

# THE EASTFORD Communicator

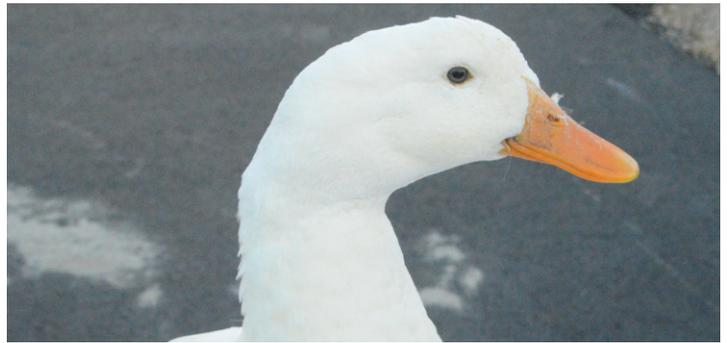


FEBRUARY 2026  EASTFORD.NEWS "Eastford: One of Connecticut's best small towns." - Carol Davidge VOL. 34, No. 7

## BASKETBALL SEASON IN THE BOOKS



**EASTFORD** — The 2025-26 basketball season has officially come to an end for the Eastford Bulldogs boys and girls, who completed their respective seasons on Tuesday, Jan. 20. Pictured, Charlie Ellsworth drives to the basket against Pomfret on Jan. 8; and Georgia Barlow fights for the ball during a loss to Ashford on Dec. 18. For more photos, including complete season recaps and stats from both the boys' and girls' teams, turn to pages 16-19! *Adam Minor photos*



*Scramble the Duck is scheduled to make his annual seasonal prediction at the Ivy Glenn Memorial on Monday, Feb. 2, at 7:30 a.m. File photo*

## Spring or winter ahead?

### SCRAMBLE SET FOR ANNUAL PREDICTION

**EASTFORD** — Scramble the Duck is once again ready to make his annual prediction!

Scramble holds a perfect accuracy record compared to all groundhogs, and will predict either an early spring or an extended winter on Monday, Feb. 2, at 7:30 a.m. at the Ivy Glenn.

The event, which is known as "Duck Day," has become a town tradition over the past decade. If Scramble sees his shadow, he will forecast another six weeks of winter. If he does not, he will

predict an early spring. A scroll will be read by Scramble's handlers to announce the result.

Scramble maintains a close eye on the weather and performs cutting edge research at Stormy Heights Academy. Scramble promises that this year's prediction will be accurate, and will choose one of two scrolls, which will declare his prediction.

For those not able to attend in person, the event will also be live streamed at [scrambletheduck.org/livestream](http://scrambletheduck.org/livestream).

## Planning Commission seeks POCD input from Eastford residents

**EASTFORD** — Do you have comments about development in Eastford? Are you interested in providing input on the vision for Eastford's future?

The Town of Eastford Planning Commission has begun the process of updating the town's Plan of Conservation & Development (POCD). The POCD sets the vision for how the town would like to move

forward over the next 10 years. The Planning Commission is responsible for updating the POCD at a minimum of once every 10 years, as required by state statutes. Eastford's POCD was last updated in 2016 and can be found on the town's website. This update provides an opportunity for the town to consider whether to make changes in the goals and objectives for the community.

Your input helps shape the plan. The deadline to complete the survey is Feb. 28. Use the QR code accompanying this article or go to <https://www.eastfordct.gov/land-use-office/page/planning-commission-forms-documents>. You can also pick up paper copies at the Town Office Building, Library, or the Post Office. The Planning Commission looks forward to your input.



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THE  
**EASTFORD**  
*Communicator*  
LOCAL NEWS SINCE 1992

VOL. 34, No. 7 | FEBRUARY 2026

**MANAGING EDITOR:** Adam Minor

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**CONTACT INFORMATION**

Articles, calendar or event information, press releases, photos or questions may be sent to [eastfordnews@gmail.com](mailto:eastfordnews@gmail.com).

Please send text in Microsoft Word format (not PDF), and high-resolution photos in JPG format. Send mail to Editor, Eastford Communicator, P.O. Box 253, Eastford, CT 06242, by the 15th of the month preceding the next issue. All submissions to the *Communicator* are subject to editing. The *Communicator* reserves the right not to accept submissions.

We do not publish Letters to the Editor.

To contact the *Communicator* by phone, call (860) 337-2481, and leave a message, and someone will get back to you as soon as we can.

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**CIRCULATION**

*The Eastford Communicator* is available online at <https://eastford.news/>, and in print, free of charge, to every home in Eastford. Out-of-town subscriptions are available by request, for an annual fee of \$50 (although additional donations are appreciated).

**FROM THE FIRST SELECTMAN**

**DEB RICHARDS**

January has brought several infrastructure challenges requiring prompt attention and repair. At the Ivy Glenn, the 30-year-old boiler failed its CT State inspection and has since been replaced. A chimney inspection will be conducted next to determine whether any additional work is needed to meet required standards.

At the Town Office Building, the furnace heat exchanger failed. Although the unit is still covered under a five-year warranty and the replacement cost is included, the inspection identified additional issues not covered by the warranty. These repairs were expected to be completed by mid-January, as of this writing.

We received a strong response to the open snowplow driver and Transfer Station attendant positions. Interviews are currently underway, and offer letters will be issued shortly.

The Town of Eastford Planning Commission has also begun the process of updating the town's Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD), which outlines the community's vision for the next ten years. Resident surveys are available at the Town Office Building, Post

Office, and Library, or online via the QR code on the Town's website.

