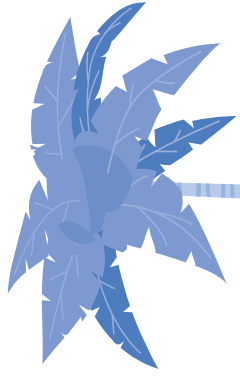


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Looking Up:

Conversations with a Beech Tree

By Bob Grindle

How does one assuage the grief of watching a large and energetic family gradually diminish at its core?

There is a beech tree sapling growing along the path to the garden. I had never noticed it and suddenly, a few days ago; there it was: an eye-catching cascade of glowing, layered and deeply yellow-orange, almost bronze leaves rising up several feet into a rather tangled and otherwise colorless edge of the woods. I am prone to getting distracted by things that catch my eye...my sense of purpose often lays dormant when curiosity kicks in...so, parking my compost-pile-bound wheelbarrow full of wood shavings and barnyard manure, I made my way through the underbrush for a closer look, jumped up onto a nearby flat, refrigerator-sized boulder a few yards away, sat down and leaned back against the solid white trunk of a towering paper-bark birch that had grown partially over one end of the rock.

How did this lone beech tree get here I wondered? There are no mature beeches on this property, so it must have sprouted from a beechnut brought by one of the two dozen or so species of native mammals and birds that prize beech tree seeds...a bit of an immigrant to this corner of the hillside, carried by the random currents of a natural world that is never at rest. I smiled to think of my own path to eastern Connecticut—London to Missouri to Indiana to Texas to Oregon to Hampton—and felt an affinity with this solitary beech sapling despite my certainty that homo sapien wisdom had more to do with my journey than random currents...ah, the vanity of human beings. Somewhere nearby, perhaps here on Clark Hill; perhaps in close-at-hand Goodwin forest, there is a mature American

beech tree whose seed has become this...um, maybe 10 year old tree that, if those same random currents favor it, could live a few centuries. Before jumping down from my comfortable perch I decide we should clear the area around this promising young addition to the woodland. In another two or three decades this spindly ten footer could mature into a 40 foot tree that begins producing its own offspring, and that thought carries me back to a funeral less than a week ago for the oldest of my remaining sisters.

Why is it that reaching my hand out to caress the cold, hard, smooth bark of this simple tree I can feel somehow connected to childhood memories of a family that once was 9 members strong and growing, but now is down to 4...and connected to that never resting natural world that continuously coaches our senses that: life goes on; that models the sometimes difficult to accept fact that loss is an essential part of living and whispers to the quiet reaches of our being that it is the very certainty of this loss that gives richness and value to life. Someone once said that: 'the goal is not to live forever, but to leave something that will.' Still holding the tiny trunk of this lone beech sapling, I smile to think of the web of connections beneath the soil that have evolved to support and nurture its growth and I know the same is true of each of our families.

We may struggle with loss, and sometimes with the cruelty of it, but loss does not define life on planet

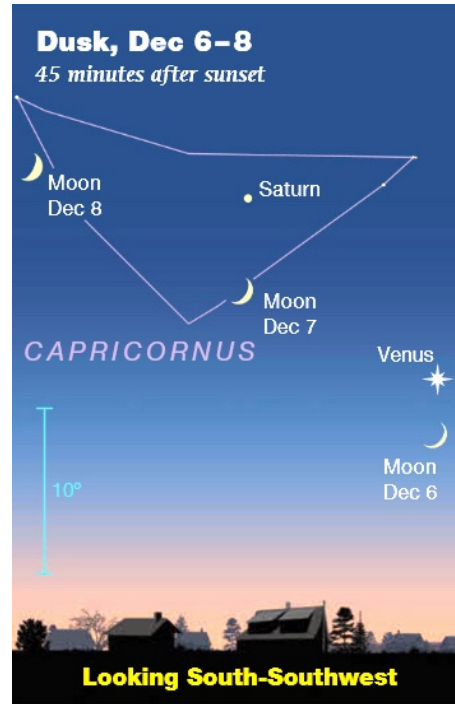
Earth, and certainly it doesn't define our species. Walking back to the wheel barrow I think of my family that once was 9 members strong and now is more than 50. We simply cannot allow loss to define the moment. The path back to the house passes several giant red oaks that succumbed to the ravages of drought and insect damage, but this year's forest floor is littered with sprouting acorns. Life does go on. Looking up into the cold, now darkening sky of our lonely planet, I understand that life is a fighter. The lights

of the house are welcoming and as Venus peeks over the western horizon I give it a neighborly nod.

Early in the coming month on Monday, December 6th, the two day old waxing crescent Moon—lit only by sunlight reflected onto it from Earth—passes barely below Venus as it sets into the southwestern sky just after 5 pm. A day later it passes below Saturn then the next day just near Jupiter, and for the entire month this line of Venus-Saturn-Jupiter, from the low southwestern sky to the middle southern sky will grace the early evening. Not everything in December happens at dusk though, and by mid-evening at mid-month the Geminid meteor shower revisits the night sky.

Drat! The nearly full Moon of the night of Monday, December 13th into the wee hours of Tuesday morning the 14th will wash out much of the

show, unless of course, you work third shift, or deliver the morning paper, or get up really early to head in to work, or maybe you just can't sleep; in that case around 3 am, when the Moon has set into the dark western horizon the Geminid meteor shower will be fully visible in Gemini, high in the western sky. The Geminids are thought to be the only meteor shower that is intensifying every year, so a half hour or so spent outside—bundled up, with something warming to drink of course—might be nicely rewarded. May you all weather the coming season of short days and snowflakes with whatever totem or source of warmth brings you comfort and joy.



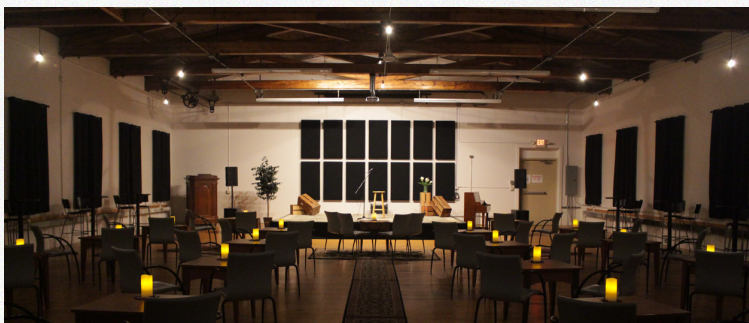
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On our cover-

I found this photo at Dreamstime, a photo service I occasionally use. The photographer's caption: *A peaceful happy senior couple embracing in a park.*

If there ever was a time for peace and an embrace, it is now. T. King

Peaceful © Wavebreakmedia Ltd | Dreamstime.com

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The Purpose of Neighbors:

- To encourage reading
- To provide a place where ideas, writing, artwork and photographs of area residents can be shared
- To encourage people to get involved in their communities
- To begin to solve national and global problems on a local basis
- To provide useful information
- To serve the inhabitants and environment of our region

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Bioneers Continues to Dazzle

By Loretta Wrobel



November 11th-13th the Bioneers held their annual conference virtually, just as they had last year.

Again, the organizers came up with brilliant and pioneering individuals who are making a profound impact on the planet. The Bioneers have a special talent for collecting people from different cultures, who are doing the work of restoring our resources, fighting racism, confronting inequalities, and rearranging how we think, operate, and interact to make our world better. Indeed, these presenters are using all their skills and energy to save our planet.

