

MacCormack faces backlash after anti-LGBTQ comments

EMILIO EMERGES TO CHALLENGE IN GOP PRIMARY AS A RESULT

BY ADAM MINOR
MANAGING EDITOR

A candidate currently running for election to the 50th District in the House of Representatives made headlines last month when he made anti-LGBTQ+ social media posts,

drawing ire from both sides of the aisle — including calls to withdraw from his campaign — and leading to another candidate emerging to challenge him in the GOP primary on Aug. 11.

Turn to **CONTROVERSY**, pg. 23

EASTFORD EXPERIENCED



EASTFORD — The Recreation Commission hosted its annual 'Experience Eastford' event on Saturday, June 6, bringing a full day's worth of activities to town for families to enjoy. Pictured, Aurora Kneeland enjoys time in the bounce house. For more photos, turn to page 5! *Adam Minor photo*

THE CLASS OF 2026



EASTFORD — On Thursday, June 18, Eastford Elementary School bid farewell to the Class of 2026! Seven eighth graders received their diplomas and will enter high school in the fall as the Class of 2030. Pictured, front row, from left, Blake Gilbert and Ryan Collard. Middle row, from left, Jericho Hillman, Callum St. John, and Aiden Abbamonte. Top row, Elizabeth McAllister and Leilani Soucy-Brodeur. From all of us at the *Eastford Communicator*, congratulations to the Class of 2026! For more photos, turn to page 4! *Adam Minor photo*

Town approves transfer station permit fee price hike

BY ADAM MINOR
MANAGING EDITOR

EASTFORD — You may notice a bit of déjà vu (again) at the Transfer Station this month, as the cost of a Transfer Station permit has risen once more —

from \$120 to \$140 — starting July 1.

This is now the third straight year that Transfer Station fees have increased. It was raised from \$60 to \$100 in 2024, then from \$100 to \$120 in 2025. This year's fee increase was approved

by the Board of Selectmen at their meeting on April 6.

According to First Selectman Deb Richards, increased costs for services remain as the culprit for the permit fee increase.

"The rates increased due to multiple reasons," Richards told

the *Communicator* last month. "[It's] the cost of fuel, increased frequency of having to haul the bulky waste, and an increase in other costs such as salaries and equipment maintenance. [These]

Turn to **FEES**, pg. 22

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HEART OF EASTFORD 5K
PGS. 20-21



EES FIELD DAY
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THE
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Communicator
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Eastford grads featured in WA Class of 2026



The Woodstock Academy sent off the Class of 2026 on Saturday, June 13. Several Eastford residents were part of the Class of 2026, moving on to the next chapter of their lives. Photo courtesy The Woodstock Academy

WOODSTOCK — The Woodstock Academy's 136th Commencement Exercises took place on Saturday, June 13, on the Woodstock Town Common. The Woodstock Academy celebrated the graduation of 263 students, including six from Eastford.

Senior class president Benjamin Arters, of Brooklyn, welcomed classmates and guests.

Isabel D'Alleva-Bochain and Ivar McDonald were honored as the Valedictorian and Salutatorian of the Class of 2026, respectively.

The Yale Honor Cup and the Donald and Hope Williams Scholarships, The Woodstock Academy's most prestigious awards, were presented. Kaylee Saucier and Ivar McDonald received the Donald and Hope Williams Scholarship Yale Honor Cup. Eli Manning and Isabel D'Alleva-Bochain received the Donald and Hope Williams Scholarship.

Rania Almashharawi addressed her fellow graduates with an adaptation of her first-place essay, "Hakawati – A Story from Gaza to Woodstock," from the Kathryn Robertson Essay Contest. The award is one of the highest academic honors a writer can achieve at The Academy and was established in memory of Kathryn Robertson, English Department Chair at The Woodstock Academy from 1956 to 1963.

Avery Nielsen '26, The Woodstock Academy's fifth Poet Laureate, and Claire Anderson '28, the 2026-27 Poet Laureate, presented their original poem "When the Tide Changes" together.

In addition to meeting the requirements necessary to receive a Woodstock Academy diploma, graduates were recognized for grade point averages deserving of summa cum laude, magna cum laude, cum laude, as well as

membership in 13 distinct honor societies.

Six seniors from Eastford were a part of the Class of 2026, including Natalie Borges, Sky DuBois, Cayden Menor, Logan Rumrill, Ayden Sirois, and Braeden Williams.

On the previous day, members of the Class of 2026, families, faculty, and the greater Woodstock Academy community gathered in the Loos Center for the Arts on Friday, June 12, for the annual Class Night and Baccalaureate program.

Throughout the evening, soon-to-be graduates were honored with more than 320 awards and scholarships. Generous donors and community partners contributed to the more than \$76,000 awarded to 96 Woodstock Academy students during the event.

By a vote of the senior class, Social Studies Teacher Sara Sziedzic was chosen as the inspirational speaker for the Baccalaureate portion of the evening.

Senior class president Benjamin Arters, of Brooklyn, welcomed the families, guests, and classmates. Senior class treasurer, Emma Long of Killingly, presented the senior class gift.

In total, 124 seniors received the Presidential Award for Academic Excellence, which is awarded to students with a grade point average of 3.5 or higher.

The following Eastford residents were honored with Awards and Scholarships:

- Natalie Borges: Tri-M Award
- Cayden Menor: Edward "Bud" Rondeau Memorial Scholarship; High Achievement in Engineering CAD
- Logan Rumrill: Outstanding Achievement in Multicultural Foods; Outstanding Achievement in Pastry & Baking I.

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PELL season draws to a close; All-Stars, year-end awards announced

POMFRET/EASTFORD — The Pomfret/Eastford Little League mostly came to a close last month, with several teams ending their regular seasons.

Regular Season Results:

- Pomfret Softball Blue Storm: 7-3-2
- Pomfret Softball Navy Knock Outs: 6-6
- Pomfret Aces (Majors): 4-8
- Pomfret Baseball - AAA Batteries: 5-8-1
- Minors AA1 Baseball - Blue Hawks: 8-3-1
- Minors AA2 Baseball - Pomfret Predators: 2-12

The Majors, AAA Minors, and both Minors Softball teams reached the second round of the playoffs, where they lost and ended their seasons. The Blue Hawks started their playoffs the week of June 14. The Pomfret Predators reached the second round, where they lost by 1. The Blue Hawks have played one playoff game and won, and were still in contention as of the Communicator's submission deadline.

All-Stars is in full swing. Pomfret/Eastford Minors softball joined with Woodstock. Games started June 17. The girls played on June 17, 18, 20, and 23.