Interest continues to grow in expanding the Senior Committee by connecting residents with shared interests. Several individuals have expressed enthusiasm for activities such as a walking or hiking club, social gatherings like group lunches, and creative groups for knitting or crocheting. Veterans have also shown interest in meeting for coffee and conversation. In addition, there may be residents willing to volunteer for a "Fix It" Workshop — held up to three times a year — where seniors can bring small appliances to the lower level of the Town Office Building for repair by volunteer helpers.

All of these initiatives can be organized under the Senior Committee. Residents interested in joining or chairing the committee, leading a group, proposing new activities, or participating in any of these opportunities are encouraged to contact [selectmen@townofeastford.com](mailto:selectmen@townofeastford.com). Volunteers are essential to making this effort successful — come be part of a growing and exciting new community group!



Sometimes, the little things make the biggest difference. "Shout Outs" is your place to celebrate kindness, gratitude, and everyday heroes. Did someone brighten your day? Help without asking? Go the extra mile when no one was watching? Let's tell their story. Share your "shout out" and together, we'll spread some joy — one good deed at a time.

Send your "shout outs" to Managing Editor Adam Minor at [eastfordnews@gmail.com](mailto:eastfordnews@gmail.com), or send a message to us on our Facebook page. Please keep your messages to 75 words or less. The editor has the right to accept, reject, or edit any submission. Deadline to receive "shout outs" is the 15th of every month before the next publication.

*Thank You!*

Thank you to Anonymous, Carol Molnar, and Larry Baldelli for your generous donations!

**DONATIONS MAKE THE COMMUNICATOR POSSIBLE!**

*Please consider a donation to the Communicator!*

*Send checks to:*

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THE  
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*Communicator*  
LOCAL NEWS SINCE 1992

# Library welcomes Rhode Island author for discussion, reception

EASTFORD — On Saturday, Jan. 17, the Eastford Public Library welcomed Rhode Island author Christa Carmen for a conversation between her and Jody Blanchette. Carmen is the author of *The Daughters of Block Island*, winner of the Bram Stoker Award and a Shirley Jackson Award finalist, the Indie Horror Book Award-winning *Something Borrowed, Something Blood-Soaked*, and the Bram Stoker Award-nominated *"Through the Looking Glass and Straight into Hell"* (*Orphans of Bliss: Tales of Addiction Horror*). At the event, Carmen shared about her life, writing journey, creative process, and what inspires her. A reception designed around her newest book, *How to Fake a Haunting*, followed the discussion. Lincoln Budd lent a deer skull and animal skins to set the scene! Dan Belanger created all the signs for this event.

*Courtesy photos*





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**TIPS FOR TODAY**  
**LIZ ELLSWORTH**

Happy Winter! Have you considered sowing some seeds now for your spring garden? Easily grow some of your favorite veggies or fruits in a milk jug, or paper-based juice carton and have seedlings ready-to-go in the spring.

You can purchase small, biodegradable pots if you prefer. Grab some seeds and potting soil and get started. Once planted, be sure to place your seeds as close to sunlit windows as possible. Alternatively, there are sunlamps that use artificial light to help cultivate plants indoors.

Some seeds that are good to start now include cauliflower, broccoli, leeks, cabbage, and onions. Bonus points for selecting plants that support our pollinators. For tips on sowing seeds out-of-doors, go to the Maine-based Wild Seed Project's blog:

<https://wildseedproject.net/blog/ideal-time-for-sowing-native-seeds> For some winter gardening pointers from the UConn's Department of Agriculture, visit their website: <https://homegarden.cahn.uconn.edu/monthly-gardening-tips-for-connecticut/gardening-tips-january/>.

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**TO OUR DONORS**

**THANK YOU**

*The Communicator* would not be what it is without each and every one of you! As we move into 2026, thank you for your continued support of Eastford news!



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**ALL THE NEWS**  
**ALL THE TIME**

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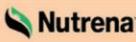
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**WHAT'S NEW AT BOY SCOUT TROOP 92?**



At top, in early January, Scouts in Troop 92 enjoyed a ski trip to Mt. Ski Sundown. Above, in January, the Cubs worked on their swimming adventure and spent time swimming at Mansfield Community Center's pool. Courtesy photos

ASHFORD/EASTFORD — In early January, Scouts in Troop 92 enjoyed a ski trip to Mt. Ski Sundown. This was a daytrip. There were no injuries.

The Troop was gearing up for the Klondike Derby that took place the end of January. The Klondike Derby is a regional event with widespread participation. Participants compete outdoors in different events. Scouts stay outdoors during the entire Derby and campout in tents. Ideal weather for the Derby is below freezing temperatures, snow, sunny and low wind. This time of year, you never know what you are going to get. After the Derby is over and you enter a heated building, it feels “funny.”

We will have a report and photos in the March *Communicator*.

Troop 92 Scout meetings are the second and fourth Tuesdays of the month at 6:30 p.m. at St. Philip's Rec Center. New members are welcome.

Cub Scout Report: In January, the Cubs worked on their swimming adventure and spent time swimming at Mansfield Community Center's pool.

This month the scouts will attend an overnight at the New England Air Museum. In addition, the pack meeting this month will include a workshop on how to build Pinewood Derby cars in preparation for the big race in March.

Cub Scouts try to raise funds to offset the cost of Scouting adventures and over nights. Please keep an eye out for our meat stick fundraiser at the winter farmer's market.