Listening to the keynote speakers was a shot in the arm and a hug to the heart. It gave me a sense that we as humans are turning things around. We do have the knowledge to repair and restore. Much of that expertise is found within Indigenous Peoples. These cultures are offering their wisdom to assist us in transforming our unsustainable culture, where wealth becomes more concentrated among fewer people and the earth is disrespected into a world of greater collective sharing and honoring our earth.

Deanna Van Buren is the co-founder of Designing Justice + Designing Spaces, in Oakland, CA. She is an architect who asks what values and beliefs we are manifesting. In examining mass incarceration, she understood that the buildings reflected racism, patriarchy, classism and gross inequalities. This she calls "punitive architecture." What do we build when our beliefs uphold Restorative Justice? She challenges us to use our imaginations to design and build places that provide more support for prisoners, such as spaces for peacemaking, assistance in reentry, and allowing for community involvement. She has worked with prisoners to help design more open, healing, and empowering environments. One example is mobile classrooms that provide opportunities for gathering, health and wellness, community interactions, and learning. She asks us to visualize a justice system that reflects love and caring. This young woman is using her ideas, beliefs, and imagination to create architecture that is more cost-effective and promotes health and wellness. Her focus is on Restorative Justice, community building, and housing for those who are coming out of incarceration. She is filled with hope and energy as she addresses the root causes of mass incarceration and develops ingenious and workable solutions!

Dr. Rupa Marya is a revolutionary in the field of medicine. She constructed the concept of "deep medicine." She blames the colonial capitalist cosmology for creating toxic environments. She discusses systems' failure and the world responding by fire. The body's response to disease is inflammation. Dr. Marya talks about our world on fire with the forests burning and our planet heating up. She believes that in order to heal, we must create a culture of caring. This is the opposite of our capitalist culture that concentrates wealth and encourages separation. We cannot heal alone. When medicine focuses on individual choices to promote healing, it misses the root cause of disease, which is the toxic ecozone we exist in. Cells age prematurely and are damaged by a relentless unhealthy environment. Survival depends on healing our environment. Indigenous People possess the wisdom to repair and heal our earth. Taking care of the land and respecting the earth are fundamental tools of healing. The culture of First Peoples embodies those principles that are not compatible

with colonial capitalist cosmology. Healthy systems need to include all people and not leave anyone out. When we adjust our lives for caring and respect, we move towards economies of care that rehabilitate the earth. Thus, the earth body becomes a healthy, thriving environment that reduces inflammation. A body responds to sickness by inflammation and swelling. These responses to disease are presently manifesting in our planet with successive heat waves, forests burning all over the world, and increasingly damaging flooding. Rupa says this is our planet's attempt to heal and cleanse. When healing materializes, the inflamed response stops. Imagine if all our medical, social, and political systems were to accept the correct diagnosis of colonial capitalist cosmology, and work to eradicate this faulty and deadly system, what a different world it would be! Dr Rupa Marya and Raj Patel coauthored the book *Inflamed--Deep Medicine and the Anatomy of Injustice*. I encourage you to check it out.

Rupa Marya is faculty advisor to the Do No Harm Coalition. This coalition is an organization of healers, health workers, and activists focused on those harmed by state-sanctioned violence. Health is a human right. Do No Harm was founded in 2016 in response to police violence. Rupa with Raj founded Deep Medicine Circle. This group is dedicated to healing the wounds of colonialism through food, medicine, story, and learning. Their focus is on creating a culture of care that corrects the relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. The group's basic principle is care for the earth and care for the people. In addition to these life-affirming organizations, this activist is a singer in a musical group called Rupa and the April Fishes, and they perform internationally.

As you can understand from the examples of these two young women, this Bioneers conference was packed with luminous voices guiding us to ingenious solutions to what seem like unmanageable and overwhelming issues. Participating in this conference left me filled with energy, passion, and motivation to pick up the threads that all of these forward-thinking individuals are throwing out to all of us. It is more than a lifeline; it is a blueprint for us to join with these radical thinkers and doers, and save not only ourselves, but all of life on our planet. We just need to pay attention and not be distracted by the wealthy few who are only interested in increasing their bank accounts.

There were many others that captured my heart, such as Suzanne Simard, Professor of Forest Ecology, who talked about the mother trees and how much carbon they store and how resistant they are to fire. They are the old wisdom keepers. Julian Brave Noisecat, director of Green New Deal Strategy at Data for Progress, who is learning his native language and explaining how willing his people are to reach out and share their wisdom with non-Indigenous peoples. Anne Bilke along with her husband David Montgomery are sharing their knowledge about soil health and how regenerative agriculture will bring back healthy, nutritious plants that keep us alive and vigorous.

I pray that I have awakened your curiosity to visit the Bioneers web site (Bioneers.org) and view the mountain of actions and successes so many people are engaged in. I encourage you to read a few of the books suggested, and talk with your friends and coworkers about what really is happening on our planet. We will all benefit the more involved and engaged we are in practicing deep medicine and following the wisdom of Indigenous Peoples. Don't ingest the colonial capitalist cosmology. It is not for you. There is enough for all on this planet, when we commit to sharing and caring.

Crossroads: In Celebration of the Earth offers an Exciting Opportunity for Actors, Singers, Rappers, Musicians and Dancers to Make a Difference

Submitted by Carol Macy

Theatre director and teaching artist Carol Macy was recently awarded a grant from the CT Office of the Arts to develop and direct a show in the Willimantic community with a focus on the climate crisis. This show is entitled *Crossroads: In Celebration of the Earth* and rehearsals will begin in earnest on Monday and Thursday evenings beginning in January. Auditions were previously held on November 16th and 18th, but there were community members who

were not able to attend either audition. Because of that, Carol wants to let the community know that interested actors, singers, musicians and dancers can reach Carol at macycje@gmail.com to gain access to the list of future rehearsals in November and December, with regular rehearsals beginning on Mondays and Thursdays in January 2022.

Performances will be held in Willimantic this April to celebrate Earth Day. Please contact Carol if you are interested in becoming a part of this production. If you would like

to be involved, but do not wish to be onstage, contact Carol as well. This performance will include short scripted plays, dramatized poetry, dance, singing, and live music. We would love to hear from you!

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Willimantic, Now and Then:

Back to the Future? Shop, Loiter (and laugh) in Willimantic!

By Mark Svetz

I was at the Willimantic Food Co-op early the other morning when my friend Chad Dunnack said “I’ve got something for you.” I was intrigued. Chad always has cool things. I had no idea, however, that he was about to present me with a piece of my personal history.



It was before dawn when I ran into Chad. Sarah and I were there delivering rye bread from the bakery in Deep River. We pick it up at Rein’s Deli in Vernon, which is the closest it gets delivered to Willimantic. But that’s not what I want to talk about. I want to talk about shopping and loitering in Willimantic. That’s what was printed on a bunch of pins in the box Chad showed me: “SHOP and LOITER in Willimantic.”

“Somebody gave me one of these and I made some more. I thought you might know something about them,” Chad told me as he opened the cool metal tea box with the pins inside. Did I know something about it? Chad had unearthed a chapter of my past with those pins.

