesday completed the scanning of in-person ballots from a 2024 budget referendum, and they were set to be electronically delivered to LaChapelle.

The conflict stemmed from LaChapelle's June 2024 requests to inspect ballots and related records from the town and school budget referendum held earlier that month. After the town and its registrars of voters denied those requests, LaChapelle filed a complaint with the state Freedom of Information Commission (FOIC). Earlier this year, the commission ruled unanimously that the town must provide access to in-person referendum ballots, determining that standalone municipal referenda are not governed by Connecticut's election statutes.

But the town had yet to comply as of a Board of Selectmen meeting earlier this month, prompting LaChapelle to attend that meeting and accuse town officials of "wasting" legal funds to fight the ruling. "Give me my ballots," he said at the meeting. "Stop wasting your money."

LaChapelle, a former member of Colchester's Board of Selectmen and a town resident for more than a decade, said his request to inspect the ballots was motivated by routine civic oversight rather than suspicion of wrongdoing. "You can call it ... a citizen's audit," he said. "Just a standard, like, 'Let's see the ballots.'"

He emphasized that he has made similar requests in other municipalities and had never encountered resistance before. "This is the first," he said.

According to LaChapelle, the issue extends beyond Colchester. He argued that access to referendum records is fundamental to democratic accountability. "The citizens have a right to access all of that documentation," he said, "It's sort of the point of democracy. ... Citizen oversight." Central to the dispute was a tabulator issue on the morning of the June 11, 2024 referendum. Ballots were temporarily deposited into an auxiliary bin after a mechanical locking arm blocked ballots from entering the tabulator. The registrars later fed those ballots through the tabulator once the issue was resolved.

The referendum that day resulted in the proposed 2024-25 town and school budgets both passing, by respective tallies of 1,298-952 and 1,179-1,066.

LaChapelle questioned whether sufficient documentation existed to record that malfunction. He said that if Title 9 of the state election law applied, which the town argued it did, certain records would have been required. "The fact that it wasn't even documented is a viola-

tion of Title 9," he alleged, while also maintaining that Title 9 does not govern standalone referenda at all.

The FOIC ultimately agreed with LaChapelle's legal position, concluding that Title 9 governs elections and referenda held in conjunction with elections, but not municipal referenda conducted on their own. The commission ruled that in-person ballots from the Colchester referendum are public records subject to disclosure under FOIA, while absentee ballots remain confidential.

Colchester First Selectman Bernie Dennler disputed the ruling's implications and defended the town's actions, stating, "The registrars declined Mr. LaChapelle's request based on guidance they received from the Secretary of State's (SOTS) Office."

Dennler expressed concern that the FOIC decision created unequal treatment of voters.

"The FOIC's ruling sets up a two-tier system of privacy where voters who cast absentee ballots are given a greater degree of privacy than those who cast in-person ballots," he said. "It doesn't make much sense to me, but I think that is an issue for the legislature to sort out."

Dennler rejected claims that the town delayed contacting SOTS or changed legal strategy late in the process.

"The registrars sought guidance from SOTS from the beginning and throughout the process," he said. "There was never a change in strategy."

When asked about allegations that his administration was avoiding transparency, Dennler pointed to the volume of records his office has released.

"In two years, my office has fulfilled hundreds of Freedom of Information Act requests," he said. "The vast majority of these requests are met without issue."

He also stressed that his office did not control the requested records.

"My office doesn't have access to the records [LaChapelle] requested," Dennler clarified, "because only the registrars, which operate independently by law, can access them."

Dennler added that the registrars were placed in "an impossible position with conflicting guidance from two different state agencies."

The Colchester registrars of voters – Republican Julianne Shilosky and Democrat Sara Mussen – echoed that position in a written re-

sponse, stating that they recognize SOTS as the authority responsible for interpreting election law. They wrote that the FOIC's ruling forced them to choose between agencies with competing directives, placing them at risk of penalties regardless of which path they followed.

The FOIC, they wrote, "has ordered Colchester to do the very opposite of the instruction given by our governing agency."

They added, reiterating Dennler's point, "It's put the town and the registrars in an impossible situation."

Shilosky and Mussen further argued that releasing in-person ballots would undermine voter privacy and create unequal protections.

"This will inevitably create two classes of privilege for the voters of Colchester," they wrote, citing greater privacy for absentee voters and reduced privacy for in-person voters – the same argument made by Dennler.

The registrars rejected claims that the town attempted to withhold records, stating that guidance from SOTS was clear. They said the office told them ballots in Connecticut, including referendum ballots, are not subject to the Freedom of Information Act.

The Registrars also clarified that sufficient documentation did exist, and that for the documentation that LaChapelle stated was missing either did not apply under Title 9 or requirements were satisfied through existing records and procedure, even if not in the specific form he expected.

LaChapelle, however, said the town has failed to cite any statute that explicitly exempts standalone referendum ballots from disclosure. He maintained that secrecy concerns are misplaced.

"Nobody ... knows how I voted in that referendum," he said in written testimony. "There are no names, no signatures and no way to trace a vote back to an individual."

LaChapelle also raised concerns about the cost of the town's legal defense, estimating that approximately \$20,000 had been spent by mid-October 2024. "Which is 20% of the town's \$100,000 legal budget," he said, adding that an appeal could double or triple that amount.

Dennler later stated, "I don't support any further appeals."

On Dec. 17, the registrars completed the scanning of in person ballots from the June 11, 2024, referendum, and they are set to be electronically delivered to LaChapelle.

For LaChapelle, the outcome is about precedent rather than a single referendum.

"There were citizens asking before me and there'll be citizens who ask after me," he said. "They just want to make sure you're following the law."

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 christian-lifechapel.org.

Women's Bible Study: Tuesdays, 10-11:30 a.m., studying the book of Revelation.

Community Bible Study: Wednesdays at 7 p.m. All are invited.

Donuts with Don: Is back Fridays at 10 a.m. It's an open discussion on the theme: How does God fit in this thing called life?

5K Resolution Run

The Youth First Coalition and Colchester Youth and Social Services will hold the 19th annual New Year's Day 5K Resolution Run at Town Hall Thursday, Jan. 1, starting at 10 a.m. Registration and bib pick-up begin at 8:30 a.m.

Pre-registration is \$35 and same-day registration is \$45. All participants will receive medals. Register at raceroster.com or visit the Facebook page @ Youth and Social Services Town of Colchester.

Proceeds benefit youth scholarships and youth center upgrades.