We are also selling Munson's Chocolate during the end of February. Anyone interested in purchasing can contact the Cub Scouts at [ctubscoutspack92@gmail.com](mailto:ctubscoutspack92@gmail.com).

Cub Scout meetings are held the first Friday of the month at 6 p.m. at Knowlton Hall. New Cubs are always welcome.

Celebrate Valentine's Day, Feb. 14. Don't forget!

- Troop 92 BSA Ashford/Eastford, Nord Yakovleff, Assistant Scoutmaster; Jesse Burnham, Scoutmaster; Rob Hany, Committee Chairman; Doug Jenne, Cubmaster

## FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT: DONNA LEAKE

As we move toward spring, and longer daytime hours, the Board of Education (BOE) will be working on the formulation of the 2026-27 BOE operating budget. By the time you read this article, the BOE will be nearing the completion of this important task.

The process began at the Jan. 8 BOE meeting, during which the board received the superintendent's proposed 2026-27 operating budget totaling \$5,023,857, which represents a 4.86-percent (\$232,861) increase over the 2025-26 approved BOE operating budget. This budget proposal was developed with input from staff and administration and includes the requests for personnel, benefits, professional services, facilities, equipment, tuition costs, and the special education services and

supports that the administration believes are important to provide quality educational programming for all Eastford children in grades PK -12. Several of these costs are non-negotiable since they are determined by contracts, either with staff or outside providers.

The BOE, acting as the Finance Committee, scheduled meetings for Jan. 22, Feb. 3, and Feb. 12 to review the budget proposal. At the BOE meeting on Feb. 12, the board is expected to approve the BOE operating budget that will be sent to the town for further review and action. At its meeting on Feb. 12, it is also anticipated that the board will approve the BOE Long Term Capital Improvement Plan – February 2026.

At the Jan. 8 meeting, the BOE also set meetings for the following committees:

Transportation (Jan. 22), Curriculum (Jan. 22), and Facilities (Feb. 3). A Policy Committee meeting was already set for Feb. 5. I believe it is important to note these meetings and recognize that the work of an Eastford BOE member extends beyond their attendance at the monthly BOE meetings. In addition to reviewing all proposals and documents received at the monthly BOE meetings, our BOE members serve on several subcommittees. Committee membership is as follows:

- Executive Committee: Stephen Bowen, Terry Cote, Adam Minor
- Fiscal (Committee of the Whole)
- Policy: Lauren Barlow, Nancy Neff
- Woodstock Academy: Rob

- Ellsworth
- EASTCONN: Nancy Neff
- Facilities: Rob Ellsworth, Stephen Bowen
- Transportation: Stephen Bowen, Adam Minor
- Curriculum: Adam Minor, Lauren Barlow, Michael Bilica
- Scholarship: Terry Cote, Lauren Barlow
- Safety: Terry Cote, Michael Bilica

In closing, I encourage all members of the community to become engaged in the budget process as it moves through its final phases. All budget documents and committee meeting minutes are available for review on the Eastford School webpage, <https://www.eastfordct.org/>.

As always, never hesitate to contact me at [dleake@eastfordct.org](mailto:dleake@eastfordct.org).

## FROM THE EASTFORD INDEPENDENT FIRE COMPANY #1 INC.



May 1, 1951, in its current location.

We rounded out the year with our annual Christmas Party for members and their families with good food, decorations and fun on Dec. 17, and a visit from Santa and his Elf at a pancake breakfast on Dec. 20. Thank you to the town's people who attended the breakfast and left generous donations.

We responded to 28 "911" emergencies in December. A detailed report (by district and incidents) is provided below showing our 2025 mutual aid town assignments.

What is mutual aid? Mutual aid is assistance between fire departments requesting help from other agencies on an incident-by-incident basis. This system allows for the movement of backup resources throughout the

covered areas, across town boundaries to maintain coverage or respond to multiple alarms.

- Ashford: 6
- Bungay: 24
- Chaplin: 1
- Dispatch Error: 2
- Eastford: 209
- Muddy Brook: 1
- Pomfret: 16
- Putnam: 1
- Tolland: 1
- Union: 1
- Vernon Fire: 1
- Woodstock: 1
- Total: 264**

We, a 100-percent volunteer organization, rely on the generous annual monetary support we get from you, our town residents. Finances are tight due to the escalation of costs to maintain the company's function

to meet training and equipment requirements. Through your generosity, you are helping us make a difference in your community and assist us in upholding a feeling of personal satisfaction that we get from helping our mutual aid friends and neighbors 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

Donations can be mailed to EIFC, P.O. Box 333, Eastford, CT 06242. Your donation is crucial in supporting Station "71" and its future.

Thank you to the Eastford Communicator Committee for giving us the opportunity to use the Communicator as a vehicle to inform the town of what we accomplish and offer daily.

*-Submitted by Jeannine Spink*

Neighbors Helping Neighbors: Happy New Year from the EIFC. The year 2025 was a very busy year for the company, responding to 264 "911" emergencies, the highest number recorded in minutes.

The EIFC is steeped in history. We have been in existence since December 1917, a fire department becoming a reality in 1938, incorporated in 1942 with 28 charter members, and the first inhouse meeting on



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**DID YOU KNOW?**

**EASTFORD HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

Did you know that in 1876, the "Eastford Village Improvement Society" gave the village roads the following names?