In the late 80s and 90s, Willimantic, like many places in the US and around the world, was experiencing a brisk drug trade. The local newspaper, the police and town officials were outdoing each other to paint a picture of Willimantic as, in the words of a Chronicle editorial, a “violence-plagued drug arcade.” As a reality check after that particular editorial, I asked then Police Chief Milton King how many reports of violent felonies there had been in the downtown area over the last year. I wasn’t surprised to learn there had been only one instance. One instance of violent crime reported in a year. Not much of an arcade.

My partner Tony Clark and I ran a syringe exchange program in Willimantic. At the time, the purchase and possession of hypodermic syringes was illegal without a prescription. The resulting scarcity of needles was a major factor in the spread of HIV/AIDS. During the 80s, we watched as people we knew got sick from this new disease. We were hearing about needle exchange programs, mostly illegal, and after talking it over, Tony and I decided we could do that. It was a momentous decision.

This reminds me of a story a former boss told me about difference between involvement and commitment. “Think of breakfast,” she told me. “The hen is involved. The pig is committed.” Well, Tony and I were committed. Our exchange was just us, two men with time on our hands, getting needles and making arrangements with drug users to trade the clean ones for dirty ones. We took many thousands of dirty needles out of circulation, saving many lives, we believed. We were arrested half a dozen times, threatened with fines and even jail.

We were caught up in the drug war. More arrests, stiffer penalties, lives disrupted. That was the official response to everything in those days, it seemed. Part of

Willimantic’s response was via a local anti-loitering ordinance. People who lived on Main Street, most notably the Hotel Hooker, were seen by many as threatening and disruptive to commerce. Of course, in the drug war mentality of the times, everyone hanging out on the street was thought to be a “drug dealer.” Most anti-loitering ordinances around the country were considered to be unconstitutional, since loitering means doing nothing, hence, committing no crimes.

Tony and I, in our self-appointed knight errantry, decided to sue the town to stop enforcement of this ordinance. We took it personally because we liked to hang out so much. Tony did the research. I typed up the papers. We won a temporary injunction against the ordinance. The Connecticut Civil Liberties Union generously took over the case and won a permanent injunction.

Somewhere in there Kathleen Clark had pins made that said “Shop and Loiter,” and we had a lot of fun with this informal campaign to patronize downtown businesses. We saw quite a few people wearing the pins, and I could always find somebody to hang out with, maybe find out what was going on. Loitering is, after all, what a downtown is for. Doesn’t everybody like to hang out for a minute, shoot the breeze with a friend, on the way to the Post Office? Why else would we have benches?



Chad’s box of memories.

Photo by Mark Svetz.

Many of us in those days were involved in various efforts to revitalize the downtown shopping area. The Eastbrook Mall had, in the past decade and a half, taken businesses and shoppers off Main Street. Downtowns were suffering all over. We were appalled that these shockingly inaccurate pictures were being painted when we were trying to bring people back downtown. That, I believe was the reason for the Shop and Loiter “campaign.” Laughing at ourselves has always brought Willimantic together. The truth is, we just loved Willimantic. We enjoyed the restaurants. We drank at the pubs. Most of all we loved the



Shop and Loiter at the new parking garage in Willimantic.

Photo by Mark Svetz.

people of Willimantic, and we wanted everybody to enjoy some of the life we loved here.

This story continued a few years ago, on a hot Sunday in August, when a graduate student from Oakland, California wandered into our shop on Church Street. He was friendly and wanted to talk about Willimantic. You see, he had been warned during his orientation at the University of Connecticut, to stay away from Willimantic because it wasn’t safe. Being from Oakland, he told us, he thought he might chance it. We had a good laugh about the dangers lurking in the deserted streets of the city around us.

Recently, I was delighted to read that Willimantic was cited as number 21 in the top 25 safest college towns in the nation. No other college town in Connecticut made the list. The people of Willimantic, it seems, keep doing things right right, while everyone around us, including our own leaders, are stuck with a bad image.

Meanwhile, on the side of our new parking garage there are signs posted that reads: “NO LOITERING/ Violators will be prosecuted to the full extent of the law.” These signs are posted right behind a couple of benches thoughtfully placed for shoppers to relax and (dare I say?) loiter. I love that we still have the ability to laugh at ourselves. Don’t we?

Mark Svetz has been a journalist, activist, teacher and self-appointed knight errant in Willimantic for the last 45 years... and counting! You can read more of Mark’s writing at www.WillimanticToday.wordpress.com

Where Are All the Aliens?

By Bob Lorentson

The renowned physicist Enrico Fermi posed this question in 1950, following his premise that because the galaxy is very old and very large, with hundreds of billions of stars and planets, we should be seeing evidence of advanced civilizations. The question came to be known as the Fermi paradox. And in today’s strange, alien-haunted world, it should be noted that a paradox beats a full house. Especially when the players are only playing with half a deck.

Despite all the problems we have on earth with such things as global warming, a pandemic, and scientists who tell us things we don’t want to hear, the majority of us do want to hear more about space aliens. The majority, in fact, believe that aliens have either been here before, are here now, or are in the planning stages for a surprise visit. Or invasion. This has led to much amateur speculation about alien capabilities and motivations, which is much like speculating on the capabilities and motivations of many of our own species, only with less of a need for bodyguards and lawyers. Fortunately for all of us however, there are

professional speculators.

The Search for Extra-Terrestrial Intelligence, or SETI, as various investigations have been called, began in earnest in 1960 when Frank Drake, an astronomer from Cornell University, employed the large radio telescope at Green Bank, West Virginia in the hopes of tuning in to alien radio signals. Anything, he likely reasoned, had to be better than Doo Wop music. Nothing of interest was found, but his excuse that space is big did trigger an interest in excuses that continues to this day. And they only got bigger and better, in keeping with the ever bigger and better telescopes, promises, and egos of the new SETI projects. (As a side note, the 2021 release of the long awaited U.S. National Intelligence Report on UFOs also reported nothing of interest, but it was reassuring to see that swamp gas hasn’t lost its ability to fool us.)

At this point in the search, perhaps it’s time we took a step back and asked a different key question, notably, why are the aliens making us look like fools? Although I’m not a professional speculator like those noted above, in some circles I am considered a professional excuse maker, unlike those noted above. So as the aliens aren’t

around to either defend themselves or abduct me, I’d like to offer some excuses on their behalf as to why they might not be making themselves more readily discoverable.

The aliens discovered long ago that we didn’t need any help in looking like fools, and are putting their resources to better use elsewhere.

After seeing what happened on other worlds, the aliens adopted policies that prohibit them from contacting or interfering with primitive indigenous cultures. They’ve noted that once an individual sees a ray gun, everybody wants one, and before you know it whole cultures simply disappeared, leaving only a legacy of ray gun rights legislation.

The aliens became too intelligent for their own good and destroyed themselves through pollution, planetary warming, weapons of mass destruction, and deadly diseases they figured they could outsmart. The warnings they sent before they went extinct were in fact received by National Intelligence Agencies, who promptly marked them as spam and

deleted them.

Alien messages aren’t received because aliens communicate in neutrino signals while we listen in radio waves. On earth, this can be compared to how the genders communicate.

The aliens realized that the speed of light is an effective barrier to space exploration, and are concentrating their resources at home to improve the lives of all aliens. The laughter from other civilizations has yet to reach them.

The aliens are waiting to make a grand entrance at the next July 2 UFO Day celebration.