For more information, contact Marquis Lawson at Colchester Youth & Social Services at 860-537-7255 or mlawson@colchesterct.gov.

Christmas Events at Westchester Church

Westchester Congregational Church, located at 98 Cemetery Rd., will celebrate Christmas with these events:

Sunday, Dec. 21: Choir Cantata, entitled "Bethlehem Joy," during the 10 a.m. service.

Sunday, Dec. 24: Christmas Eve service at 5 p.m.

For more information, visit www.westchestercongchurch.org or email westcongchurch@gmail.com.



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A blue paw print icon.

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Abundant Life Church News & Notes

Abundant Life Church, a Christ-follower church that believes in salvation through Jesus Christ, is located at 85 Skinner Rd. Worship is in person at 10:30 a.m. Sunday.

Adult Sunday Bible School: two classes, Sundays at 9:30 a.m.

Bible Study for Women: Every Wednesday at 10 a.m. at Sweet Aroma, Colchester.

Healing Bible Study: Every Wednesday at 6:30 p.m.

Prayer Meetings: Thursdays, 10 a.m. and Fridays, 6:30-8:30 p.m. There is also a brief meeting for pre-service prayer on Sundays at 10:15 a.m.

Men's and Women's Breakfast: Meets once per month on Saturday mornings.

Children's Church: Meets Sunday mornings after worship service.

Special Events: Children's Christmas Pageant: Sunday, Dec 21, 10:30 a.m. **Christmas Eve Candlelight Service:** Dec. 24, 6 p.m.

Advent: All are invited to come this month as the church lights the Advent candles each week and a special message is given during the lighting of each candle. The final candle, "Christ Candle," is lit on Christmas Eve.

Unless otherwise noted, all groups/gatherings are held at the church building.

Call the church office at 860-537-3082 for more information, questions, or even if you just need prayer. You can also visit AbundantL.com.

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Veteran Coffee House

The next Colchester Military Veteran Coffee House will be held at Cragin Library on Saturday, Dec. 20 from 10 a.m.-noon. All military veterans are welcome.

Contact Mary Gura with questions or suggestions for speakers at 860-537-2921.

Bacon Establishes Hall of Fame

Bacon Academy has established a “Hall of Fame” to recognize contributions to athletics, academics, associated student body activities (the arts, student government, clubs), and community service.

Recognition is also given for career contributions and accomplishments. Inductees include alumni who have graduated, employees who have retired from Bacon Academy, retired coaches and individuals who have made extraordinary contributions to Bacon Academy and may or may not have been an alumnus or employee of Bacon Academy.

Nominations are being accepted until Monday, Jan. 12, with a Hall of Fame induction in spring of 2026. The nomination form can be found at ba.colchesterct.org/halloffame.

Color House Ornament Trail

This holiday season, The Color House Art & Pottery Studio is inviting the community to join in its first-ever Color House Ornament Trail.

Running through Dec. 21, 100 handcrafted ceramic ornaments created by artist Tina Parsadanov and her team at The Color House will be hidden all around Colchester, from local parks to small businesses. Each ornament is unique, and free for whoever discovers it.

Participants are encouraged to visit participating Colchester businesses to collect stamps in their Ornament Trail Digital Passport. Even if an ornament has already been found at a location, visitors can still stop in to scan the business's unique stamp. For every five stamps collected, participants will earn an entry into grand prize drawings featuring gift cards, wine baskets, pottery and other prizes.

Visit www.cohoct.com/ornamenttrail for more information and to register.

Senior Center Upcoming Trip

Colchester Senior Center has announced a trip coming up. Trips are available to senior center members and their adult guests over the age of 18. Membership is free for Colchester residents aged 55 and older. There is an annual fee of \$15 for seniors residing outside of Colchester. For more information or to register, call 860-537-3911 or email csc@colchesterct.gov.

Majestic Cities of Central & Eastern Europe: Oct. 4-17, 2026. Explore Berlin, Prague, Vienna, Budapest and Krakow. This 14-day, 13-night trip includes airfare, hotels, and meals (12 breakfasts, one lunch, and six dinners). Cost is \$6,499 per person for double occupancy, if booked before Feb. 26. This is a small group tour (only 24 people in total on the tour) so space is limited. For more information visit <https://gateway.gocollette.com/link/1346389>.

Senior Center News & Notes

Colchester Senior Center, 15 Louis Lane, has announced the following. **Unless noted, registration is required for all programs.** For full program 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, Dec. 22: 9:00 Making Memories; 9:00 Exercise w/ Anne; 9:00 Middle School Choir Performance; 10:00 Sittercize; 11:00 Learn to Sign; 11:00 – 12:00 Fitness Orientation by appointment; 12:00 Gift Wrapping; 12:30 Mah Jongg; 12:30 Bridge; 12:30 Set Back.

Tuesday, Dec. 23: 9:00 Making Memories; 9:45 Tai Chi; 10:00 European Christmas Traditions; 10-12 Holiday Box Deliveries; 12:30 Pinochle; 1:00 Cornhole; 1:15 BINGO; 4:00-8:00 Wellness Nights.

Wednesday, Dec. 24: 9:00 Making Memories; 9:00 Walking Group; 10:00 Adult Coloring; 10:00 Hand and Foot Card Game; 10:00 Sit & Be Fit Video; 11:00 TVCCA Lunch is served early; CSC Closes at 12:00 for Christmas Holiday.

Thursday, Dec. 25: CSC Closed for Christmas Holiday.

Friday, Dec. 26: No Social Service Hours; 9:00 Open Art Studio; 10:00 Sit & Be Fit; No Choral Group; no yoga; No Lunch Served; 1:15 Bingo.

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School Board Addresses Environmental Concerns

By Toriana Williams

Public comment began the Dec. 9 Colchester Board of Education meeting, with a resident raising detailed environmental concerns about the proposed synthetic turf fields at Bacon Academy. His comment framed much of the subsequent discussion, particularly around drainage, environmental testing and long-term facility planning.

Jeff Mattson, who stated that he lives near Bacon Academy, addressed the board regarding the proposed installation of three artificial turf fields. He emphasized the proximity of the fields to Sherman Brook and nearby ponds that serve as water sources for homes with private wells.

“The three artificial turf fields proposed cover about six acres of field and ... one million pounds of crumb rubber will be used to fill those fields,” Mattson said. He further stated, “Colchester gets 43 inches of rain every year and that amounts to seven million gallons of water that’s going to drain through the fields and the crumb rubber and right into Sherman Brook.”