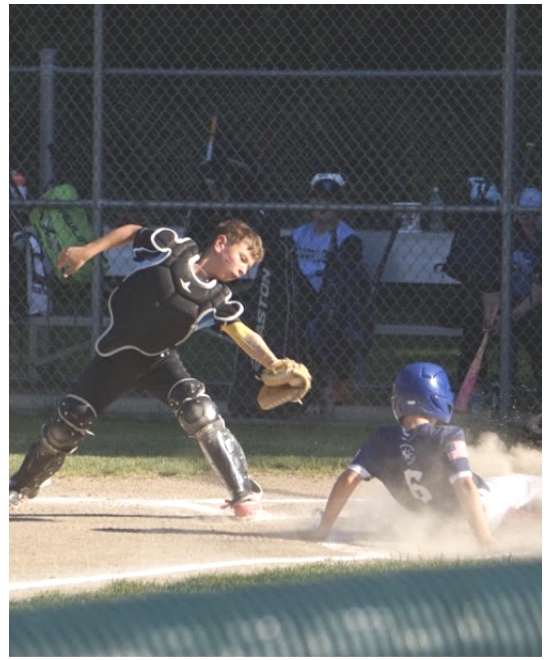
The 2026 Minors Softball All-Star Team (Pomfret, Eastford, Woodstock) roster includes: Harper St. Lawrence, Lielle Cappos, Kipper MacLeod,

Corinne Ellsworth, Peyton DeLay, Eva Nester-Wheeler, Kelsey Vicente, Zarina Campbell, Savannah Fournier, Natalie Murphy, Aurora Mule, Haley Sorel, and Kinsley Haggett. Congratulations to our Minors All-Stars!

Majors Baseball All-Stars started on June 29, and the boys will play on July 3 and 8. They have joined with Thompson Little League.

The 2026 Majors Baseball All-Star Team (Pomfret, Eastford, Thompson) roster includes: Axton DiPasquale, Calan Gaudette, Connor Rauh-Sarr, Jack Kernan, Jacob Racine, Jaxson Trottier, Mason Caya, Montonio Alvarez, Paxton Hudock, Ryan Bates, Trey Hutchings, Zachary Mayer, and Camden Haggett. Congratulations to our Majors All-Stars!

PELL held its end-of-year celebration on June 13 with an incredible turnout! There were 200 people at the field for food, ice cream, and a lot of Wiffle ball! We also held a beautiful ceremony to present the Zach Stolarek Award, which was given this year to Trey Hutchings, of Eastford. Zach Stolarek passed away from a severe and aggressive form of cancer in 2021. The award is given to a young athlete who shows perseverance, passion, and love for the game, on and off the field.



EES says goodbye to seven students in the Class of 2026

EASTFORD — On Thursday, June 18, Eastford Elementary School bid farewell to seven graduating eighth-grade students in its annual Graduation Ceremony. Students looked back on their memories from the past decade together. Class President Blake Gilbert reminisced on his favorite moments, and the class presented a slideshow featuring photos from all their years at EES. Superintendent Donna Leake and Board of Education Chairman Stephen Bowen each wished the students well as they moved on to high school in the fall to officially become members of the Class of 2030. shed the students well as they moved on to high school in the fall.

Adam Minor photos



WHERE ARE THEY GOING?

The Woodstock Academy

Aiden Abbamonte
 Ryan Collard
 Jericho Hillman
 Elizabeth McAllister
 Callum St. John

Harvard H. Ellis Technical School

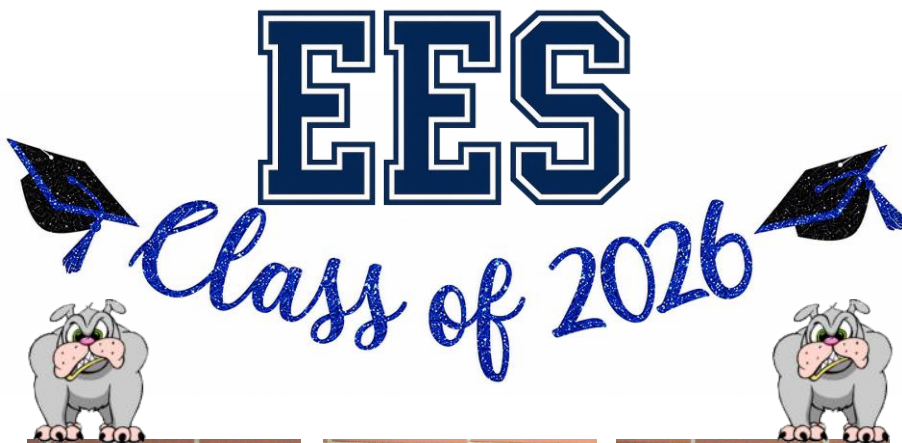
Blake Gilbert

EASTCONN Arts at the Capitol Theater

Lelani Soucy-Brodeur

CLASS OF 2026 AWARDS

- **Aiden Abbamonte:** Allen James Day Memorial Award; Eastford Teachers Memorial Award; The William Shand Memorial Award
- **Ryan J. Collard:** The Citizenship Award
- **Jericho James Hillman:** The Eastford Teachers Association Local Hero Scholarship
- **Elizabeth Ann McAllister:** The Marilyn Krom Award
- **Leilani Soucy-Brodeur:** Allen James Day Memorial Award; The Humanities Award; Roger Mason Day Memorial Award; Presidential Award for Educational Achievement
- **Callum St. John:** The Otto F King Award
- **Blake Wes Gilbert:** The Olivette Kozey Art Award; The William S. Warren Academic Award Leadership Award



AIDEN
ABBAMONTE



RYAN
COLLARD



BLAKE
GILBERT



JERICHO
HILLMAN



ELIZABETH
MCALLISTER



LEILANI
SOUCY-BRODEUR



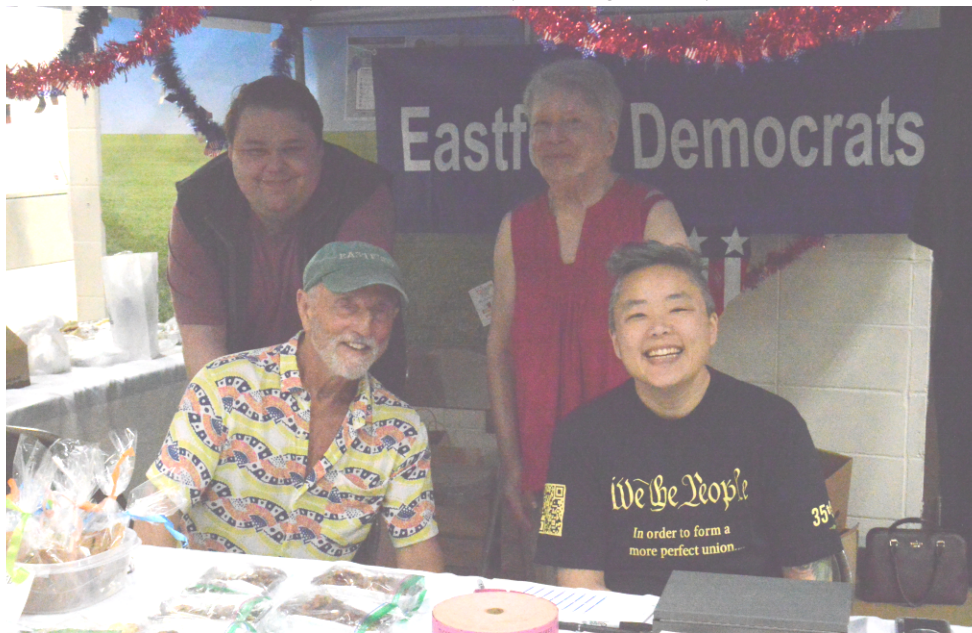
CALLUM
ST. JOHN

'Experience Eastford' continues long-standing tradition of family fun



EASTFORD — On Saturday, June 6, the Eastford Recreation Commission presented its annual "Experience Eastford" event from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at Eastford Elementary School, showcasing what the town has to offer, and offering all kinds of fun activities for families throughout the day, including the Heart of Eastford 5K and Kids Fun Run (see separate coverage on pages 20-21), a bounce house and yard games, live music from the Babcock Cornet Band and "The B Side," a bake sale hosted by the Eastford Democrats, a pie eating contest, a car show down the road at Bowen's Garage, a book sale hosted by the Friends of the Eastford Public Library, and much more. *Adam Minor photos*

At left, the annual pie-eating contest was enjoyed by more than a dozen hungry children. At right, the Eastford Public Library's book sale saw a steady line throughout the day.