- County Road North to Main Street
- County Road South to Main Street
- Village to Phoenixville to Elm Street
- Village to Westford Road to School Street
- Village to Woodstock Valley to Pleasant Street

Street

- School to south to Broadway
- School to east to High Street

Please consider showing your support by becoming an Eastford Historical Society member or by honoring us with a donation. Membership forms may be found on the bulletin board in the Eastford Post Office. Thank you! EHS, P.O. Box 350, Eastford, CT 06242.

**FOOD PANTRY UPDATE**

**AUDREY CARABEAU**

The Eastford Food Pantry is located at the Eastford Baptist Church, 133 Union Rd. Please see our hours of operation at the end of this article.

We continue to seek individuals or families who reside in Eastford and are in need of food assistance. If you are in need of food 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 those who are homebound.

Thank you to all who donated food, home goods and money in the month of January. 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. Check donations can be mailed to Eastford Food Pantry, 16 Westford Rd., Eastford, CT 06242.

Donation suggestions include rice, pasta sauce, pasta, tuna, canned fruit, soup, healthy snacks, crackers, mayonnaise. Thank you for your support!

Eastford Food Pantry hours for February are:

- Monday, Feb. 2, 8-11 a.m.
- Wednesday, Feb. 18, 2-4 p.m.



**Congregational Church of Eastford**

4 County Rd, Eastford, CT 06242-0177

cceastford@gmail.com Website: cceastford.org



**Weekly Sunday Service at 10am (Eastford Elementary)**

Pastor Mike Moran and Associate Pastor Evan Burgess

**CUPCAKE WARS**

**Feb 28 from 2 - 3:30 pm**

Held at Eastford Elementary School

<https://cceastford.org/cupcake-wars/>



**SPORTS CAMP**

**July 27 - 31**

**8:30 am - 12:15 pm**

Held at Eastford Elementary School

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## IN THE GARDEN: SUSAN BURNS

To increase the visual and wildlife appeal of the garden throughout the year takes planning. Every week, the garden brings something different to celebrate. Unfortunately, many plantings feature commonplace plants that are meant to look the same year-around with little maintenance.

For example, Boxwood. In order to have seasonal interest, we must strive to choose plants that work across multiple seasons. What this means is having colorful bark in winter, bright foliage in autumn, flowers in spring or summer, fruit any time of the year. You want a plant with more than one season of

interest.

Let's just take one plant as an example: Serviceberry, sometimes called Juneberry (*Amelanchier x grandiflora*). This shrub, or small tree, depending upon how or if you prune it, produces beautiful white flowers in spring. In summer, it has delicious fruit which makes the birds happy. In fall the foliage is brilliant. Choosing a plant like this not only simplifies the art of designing for continued seasonal interest, but also stretches the gardening budget. Ask yourself if you would rather have a flower blooming for two or three weeks in spring or a plant contributing for three-plus months of the year.

In our garden right now, there are loads of red and purple berries brightening the yard. Birds flock to the berries so if you are a bird watcher, you will have an added winter bonus.

Our woods are filled with the native witch hazel (*Hamamelis Virginiana*). We have two types. One flowers in November/December and the other in late winter. The flowers are yellow and come at a time when we are amazed and thrilled.

When we think about seasonal interest, we often put ourselves first. We should remember to consider how it can benefit the critters that live in the garden.

Building a diverse seasonal palette can provide reliable habitat for bugs and other animals. For example, Spicebush (*Lindera benzoin*) offers yellow flowers in spring, yellow foliage in fall and red fruit. In summer, swallowtail butterflies love this shrub because it is the host for Swallowtail larva. You cannot go wrong by adding this plant to your landscape.

Winter is the time to plan for what is to come in our gardens. Make a list of changes you need to make and plants you need to add, as well as those you want to remove because they are no longer satisfying to you.

Happy New Year!

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

February often feels like the heart of winter with busy schedules, long weeks, and the weight of everyday concerns can quietly wear us down. In seasons like this, having a place to gather, reflect, and be encouraged matters.

Each Sunday at Eastford Baptist Church, we gather together because we need truth, hope, community and encouragement. Our Sunday School for all ages meets at 9:15 a.m., followed by our 10:30 a.m. worship service. These times are designed for families, individuals, and anyone

looking for a meaningful start to their week.

During our worship service, we are currently working verse-by-verse through the biblical book of 1 John, a letter written to help people find clarity, assurance, and confidence in what they believe. Its message speaks directly to real life, real questions, and real struggles, reminding us of the hope found in Christ and the importance of walking together in faith.

In addition to Sundays, we offer several mid-week opportunities for connection and growth. Our

“Olympians” kids’ ministry (grades 1–6) and Teen Club (grades 7–12) provide a fun, safe, and Christ-centered environment where young people can build friendships and learn biblical truth. We also offer a discipleship class for adults that is currently exploring the history of the Bible — how it was written, preserved, and passed down to us. In addition, a women’s Bible study meets regularly for encouragement, prayer, and study together.

Whether you are looking for a church home, a place for your

children or teens, or simply a community where you can grow and ask meaningful questions, you are welcome. Our doors are open, and we would be glad to see you this February.

**DID WE MAKE A MISTAKE?**



**Let us know!**

[eastfordnews@gmail.com](mailto:eastfordnews@gmail.com)

## CUPCAKE WARS!

*Sponsored by the Congregational Church of Eastford*

**SATURDAY  
FEBRUARY 28, 2026  
2:00 – 3:30 PM**

Location: Eastford School Gym  
12 Westford Rd, Eastford

*Be a Contestant! Be a Taste Tester!*

Details and entry form at:  
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## 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 Feb. 15.