The aliens actually were here, and were, in fact, the originators of Doo Wop music. Mission accomplished, they left to spread the joy of singing nonsense syllables in harmony to other worlds.

For more of Bob’s writing, check out his new book of essays on Amazon titled “Hold the Apocalypse - Pass Me a Scientist Please,” and follow his blog at www.bobllorentson.com.

CT Green Energy News

Submitted by Peter Millman



Welcome to the CT Green Energy News, a weekly digest of stories that has been condensed into a monthly format for *Neighbors* readers. To read the full stories online, just Google the titles below. You can also subscribe to the free weekly email newsletter by contacting Peter Millman at peter.millman7@gmail.com.

News and events for advocates of clean energy, energy efficiency, and climate action at the state and local levels, focusing on Connecticut. Brought to you by People's Action for Clean Energy (PACE) and Eastern CT Green Action (ECA).

Killingly power plant dealt a major setback as ISO-NE abandons plans

CT Mirror. "In a statement, an ISO-NE spokesman explained its action this way: 'Any new resource acquiring a capacity supply obligation is required to meet several development milestones, including, among other things, financing, permitting, major equipment orders, and commercial operation. Developers who face delays in meeting milestone deadlines have the ability to find other resources to cover their obligations for up to two years. After these two years, if a project is still unable to meet their milestone deadlines, the ISO has the right to seek to terminate of the resource's obligation through a filing with the Commission. The ISO is exercising this right with regard to the Killingly Energy Center.'"

Northeast grid rules could make or break clean energy

E&E News. "States in New England have long been frustrated by what they describe as a mismatch between their own clean energy goals and the rules set by ISO New England, which oversees the six-state power grid with the primary goal of electric reliability. Five New England states have established goals to achieve 100 percent clean power, and several have ambitious plans to scale up electric vehicles and electric heating systems. Rules within the wholesale power market, which covers Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island and Vermont, have sometimes worked against those targets, including by favoring natural gas and overestimating the cost of renewables, according to observers."

Why Haven't More Connecticut Towns Adopted EV Fleets?

Governing. " 'Aside from the fact that it helps to reduce the carbon footprint, it's good for the next generation coming along, it's good for the environment — those are all plus things. But if you want to get very parochial about it, they don't need servicing like other vehicles do. Their operating costs are much lower.' But despite the shift toward electric vehicles in some towns and cities, others are far from giving up their dependency on gasoline. The vast majority of Connecticut municipalities have not purchased electric vehicles, whether due to concern about costs, doubts about their practicality or simply because they haven't gotten around to it."

Letters and Emails

Dear *Neighbors*,

This is a note of appreciation for your paper.

Mark Svetz's remembrance in your November issue of his first bicycle took me back to my own first bike while at the same time offering some time-travel through Willimantic — Bud's, construction of the Route 6 bypass, creation of the rails-to-trails walkway out to Mackey's — reminders of a sort that help stitch together a community across our collective memory.

In contrast, Brenda Buchbinder's letter concerning the impending loss of Windham Community Memorial Hospital's Maternity Unit was deeply disturbing. I wish I had read this issue of *Neighbors* earlier and known that history in time to attend the public forum. The cut is

short-sighted and inhumane. It's likely to cost the lives of some infants and mothers, and deals a body-blow to Willimantic as a community and especially to its most marginalized and vulnerable citizens. Buchbinder points out the questionable economics of the cut, including the \$25,000 price tag for a Lifestar helicopter ride from Windham to Hartford Hospital. And this is a memorial hospital that is underlain by gifts and endowments that are being ripped off by Hartford Healthcare.

The pattern here is all too reminiscent of the attacks now underway on print newspapers in this country as they are bought up by rapacious and secretive hedge funds like Alden Capital that have no interest in journalism, who make deep cuts in staff, raise subscription prices, and run proud newspapers into the ground,

and sell their emptied buildings, all to turn a short-term profit. This phenomenon is examined in the November issue of *The Atlantic*, entitled "Who Killed America's Newspapers?" by McKay Coppins.

Journalism itself is at risk. Good investigate journalism costs money. The Internet offers the illusion that it is free.

All this is to say thank you to *Neighbors* and to these writers. Local journalism is the informational bedrock of Democracy. Loss of local reportage translates into a poorly informed electorate and lower voter turnout, which benefits know-nothing politicians riding on a tide of ignorance.

Support strong communities.

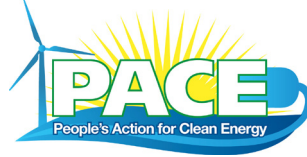
David Morse
independent journalist, Mansfield

Verogy installs 835 kW of solar across Connecticut school district

Solar Power World. "West Haven and Verogy made a power purchase agreement (PPA) that makes it possible for West Haven to purchase electricity at a discounted rate. The PPA locks in this lower rate so that if electricity costs rise in the future, West Haven will continue to pay a reduced amount for electricity for the 25-year term of the agreement... 'Our West Haven projects not only help in the fight against climate change, but they also deliver renewable power at a reduced cost to West Haven.'"

Selectmen Hear Plan For Making Newtown More 'Green'

Newtown Bee. "With the goal of a greener, more sustainable Newtown, the Sustainable Energy Commission revealed its ambitious goal of making 95 % of Newtown's energy usage renewable by next year... The energy plan is "designed to guide the town toward greater energy efficiency and stability," said Quinn, and benefits include reducing the town's carbon footprint and contribution to climate change, gaining savings by reducing energy expenditures, improving air quality with resultant health benefits, reducing weather-related power outages and bringing more comfort to homes and businesses."



The price of energy is going up in CT. Could it have been avoided?

CT Mirror. "Fingers are pointing to policy set in 2012 when Connecticut's first Comprehensive Energy Strategy was unveiled. Its backbone was to expand the use of natural gas — then historically cheap and plentiful due to fracking. From climate change and emissions perspectives, it was also cleaner than oil — then the heating fuel of choice and also widely used in power plants in the region... The CES had also called for using weatherization, energy efficiency, equipment upgrades and renewable energy. All could have helped lower energy costs and all have fallen short of expectations for lower-income people. 'It's not working for the people that we serve.'"

Study: Connecticut could conserve land by installing solar above parking lots

Energy News Network. " 'It's not that we can do everything in parking lots — we're still going to need some utility-scale arrays,' said Mark Scully, the president of People's Action for Clean Energy, or PACE, which commissioned the study. 'But there are significant advantages to putting them on this already-degraded real estate. And they can be placed in environmentally disadvantaged and underserved communities.'"

Panelists Look For Solutions Without TCI

CT News Junkie. " 'We will continue to put our heads together,' Cohen said. She said she would like to pursue legislation that would address emissions for medium and heavy duty vehicles, a measure that didn't make it out of the House of Representatives last session.'... "If we address transportation-related greenhouse gases, we can also address transportation-related air pollution and transportation-related health impacts.'"

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The Neighbors paper
Locally Written
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From the Ground Up - Buying Local in Connecticut

To Beet or Not To Beet? That is the question.

By C. Dennis Pierce

Beets. Those red vegetables that stain your hands when you are cleaning them. Beets, typically not a favorite vegetable of many. Several months ago, I was at the Willimantic Co-op and while there, in the produce section, I found some local beet greens that had the beginning of a small beet still attached to the greens. I am always looking for shortcuts in my gardening endeavors so I thought to myself I wonder if I can replant these? From grocery bag to the warm soil of my raised garden bed I provided these tiny fledglings with a new home. Initially most of the greens wilted and died, probably due to the trauma of riding in the back of a Subaru, but after a while in the ground, they settled in giving birth to new shoots that sprung from the ground. Yes! There was still hope.