Julia Kneeland, author of the popular "Jig" children's book series, hosted a table to display her works.

The Eastford Democrats set up a bake sale, which was enjoyed throughout the day.



A car show at Bowen's Garage brought out car fans of all ages to see vehicles on display from the last 100-plus years.



State Sen. Jeff Gordon poses with Christopher Bowen and Rachel Budd at the Eastford Republicans' table.

A JOURNEY TO REMEMBER

STUDENTS SHARE MEMORIES OF FIELD TRIP TO WASHINGTON, D.C.

BY ADAM MINOR
MANAGING EDITOR

EASTFORD — Over the span of four days in May, Eastford Elementary School seventh- and eighth-graders experienced the culmination of years of fundraising — a field trip to Washington, D.C., that will leave memories that will last a lifetime.

From Tuesday, May 19, to Friday, May 22, students and chaperones embarked on the annual trip to national landmarks and museums, giving students valuable insight into the nation's history. After the trip, EES teacher James Salsich had his students reflect on the trip, and those reflections were kindly shared with the *Communicator*!

The trip began with the long bus ride from Eastford to Washington, D.C. on Tuesday, May 19. Upon arrival, the group shared dinner and rested up before the trip began in earnest on Wednesday, May 20.

The morning of May 20 was spent at Arlington National Cemetery. There, the group learned about the property's history and the notable figures buried there, including President John F. Kennedy. The group also visited the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, which is monitored 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

"I really liked [the cemetery] because we got to respect and remember people who died in the Army or Air Force, and I really appreciate that we got to go there," said seventh grader Mackenzie Lathrop.

In the afternoon, the group headed to the International Spy Museum, which explores the country's history through the lens of espionage and intelligence.

For seventh grader Aiyana Reed, this attraction was the highlight of the trip.

"[The Spy Museum] was the best out of all of them we went to," Reed said. "When we got to the Spy Museum, they gave us a card, and it worked like a badge for a secret mission."

After the Spy Museum, the group toured several monuments, including the World War II Memorial, the Korean War



The seventh and eighth-grade classes at Eastford Elementary School traveled to Washington, D.C., from May 19-22. The group is pictured here on Wednesday, May 20, at the World War II Memorial with the Washington Monument in the background. Courtesy photo

Veterans Memorial, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, the Lincoln Memorial, the Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial, the Franklin Delano Roosevelt Memorial, and the Jefferson Memorial.

Seventh-grader Macy Haynes was particularly impressed by the beauty of the plants at the various memorials.

"One thing that shaped my D.C. experience was the plants it held and the beauty they brought to the monuments," Haynes said. "One of the plants that we saw was the poinsettia. These plants are full of color and brightened up Washington. I mostly saw them planted or found around the monuments. I do not know whether they were placed there next to the monument to symbolize something or just to draw attention to it. I think it showcases how beautiful Washington is and how large the monuments are."

On Thursday, May 21, the group spent the day first at the National Air and Space Museum, then at the Smithsonian National Museum of American History, and the Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History.

Seventh grader Jillian Norman

believed the Museum of Natural History was a highlight.

"One of my favorite parts about this trip was going to see the gemstones at the Natural History Museum," Norman said. "I love looking at shiny things like gems, and they literally bedazzled me. The first thing we saw was the Hope Diamond. The actual stone was a deep blue and huge — the size of my palm. The chain was made of silver and clear, well-sized diamonds. The Hope Diamond sat on a pedestal inside a glass case, spinning to show every side, yet occasionally stopping so people could take pictures. There were more amazing gemstones as well, rings and necklaces studded with huge stones. Finally, in the last and biggest section, all the different types of gems and crystals were on display. Some were massive, the largest one being almost as big as me, and some were super tiny, but still gorgeous. I noticed one of the cases held so many different-looking gems, except they were all made of calcite. This was the most gems I had seen in my life, and all of a sudden, I wanted my own collection of tiny, sparkling gems."

After spending the day at museums, the group headed to a Major League Baseball game at Nationals Stadium, where the Washington Nationals hosted the New York Mets in a 2-1 victory for the visiting Mets.

Seventh-grader Jacob Waddicor enjoyed the game.

"The game was exciting, and I got popcorn in a big bucket too," Waddicor said.

Wrapping up the trip on Friday, May 21, the group spent the morning at the Smithsonian National Zoological Park before heading home. This zoo is known particularly as being one of only two zoos in the United States (San Diego is the other) that houses pandas — a fact that several students were excited for, including Chloe Minor.

"My favorite part of this trip was seeing the pandas," Minor said. "I was very excited for this trip for almost six years because I knew that we were going to see them."

After lunch, it was time to head back to Eastford, bringing the field trip to a close. After a day of travel, the bus arrived back at Eastford Elementary School at around 10 p.m. on Friday, May 22.

BUDD DESIGNATED ECC VOLLEYBALL ALL-STAR, NAMED TO ALL-STATE TEAM



WOODSTOCK — Owen Budd, of Eastford, a junior at The Woodstock Academy, was named an Eastern Connecticut Conference All-Star in Boys' Volleyball for the 2026 season. The Centaurs earned the top seed in the Class S State Championship Tournament, but lost to Joel Barlow in the championship match on Friday, June 12, at Newtown High School, 3-0. The Centaurs finished the season with a 24-2 record. Budd is pictured at right, with fellow Woodstock Academy ECC All-Star selections Brayden Bottone, left, and Christian Hart. Additionally, at a CT High School Coaches Association (CHSCA) banquet on Tuesday, June 16, in Plantsville, Budd was honored by being named to the Class S Boys Volleyball All-State Second Team. *Courtesy photos*

STUDENTS OF THE TRIMESTER



EASTFORD — On Thursday, June 11, Eastford Elementary School sixth-grader Owen Barlow, left, and fourth-grader Hope McGurl, were honored at a meeting of the Eastford Board of Education for being recently named the Citizens of the Trimester. The honor is given in recognition of leadership qualities, respect for others and property, encouragement and support of peers, and involvement in school activities. Their nominations were read to the board, and each was awarded a certificate.

Adam Minor photo

ELLSWORTH GRADUATES FROM POMFRET SCHOOL



POMFRET — Rob Ellsworth, of Eastford, graduated from Pomfret School on Sunday, May 24. He earned a place on the High Honor Roll in all 12 trimesters while serving as a two-sport varsity captain. Rob will attend Wesleyan University in the fall as a committed member of the Wesleyan Cardinals baseball team. *Courtesy photo*



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BREAKING NEWS

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Ask us how YOU can get involved with the *Communicator* today!





DID YOU KNOW?