# CALENDAR

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

## FEBRUARY

*Tuesday, Feb. 3*

Eastford Public Library hosts "Homeschool STEAM Hour" at 10:30 a.m. Please register, as space is limited.

*Thursday, Feb. 5*

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

Ragged Hill Woods Environmental Science Programs at Windham Tolland 4-H Camp, 326 Taft Pond Rd, Pomfret, CT. For Pre-K to Grade 8 students. Feb. 5: How Trees Grow; Feb. 12: Catapults; Feb. 19: Fur, Feathers, Scales & Skin – How It Keeps Animals In! 4:30 p.m. \$20 per session. Call (860) 974-1122 to register. It is winter, but we aren't hibernating at Windham-Tolland 4-H Camp. Check us out!

*Saturday, Feb. 7*

Eastford Public Library hosts "Take Your Child to the Library Day." This will be a drop-in event where we will be highlighting National Bird-Feeding Month. Join us as we create an assortment of homemade bird feeders along with other themed activities.

*Wednesday, Feb. 11*

Eastford Public Library hosts "Maker's Night" from 6 to 7:30 p.m. for teens and adults. Join us

as we use a decoupage technique to turn seashells into beautiful trinket dishes. Please register.

*Thursday, Feb. 12*

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

*Saturday, Feb. 14*

Eastford Public Library hosts a sweet "Valentine's Day Craft" at 10:30 a.m. Please register.

*Sunday, Feb. 15*

Start the winter break off right at Windham-Tolland 4-H Camp with some fun with friends, old and new! Boys and girls, ages 6-12 are welcome to our "Camper Game Day" on Feb. 15 from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Lunch and snack provided with games, crafts and lots more! Bring appropriate clothes to be outdoors for part of the day. Admission is \$25/child. Call (860) 974-3379 to register by Feb. 10 or e-mail [registrar@4hcampct.org](mailto:registrar@4hcampct.org). Windham-Tolland 4-H Camp is located at 326 Taft Pond Rd., Pomfret Center. For more information, call (860) 974-1122 or visit [www.4hcampct.org](http://www.4hcampct.org).

*Monday, Feb. 16*

It may be cold out, but summer will be here before you know it. Join us at Windham-Tolland 4-H Camp for our Open House on Feb. 16 from 1 to 3 p.m., to get your summer schedule organized. Take a tour, meet some of the

staff and register for camp while you are there. Early bird discounts expire at the end of the month, so this is a great opportunity to save your spot before the week you want fills up and you get to save some money too. Windham-Tolland 4-H Camp is located at 326 Taft Pond Rd., Pomfret Center. For more information, call (860) 974-1122 or visit [www.4hcampct.org](http://www.4hcampct.org).

*Thursday, Feb. 19*

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

*Saturday, Feb. 21*

The Quiet Corner Garden Club will host a "Bulb Forcing Workshop for Seniors" at Eastford Public Library at 1 p.m. All bulbs and planting materials will be provided. Please bring a clear glass container of about two to three cups in size if you have one. However, a selection of containers will be available if needed. Please register, as space is limited.

*Tuesday, Feb. 24*

Eastford Public Library hosts "Grim Readers Book Club" at 6 p.m. Presumed Guilty by Scott Turow is on display and available for check out. Come in and join this thrilling and fun group that meets every other month on the fourth Tuesday.

*Thursday, Feb. 26*

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

*Friday, Feb. 27*

Join us at Eastford Baptist Church on Friday, Feb. 27, for a free community painting class from 6-8 p.m., led by Pastor Timothy Howard Jr. in the Family Activity Center. This is a beginner's class, so all ages and skill levels are invited. All materials will be provided. Just sign up, show up, and enjoy!

*Saturday, Feb. 28*

On Saturday, Feb. 28, Eastford Baptist Church will host its 4th Annual Olympians LEGO Derby! The event, which is for kids in Grades 1-6, starts at 1:30 p.m. at the church's Family Activity Center gym, where kids will build their LEGO racecars. Racing heats begin at 2 p.m. The event will also feature snacks, crafts, games, and other activities! Parental pickup at 4 p.m. Join us for a great afternoon of racing action! For more information, e-mail [ebcolympians@gmail.com](mailto:ebcolympians@gmail.com)!

On Saturday, Feb. 28, from 2 to 3:30 p.m., the Congregational Church of Eastford will host its annual Cupcake Wars! The event will be held at the Eastford Elementary School gym, 12 Westford Rd., Eastford. Be a contestant or a taste tester! Details and entry form at [www.cceastford.org/events](http://www.cceastford.org/events). This is a free, community event. Open to all ages.