Mattson cited a Connecticut Department of Public Health study, noting that while summaries often claim safety, “the summary shows that zinc is present in the leachate concentrations

about 500 times greater than the toxicity criteria.” He added that “certain samples of crumb rubber also leached acutely toxic levels of cadmium, barium, manganese and lead.”

Mattson stressed that his opposition was not to the project itself but to the lack of site-specific environmental analysis. “I am in favor of having new fields put at Bacon. I think they really need them,” he said. “But I think they need to do some research into the drainage into the pond so that we can make sure our water’s safe.”

He concluded by urging district officials to take an active role in environmental due diligence: “Please do some research on your own and don’t just blindly believe it’s safe for the environment because the committee and the turf company tell you it is.”

Project Details, Environmental Testing

Later in the meeting, district representatives and consultants addressed many of the concerns raised during public comment. Andrew Dyjack explained that the proposed turf system uses a “heavily sand-based system over 65% sand” with cryogenically processed rubber infill. “The rubber is processed in a cryogenic manner,” he said. “Although it is from tires ... there’s no fiber

steel in it. The density is such that it doesn’t float in water.” He added that the infill “passes EN71 safety standard tests,” stating, “You can literally ingest it. It won’t leach into your system whatsoever.”

In response to questions about environmental monitoring, it was stated that annual testing would be conducted if the fields are approved and built. “If the discharge comes out at elevated levels above and beyond what the state recommends, we would put in a mitigation,” Dyjack said, noting that mitigation measures are “not unheard of” and “not an excessive amount of money.”

Drainage capacity was also discussed. The system was described as capable of handling “50 to 80 inches of water drainage per hour,” a figure cited as significantly exceeding typical rainfall events.

Accessibility and Safety Improvements

In addition to environmental issues, the turf and facilities project was presented as a solution to longstanding accessibility and safety concerns. The proposal includes paved pathways between athletic fields to allow access for emergency vehicles and individuals with mobility challenges.

“The proposed project would have an asphalt 12-foot path ... so that emergency vehicles can go in between and those portable bleachers can be moved from site to site,” said vice chair Matt Parsons.

Lighting infrastructure was also discussed. While lights themselves are not included in some areas, foundational elements would be installed. “If you don’t do the infrastructure while it’s being constructed, the cost to do it is like three [times],” Dyjack explained.

Synthetic field lifespan was addressed, with estimates provided. “For the stadium field, the expectation is a 10-year warranty, and it should last anywhere between 12 and 15 years,” depending on maintenance.

In Other News

Another significant agenda item at the Dec. 9 meeting was the district’s kindergarten waiver process, following changes to Connecticut state law. Judy O’Meara, the principal of Colchester Elementary School, explained that the kindergarten cutoff date is now Sept. 1, making children born on Sept. 2 or later ineligible without a waiver.

“What they did not put into their regs was what that process would look like,” O’Meara said, referring to the state’s guidance. As a result, the district developed its own assessment process using the DIAL assessment.

“It looks at speech and language, concepts, gross motor and social/emotional,” she said. O’Meara noted that the process can be emotionally difficult for families, stating candidly, “It also upsets a lot of people when you tell them that their children aren’t [ready].”

The meeting also highlighted student accomplishments, including recognition of Bacon Academy athletes earning college scholarships and championships. These recognitions were presented as informational items and celebrated by the board.

Updates on the district’s safe school climate plan emphasized consistency, restorative practices and staff training. Jen Karcich, the state district safe school climate coordinator, explained that climate policies are intended to create shared expectations so that behavior is not “left up to chance.”

“We don’t say, ‘Hey, 50% of the time is okay,’” Karcich said. “We teach them so that they can be closer to the 80 to 100%.”

Colchester Federated Church News

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

Worship: Sundays at 9 a.m. The service is also broadcast via Facebook Live. Worship videos are at www.colchesterfederated-church.org under the Worship tab. Updated information is on the church’s Facebook page.

Advent Schedule: Sunday, Dec. 21, Fourth Week of Advent: Love & Annual Christmas Pageant.

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

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. through June.

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.

Ahavath Achim Schedule

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

Services: Fridays at 6:30 p.m., live and on Zoom; Saturdays at 10 a.m., live and on Zoom.

Classes on Tuesdays: Folklore of the Talmud at 6 p.m., followed by Talmud at 6:30 p.m., and Kabbalah at 8 p.m.

For more information, or Zoom links, call 860-537-2809. Office hours are Wednesday, 9 a.m.-4 p.m.

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The Colchester Historical Society’s 2026 calendars are now available. Among the pictures included is this shot looking west from Hayward Avenue across the Town Green toward Main Street. The Chapman Family residence, with its gambrel roof, is to the left pf the three-story Hooker Hotel at the corner of Main Street and Academy Street (also known as Norwich Avenue).

Historical Society Calendars Available

The Colchester Historical Society’s 2026 calendars are now available.

The 2026 calendar presents a monthly historical overview of Colchester’s Town Green and surrounding landmarks through photographs and descriptions, highlighting changes in the landscape, buildings, and community activities over time.

The Green, also known as The Park, is one of Connecticut’s largest and most beautiful public spaces. Colchester’s spacious Town Green, originally preserved as open space, features a gazebo, monuments, and a baseball field. Throughout the year, the Green is the site of many community events, including concerts, a seasonal farmer’s market, carnivals, fairs and more.

Calendars cost \$12 each and can be purchased at the Colchester History Museum on Sundays from 11 a.m.-2 p.m., or at Nathan Liverant and Son Antiques, 168 Main St., Mondays through Saturdays, 10 a.m.-5 p.m.

To purchase or learn more, contact the society at 860-537-3240 or mail@colchesterhistory.org.

Artist Exhibit Runs Through Holidays

ARK Distillery is hosting an exhibit by fine artist Sylvina Rollins throughout the holiday season. All are invited to come visit and view Rollins’ original oil paintings and other fine art offerings inspired by farm life, color, gardens and pets.

ARK Distillery is a woman owned estab-

lishment launched early this year. It is located at 200 Lebanon Ave. Rollins’ paintings compliment the restored historic building, which once housed a feed and grain store.

ARK stands for Acts of Random Kindness. For hour, visit arkdistillery.com, and for more on the artist, visit sylvinarollinsart.com.

Westchester Church News

Westchester Congregational Church, located at 98 Cemetery Rd., holds worship Sundays at 10 a.m. All are welcome to attend. The church choir always welcomes new members. Services are also available on Zoom; visit www.westchesterconchurch.org for login information. Sunday School for children meets during the worship service.