My gardening cycle has its ups and downs. Eager in the spring, water once or twice a day but as August approaches the weeds win the battle and the garden slowly begins to be overgrown. That is the time when I shift to relying on the authorities. Those unsung heroes of the Quiet Corner. The farmers that bring their offerings to the local Farmers Markets for my perusing. Sure, I occasionally pinch away at my tomato plants hoping to encourage a bigger crop. I can say, I do spend more time with my herbs since they are right outside my porch, and what else can you do when you are waiting for your dogs to go about their business in the early morning trips around the yard.

But now, back to the beets. It was the week before Thanksgiving and my youngest was crafting the menu for Thanksgiving dinner. I offered the idea of rummaging through the remains of the garden hoping to find some survivors of my beet experiment. To my surprise, those little, radish size, beet-lings transformed themselves to a bouquet of red beauties that would have won first prize at the Brooklyn Fair. Dirt crusted and hard skinned they ended up cleaned and ready to be roasted and then later made into a beet soup that became the warm up act for a hickory smoked turkey. I am not sure if others are adventurous as we were but I offer you're the recipe below for your entertainment.

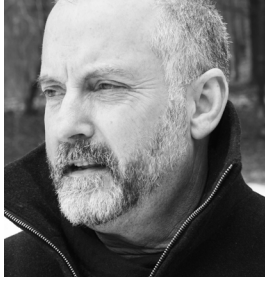
Now that the first snow has fallen and the days are getting colder a few of the local farmer's markets are moving to warmer climates. The following are the locations and hours for the Storrs and Coventry markets:

Storrs Farmer's Winter Market

Storrs Winter Farmer's Market offers Mansfield and its neighbor's access to fresh, locally-grown foods all through the winter. The Winter Market is open twice a month from December through April. The Market is held from 3:00 pm to 5:00 pm in the Buchanan Auditorium next to the Mansfield Public Library. Dates are: December 4 & 18th, January 8 & 22nd, February 5 & 19th, March 5 & 19th and April 2 & 16th. Interested in who will be at the Storrs Winter Farmers Market? You can sign up for bi-weekly emails at the Markets web site, <https://www.storrsfarmersmarket.org/winter>

Coventry Farmer's Winter Market:

Coventry Market is gearing up for another winter season. Roasts, steaks, turkey, chicken, pies, produce, baked goods, cheeses, sweet and savory choices and more. Spice up your appetizers with sauces, tempt your sweet tooth with a large variety of delicious choices from local bakers and confectioners. Come explore the growers, producers and artisans of our market. Come join them on Sundays, November 14th to March 27th from 10:am to 12:30pm at Patriots Park Lodge, 172 Lake Street in Coventry, CT. No market on December 26th or January 2nd. More info and an opportunity to sign up for their newsletter can be found at www.coventryfarmersmarket.org

Beetroot Soup
Servings – 4 to 5

Pre heat the oven to 400 degrees.

Ingredients:

4 large, raw, washed, beets
1 tablespoons of olive oil for cooking. Additional oil for roasting beets.
1 large, red onion chopped
1 or 2 sticks of celery, washed and chopped
4 ¼ cups of vegetable or chicken stock
2 tablespoons of dill chopped and a few springs for garnish
Salt and black pepper

Directions:

Remove top and bottom roots from beets.
Wrap each beet in a foil packet but before you do drizzle some olive oil on each beet before closing the packet.
Place on a baking pan.
Bake for 45 minutes to 1 hour or until beets are tender.

Remove beets and let cool.
With a paring knife peel back the skins.
Cut beets into small chunks, larger than a dice. Set aside.
Heat 1 tablespoon of oil in a large pan or Dutch oven. Add onion and celery and cook, stirring often for approximately 5 minutes until soft but not brown.
Stir in roasted beets and stock/broth and season with salt and pepper.

Bring to a boil and then turn down the heat to a simmer for 5 minutes.
Take the mixture and transfer it to a blender.
Add dill and blend until smooth. If necessary, add more stock to thin.
Check for seasoning and adjust accordingly.
Prepare your soup bowls by heating them in the oven for a few minutes and just before serving pour soup into bowls and top with sour cream or plain yogurt and a sprig of dill.

Another year has gone by. A year like no other. Yet, we persevered. Our lives have changed significantly. Interesting how we adapted and continue to move forward with our daily lives. Right now, I feel very much like the animals that live in my yard and the woods behind it. I am not hording acorns but my wood is stacked, the garden still needs to be cleaned but I am more prepared this year than I was last year. Please God, just give me a few more weeks before the ground freezes rock hard and the snow begins to fall and accumulate. Until next month, if you have a suggestion for a farm or a local grower or even a recipe that would feature a local ingredient, please let me know. I will do my best to share your suggestions in a future column. Drop me a line at Codfish53@Yahoo.com.
Peas be with you...

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Great American Film Noirs

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Showings: First Fridays (unless otherwise stated) at 12:30 pm, in the Community Room

Upcoming Scheduled Movie Dates and Titles:

December 3, 2021: D.O.A.
D.O.A. (1950) 83m. "Dead On Arrival." Dying from a slow poison, Edmond O'Brien has 24 hours to track down his own killer! Directed by Rudolph Mate.

January 7, 2022: The Strange Love of Martha Ivers
The Strange Love of Martha Ivers (1946) 116m. A man is reunited with his childhood friend and her husband, who believe he knows the truth about the death of her rich aunt years earlier. Starring: Barbara Stanwyck, Van Heflin, and Kirk Douglas in his film debut. Directed by Lewis Milestone.

A Chance Meeting on the Trail

By Bill Powers

My grandson once asked me if I had to do it all over again, would I, if I could, have pursued a different career. I thought for just a moment, and the answer, which surprised me, and quickly came to mind as it shot out from my mouth was: "GEOLOGIST." My career path after several turns over decades eventually led me teaching history and social studies. In high school I had a chance to "test drive" the teaching of history for a week at a junior high school. In a way geology fits with my earliest career interests; after all, it is considered to be a "historical science."

Chance meetings on hiking trails can sometimes evolve into special and meaningful relationships. One day while hiking along the Nipmuck Trail, at a place along the edge of the Fenton River near Gurleyville Road in Mansfield, I came upon a small group of UConn students who were intently listening to a man who was pointing out specific geological features. It was a field trip. They had several tools with them which they used, among other things, for gently scraping and chipping away at the surfaces of rocks and for invading the earth to take core samples. I had taken a college geology class many years earlier, and it was not at all like this! This was an outdoors hands-on experience with an expert interpreter. It was fascinating and wonderful.

The professor was geologist Robert Thorson; he asked if I would like to join the group. For me, it was the beginning of a new appreciation for a better way to learn about natural history in general. In an effort to enhance my experiences on the trail, a goal became to hike with well-formed interpreters, whenever possible. Nature holds many amazing secrets that are not readily apparent to the untrained eye. Later, usually through the Connecticut Museum of Natural History, I was able to join Dr. Thorson in the field to learn not only about geology, but also about his special interests in stone walls.