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## VITAL STATISTICS

### BIRTHS

December: 0

### MARRIAGES

December: 0

### DEATHS

December: 1

## REAL ESTATE TRANSACTIONS

**Nov. 4:** 120 Ashford Rd., Unit 2, \$305,000, Mark D. Sullivan to Timothy J. Beeman

**Nov. 13:** 277 Old Colony Rd., \$111,500, Robert H. Clark to Brak Capital LLC

**Nov. 19:** 140 Old Colony Rd., \$362,500, Mem Investment TLLC to Charles J. Burrows

## POLICE REPORT - TROOP D

During the month of November 2025, Troop D Troopers responded to 38 calls for service in the Town of Eastford. Of these calls for service the most notable are:

- Accidents:** 3
- Investigations:** 2
- Burglaries:** 0
- Larcenies:** 0
- Non-Reportable Matters:** 33

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

- DUIs:** 0
- Traffic Citations:** 0
- Written Warnings:** 7

## UPCOMING PUBLIC MEETINGS

**Tuesday, Feb. 3:** Conservation and Historic Preservation Commission, 7 p.m., Town Office Building; Board of Education Fiscal Committee Budget Meeting, 6 p.m., Eastford Elementary School Library

**Monday, Feb. 9:** Board of Selectmen, 7 p.m., Town Office Building

**Tuesday, Feb. 10:** Planning Commission, 7:30 p.m., Town Office Building

**Wednesday, Feb. 11:** Crystal Pond Park Commission, 6 p.m., Woodstock Town Hall, 415 Route 169, Woodstock, CT 06281.

**Thursday, Feb. 12:** Bowen's Field Committee, 6 p.m., Town Office Building; Board of Education, 6 p.m., Eastford Elementary School Library

**Thursday, Feb. 26:** Library Board of Trustees, 6:30 p.m., Eastford Public Library; Inland Wetlands and Watercourses Commission, 7 p.m., Town Office Building

## CCE CHRISTMAS PAGEANT DELIGHTS



**EASTFORD** — On Sunday, Dec. 21, the Congregational Church of Eastford held its annual Christmas Pageant during their worship service at Eastford Elementary School. The program celebrated the birth of Jesus four days before Christmas. *Adam Minor photos*



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Our next issue will be published on:

**March 1**

Please send all submissions to [eastfordnews@gmail.com](mailto:eastfordnews@gmail.com) by:

**Feb. 15**

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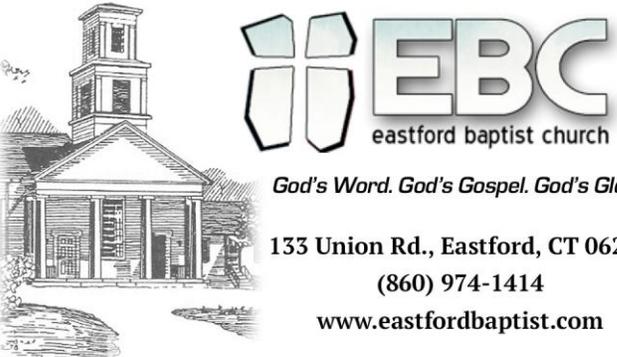


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### WHAT'S GOING ON AT THE EASTFORD PUBLIC LIBRARY? KATIE BALL



The library is more than just books! Our hope is to offer the community a place to take a pause from hectic schedules and connect with one another. Please stop in, we'd love to see you.

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](mailto:eastfordpublib@gmail.com). Upcoming events and programs can be seen on the town page, on social media, or in the Calendar section of this month's Communicator. If you haven't yet, please follow Eastford Public Library on Facebook and/or Instagram @eastfordpubliclibrary.

*Anna Moore during the library's New Year's Eve Celebration, "Reach for the Stars." Courtesy photo*

### Do you have:

- Photos?
- Information?
- Story leads?
- Events to promote?
- Local sports results?
- Press releases?

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LOCAL NEWS SINCE 1992

After 46 rewarding years in the real estate profession, I have announced my retirement. It has been an honor to serve you, help you find homes and sell your homes, and build relationships that have meant so much to me throughout my career.

I am deeply grateful for every client, colleague, and friend who has trusted me along the way. Your confidence and loyalty have been the foundation of my career, and I carry that gratitude with me as I step back from day-to-day operations.

I am proud to share that the agency will be transitioning to the leadership of my daughter-in-law, Amy Vinal. She brings a strong work ethic, a genuine passion for serving clients, and a fresh vision for the future. Having worked closely with our team and our community, she understands the values that built this agency and is committed to carrying them forward.

This transition represents not just a change in leadership, but the continuation of a family legacy built on integrity, dedication, and personal connection. I have complete confidence that she will lead the agency with the same care and commitment that has guided us for nearly half a century.



*With sincere gratitude,  
Effie Vinal*



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FROM THE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF EASTFORD

EVAN BURGESS

Every February, our culture observes Valentine’s Day, a day set apart to celebrate love. However, if you take a look at how our culture celebrates this holiday, it highlights a certain kind of love — the fiery red, heart-shaped, romantic kind of love — the kind of love we see depicted in soap operas and rom-coms, where lovers go to extreme ends to show their devotion. This is the kind of love Valentine’s Day highlights.

This sort of love feels good. I have experienced the thrill of this explosive love towards another, and I’d be willing to bet you have as well. I am by no means trying to knock romance, as I probably wouldn’t be married without it. It is where most romantic relationships begin!

Nevertheless, long-lasting relationships do not remain in this explosive phase of love, despite what today’s romance novels and films might suggest. In a lot of ways, our culture’s

picture of love is restricted to and synonymous with this romantic love, placing unrealistic expectations on our relationships to always be explosive and exciting. And when they’re not, we move on, in search of the next jolt of romance.

I think many of us can agree our culture isn’t painting an honest picture of what real love truly looks like. Deep down, we know real love is more than this.

As a pastor, I have had the wonderful privilege of officiating a handful of weddings. Leading up to the ceremonies, I meet with each couple to decide details, logistics, and to go over their vows. Standard wedding vows include promises to love and cherish each other “for better or for worse, for richer or for poorer, in sickness and in health, till death do us part.” We’ve all heard these before.