Twelve-Step Meetings: Al-Anon meets in Canney Hall Wednesdays at 7 p.m. AA meets in Canney Hall Fridays at 7:30 p.m.

Scouts: The church sponsors Scouting America Troop 109. During the school year, Troop 109 meets on Tuesdays at 7 p.m.

Outreach and Other Opportunities: Knit-

ting Group meets Thursdays at 10 a.m. Many knitted, crocheted, and quilted items have been sent to Native American reservations, hospitals for babies, and other places to help those in need. The Blessings Box is at the end of the church parking lot and contains donations of non-perishable food, personal care, and other items for those in need. Take what you need; donate what you can. Also, the church sponsors the Wounded Warrior Project, a donation opportunity to help veterans.

For more information, visit westchesterconchurch.org, email westconchurch@gmail.com or call the church at 860-267-6711. Pastor Ron Lake can be reached at 860-428-3460.

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AHM News & Notes

AHM Youth and Family Services has announced its winter and early spring programs are open for registration. Programs begin Monday, Jan. 5.

A variety of classes will be offered for all ages. Classes include yoga, macrame, Art with Audrey, and more.

Residents of Andover, Columbia, Hebron and Marlborough can sign up at ahmyouth.recdesk.com/Community/Program. Printed programs are also available in the AHM offices, located at 25 Pendleton Drive in Hebron.

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Creative Collective Seeks Members

HCC, a committee of The Town Center Project, was formed to support local artists and to help create opportunities to promote, display and sell their work. The commitment to the group would include: an annual general meeting held midyear in the summer combined with a social event; participation in one major town event a year; and participation in subcommit-

Preschool Lottery Applications

Parents/guardians of children who will be 3 or 4 years old by Sept. 1, 2026, and who wish to enter Hebron's preschool lottery, should submit an application by Monday, March 9, at 3 p.m. The application can be downloaded from www.hebron.k12.ct.us. From the "Quick Links" portion of the page, click on "Preschool Program" and then "Preschool Lottery."

Gilead Hill Kindergarten Registration

Parents/guardians of children who will be 5 years of age on or before Sept. 1, 2026, and are planning to have their child attend public school in Hebron, are asked to log into www.hebron.k12.ct.us by Friday, Feb. 27, to begin the registration process. From the “Quick Links” portion of the page, click “Registration” and complete the pre-registration form. A link will then be sent to you to complete registration.

St. Peter's News & Notes

Children's Christmas Pageant: Sunday, Dec. 21, 10 a.m. All children are invited to be a part of the Nativity Pageant. Parishioners and non-

Upcoming at the Library

PJ Storytime: Every first and third Tuesday of the month at 6 p.m.

Local Artist on Display

Perkins holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in interior design from Iowa State University. She is a member of the East Hampton Art Association.

The new year for HCC begins Jan. 1, 2026. Dues for membership are \$40 annually. High School students are welcome at a student rate of \$25 annually. The collective meets the first Monday of each month at 6 p.m., at the Russell Mercier Senior Center. All local artists are welcome.

The lottery drawing will take place on Thursday, April 2, at 11 a.m., at Gilead Hill School. Applicants will be notified of their acceptance or waitlist status by phone.

Students currently enrolled in our preschool program do not need to register for kindergarten as this process happens automatically.

Recurring Meetings: **Balance Class:** Mondays, 10:30-11 a.m., \$5; **Connect:** Mondays at 2 p.m.; **Choir:** Wednesdays at 6 p.m.; **Monthly Meetings:** Building and Grounds, Community Events planning, Finance, Liturgy, Pastoral Care and Vestry.

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Help for the Holidays

The Grief Journey: A Bereavement Support Group is held Wednesday evenings from 7-8:30 p.m., at the Church of the Holy Family parish house, 185 Church St. The group is

All grieving adults are welcome, whether your loss is recent or past, and you may come to one session or as many as you would like. This support group is non-denominational and brought to you by a collaborative effort of the Hebron faith communities. There is no registration.

Upcoming at the Library

Knit Wits: Mondays, 6 p.m., bring your project or your questions for this friendly group of knitters and crocheters.

Christ Lutheran Church News and Notes

Bible Study: Sundays at 10:30 a.m., following service and fellowship time. All are welcome. A new **Men's Bible Study** will begin in January, focused on "Seven Rules All Good Christians Should Break."

Caring Shepherds Social Ministry Group: Open food pantry days held to distribute food staples, household and hygiene items as well as Bibles and prayers. All are welcome. For more information about donating or participating in food pantry days, call the church at 860-228-1152.

Parks and Rec News & Notes

Minds in Motion – Future Architects: Tuesdays, Jan. 20-March 3, at Hebron Elementary

Karate: Mondays and Wednesdays, 5-6 p.m., at Gilead Hill School, for ages 6 through adult. These are six-week ongoing sessions. Must register for each ongoing session.

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An illustration of a steam locomotive and a passenger train car, with several puzzle pieces floating around them, symbolizing the 'putting pieces together' mentioned in the text.

Church of The Holy Family News

“Neighbors Feeding Neighbors”: The Social Outreach Committee collects breakfast cereal on the second Sunday of each month for the benefit of the Covenant Soup Kitchen (CSK) in Willimantic. The next collection date is Jan.

Mondays: Enhance Fitness via Zoom, 9-10 a.m.; Massage, 9 a.m.-3:30 p.m. **Tuesdays:** Knitting/Crocheting Group, 10:15-11:45 a.m.; Hand and Foot Canasta (cards), 12:45-3:15 p.m.; Card-Making, 1-2:15 p.m. **Wednesdays:** Enhance Fitness via Zoom, 9-10 a.m. **Thursdays:** Yoga, 9-10 a.m.; Sunshine Singers, 10:15-11:45 a.m.; Tai Chi, 10:15-11:15 a.m.; Chatham Health blood pressure screening, 11:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m. on the third Thursday of the month; Chatham Health Education Series, 12:15 p.m. on the third Thursday of the month; Massage, 12:30-6:30 p.m.; Mahjong, 12:45-3:15 p.m.; Bingo, 1-3 p.m.; **Fridays:** Enhance Fitness via Zoom, 9-10 a.m.