Dogs sweat through their toes! Dogs don't just pant to cool off. Dogs have sweat glands between their toes called merocrine glands, which, in addition to panting, is how they cool themselves down.



DOG OF THE MONTH

Meet Odin — the handsome 7-month-old Catahoula mix with one baby-blue eye, one brown eye, and a face that really should've gotten me adopted on sight. And yet ... here I am. Still waiting! PawSafe is located at 348 Old Colony Rd., Eastford. Learn more at www.pawsafe.org.

THE PASTOR'S PEN: TIMOTHY R. HOWARD JR.

A lot of people I talk to have faith, or at least a quiet curiosity about it, but they have never quite made it through the door of a church. Life gets busy. It can feel intimidating walking into a place where everyone seems to know each other. There is always a reason to put it off until next week.

If that sounds familiar, I want you to know something. You are exactly who a church like ours is here for.

Summer is actually one of the best times to visit. Things are a little more relaxed, the schedule is flexible, and there is something about the season that naturally turns our minds toward gratitude and reflection. It is a good time to explore what you believe and what kind of community you want around you.

At Eastford Baptist Church, you will find ordinary people who are asking the same big questions you are. Nobody has

it all figured out. We just try to work through it together. We go through Scripture verse by verse, letting the text speak for itself. You will not hear personal opinions from the pulpit or a message built around whatever happens to feel relevant that week. We open the Bible, work through it passage by passage, and trust that it has something to say to all of us.

Sunday worship is at 10:30 a.m., and Sunday School is available at 9:15 a.m. Come check us out. We would love to meet you.

We also have something special coming up for families. Vacation Bible School runs Aug. 3-7 from 6 to 8:15 p.m. and is open to all children in Pre-K through 6th grade. It is a fun week for kids and a low-pressure way for parents to get a feel for who we are. Be sure to register your kids today by clicking on the "Events" tab at www.eastfordbaptist.com.

FOOD PANTRY UPDATE: AUDREY CARABEAU

The Eastford Food Pantry is located at the Eastford Baptist Church, 133 Union Road. Please see our hours of operation below.

If you reside in Eastford and need food assistance, call Audrey Carabeau at (860) 933-7685 to sign up. We have the resources to help you! All referrals are kept confidential. Delivery is available to homebound individuals.

Thank you to all who donated food, home goods, and money in June. Your donations are greatly appreciated by our pantry families. The Eastford Food Pantry relies on donations

from the community. All donations to the pantry can be dropped off at Bowen's Garage or at the Town Office Building during regular business hours. Donations can be mailed to Eastford Food Pantry, 16 Westford Rd., Eastford, CT 06242.

Donation suggestions include tuna, canned fruit, healthy snacks, crackers, jelly, pasta, pasta sauce, deodorant, and laundry detergent. Thank you for your support!

July Eastford Food Pantry hours: Monday, July 6, 8-11 a.m.; Wednesday, July 22, 2-4 p.m.

TIP FOR TODAY: LIZ ELLSWORTH

Happy Summer! It's the season of pick-your-own (PYO) fruits, veggies, and flowers. What a wonderful way to get outdoors and enjoy our local farms and orchards! There are opportunities in our area to pick your own strawberries, raspberries, blueberries, peaches, and early-season apples (and eventually autumn's pumpkins). Next, you can

enjoy fresh berries on your cereal or ice cream or bake some tasty pies or bread. If you have extra produce, share some with family and friends. You will also be supporting the local economy.

For info on where you can find pick-your-own farms, check out the Grown Connected website at <https://www.grownconnected.org/findfarms>.

CALENDAR

Calendar entries must be submitted before the 15th of the month preceding publishing. Please send all calendar content to eastfordnews@gmail.com, and limit submissions to fewer than 100 words. All entries are subject to editing at the editor's discretion.

JULY

Wednesday, July 1

Eastford Public Library hosts "Tavern Trivia Night" with Jeremy Barlow at 6:30 p.m. Join us as our knowledge of history is tested. Please register!

Thursday, July 2

Eastford Public Library hosts "Story Time" at 11 a.m. Join us for a story, craft, snack, and time of free play. In the afternoon, we will host a Dungeons & Dragons club from 4:30-5:30 p.m. (ages 11-13). This group will continue to meet every Thursday.

Tuesday, July 7

Eastford Public Library hosts Tom Angels from History Without Walls from 3-4:30 p.m. This amateur vexillologist and dynamic Revolutionary War-era interpreter will deliver an immersive, time-travel-style presentation that makes the past engaging, educational, and unforgettable. The program is for all ages. Please register.

Wednesday, July 8

Eastford Public Library hosts "Maker's Night" from 6-7:30 p.m. This will be the first session of a two-part series: "A Patriotic Fraktur Painting Class." Valerie B. Oliver, former President of the Historical Society of Early American Decoration, will be teaching the colonial art of Fraktur Painting. Registration is a must!

Eastford commemorates the 250th Anniversary of American Independence! To mark the 250th anniversary of the birth of the United States, the Town of Eastford will host a public reading of the Declaration of Independence. The Declaration was approved and signed in

Philadelphia on July 4, 1776, and was first read publicly on that day. Printed copies were then distributed throughout the colonies, and on July 8, 1776, the Declaration was read in cities and towns across the 13 colonies, announcing the emergence of a new nation. The Town of Eastford invites residents and visitors to gather on the steps of the Ivy Glenn Memorial at 6 p.m. on July 8 for a reading of the Declaration of Independence. Following the reading, Phil Finch of the Eastford Historical Society will give a brief presentation on what life was like in Eastford in 1776. As part of this statewide commemoration, the Connecticut Society of the Sons of the American Revolution will provide a commemorative, frameable copy of the Declaration of Independence to each of Connecticut's 169 towns. Join us as we celebrate this historic milestone and reflect on the ideals and events that shaped our nation 250 years ago. Please, park in the Eastford Elementary School parking lot.

Thursday, July 9

Eastford Public Library will not host "Story Time" today. Sorry for the inconvenience.

Saturday, July 11

Eastford Public Library hosts "The Page Turners" at 1 p.m., who will discuss "Johnny Tremain," by Esther Forbes. Copies of the book are on display and available for check-out.

Fun for the whole family! The Congregational Church of Eastford will host its annual Frog Jump and Band Concert at Crystal Pond Park from 5-8 p.m. on Saturday, July 11. The event will feature a frog-jumping contest — longest jumper wins. You are encouraged to bring your own frogs, but we will have some loaners on hand, too. There

will be swimming in the lake, a free cookout for all, premium ice cream, a bounce house, and other fun. We will be treated to a concert by the East Woodstock Cornet Band. The entire event is free, our gift to you.

Tuesday, July 14

Eastford Public Library hosts "Children's Gardening Workshop," presented by Old Sturbridge Village, at 3 p.m. Join us as we look at 19th-century gardening tools, plant an heirloom bean, and decorate a seed packet to take home. Please register.

Wednesday, July 15

Eastford Public Library will host the second session of the two-part "A Patriotic Fraktur Painting Class" from 6-7:30 p.m. (see July 8 calendar entry).

Thursday, July 16

Eastford Public Library hosts "Story Time" at 11 a.m. Join us for a story, craft, snack, and time of free play.

Tuesday, July 21

Eastford Public Library hosts "Butter Making and Sampling Journey Cakes" at 3 p.m. Please register.