The truth is, life isn’t always romantic. We get sick unexpectedly. We hit hard times.

Wedding vows recognize this reality. Romantic love isn’t what you need when life goes sideways. A different kind of love is required. A steadier, quieter kind of love.

Perhaps you’re rolling into this new year a little worse for wear. You’re tired and hurting. Maybe the explosive nature of a romantic relationship has blown up your life. I’d like to offer you something better than a heart-shaped sugar rock. I’d like to invite you to consider where I’ve found a bottomless source of real and steady love.

There is a famous passage in the Bible quoted very often at weddings that speaks of this real love. It defines love in a myriad of ways, but one aspect it reiterates is how love endures. “Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends.” Where does this love come from, and how can you experience it?

Well, I’ll be straight forward. This love is found in Jesus.

Depending on who you are, dear reader, this may cause you to either roll your eyes, laugh, or nod in agreement. When I first heard it stated that a man who lived 2,000 years ago had something to offer me, it left me more confused than anything else, until I experienced it myself. Jesus isn’t as explosive or alluring as what our culture is trying to sell you, but I’ve found His to be the most genuine, steady, and compelling.

If you’d like to learn more, I’d invite you to either come visit our church (10 a.m. every Sunday at the Eastford Elementary School), or reach out to me (evan.cceastford@gmail.com). And happy Valentine’s Day! May our town be a place where the explosion of romantic love stirs up more of the real, quiet love we all need.



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# Bulldogs boys' team celebrates positives as season concludes

## HUTCHINGS TOUTS 'HEART AND EFFORT' AS PROGRAM LOOKS TO FUTURE

BY ADAM MINOR  
MANAGING EDITOR

EASTFORD — The Eastford Bulldogs boys' basketball season was a story of ups and downs.

Getting off to a fast 2-1 start with key wins against Wheeler and Parish Hill in December, it looked as though the Bulldogs were on a clear path to the playoffs. However, Eastford would not see another victory, as they finished the season on a seven-game losing streak at 2-8, missing the playoffs.

Despite the finish, there was much to celebrate this year, as the Bulldogs won their first game in three years in December, a good start to what will hopefully be a bright future for the program, according to Head Coach Zach Hutchings.

"The boys came together this year for the best season we have had since 2020," Hutchings said. "What we lacked in talent, we made up for in heart and effort. We have a great group of fifth, sixth, and seventh graders that I'm excited to see come back next year."

Hutchings added he was excited to see the upcoming talent on the junior varsity (JV) squad, and looked forward to developing their skills.

"The JV squad was young and new to basketball, but they showed heart and hustle that guarantees their success as they learn the game," he said.

The Bulldogs' leading scorer this year was eighth grader Callum St. John, who emerged as a leader last year, and continued his development this season, scoring at least 123 total points this season (not counting points scored against Wheeler on Jan. 6, a game for which we could not verify statistics), accounting for a scoring rate of 13.6 points per game.

"Callum is the best player I have had the pleasure of coaching, and is one of — if not the — best player in eighth grade in our entire league this year," Hutchings said. "While his basketball skills are impressive,



The 2025-26 Eastford Bulldogs boys' varsity team. Top row, from left, Head Coach Zach Hutchings, Callum St. John, Charlie Ellsworth, Sylas Platt, Ryan Collard, and Assistant Coach Chris St. John. Bottom row, from left, Logan Gillett, Blake Gilbert, Trey Hutchings, Christian Anderson, and Jackson Ritter. Adam Minor photo

his growth as a leader on and off the court is what shined to me."

Blake Gilbert (35 points) and Ryan Collard (15 points) are also eighth graders who have played their last games in an Eastford uniform. Hutchings praised Gilbert as his pick for "most improved player."

"Blake was the most improved player this year and his defensive contributions, and sharp shooting, were imperative to the wins we got this season," he said, adding that Collard, as well as eighth grader Aiden Abbamonte were "amazing additions" to the team as well.

"[Collard and Abbamonte] showed tremendous effort and contagious, positive attitudes," Hutchings said. "The whole team wishes they had played more than one year."

Seventh graders Charlie Ellsworth (78 points), Sylas Platt (69 points), and Jackson Ritter (33 points) also made significant contributions to the Bulldogs' scoring attack, which will be needed as they emerge as the team's leaders in the 2026-27

season.

With Callum St. John's departure from the team also means the departure of Callum's father, Chris, as the team's assistant coach, who has been with the team for the past three years.

"Chris' contributions to the kids' basketball fundamentals have been a huge part of any successes we have achieved over his time with us," Hutchings said. "Chris has donated his time and knowledge in a kind and positive way that I have seen several kids benefit from, both on and off the court. His insight has helped me grow as a coach and as a person. He will be missed. Thank you, Chris."

See below for a season schedule recap, as well as points totals. Turn to page 17 for more photos from the season!

### FINAL SEASON RESULTS

- Thursday, Dec. 4: vs. St. James, L, 35-43
- Monday, Dec. 8: vs. Parish Hill, W, 43-33

- Thursday, Dec. 11: vs. Wheeler, W, 45-31
- Tuesday, Dec. 16: vs. Pomfret, L, 22-43
- Tuesday, Jan. 6: @ Wheeler, L, 28-55
- Thursday, Jan. 8: @ Pomfret, L, 43-59
- Monday, Jan. 12: @ Ashford, L, 40-51
- Wednesday, Jan. 14: vs. Ashford, L, 32-53
- Thursday, Jan. 15: @ St. James, L, 55-66
- Tuesday, Jan. 20: @ Parish Hill, L, 41-61

### FINAL SCORING TOTALS\*

Callum St. John: 123  
Charlie Ellsworth: 78  
Sylas Platt: 69  
Blake Gilbert: 35  
Jackson Ritter: 33  
Ryan Collard: 15  
Trey Hutchings: 3

\*Scoring statistics do not include points scored during game against Wheeler on Jan. 6 — statistics were not made available for this game.