Fortunately, hiking with other geologists in a variety of terrains, including mountains, plains, and coast lines, would help to satisfy my great curiosity. My wife and I were fortunate to accompany geologists we met while hiking in the Canadian Rockies. It was wonderful to hike with our friend Duncan, a geologist from New Orleans, at annual Appalachian Mountain Club's August Camp trips to Mt. Rainier, Yellowstone and the Sierra Nevada Mountains. It was an incredible experience to accompany geologists in the field through programs sponsored by: Project Oceanology; the Connecticut Museum of Natural History; our local Goodwin Nature Center in Hampton; the College of the Atlantic; the National Park Service; and, the Mount Washington Observatory (glacial geology). My UConn fellowships in marine biology and oceanology both in New England and Baja Mexico often included discussions about geology while in the field. The Goodwin Nature Center's Master Naturalist program included field studies for local geology.

A chance meeting on a trail led to new perspectives for greater fulfillment and enjoyment while hiking, as well as, a good way to learn about natural history.

Bill Powers after retiring from public school teaching became a master naturalist.

WTG Holiday Concert

Submitted by Robin Rice

Have you been wishing for a little more 'normalcy' and a little more fun in your life? Well, the Windham Theatre Guild will lift your spirits and warm your heart with a concert filled with wonderful seasonal songs. The concert will contain secular and Christmas Carol holiday music. The chorus will be singing beautifully arranged holiday songs including 'We Need A Little Christmas', 'Winter Wonderland', 'Silver Bells', 'Mary Did You Know', 'Have Yourself A Merry Little Christmas', and more. There will be a children's pageant, an appearance by Santa and a chance for the audience to sing along. Join us for this program of beautiful songs and start your holiday season off right! Performances are Saturday, December 11th at 7:30pm and Sunday, December 12th at 2:00pm at the Burton Leavitt Theatre, 779 Main Street, Willimantic. Tickets are \$13 for adults, \$11 for seniors/students, and \$8 for children under 12 (includes \$1 processing fee).

Per the Town of Windham's mask mandate, all audience members will be required to wear a mask, regardless of vaccination status. There will be socially distanced seating with approximately 3 feet of distance between each party. Also, the WTG Shoe Fundraiser has been extended. Bring your unwanted gently worn shoes to the concert. Reserve tickets by calling 860-423-2245 or online at windhamtheatreguild.org.

neighbors
a little paper
big on community

Unsung Heroes of Soul:

Brenda and The Tabulations

By Dean Farrell

As host of "The Soul Express," I play the biggest names in 1960s and '70s-era soul music. I also mix in the many great soul artists who did not necessarily become household names but were no less talented. This month's column is about Brenda & The Tabulations, whose "sweet soul" sound was clearly influenced by the doo-wop groups of the 1950s.

In the summer of 1966, Brenda Payton and Maurice Coates worked together at a Philadelphia playground. Coates suggested they sing together in a show they presented for the kids at the end of the summer. Gilda Woods, wife of popular radio D.J. Georgie Woods, happened to be driving by and caught their performance. When she asked if they had any original material, they said yes—even though they had none. Within two days, however, Coates and Payton had co-written "Dry Your Eyes." Now they needed to form a group, so they recruited Eddie L. Jackson and Jerry Jones to round out a quartet.

Gilda Woods signed on as their manager, gave them their name (by opening up a dictionary), and co-produced the session with Bob Finiz, the in-house producer at Jamie/Guyden Records. "Dry Your Eyes" was released on J/G's Dionn subsidiary. It became the group's first and biggest hit, reaching #8 on the Billboard Rhythm & Blues chart and #20 pop during the first quarter of 1967. Payton's voice was both sweet and rough-edged, making the group sound paradoxically innocent and world-weary.

Smokey Robinson wrote their next chart single, "Who's Lovin' You." He had first recorded the song himself with the Miracles in 1960. At least two other Motown acts, Brenda Holloway and the Jackson Five, recorded their own versions. But only the Tabulations made it a hit.

Over the next two years, they placed additional songs on both the R&B and pop charts, though none duplicated the initial success of "Dry Your Eyes." They also came out with an LP of the same name. By the end of 1969, Jamie/Guyden had discontinued the Dionn imprint and replaced it with Top & Bottom. After their first hit on the label, "The Touch of You," Gilda Woods hooked the group up with songwriter/producer Van McCoy. He wrote and produced their next hit, "And My Heart Sang (Tra La La)," and would helm all their future Top & Bottom sessions.

By 1971, the male members had all left the Tabulations. Payton replaced them with two female singers, Pat Mercer and Deborah Martin. This was the line-up that recorded the group's second-biggest hit, "Right On the Tip of My Tongue." That same year, Top & Bottom released a self-titled album on the trio—though, inexplicably, it left out "Tip of My Tongue."

In 1972, Brenda & The Tabulations signed with Epic Records. Their biggest hit for the company was "One Girl Too Late." It was also their last recording produced by Van McCoy. By now, Brenda Payton was essentially a solo act, though she continued to record under the group's name. In 1977, her third album, "I Keep Coming Back For More," was released on Chocolate City, a division of Casa-blanca. It produced "(I'm a) Superstar," the last charted single for Brenda & The Tabulations.

In 1974, the group was mentioned in the hit song, "Life Is a Rock (But the Radio Rolled Me)," by Reunion.

In 1975, the Tabulations' one-time producer, Van McCoy, rode the disco bandwagon to #1 with the instrumental smash, "The Hustle." Four years later, he succumbed to a fatal heart attack at age 39.

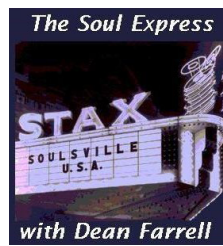


Brenda Payton, 46, died of breast cancer on June 14, 1992. Eddie L. Jackson, 63, died of a brain aneurysm on May 3, 2010.

In 2011, the group's 44-year-old recording of "The Wash" (the original B-side of "Dry Your Eyes") was used in a commercial for Axe body wash.

Charted singles:

- "Dry Your Eyes" (1967) R&B #8, Pop #20
- "Who's Lovin' You" (1967) R&B #19, Pop #66
- "Stay Together Young Lovers" (1967) R&B #44, Pop #66
- "Just Once In a Lifetime" (1967) R&B #41, Pop #97
- "When You're Gone" (1967) R&B #27, Pop #58
- "Baby You're So Right For Me" (1968) Pop #86
- "To the One I Love" (1968) R&B #45
- "That's the Price You Have to Pay" (1969) R&B #43
- "The Touch of You" (1969) R&B #12, Pop #50
- "And My Heart Sang (Tra La La)" (1970) R&B #12, Pop #64
- "Don't Make Me Over" (1970) R&B #15, Pop #77
- "A Child No One Wanted" (1971) R&B #42, Pop #120
- "Right On the Tip of My Tongue" (1971) R&B #10, Pop #23
- "A Part of You" (1971) R&B #14, Pop #94
- "Why Didn't I Think of That" (1971) R&B #34, Pop #107
- "One Girl Too Late" (1973) R&B #48
- "Home to Myself" (1976) R&B #61
- "(I'm a) Superstar" (1977) R&B #31



Please check out the Unsung Heroes of Soul blog at <https://60459fe07898a.site123.me/>

Dean Farrell hosts "The Soul Express" twice a week: Thursdays from 8:00-11:00 p.m. on WECS, 90.1-FM (www.wecsfm.com) and Fridays from 5:30 - 7:30 p.m. on WRTC, 89.3-FM (www.wrtcfm.com). He plays vintage soul music of the 1960s and '70s, everything from #1 hits to long-lost obscurities. Dean's e-mail address is soulexpress@gmail.com.