Wednesday, July 22

Eastford Public Library hosts "Sourdough Tips and Tricks" with Cory Blanchette at 6:30 p.m. Deadline for registration is July 18.

Thursday, July 23

Eastford Public Library hosts "Story Time" at 11 a.m. Join us for a story, craft, snack, and time of free play.

Monday, July 27

The Congregational Church of Eastford, in partnership with Living Proof Church of Ashford, will hold its annual Sports Camp on the grounds of Eastford Elementary School, Monday to Friday, July 27-31, from 8:30 a.m. to 12:15 p.m. The camp is for children ages 4-12, and offers flag football, soccer, basketball, cheerleading (girls only) for kids ages 6-12, and skills development for 4- to 5-year-olds. Sports instruction is led by college-age athletes. The day also includes a Bible lesson and snack. There is a fee of \$65 per camper. For more information and to register, visit <https://ceastford.org/sports-camp/>.

Wednesday, July 29

Eastford Public Library hosts "George Washington's Favorites," at 3 p.m. This will be an interactive, audio-visual program presented by Frances Cibel Hendrickson. Please register.

Thursday, July 30

Eastford Public Library hosts "Story Time" at 11 a.m. Join us for a story, craft, snack, and time of free play. Later in the day, Eastford Public Library hosts "A Colonial Afternoon Tea" with patron Claire Williams at 3 p.m. Please register.

ATTENTION

OUT-OF-TOWN RESIDENTS

There is an annual \$50 subscription fee for non-Eastford residents to receive the *Communicator*, which covers production and mailing costs. For uninterrupted service, if you would like to continue receiving the *Communicator* for the next year, please mail a check for a minimum of \$50 to Eastford *Communicator*, P.O. Box 253, Eastford, CT 06242. We must receive payment no later than July 15.

ALL EASTFORD. ALL THE TIME.



VITAL STATISTICS

BIRTHS

May: 0

MARRIAGES

May: 0

DEATHS

May: 0

REAL ESTATE TRANSACTIONS

April 1: 5 Nahaco Hill Lane, \$315,000, Nahaco Development LLC to Samantha Morin

April 15: 261 Old Colony Rd., \$165,000, Federal Home Loan Mtg Corp to Gregory Driscoll

POLICE REPORT - TROOP D

During the month of April, Troop D Troopers responded to 23 calls for service in the Town of Eastford. Of these calls for service, the most notable are:

Accidents: 3

Investigations: 3

Burglaries: 0

Larcenies: 0

Non-Reportable Matters: 17

In addition to the above investigations, Troopers conducted the following motor vehicle enforcement:

DUIs: 1

Traffic Citations: 0

Written Warnings: 1

PUBLIC MEETINGS: JULY

Monday, July 6: Board of Selectmen, 7 p.m., Town Office Building

Tuesday, July 7: Conservation and Historic Preservation Commission, 7 p.m., Town Office Building

Wednesday, July 8: Crystal Pond Park Commission, 6 p.m., Crystal Pond Park, 305 Crystal Pond Rd., Woodstock, CT 06281

Thursday, July 9: Bowen's Field Committee, 6 p.m., Town Office Building

Sunday, July 12: Recreation Commission, 4 p.m., Town Office Building

Tuesday, July 14: Planning Commission, 7:30 p.m., Town Office Building

Thursday, July 23: Inland Wetlands and Watercourses Commission, 7 p.m., Town Office Building

WHERE IS IT?



Where was this photo taken? See the answer on page 23!

FROM THE GROVE CEMETERY ASSOCIATION BOARD OF TRUSTEES

The Eastford Grove Cemetery Association greatly appreciates the following donors who have contributed to the beautification of the grounds:

• Beverly Mitchell (In Memory of the Mitchell Family)

- Bill & Carol Anderson
- David Barlow (for landscaping material and services)
- Jason & Elizabeth Shead (In Memory of Kevin & Susan Shead)
- Jacquelyn Charest (In Memory of the Whitman & Lawton Families)

EASTFORD GROVE CEMETERY PERPETUAL CARE DONATION FORM

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WE WANT YOUR PHOTOS!

Have a great photo you want to share?

Send photos to eastfordnews@gmail.com!

PREPARING THE HONORS



EASTFORD — On Friday, May 22, volunteers prepared Grove Cemetery for Memorial Day. In total, 128 veterans were recognized. From left, David Barlow, Owen Barlow, Beverly Salcius, Ralph Yulo, Victor Salcius, Rick Torgeson, Scott Huri, Sherry Huri, Alex Kowalchuk, Max Larkin, Faye Logee, Joe Andert, Jeannine Spink, Jack Larkin, Jason Shead, Elizabeth Shead, Nora Shead, Tyler Shead, Lauren Anderson. *Courtesy photo*

FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT: DONNA LEAKE

School is out for the summer! Or, at least it will be by the time you are reading this article! I hope that all Eastford families with school-aged students have had a positive school year. I also wish the Eastford students in grades 8 and 12 the best of luck as they move to their next educational adventure.

At Eastford Elementary, we believe in the benefits of building strong school-family partnerships. Hopefully, those families with students at EES have benefited from this commitment. As a staff, we support caregivers' positive efforts to become better advocates for their children. According to research, family engagement forms a positive link between home and school. Research indicates that collaboration between caregivers and educators improves student academic achievement, attendance, and behavior. It also lowers chronic absenteeism and high school dropout rates. Students are likely to experience stronger social-emotional growth and engage in fewer risk behaviors, such as substance abuse or violence. Strong school-family partnerships often lead to stronger school/community partnerships overall.

At EES, we are proactive in

engaging our families in the decision-making and goal-setting process for their children's education. Teachers maintain regular communication with families through individual appointments, conferences, e-mails, and phone calls. Our school administration responds positively to all phone calls and e-mails from caregivers. There is a monthly newsletter that celebrates successes and keeps families informed about available opportunities and resources. Our movement to student-led conferences in Grades 3-8 engages students and families in a much more personalized discussion of student progress. Families are invited to celebrate students' successes at classroom and/or school-wide events such as concerts. Given that we have successfully obtained a competitive after-school grant for the past several years, we have offered family engagement opportunities such as Paint Night, Astronomy Night, and Meet the Penguin Night.

We recently received notification that our after-school grant has been approved for the 2026-27 school year. We will continue to offer opportunities for free after-school

programming and family engagement activities. While we can't offer daily after-school childcare for free, the grant does make it possible for us to subsidize between \$100-\$200 per student, depending on the number of days of attendance, of the monthly cost of the Hale YMCA program.

I have become personally involved in providing family partnership activities through the Super-Duper Math Trooper Problem Solvers Club. This provides me with the opportunity to get to know the students at EES. Given my professional training in mathematics, I am particularly interested in the mathematical thinking they use to analyze word problems. This year, the program was offered to all families in Grades 1-3. I am pleased to say that on June 15, I celebrated the success of 21 families who completed six of the monthly problem-solver packets. I intend to continue offering this program next year and look forward to increased family involvement.

Although the connection may not always be obvious, we are always looking to support the educational experience of our children and their families.

The Board of Education approved the addition of a third bus to provide daily transportation for our students. This additional bus will shorten the time our students spend on buses, allow for a later pickup time, and an earlier return home. Hopefully, this will also encourage families to allow their children to take the bus to and from school whenever possible. The lines of cars, especially at school closing time, are getting longer and creating more opportunities for accidents on the school grounds. This is a one-year contract that will be reviewed based on the success of attaining improved bus transportation and shorter car lines.