# Highlights from the Bulldogs boys' basketball season



Syllas Platt, left, and Charlie Ellsworth prepare to defend an inbounds play against Wheeler on Dec. 11.

Coach Hutchings rallies his team during a timeout in their victory over Wheeler Dec. 11.



Callum St. John and Blake Gilbert play defense against Ashford on Jan. 14.



The Bulldogs celebrate their first win of the season against Parish Hill Dec. 8.



Jackson Ritter, middle, with Syllas Platt and Callum St. John behind him, prepare on defense during their game against Ashford on Jan. 14.

Adam Minor photos

# Bulldogs girls' team celebrates fresh start with 2025-26 campaign

## BARLOW: DESPITE WINLESS SEASON, TEAM 'DEMONSTRATED TREMENDOUS GROWTH'

BY ADAM MINOR  
MANAGING EDITOR

EASTFORD — If the 2025-26 Eastford Bulldogs season could be summed up in two words, they would probably be, “fresh start.”

Despite a winless record (0-10) for this year's girls' team, it was a time of growth for a team that hadn't existed for six years.

“The girls demonstrated tremendous growth as a team throughout the season,” Barlow said. “Many of the teams we faced commented on their grit and exemplary sportsmanship.”

Eastford faced off in two games apiece against Parish Hill, Wheeler, Pomfret, Ashford, and St. James, losing all 10 games. Despite the results, Barlow noted that this team was essentially starting from scratch in a league that featured teams with players with tons more experience playing together.

“It is important to note that this was our first girls' team since 2020,” she said. “In contrast, many opposing schools have groups of players who have competed together for years and already established strong camaraderie — something our team is just beginning to build. Several of our players were new to basketball, making their progress all the more impressive.”

One advantage the Bulldogs can take from this season is the fact that this squad featured no graduating eighth graders, which means each player (if they choose to do so) will be eligible to return for another run next year.

Seventh graders Mackenzie



The 2025-26 Eastford Bulldogs varsity girls' basketball team. From left, Assistant Coach David Platt, Emma-Lynn Salony, Zoë Labonte, Alina Platt, Chloe Minor, Aiyana Reed, Mackenzie Lathrop, Olivia DePercio, Georgia Barlow, and Head Coach Jennifer Barlow. Adam Minor photo

Lathrop (34) and Olivia DePercio (31) emerged as the team's scoring leaders this season, something Barlow hopes will bring momentum into next season as the girls continue to develop their skills.

“Looking ahead, we are in a strong position. We have no eighth graders, so while we may welcome new fifth graders next year, the core of the team will return with valuable experience, a deeper understanding of the game, and a stronger sense of teamwork.”

As the Bulldogs close the book on this season, Barlow expressed her gratitude for her players.

“Although basketball is not my primary sport, it has been a

genuine pleasure to get to know these athletes, learn the game alongside them, and watch their confidence and skills grow,” she said. “Great job, Bulldog ladies.”

See below for a season schedule recap, as well as points totals. Turn to page 19 for more photos from the season!

### FINAL SEASON RESULTS

- Thursday, Dec. 4: @ St. James, L, 4-45
- Monday, Dec. 8: vs. Parish Hill, L, 6-57
- Thursday, Dec. 11: @ Wheeler, L, 16-50
- Tuesday, Dec. 16: @ Pomfret, L, 14-49
- Thursday, Dec. 18: @ Ashford,

- L, 2-73
- Tuesday, Jan. 6: vs. Wheeler, L, 16-45
- Thursday, Jan. 8: vs. Pomfret, L, 10-47
- Monday, Jan. 12: vs. Ashford, L, 7-66
- Thursday, Jan. 15: vs. St. James, L, 8-55
- Tuesday, Jan. 20: vs. Parish Hill, L, 7-52

### FINAL SCORING TOTALS

Mackenzie Lathrop: 34  
Olivia DePercio: 31  
Zoë Labonte: 8  
Emma-Lynn Salony: 8  
Georgia Barlow: 4  
Aiyana Reed: 4  
Chloe Minor: 1



The 2025-26 Bulldogs girls' junior varsity team. From left, Keeley Alimandi, Lily Krasnecky, Jocelyn Hillman, Hayleigh Wooding, Peyton Delay, Rory Ball, Harper St. Lawrence, Scarlett Haynes, and Corinne Ellsworth. Adam Minor photo



Olivia DePercio brings the ball up the court and drives against Wheeler on Jan. 6. Adam Minor photo

# Highlights from the Bulldogs girls' basketball season



Zoë Labonte brings the ball up the court against St. James on Dec. 4.



Mackenzie Lathrop takes a defensive position against Ashford on Dec. 18.



The Bulldogs stack up on an inbounds play against Pomfret on Dec. 16.



Chloe Minor looks to jump start the Bulldogs offense against Parish Hill on Jan. 20.



Mackenzie Lathrop looks to pass the ball against St. James on Jan. 15.

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