Collection for Project HOPE, Inc. (Homeless Shelter): The Social Outreach Committee is collecting the following items for the shelter: TP (greatest need); shampoo, conditioner & body wash; toothpaste (toothbrushes not needed); household cleaning products; paper towels, 13- and 35-gallon trash bags (55-gallon no longer used); men's crew neck T-shirts & boxer briefs (great need; M,L,XL,2XL); women's briefs (sizes 6-10); hand and body warmers; men's & women's wool socks, warm hats and gloves; new or gently-used and clean winter clothing (no stains, tears or pet hair) and coats (no faulty zippers please); women's personal hygiene products; and laundry pods or liquid detergent and dryer sheets. Place bagged donations in the oak collection box next to the Cry Room. Call Monica McKerracher (860-228-4211) for more information.

Quiet Christmas Service

In a press release, the church said, "It can be difficult for many of us to embrace the festive spirit around the holidays, whether due to the recent or anticipated loss of a loved one, the dissolution of marriage, unemployment, or

The Quiet Christmas Service is designed to provide comfort, healing, and hope during a time when such support may be needed. All are invited to participate in this gathering for prayer and reflection, bringing your feelings of fear, pain, or grief.

All are invited. Participants are welcome to bring a photograph of a loved one to place on the communion table.

The Worship Center News & Notes

Kingdom Women: Women's Bible Study: The study will be taking a break for the months of November and December. It will resume in

Gilead Congregational Church News

This Week's Scheduled Events/Meetings:
 Sunday, 12/21 – Worship Service with Christmas Pageant at 10 a.m. (in-person in the sanctuary, online and livestreamed); Sunday, 12/21 – Coffee Hour at 11 a.m. (Fellowship Hall); Sunday, 12/21 – Card-Making with Gayle at 11:30 a.m. (Fellowship Hall Classroom); Sun-

Local Artists in Andover Show

From now through Dec. 28, Amston artists Elizabeth Dougherty and John Ros will have an exhibition of mixed media works entitled "Over Here" at Over Andover Barntique, 415 Route 6, Andover, as part of Artist Open Studios of Northeast CT.

For more information, visit aosct.org.



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in these uncertain times!**

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PZC Makes Changes to Brainerd Place Plan

By Anne Lilburn

A fifth floor of apartments, as well as a two-story daycare facility, are set to be added to the Brainerd Place project, following the Planning and Zoning Commission's approval of proposed amendments last week.

The commission met Dec. 11 to continue its hearing regarding the amendments to the large mixed-use project, located at the site of the former Elmcrest Hospital. Some of the changes to the proposed plan include adding a fifth floor with an additional 37 "independent living" apartments to one building, and adding a two-story daycare facility designed to accommodate 174 students.

The meeting had been continued from a previous meeting on Nov. 13 because an engineering report had not been completed.

At this meeting, community members and Planning and Zoning Commission members alike asked pointed questions to developer Dan Bertram of BRT DiMarco. The concerns ranged from broader topics, including the question of

whether another traffic study needed to be completed, to the specifics of replacing a sassafras tree which required removal.

One community member, Karen Mazza, said she thought the town had been very flexible with the developer in the past. She said she believed it was time now for the town to hold its ground and reject unnecessary changes now that the project is fully underway, with units already built and leased.

"The developer's previous threats to walk away and leave us with a pile of dirt doesn't hold weight anymore," she said, adding that she thought the town should get things in return for any proposed changes.

To that end, some community members spoke out with concern about the additional 37 proposed independent living units – units restricted to people age 55 and up who need assistance with one or more "activities of daily living" – which would increase the total number from the originally proposed 108 to 145.

Concerned residents asked about whether those units could be made into affordable housing, and Bertram said he did not believe it would work for this project, adding that the development's proposed rooftop restaurant would only remain "economically viable" if those additional new units were priced at market rate.

"I have a lot of affordable housing experience," Bertram said. "There's a time and a place for it, and I do believe deeply in it. This is just not one of them ... in that building."

Commission members and the public discussed if an additional traffic study was needed, particularly because residents expressed concern about the addition of the day care center, which the amended application estimated would yield an additional 120 vehicle trips during drop-off and pickup hours. Bertram said it would be possible to mount cameras on buildings to study traffic patterns and hopefully address any concerns if needed, but the commission declined to do an entirely new traffic study.

With regards to the sassafras tree that needed to be removed, the original amendment had proposed replacing it with another sassafras

tree, placed slightly further back from the street. However, Bertram told the commission that an arborist had recommended that the sassafras tree be replaced with a red maple instead, because its root system would be better suited to not damaging the sidewalk and foundations. He said that the tree would have a four- to five-inch diameter trunk and a 20-foot height at planting.

One important concern that the commission considered concerned how the fire department would handle the property now that a fifth story was being proposed for one building. Commission members worried about the Portland Fire Department's current equipment, and the additional costs for equipment required to protect larger and taller buildings like this. They discussed the mutual aid plan that the town has with surrounding communities, but also worried about their ability to compel other towns to protect this property.

In the end, the commission did approve the amendments – conditional on the final plans being sent to the fire chief for a full review and written sign-off.

First Congregational Church News

The First Congregational Church of Portland, UCC, located at 554 Main St., holds worship Sundays at 10 a.m. All are welcome. Pastor is the Rev. Judith Cooke.

This Sunday, Dec. 21, the church will celebrate the fourth Sunday of Advent.

Also at 10 a.m., elementary aged children will meet for Church School in the newly renovated classroom, and the middle school class will meet in the youth room. Infant - Pre-K children will

enjoy playtime and an age-appropriate lesson.

Christmas Worship Schedule: At 4 p.m. Dec. 24, the church will hold its Intergenerational Christmas Eve Worship. At the 10 p.m. Traditional Candlelight Christmas Eve service, the church will celebrate the birth of Jesus with special music, sacred story, Christmas message, and candlelight.

For more information, call 860-342-3244 or visit firstchurchportlandct.org.

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 860-342-6761.

Food Share Mobile Pantry comes to the Food Bank every other Monday; the next pantry visit will be Dec. 29.

Weekly Programs: Unless noted, all programs are free. **Monday, 12/22: Light Aerobics,** 9:30-10:30 a.m.

Tuesday, 12/23: Bears on a Journey, 9:30-11 a.m., Help make fleece teddy bears for cancer patient – donations of light fleece (one yard or more) are sought; to donate call 860-342-0809; **Watercolor Class,** 9:30 a.m. – for more info please contact Bivenne at bivenne@yahoo.com; **Congregate Meal,** noon. Cost is \$3 suggested donation (must fill out form) Menu: stuffed chicken with gravy, mashed potatoes, green beans, string cheese, holiday cookie; **Coupons for Troops,** 1-4 p.m.; **Setback,** 1 p.m.; **Synco-Cize,** 5-6 p.m.