There is an ad-hoc committee of Board of Education members researching the best educational opportunity for our high school students who wish to attend a public high school. At the BOE meeting scheduled for Aug. 20, the committee will present an overview of its research. The BOE is also hosting a Community Conversation on Thursday, Sept. 24, from 6-8 p.m., inviting parents and caregivers to participate in the discussion.

Enjoy the summer months!

FROM THE FIRST SELECTMAN: DEB RICHARDS

Volunteer opportunities are available in Eastford!

Municipalities rely on volunteers to help support many aspects of local government and community life. In Eastford, our committees and commissions are made up of dedicated volunteers who help shape the future of our town and step forward when their community needs them.

Now, we're asking you to get involved. Have a voice in your town, contribute your ideas, and help create the Eastford you want to live in. Whether you can serve on a committee, commission, or assist with community events, there are opportunities for every level of involvement.

We are currently seeking volunteers for the following positions:

- Inland Wetlands and Watercourses Commission (IWWC): The Inland Wetlands and Watercourses Commission is a

municipal regulatory body established under Connecticut's Inland Wetlands and Watercourses Act. The commission reviews and permits activities that may affect inland wetlands and watercourses, balancing responsible development with environmental protection.

- Planning Commission: The Planning Commission is a volunteer advisory body that helps guide land use, development, and long-term planning within the town.

- Eastford Conservation and Historic Preservation Commission: This commission focuses on the development, conservation, supervision, and protection of Eastford's natural resources, including water resources, while also preserving the town's historic character.

- Recreation Commission: We are looking for volunteers to help organize, manage, and plan town-sponsored recreational programs

and events, including the annual Easter Egg Hunt, Experience Eastford, Memorial Day Bike Parade, and bus trips. We welcome new ideas and enthusiastic individuals who enjoy creating community events and activities.

- Eastford Food Pantry Committee: Volunteers are needed to help support the Food Pantry and assist in serving community members in need.

- Senior Citizens Committee: We are seeking residents interested in serving as Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary, or committee members. Volunteers will help set agendas, organize events and programs for Eastford seniors, and provide oversight for the recently established Senior Hiking Subcommittee. The committee is expected to meet approximately four times per year, with additional activities determined by the committee.

- The Mid-Northeast Recycling Operating Committee (MidNEROC) Representative: This position involves attending monthly meetings (with Zoom participation available). Some familiarity with waste management and hazardous waste issues is helpful but not required.

- Agent for the Elderly: We are seeking a resident willing to serve as a liaison between Eastford seniors and the agencies, organizations, and programs that provide services and resources to older adults.

- Gardening: Interested in gardening? We are looking for volunteers to occasionally tend to the very minimal gardens at the Town Office Building.

Interested in volunteering? For more information about any of these committees, commissions, or volunteer opportunities, please contact emily.john@eastfordct.gov.

FROM THE EASTFORD INDEPENDENT FIRE COMPANY #1 INC.



The fire department responded to 19 emergencies during the month of May. The budget was approved by the town. Thank you. You'll notice a change in the look of the firehouse. Since 1942, the house has sustained minimal change in its color. Very positive feedback has been received from the town. There is still work to be done. Congratulations to Dan Driscoll, who was designated an Active Member.

On Tuesday, June 2, the department celebrated its 84th birthday. Invites were sent to all active members, veterans, and invited guests. The annual company picture (featured with

this article) was taken with members in front of Engine Tankers 171 and 271. Dinner was served. Chief Beaudoin delivered his annual address regarding the "happenings" of the fire department the previous year. Awards and recognition were given to members and former members.

Another highlight of the evening was the Memorial Table. The table displayed helmets designating the jobs the deceased members may have performed. Fire Department and American flags symbolized the commitment of the deceased members and the ladies' auxiliary. Without their commitment, the EIFC would not be at the level it is today. The evening closed with the monthly business meeting.

Preparing your pets for emergencies makes sense — get ready now! If you are like millions of animal owners, your pet is an important member of your household. The likelihood that you and your animals will survive an emergency depends largely on the



emergency planning you do today.

Just as you do with your family's emergency supply kit, think about the basics for survival, particularly food and water. Consider two kits. In one, put everything you and your pets will need to stay where you are. The other should be a lightweight, smaller version you can take with you if you and your pets have to get away. Be sure to review your kits regularly to ensure that their contents, especially foods and medicines, are fresh. Plan what you will do in an emergency. Be prepared to assess the situation.

Stay informed. It is Important to stay informed about what might happen. Make a backup emergency plan in case you can't care for your animals yourself. Develop a buddy system with neighbors, friends, and relatives to ensure someone is available to care for or evacuate your pets.

Keep in mind that what is best for you is typically what's best for your animals. Hydrate, hydrate, hydrate! For more information about how to prepare, visit www.ready.gov or call 1-800-BE-READY.

-Submitted by Jeannine Spink

FROM THE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF EASTFORD: MIKE MORAN

Hello Eastford! Just a quick update from the Congregational Church of Eastford as we step into the heart of summer.

First of all, we remain so grateful to our wonderful town and community for all your caring and generous support following the loss of our building to fire in 2023. You have allowed us to use spaces like the school, the library, and Eastford Baptist Church's Family Activity Center. You have loaned us vehicles, donated time, organized fundraisers on our behalf, and given generous financial gifts. Thank you so much!

In these three years since the fire, we have grown a great deal

— spiritually, as a church family, and in numbers. For this, we are grateful to the Lord. As far as our new building goes, we are at the point where, on a transatlantic flight, the captain says, "We have begun our initial descent." As we hope for completion by summer's end, we will plan a time to invite you all to come and see what the Lord has done. If you would like to check us out before we move into the new building, there's no need to wait. We worship every Sunday at 10 a.m. in the Eastford Elementary School gym. Join us.

July is a big month for us for special events. On Saturday, July 11, we will host our annual (like, 100+ years!) Frog Jump and Band

Concert. This year, we will be at Crystal Pond Park from 5-8 p.m. We do indeed jump live frogs. If you want to compete, the best plan is to catch your own and bring them. We will also have loaner frogs. The East Woodstock Cornet Band will play; we will serve burgers, dogs, and the fixings, ice cream, and cotton candy; and we will have a bounce house for kids. There is always an old-fashioned cake walk, where you can win a home-baked treat to take home. This makes for a great family outing — all at no charge. Join us!

Also, in the last week of the month, we will host a sports camp for children ages 4-12. We will offer a skills development track

for 4- and 5-year-olds, and for the older kids, we offer soccer, basketball, cheerleading, and flag football. There will be daily Bible lessons as well. The camp is held at the Eastford Elementary School from July 27-31, 8:30 a.m. to 12:15 p.m. There is a fee. You can find out more and register at <https://ceastford.org/sports-camp/>.

Finally, we believe we are here to serve our Lord Jesus and that He has called us to bless you. This is why we do these things. Jesus is real, and He loves you, and so do we. Happy summer. Happy 250th USA! Use sunblock. Eat a lot of burgers, dogs, and Buck's. Slow down and enjoy one another.