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www.coventrywinterfarmersmarket.com

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Friday, December 3rd, 8-11 pm
Introductory session at 7:45.
Patriots Park Lodge
172 Lake Street, Coventry, CT.
Adults \$12, Students \$6.
Partner not required, all dances taught.
Covid restrictions apply - mask & proof of vac.
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Questions: Dennis at knowdj@charter.net.

The Phoenix Rises

By Delia Berlin

A week after we lost our 30-year-old parrot, Eureka, I saw a damaged table for sale at the Mansfield Marketplace flea market. It had carved legs with feathers in the pattern. Fresh in my grief from losing Eureka, it reminded me of her. I had been looking for a small table, but this one would require considerable restoration work and I was too despondent to take on a project. I passed it up.

I rarely regret not buying something, but over the following days thoughts about this table kept nagging me. The following Sunday, I told David that if I could still find it at the flea market, I would buy it. But unsurprisingly, it wasn't there.

Miraculously, on the next Sunday the table reappeared. I quickly asked for its price and paid it. I explained to the dealer that the table had a special meaning for me. I showed her a photo of Eureka and told her that the piece would become her memorial table. She was clearly sympathetic and gave me a hug, asking me to take a picture after the repair to show her the result. If I see her again, I will do that and will also give her this issue of *Neighbors*.

Once home, I consulted with my brother-in-law, who knows a lot about woodwork. He thought the table had real potential and recommended hiring a skilled craftsman. We immediately thought of Johnnie Walker, who has done great work for us in the past and who has a studio at Moulton Court, right across from David's. We lucked out, because Johnnie was just finishing a big job and had a little window of time before starting the next one.

In addition to being a very talented and creative craftsman, Johnnie is great at helping one think through the possibilities and details of a job. For those of us who can imagine a finished piece but don't know how to get it done, our awareness of alternative paths is limited. Johnnie can explain and help visualize different possibilities, so one can make better decisions about how to advance the project.



The table is built of solid mahogany. It was once a drop-leaf table, but one of the leaves broke off and the other was removed. Since I just needed a small table, we planned to build a one-piece tabletop with the remaining wood sections. The legs were in great shape but needed to be raised to standard height, because their original casters were missing. A few blemishes had to be fixed and a fake drawer pull fastened to complete the job.

When Johnnie came to pick up the table pieces from our house, we discovered that cuts and marks that we thought were from damage were actually made to accommodate the hand-cut swing arm that held up the original side leaves. They were very ingeniously made. After Johnnie took the table to his shop, I did some research and found out that it was a nineteenth-century Sheraton mahogany table with carved feather-and-acanthus-leaf legs. These tables were built in New York between 1820 and 1899 in various sizes, and very few remain in original condition. A large and pristine specimen could sell for as much as \$6,000. I don't own anything that expensive, but a valuable memorial would be fitting for Eureka.

Eureka was beautiful, loving, and bright. She



could understand almost everything I told her and she spoke herself sometimes, always appropriately. She gave us thirty years of almost uninterrupted joy. Most people are not familiar with pet birds. But if you can imagine a very smart dog that remains a puppy for thirty years, or a toddler who never outgrows her cuteness and cuddliness, you'll have a good approximation of Eureka's persona. What we lost is not only her own magical being, but her ability to turn me into a puppy as well. Silly as it sounds, the two of us played all day. Every evening, tired from our antics, she would ask for cuddles and fall asleep on my lap or in the crook of my neck.

Eureka had a very good life for a pet parrot. Having only one family for thirty years is rare for pet birds. It's a long time, during which many things can happen in families: marriages, divorces, illnesses, moves—any of which can interfere with the ability to keep a high-maintenance pet. Because of this, many pet birds need "rehoming," sometimes more than once and often in their advanced years. But Eureka's main human (yours truly) never got tired or bored of her, even as her needs increased with age. During her last four years, in particular, she required lots of extra care. This included special spoon feedings and beak filings that, mercifully, I was able to give and she was able to take in complete peace and trust. Her constantly renewed toy supply would have been the envy of most children, let alone parrots. And she joined us for many family events, such as opening holiday presents, trips, and parties.

We were particularly fortunate to have Eureka during the pandemic lockdown. She brightened our long days and just loved being locked down with her "flock." One of our neighbors in the Prospect Hill neighborhood of Willimantic set out to entertain the residents every evening by marching through the streets in highland gear and playing the bagpipes. Eureka loved the music and demanded to go out to see him go by, while she danced and whistled to the tunes. The musician was so enchanted that he wanted to buy himself a parrot. Aware of the responsibilities involved, we did what we could to dissuade him. Having a toddler who never grows up and can bite and scream when displeased is not for everyone.

Eureka played, ate, and functioned normally until a week before her death, when suddenly her legs did not respond. She looked at me puzzled, obviously expecting an explanation or a cure, neither of which I could deliver. She recovered control within seconds, but the following day she had a similar episode. A visit to the vet found no obvious cause for her symptoms. Neither we nor the vet wanted to put her through invasive testing. We decided to try a nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory that, if nothing else, could alleviate arthritis and possible aches. But we already knew that whatever was happening was dire and that we were likely living through her final days.

Day by day, Eureka seemed comfortable and peaceful, but able to do less and less. During her last two days, she mostly slept, without eating or drinking at all. She just wanted to be held, sleeping on and off. My daughter and granddaughter came from New York to say their goodbyes. We thought that they were not going to arrive in time to see her alive, but Eureka stayed semi-alert all through their visit.

For perspective, when we first got Eureka as a featherless chick, my daughter, now a surgeon, was a schoolchild. None of our grandchildren, now aged 10 to 21, has ever known our home without Eureka in it. She

accompanied me from my thirties to my sixties, lived with us in three houses, welcomed babies into our family, and saw us through health crises. We understood how important a predictable routine was to her and, unnoticed by many acquaintances, our lives followed a pattern tailored around her needs. For example, she showered with me and required a lunch treat from David virtually every day for thirty years.

But, truth be told, while our decades together strengthened our bond, Eureka stole our hearts before she was even fully feathered. She was just a chick when her recognition of family, her focused curiosity, and her playfulness amazed us all. One day, when she was three months old, I held her belly-up, tickling her and kissing her feet, and telling her "I'm gonna eat your foot!" The next day, I was holding her near my face when she stuck a foot out toward my mouth and said, "Eat your foot!" Those were her first words and for a while, when people asked me if she talked and what she said, my answer must have sounded pretty weird.

About a week after her brief loss of leg control, Eureka died peacefully while I held her. We took her body to the Connecticut Veterinary Medical Diagnostic Laboratory at UConn for a necropsy. The results were unexpected. Eureka died of the West Nile encephalitis virus, which caused extensive bleeding in her brain. The necropsy also found many signs of advanced age, such as marked atherosclerosis and chronic damage to her heart and lungs. Most likely, the mosquito that infected her with West Nile didn't rob her of many good years. We find some consolation in that.