Wednesday, 12/24: Light Aerobics, 9:30-10:30 a.m.; **Chair Yoga with Gia,** 10:30-11:15 a.m., fee is a \$5 donation to instructor. **Senior Center closes at noon.**

Thursday, 12/25 and Friday, 12/26: Center closed all day.

Upcoming Events: Unless noted, all events are free – and registration is required. **Holiday Flower Arrangements with Seng:** Monday, Dec. 22, noon-2 p.m. Cost is \$8.

Holiday Closings: On Wednesday, Dec. 24, the center will close at noon, and it will remain closed all day Dec. 25 and 26. The center will also close at noon on Wednesday, Dec. 31, and remain closed all day Jan. 1.

Hair by Jessica: Monday, Dec. 29. Men's/women's shampoos, cuts and styling are available. Call Jessica to make an appointment, at 860-751-9215.

Cooking for One with Marilyn: Monday, Jan. 5, 11:45 a.m. January's class will be a soup tasting. Fee is \$10.

Lunch Trip to First & Last Tavern in Glastonbury: Tuesday, Jan. 6. Leave the center at 11:30 a.m. Ride fee is \$5; pay for your own meal.

Lunch & Learn with October Kitchen: Wednesday, Jan. 7, noon. Learn more about what October Kitchen offers.

Sweet Treats and Conversation with Com-

munity Leaders: Thursday, Jan. 8, 1 p.m. This month's community leader is Portland Clean Energy Task Force Chair Andy Bauer, who will explain how the Home Energy Solutions visit saves money by making your home more weathertight. The Usual \$75 co-pay is being waived for those who sign up before March 31.

Lower Valley Care Advocates Donuts and Talk: Monday, Jan. 12, 11:30 a.m. Physical therapist Aaron Morales will lead a hands-on presentation on falls, balance, and basic PT exercises.

Bingo with Sean from Ageless Insurance: Tuesday, Jan. 13, 1:30 p.m.

Aging Boldly: TED Talk and Coffee Social with Sarah Elliott-Caratasios: Tuesday, Jan. 13, 2 p.m.

Pharmacy Hop & Lunch!: Thursday, Jan. 15. This will be a trip to Walgreens in Portland and Stop & Shop and CVS in Glastonbury, followed by lunch at Ken's Corner. Leave the center at 10:00. Cost is a \$5 ride fee; pay for your own lunch.

Holiday Closing: The center will be closed Monday, Jan. 19, for Martin Luther King Jr. Day.

Live Well, Age Well – A Free Diabetes Support Group: Led by retired physician Dr. Elsamma Chacko, this group meets the third Tuesday of each month at 1 p.m., and focuses on living well with diabetes and aging in place by bringing expert guidance and lived experience together in a supportive setting.

Trip to New Britain Museum of American Art: Norman Rockwell Exhibit: Wednesday, Jan. 21, leave center at 10 a.m. Admission is \$15, and there is a \$5 ride fee.

Shopping Trip to Noel's Grocery and Stop & Shop in Colchester: Thursday, Jan. 22, leave center at 10 a.m. There is a \$5 ride fee.

Zion Lutheran News & Notes

Zion Lutheran Church is located at 183 William St. All are invited to participate in worship. Sara Stall-Ryan is pastor.

Worship Notes: Zion offers Sunday worship each week at 9 a.m. The annual Christmas pageant will be presented during worship this Sunday, Dec. 21. All are welcome to view this telling of the Christmas story by the Sunday School children.

The Christmas Eve service will be at 5:30 p.m. Dec. 24. On Dec. 28, members of Zion will join others for a Service of Lessons and Carols at Trinity Episcopal Church, 345 Main St., at 10 a.m. There will be no service at Zion that day.

Learning: Sunday School classes, for children ages 3 through 8th grade, meet the first and

St. Mary Church News & Notes

St. Mary Roman Catholic Church, located at 45 Freestone Ave., invites all to attend its services and events. For more information, visit www.stmaryportlandct.org.

Worship: Weekday Masses are Monday and Tuesday at 8 a.m., and Friday at 12:10 p.m. Weekend Masses are Saturday at 5 p.m. and Sunday at 8 a.m. and 10:30 a.m.

Reconciliation: Saturdays between 4 and 4:45 p.m. Call 860-342-2308 to make arrangements.

Bereavement Support Group: All are invited to attend. The group meets each month on the second Monday at 6:30 p.m. in the church hall and every fourth Tuesday at 2 p.m. in the rosary

room. Call Susan Bongiorno at 860-685-1966 for additional information.

Baptism: Call Sue Ferraiolo at 860-342-2308 to make arrangements.

Marriages: Contact the office at 860-342-2328 to make an appointment with the Rev. John Antonelle.

Holy Hour Benediction: First Friday of every month following the 12:10 p.m. Mass.

Blessed Mother Mass: First Saturday of every month at 9 a.m.

Hours of Operation: Church hours are 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. daily. Office hours are 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Monday-Friday.



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Library Friends Holiday Store

The Friends of the Portland Library has opened its 2025 Holiday Store. When you visit the library, located at 20 Freestone Ave., stop by and browse the selection of gift-quality and like-new books and puzzles for all your reader and puzzler friends and family.

Also, a select number of handcrafted book-art ornaments are available to help you deck your halls with literary décor.

The Holiday Store is in the corridor to the Mary Flood Room at the library. All proceeds support the Friends in continuing to bring programs for all ages to the library, fund the museum pass program, and enhance the media collections enjoyed by many.

Garden Club Seed Swap Event

Celebrate National Seed Swap Day with the Portland River Valley Garden Club on Saturday, Jan. 31, from 10 a.m.-2 p.m., at the Waverly Center, 7 Waverly Ave.

Bring labeled seeds saved from your garden – or unopened packets from last year – and exchange them for new varieties to grow this season.

Enjoy free demonstrations on making seed

bombs, winter sowing and growing micro-greens. Visit River Bend Bookshop’s vendor table and learn about the Portland Library’s Seed Library.

Admission is free; food bank donations are encouraged.

For more details, visit portland-river-valley-garden-club.blogspot.com.

Vocal Chords Seek Altos, Tenors and Basses

The Middlesex Hospital Vocal Chords (MHVC), directed by Samuel Tucker and accompanied by Alan Dougherty’s 10-piece orchestra, are searching for men and women to join their alto, tenor and bass sections. No auditions or prior experience are required.