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WINDHAM-TOLLAND 4-H CAMP NEWS

July is here — and camp is in full operational summer fun outdoors mode. If you are looking for an unplugged, fun, and life skill-building experience for your child, check out what is on the schedule for the rest of the summer at the Windham-Tolland 4-H Camp.

As long as openings are available, it is not too late to register for either a day or an overnight slot. You can find details and registration forms on our website, www.4hcampct.org.

Campers 9-15 self-select the activities they want to include in their schedule each week from a list of 13 offerings. Some options include learning to knit or ride a horse, acting in a play, riding the zip line, swimming, fishing, or playing sports.

Each week has a different theme:
• July 5-10: Carnival Week

- July 12-17: Zoo Week
- July 19-24: Pirates and Vikings Week
- July 26-31: International Week
- Aug. 2-7: Puddles & Bubbles Week
- Aug. 10-14: Capture the Flag Week (Day Camp only)
- Aug. 15-16: Family Camp Overnight

Our motto: A summer of fun, a lifetime of memories! We'd love to have you come and make some memories with us this summer. Our camp registrar is available by phone to answer any questions at (860) 974-1122 or e-mail registrar@4hcampct.org.

Windham-Tolland 4-H Camp is located at 326 Taft Pond Rd., Pomfret Center. Contact us at (860) 974-1122, or visit www.4hcampct.org.

DID YOU KNOW? EASTFORD HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Did you know that Eastford once had high hopes of becoming a railroad town?

At the August Town Meeting in 1849, selectmen instructed that \$100 be spent to hire a competent surveyor to obtain the best route for a railroad from Willimantic to the Massachusetts line through Mansfield, Chaplin, Eastford, Woodstock, and Thompson, a charter having already been granted by the CT General Assembly. At that time, Eastford mill owners had to travel to the nearest rail station (probably Willimantic) for both pick-up and delivery of goods. A rail

station in town would save them both time and money. Other businesses in town would likely also benefit from having a station in Eastford. As William Clark noted in the March 2022 Eastford Historical Quarterly in his enlightening article on the old mill dams, "Eastford is still waiting for it."

Donations of original writings, old photographs, and small historic items are always welcome, and monetary donations are greatly appreciated! Send to P.O. Box 350, Eastford, CT 06242. For questions, call (860) 974-1610 (Tom) or (860) 933-0468 (Linda).

RECREATION UPDATE

Thank you so much for your participation in the Heart of Eastford 5K Run and Experience Eastford. As we move into a new fiscal year, we are making some leadership changes and looking to grow our team. There are a lot of good ideas out there to strengthen our town's activities for kids, adult

sports, and activities for adults, like bus trips, concerts, and special classes. Right now, our team is very small, but we would like to expand to better serve our terrific community. Maybe you might join the team? Contact us at https://www.eastfordct.gov/recreation-commission.



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WHAT'S GOING ON AT THE EASTFORD PUBLIC LIBRARY?

KATIE BALL, LIBRARIAN

Colonial Days at the Eastford Public Library! Let the library transport you back in time to 1776 as we celebrate America250. Children and adults alike are invited to take part in our six-week Summer Reading Program that will feature a different theme each week. This year, we will be offering a BINGO reading challenge for both groups. Please inquire at our front desk if you have any questions.

Week 1: Colonial Life (July 7-11)

Week 2: Colonial Gardening (July 14-18)

Week 3: Colonial Fare (July 21-25)

Week 4: Colonial Entertainment (July 28-Aug. 1)

Week 5: Colonial Arts (Aug. 4-8)

Week 6: Colonial Toys & Games (Aug. 11-15).

Summer Reading Finale will take place Saturday, Aug. 15, at 10:30 a.m.

Library hours are Tuesdays, 11 a.m. to 6:30 p.m.; Wednesdays, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.; Thursdays, 11 a.m. to 6:30 p.m., and Saturdays, 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. You may reach us at (860) 974-0125, or by e-mail at eastfordpublib@gmail.com. Upcoming events and programs can be seen on the town page or on social media. If you haven't yet, please follow Eastford Public Library on Facebook and/or Instagram @eastfordpubliclibrary. Stop in, we'd love to see you.



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*Well, this is awkward!
 We took way too many photos for this issue. Visit our website for extras!*

Congregational Church of Eastford
www.cceastford.org
 Visit calendar and event tabs for more!

Pastor Mike Moran
 Associate Pastor Evan Burgess

July 11 from 5 - 8 pm (Family-friendly event!)
FREE Frog Jump, Band Concert & Cookout
Crystal Pond Park, 305 Crystal Pond Rd, Woodstock

Sports Camp (Ages 4 - 12)
July 27 - 31 from 8:30am - 12:15pm
 Register by July 5th for free T-Shirt!
 Online registration cceastford.org/sports-camp/



REGISTRARS SEEKING POLL WORKERS

Eastford's registrars are seeking poll workers to cover the election primary which will begin on Aug. 3, ending Aug. 9. Hours/days are very flexible. You will be responsible for checking in voters on the official registration list. This is a paid position. If interested, please e-mail us at registrar@townofeastford.com.

Our next issue will be published on:

Aug. 1

Please send all submissions to eastfordnews@gmail.com by:

July 15





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The Town of Eastford invites residents and visitors to gather on the steps of the Ivy Glenn Memorial for a live reading of the Declaration of Independence. Following the reading, there will be a brief presentation by Phil Finch of the Eastford Historical Society on what life was like in Eastford in 1776.

Join us as we celebrate this historic milestone and reflect on the ideals and events that shaped our nation 250 years ago!

Celebrate America 250

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5K raises more than \$4K for food pantry, families in need

EASTFORD — Experience Eastford kicked off at 9 a.m. Saturday, June 6, with the annual Heart of Eastford 5K, hosted by the Recreation Commission. In total, 81 racers took to the streets to run the course, which began and ended at Eastford Elementary School. The event raised \$4,176, which will be split between the Eastford Food Pantry and a beneficiary yet to be determined. Two Eastford residents competed in the 5K. Luke McGurl finished second in his age group (Male 40-49) with a time of 22:33. The time was also good to earn him an overall third-place finish. Allison Sparks finished first in her age group (Female 30-39) with a time of 31:36. This time earned her 34th place overall. For complete results from the race, turn to page 21, or visit <https://runsignup.com/Race/Results/187829#resultSetId-659812;perpage:100.s>. Adam Minor photos



Kids Fun Run highlights 'Heart of Eastford 5K' experience

EASTFORD — As a supplement to the Heart of Eastford 5K on Saturday, June 6, which itself kicked off Experience Eastford, the Recreation Commission hosted a Kids Fun Run during the 5K. Eight local children sprinted in a brief road race that began at the intersection of Westford Road and John Perry Road, then turned around at the intersection of John Perry Road and Church Road, and then ended at the starting line. The entry fee was a donation to the Eastford Food Pantry or a local animal shelter. The eight racers were Hope McGurl, Emmett McGurl, Levi McGurl, Elena DeGostin, Roman Burgess, Cora Cote, Aurora Kneeland, and Cal Cote. *Adam Minor photos*



Heart of Eastford 5K 2026 RESULTS

OVERALL RESULTS

(Name, Town, Time, Age)

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Field Day adds fun exclamation point to end of EES year

EASTFORD — Eastford Elementary School hosted its annual Field Day festivities on Friday, June 12, offering a variety of activities all day long to kids in grades Pre-K through 8, including kickball, disc activities, yard games, and more. Students and staff also enjoyed a pizza lunch courtesy of the PTO. The day came to a close with the annual inflatable costume race and Grade 8 water balloon fight, bringing a cool end to a hot, sunny day.
Adam Minor photos



Transfer Station permit fees on the rise again this month

FEES
Continued from pg. 1

all contribute to having to raise rates.”

While another increase may not be ideal, Richards maintained that the cost of a permit in Eastford is still favorable compared with other towns.

“It’s still a great deal compared to pick-up and other towns’ fees,” she said.

Taking a look at fees in surrounding towns, Eastford is still generally on the lower end, objectively, in Windham County. In nearby Woodstock, for

example, according to information provided on the town’s website, the Woodstock Transfer Station charges \$275 for a single-family household, which includes only one permit (Eastford issues two). A second permit in Woodstock is \$50, bringing a two-vehicle permit to \$325 annually.

In Pomfret, their Transfer Station closed years ago, but offers residents permits in Woodstock and Brooklyn. The Woodstock permits are only available to 50 residents at \$270 per permit, with three planned bulky waste disposal events throughout the year. The

Town of Brooklyn also opens their transfer station to outside residents on a “pay as you go” basis. Bags are purchased for household trash disposal, and a large number of bulky items are accepted at varying fees per item. Comparatively, trash pickup services by Casella Waste Systems in Willimantic can cost more than \$100 quarterly, not including bulky waste or other services provided by a transfer station.

However, not every town charges extra for use of the transfer station. In Ashford, for example, residential or household

refuse disposal at the Transfer Station is generally free for Ashford residents, as it is covered by town taxes. However, there are separate fees for other items, such as tires and hazardous waste. Transfer station permits are provided at no additional cost in Union.

For the number of services offered at Eastford’s Transfer Station, Richards said that even at \$140, people get a good bang for their buck.

“Eastford is a good deal for the amount of trash and bulky waste being handled,” she said.



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Emilio to challenge MacCormack in GOP Primary on Aug. 11

CONTROVERSY
Continued from pg. 1

In May, Jadon MacCormack (R-Brooklyn), 23, was declared the Republican candidate slated to run against Democratic incumbent Pat Boyd (D-Pomfret) in the State House of Representatives' 50th District, which covers the towns of Ashford, Brooklyn, Eastford, Hampton, Mansfield, Pomfret, and Woodstock. The election is slated for Tuesday, Nov. 3.

In a social media post on June 2 titled, "Happy Straight Month," MacCormack stated he would "stand against the transgender and LGBT movement that has for too long corrupted our families, undermined parental authority, and eroded the foundational values of our society." He added he would "fight relentlessly in the state legislature to protect our children from premature medical interventions, indoctrination in schools, and the normalization of perverse ideologies that threaten the innocence of the next generation."

The post drew immediate backlash from both sides of the aisle, especially when further comments by MacCormack were featured on an episode of "Reese on the Radio," on WTIC NewsTalk 1080 on June 3. In the episode, MacCormack confirmed his support for the death penalty for "sodomites," confirming a post made on the social media site X on

Aug. 11, 2025, replying to Dominic Michael Tripi's post about the Supreme Court considering overturning a gay marriage ruling with a picture of a noose with the caption: "The Bible has a better idea."

"I want to bring us back to the old past and the truth of what made America the land of the free," MacCormack said on the "Reese on the Radio" episode June 3. "When it comes to putting on the death penalty, we need to focus on what is proper. We can't have people molesting children. Perverts, these horrible people, they should get the death penalty too. I believe every sodomite is a pervert."

MacCormack's opponent, incumbent State Rep. Pat Boyd (D-Pomfret), called MacCormack's comments "tone deaf" and hateful in a statement on June 3.

"As someone who has lived in northeastern Connecticut my entire life, I am deeply embarrassed that our region is drawing statewide, and potentially national, attention for all the wrong reasons," Boyd said. "The nomination of a major party candidate who chooses to divide our towns, spread hate, and insult our neighbors is completely tone-deaf to the decent people from all political backgrounds who live here. ... when a candidate crosses the line of basic human decency by judging others and plastering irrational, hateful posts about our neighbors, friends, and family

across social media, it threatens the very fabric of our community."

State Sen. Jeff Gordon (R-Woodstock) also condemned MacCormack's statements on June 3.

"The hateful remarks recently posted on social media by a candidate for State Representative in the 50th District directed at the LGBTQ community are reprehensible and have no place in our public discourse. I condemn these comments in the strongest terms. I've been consistent in calling out hate speech in the Quiet Corner, in all its forms, from all people, regardless of their political views, and this is no exception. As a community, we do not condone rhetoric like this in any form. Whether this language comes from the political right or the left, it does not reflect the basic decency that northeastern Connecticut residents exhibit on a daily basis."

The Connecticut GOP released a statement later that week that sought to distance itself from MacCormack's statements.

"The Connecticut Republican Party strongly condemns any rhetoric, explicit or implicit, that can be interpreted as encouraging hostility, intimidation, or violence toward any individual or group," the statement reads. "At a time when our nation continues to witness the real-world consequences of inflammatory political discourse amplified through social media, candidates for public office have a heightened responsibility to choose their words carefully and to promote civil, respectful debate. The recent statements made by [MacCormack] fall far short of that standard. By invoking historical punishments for individuals based on their sexual conduct and coupling those references with language portraying entire groups of people as threats to society, MacCormack crossed a line that should never be crossed by anyone seeking public office. Whether intended or not, such rhetoric can be interpreted as validating hostility toward members of the LGBTQ community and contributes to an atmosphere of division and fear. ... Mr. MacCormack is entitled to his personal opinions, but those

opinions are not representative of the Connecticut Republican Party. His statements do not reflect our values, our principles, or our approach to public service."

Facing calls to withdraw from the race, MacCormack remained defiant, stating publicly that he had no regrets and that he would "never withdraw." In a social media post on June 4, he doubled down on his statements.

"On America's 250th anniversary, I see this issue as a major turning point for the country, but for local communities especially, one rooted in the founding principles of Connecticut," he stated in the June 4 post. "I will never withdraw. I plan on running the most impactful campaign of this election cycle ... I stand by every word. Those who oppose my statements have immoral judgment and are not upholding the founding principles of Connecticut."

In the days after the comments, news began to emerge that Anthony Emilio, of Pomfret, would be collecting signatures across the district to challenge MacCormack in the primary scheduled for Aug. 11. The minimum number of signatures required was 238, and Emilio collected 340 — including some at Experience Eastford on June 6. Emilio is now officially on the ballot for Aug. 11, and the winner of the primary will challenge Boyd in November.

Christopher Bowen, chairman of the Eastford Republican Town Committee, promoted the petition before Experience Eastford and spoke to the effect the controversy has had in town.

"The positions [MacCormack] has been promoting are rooted in division and hostility, and they run counter to the basic values of respect, dignity, and liberty that hold communities together," Bowen said. "When public voices spread messages that demean and attack others, it harms more than individuals; it erodes the sense of safety that we all deserve. ... Adding your name to the petition is a simple but meaningful way to push back against the hate and support a better future for everyone."

WHERE IS IT?



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