Rehearsals start on Tuesday, Jan. 20, from 6:45 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. at St. Francis Church’s Msgr. Fox Parish Hall, 10 Elm St., Middletown, as they prepare for their spring concert on Saturday, May 2 at Portland High School.

New members may join until Feb. 3.

You do not need any affiliation with Middlesex Health to become a member. For more info, visit vocalchords20.org or call 860-342-3120.

Soccer Club Winter Futsal

Portland Soccer Club (PSC) is now accepting registrations for the 2026 Winter Futsal season. Registration will be accepted through Jan. 4.

Fee for all age groups is \$50; registrations received after Dec. 24 will be charged an additional \$25 late fee. PSC will only accept registrations online, at www.bluesombrero.com/portlandsoccerclub.

Age groups are: U5 & U6 (born 01/01/20 to 12/31/21) – Dribbler-Club; U7 & U8 (01/01/18 to 12/31/19) – Kicker-Club; U9 & U10 (1/01/16 to 12/31/17) – Travel; U11 & U12 (01/01/14 to 12/31/16) – Travel.

The Winter Futsal season will run Saturdays from Jan. 10-Feb. 28 (an eight-week session), at Gildersleeve Elementary School. Times are: U5 & U6 Dribbler sessions, noon-12:55 p.m.; U7 & U8 Kicker Boys sessions, 1-1:55 p.m.; U7 & U8 Kicker Girls sessions, 2-2:55 p.m.; U9 & U10 Travel sessions, 3-3:55 p.m.; U11 & U12 Travel sessions, 4-4:55 p.m. Note: Depending on numbers, the Travel sessions may be every other week.

Futsal uses a smaller, heavier ball, and is played on a basketball court so the ball travels faster and stays close to the floor. Benefits: more touches on the ball for each player, more shooting, and more goals. Futsal is more technical and less aggressive, which allows for more flexibility to mix age groups and genders, PSC said.

Final registration numbers will determine the session configuration for this winter session.

For more information, contact club president Chris Donahue at donahuecj@sbcglobal.net or 860-342-3228, or vice president Chad Wilson at nosliw.dahc@gmail.com or 205-999-8842.

Quilt Guild Meets Monthly

The Heart of the Valley/Greater Middletown Quilt Guild welcomes new members. Meetings are held at 7 p.m. on the second Thursday of each month at Portland Senior Center, 7 Waverly Ave., from September through June.

For more information, call 860-670-5351.



State Reps. Christie Carpino (R-32), left, along with Nicole Klarides-Ditria (R-105), right, recently toured the Connecticut Humane Society, to highlight their commitment to animal welfare.

Carpino Visits Connecticut Humane Society

State Rep. Christie Carpino (R-32) and Nicole Klarides-Ditria (R-105) and other interested legislators recently spent a few hours touring the Connecticut Humane Society, meeting with staff, volunteers and caretakers dedicated to rescuing, protecting, and placing animals in forever homes.

During the visit, the lawmakers saw firsthand the organization’s medical care operations, adoption programs, and behavioral support services that ensure animals receive not only shelter, but comprehensive care and rehabilitation.

The leadership at the Connecticut Humane Society asked the group of legislators in attendance to consider legislation on ways to finance the housing of animals caught in situations where they need to be removed from their homes.

“The Humane Society is a tremendous resource for families and for vulnerable animals,” said Carpino, who adopted her puppy from the Connecticut Humane Society last year. “Their compassion, professionalism, and advocacy make a real difference in our communities. I am grateful for their work and honored to support their mission.”

Klarides-Ditria, who is co-chair of the Animal Welfare Caucus echoed the sentiment, noting the importance of state partnership.

“Our visit was a reminder of how critical this organization is to animal safety across Connecticut,” she said. “From veterinary care to adoption services, the Humane Society goes above and beyond. We will continue to champion policies that strengthen their ability to serve.”

The 32nd District represents Portland and Cromwell, and the 105th District represents Beacon Falls, Derby and Seymour.





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Climbing on a ladder might be the most dangerous thing you do all year. Foot and ankle fractures can result from unsafe ladder use. Make sure you have the balance and strength to use a ladder. Take the time to secure it properly. Don't stand above the marked level and always wear lace-up shoes or boots. Check our website for more ladder safety tips.

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"PET OF THE WEEK"

Meet **Aggie**, a young, gentle soul recently joining our rescue from a local shelter. Aggie is an 11 month old catahoula leopard mix. Her curiosity sparks joy as she explores her surroundings with a playful spirit. Aggie is a bit shy, but her sweetness shines through as she warms up to new friends, both human and canine. She might even find a feline friend charming! Aggie loves to cuddle, making her a perfect companion for cozy evenings. If you're looking for a loyal friend who can bring a playful and loving energy to your home, Aggie could be your perfect match.



Callie, 1 yr, has had a rough start. While she was obviously someone's cat once, she was found living outside. A kind person took her onto her enclosed porch but was not able to let her into the house because of her own pets. This Good Samaritan kept her safe until we had space to take her in. We suspect that other cats may have bullied her while she was living outside. So at this time, we would say that she would do best as a one and only with someone who is willing to give her some time to feel safe. She promises to do her best and to thank you with as much affection as you could possibly want.



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RE 1-31-25

The Weekly Crossword

by Margie E. Burke

ACROSS

- 1 Emerald City's creator
- 5 A bit cracked
- 9 Modern messages
- 14 In addition
- 15 Run the show
- 16 Nick of "Affliction"
- 17 Church instrument of old
- 19 Sci-fi author Verne
- 20 Mother of Calcutta
- 21 Replant timber
- 23 Like sunlit water
- 25 Kidnap victim
- 28 Bananas, so to speak
- 31 Elliptical
- 32 Brother's daughters
- 35 Brewer's vat
- 36 "Peanuts" girl
- 37 Honeydew, e.g.
- 38 Magpie or macaw
- 39 Utah airport code
- 40 Sentence ender
- 41 Pasadena's ____ Bowl
- 42 Mideast capital
- 44 More evident
- 46 Study of beauty
- 49 Affectionate one
- 51 Took home after taxes
- 55 Oil source
- 56 Theater break
- 58 Not so crazy
- 59 BBQ entree
- 60 Sea eagle
- 61 Lengthy lock
- 62 Adriatic and Aegean
- 63 Clothing closure

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- 26 Plant seed
- 27 Excessively sweet
- 29 ICU worker
- 30 Rear-____ (road mishap)

- 33 Whitney or Wallach
- 34 Take as one's own
- 38 Shows obvious anger
- 40 Quarterbacks, often
- 43 "John Wick" star
- 45 Lenovo competitor

- 47 Whodunit suspects, often
- 48 Comic Kovacs
- 49 Purchase price
- 50 Winglike
- 52 ____ the tables
- 53 ____ St. Vincent Millay
- 54 Thought-provoking
- 57 Abbr. on a schedule

Answers to Previous Crossword:

H	A	R	P		S	A	R	I		A	M	B	E	R
E	W	E	R		E	D	E	N		H	A	W	S	E
A	L	S	O		E	V	I	S	C	E	R	A	T	E
T	S	U	N	A	M	I		E	R	M	I	N	E	S
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A	R	G	U	S		E	N	M	I	T	Y			
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R	E	F	U	T	E	R		S	U	D	S	I	N	G
I	N	T	E	R	R	U	P	T	S		A	L	E	E
D	E	E	R	E		T	O	O	K		C	L	A	N
S	E	N	S	E		S	P	R	Y		K	A	L	E

LEGALS

Hebron Republican Town Committee Caucus

Notice is hereby given that a caucus of all enrolled Republican electors of the Town of Hebron is being held on Wednesday, January 7th (Snow date - 1/12) at 7:00pm in the Town Meeting Room at the Hebron Town Office Building, 15 Gilead Street (Route 85), Hebron, CT. The purpose of the caucus is to elect members of the Hebron Republican Town Committee (HRTC). All registered Republicans in Hebron are welcomed to attend. Anyone interested in Hebron Republican Town Committee membership is encouraged to contact HebronRepublicans@gmail.com. Clifford Boyce, Treasurer HRTC

1TB 12/19

LEGAL NOTICE OF ACTIONS
PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION
HEBRON, CONNECTICUT

The Hebron Planning and Zoning Commission took the following action at their Regular Meeting, which was held on Wednesday, December 10, 2025 at 7:00pm on the following:
Petition 2025-23 – Petition of Stephen Kowalski, owner, for Special Permit to construct an accessory structure exceeding 900 square feet, (2,592 sq. ft.) on a lot less than 5 acres (4.34 acres) in size in accordance with Section 2.E.8 of the Hebron Zoning Regulations at 389 Martin Road, Residence-1 District. **Approved, with conditions.**
The video recording of the Planning and Zoning Commission Meeting can be seen using the following link:
<https://transcripts.gotomeeting.com/#/s/04ffefa1786e382c6c6c0591feaf4babfc9cba937152fff047369c5457503b08>

1TB 12/19

TOWN OF HEBRON
TAX COLLECTOR'S LEGAL NOTICE

Pursuant to SS 12-145 of the CT Statutes, the undersigned Tax Collector of the Town of Hebron gives notice that she will be ready to receive Supplemental Motor Vehicle taxes and the second installment of Real Estate taxes due January 1, 2026 at the Tax Collector's office at Hebron Town Hall, 15 Gilead St, Hebron, CT on Mon-Wed 8:00-4, Thur 8:00-6 & Fri 8:00-1. Payments must be received or postmarked by 2/2/2026 to avoid interest. All taxes remaining unpaid after February 2, 2026 will be charged an interest rate from January 1, 2026 at the rate of 1.5% for each month elapsing from the due date of the delinquent tax to the date of payment, with a minimum interest charge of \$2.00 per installment. SS 12-146 Failure to send out or receive such bill does not relieve the taxpayer of his/her responsibility for the payment of taxes or delinquent charges. SS 12-130 Dated at Hebron, CT this 3rd day of December 2025. Brigit Tanganelli Acting Tax Collector

3TB 12/19, 1/2, 1/23

TOWN OF ANDOVER
PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION
LEGAL NOTICE OF ACTION

The Andover Planning & Zoning Commission took the following action at their December 16, 2025, meeting:
Approved with conditions Special Permit application #25-1SP 280 Route 6, Sokol Koni, construction of a single family residence with a market rate accessory apartment.
Approved application #25-32C amending the Andover Zoning Regulations **Effective** January 15, 2026:
Amend articles 4.9.2 and 4.9.3 change the word "width" to "frontage" for rear lots
Add new article 4.22 concerning Agritourism
Add new article 7a.0.9 require garages for more than 2 vehicles in the Lake District to obtain a special permit
Amend articles 8.1 and 9.1 change "gasoline" to "motor vehicle fuel", add requirement that motor vehicle storage facilities obtain a special permit
Repeal article 10.7.2.1 manufactured homes in a special flood hazard area
Repeal article 11.1 Minimum floor requirements
Amend article 11.2 conforming changes, front yard setback for open space lots set to 30 feet from centerline of street, set front yard set back for businesses adjacent to ARD to 45 feet, make set back requirements for all lots the same in the Lake District
Amend article 16 to require a special permit when removing more than 500 cubic yards of surplus materials in conjunction with construction of structures on a site
Amend article 19 to require Class A Kennels to obtain a special permit
Repeal article 22.0.5
Patrick Dougherty – PZ&C Chairperson

1TB 12/19

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by George M. Mantikas, DMD

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RE 12-19-25

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RE 12-19-25

LEGAL NOTICE

Membership Caucus Andover Republicans

Registered Republicans who wish to join the Andover Republican Committee are welcome to attend the Membership Caucus on Tuesday, January 6, 2026 at 7:00 p.m. being held in the Andover Town Office Community Room at 17 School Road. The snow date for the Caucus will be Thursday, January 8, 2026 at 7:00 p.m.

Cathy Palazzi
Secretary ARTC

1TB 12/19

TOWN OF PORTLAND

PLANNING & ZONING COMMISSION

LEGAL NOTICE OF DECISION

At the December 11, 2025 meeting, the following actions were taken:
Approved Application #25-05: 69 Marlborough Street. Request for Special Permit Modification. Application and Property of BRT DiMarco PTP, LLC. Map 19, Lot 68. Zone B-2, B-3 and TCVD. Dated at Portland, CT this 15th day of December 2025
Robert Ellsworth, Chairman
Planning & Zoning Commission

1TB 12/19

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CT12-10-20

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RE3-15-24

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Employment Type:

Part Time to Full-Time

Reports to:

CEO

Position Summary

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Debbie Walden

Lic. # RES 0707452

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