Some have asked us how an indoor pet could get West Nile virus. While Eureka never spent time outdoors at dusk or when it was muggy, she loved having lunch or supper with us on the deck in good weather. Our deck is elevated and generally bug-free, so we never worried about such a freak risk. Both our parrots, while domestically bred in the United States, were African species. I have read that in Africa, where the virus is endemic, bird populations have developed resistance over generations. Here, when the virus first appeared, it decimated wild birds, but now most get asymptomatic or mild infections. However, there



is no treatment for the illness and birds with severe cases almost always die. This year, a rainy summer favored large numbers of mosquitos that prey on birds and there were many avian casualties. While most of the vets we talked to have never known of a parrot death from West Nile, the CDC maintains a list of bird species in which the virus has been found in necropsies, and the list contains many species of parrots in addition to all sorts of birds, ranging from hummingbirds to flamingos, both in captivity and in the wild. As we well know, unlikely doesn't mean impossible.

Finally, Johnnie delivered Eureka's memorial table to our sunroom. Like Eureka, it is gorgeous. The beautiful rebuilding and restoration confirmed that the project fully deserved Johnnie's talent. We are thankful for his skill and for our meaningful new table. As we use and enjoy it, we will pause to remember Eureka. I will try to recall the softness of her nape feathers on my lips when she bent down her neck asking for kisses, her crazed naughty look when she stole and ran away with a paper napkin, her joyful expression when she made us laugh. In time, all sorrow will turn into gratitude for three decades of her friendship and the enormous privilege of her trust.

Gifts That Help Loved Ones Live Well (And Offer Tax Advantages, Too)

By James Zahansky, AWMA®
Principal/Managing Partner & Chief
Goal Strategist



It's the time of year when many of us are frantically shopping online or at the mall, looking for the perfect gifts for the ones we love. But the things they might need and appreciate most aren't always necessarily able to be boxed up and tied with a bow. In fact, there are a couple of ways to give someone you love a gift that could be life-changing for them while also providing some tax benefits for you.

Give the Gift of Education

Financial gifts you make are generally subject to gift tax. But the IRS considers payments for tuition made to a qualified educational organization on behalf of a student to be "non-gift gifts," which are excluded from the gift tax as well as the generation-skipping transfer tax (GSTT).

This exclusion allows you to pay an unlimited amount toward a loved one's tuition at any level of education, from elementary school to graduate school. It's also in addition to the annual gift tax exclusion. This makes it an excellent (and often overlooked) way to transfer wealth to your children and grandchildren while investing in their future. (Though it's important to note that the payment can be made on behalf of anyone – it need not be a relative). It can also reduce your estate tax liability by removing the value of the payment from your gross estate.

To avoid it being a gift for gift tax purposes, the payment must meet several conditions. It must be for tuition only. Payments for costs such as supplies, books, dormitory fees, and board do not qualify for the exclusion. The payment must also be made directly to a qualified educational organization – payments made to the student will not qualify.

The educational organization must also meet several conditions in order to be considered "qualified" for the purposes of making gifts of tuition. It must maintain a regular faculty, offer a regular schedule of courses, enroll students on a regular basis, and have a place where it regularly carries out its educational activities.

One potential drawback to think about when considering making a gift of tuition is any possible negative income tax consequences for the student or student's parents. If a dependency relationship exists between the student and another person, the tuition payment that you make will count in the calculation of the student's support. This could affect who is eligible to claim a dependency exemption for the student and could affect the parent's or student's ability to claim a personal exemption.

Lastly, if you do gift a loved one with a tuition payment made to a qualifying educational organization, be sure to get a receipt. If the IRS audits you, you may need to prove you made the payment directly to the organization.

Give the Gift of Health and Care

As with tuition payments, payments made directly to a qualified medical provider on behalf of someone else are considered qualified transfers or "non-gift gifts," and so are excluded from the gift tax as well as the GSTT.

This exclusion allows you to pay an unlimited amount and is an addition to the annual gift tax exclusion. It can also reduce your estate tax liability by removing the value of the payment from your gross estate.

Payments must be made directly to the medical care provider and may be made for medical expenses that are deductible for income tax purposes. In general, the medical expenses must be for diagnosing, curing, treating, or preventing disease, or for treatments that affect any structure or function of the body. Treatments that lessen the effects of disease (prescriptions, for example) and medical insurance premiums may also qualify. Cosmetic surgery, general health maintenance such as annual check-ups, non-prescription medications and toiletries are a few examples of expenses that do not qualify.

Keep in mind that any amount for which the patient is reimbursed by insurance does not qualify for the exclusion and is subject to gift tax. So if you pay a person's \$10,000 hospital bill and insurance reimburses them \$3,000, that \$3,000 portion of your payment will be treated as a regular gift and so will be subject to gift tax.

As with gifts of tuition payments, if you make a medical payment on another's behalf, make sure to get a receipt so that you can prove you made the payment directly to the medical provider, should you be audited.

Helping Loved Ones Live Well Requires That You Plan Well

The ability to provide support to help loved ones reach their biggest dreams and overcome their hardest challenges is one of the most meaningful rewards of building and sticking to a strong financial plan. Watching our clients carry out those goals is certainly one of the most rewarding aspects of the financial planning and partnerships we nurture here at Weiss, Hale and Zahansky Strategic Wealth Advisors. We welcome you to reach out and see how our strategic Plan Well, Invest Well, Live Well process can help you to provide these special gifts for your loved ones now or down the road. Learn more at whzwealth.com and contact us at (860) 928-2341 or info@whzwealth.com to get started.

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Killingly High School and ACT in Willimantic Receive Grants to Study Local History

By Donna Dufresne

Tenth graders in Killingly High School and Arts at the Capitol Theater (ACT), the public performing arts magnet high school in Willimantic, are participating in a study of the soldiers in the 29th Connecticut Colored Infantry Regiment in the Civil War funded by a grant from the nonprofit organization The Last Green Valley. The program, “Out of the Shadows: Shedding Light on the CT 29th Colored Regiment,” was designed by education specialist and historian Donna Dufresne. During the yearlong enrichment program, students will learn to read and interpret primary sources as they research the local 29th Regiment soldiers of Nipmuc and African descent. Students will try to locate the places where the veterans of the 29th Regiment lived, worked, and prayed, and place memorial markers at their gravesites.

The program kicked off with a retreat at the Windham-Tolland 4-H Camp in Pomfret, where students from both schools met and participated in collaborative team-building activities. The intent was for the students, who come from different learning communities, to get to know each other. Heather Logee, director of the camp, led the outdoor challenge activities.

One highlight of the student retreat was the dramatic interpretation of Private William Webb, a Civil War soldier in the 29th Colored Regiment, performed by Kevin Johnson of the Connecticut State Library. Appearing in his Civil War uniform, “Private Webb” captured the attention of the audience of teens and faculty as he told stories of the battles and daily life of a soldier of African descent. He emphasized that he was fighting for the ideal of freedom and the hope of gaining citizen rights. After the performance, Johnson explained that he had found William Webb in the archives of the State Library and pieced his story together from primary sources such as military records, birth and marriage records, and other documents.

Since the retreat and performance, students have been learning how to analyze and interpret primary documents, photographs, and pictures. Recently, they were given the transcript of a letter written by a soldier from the 29th Regiment. Joseph O. Cross’s letter to his “dear wife” lacks punctuation but is full of descriptive detail of the long marches and Rebel attacks. He describes one gruesome battle where his



company was ordered to crouch behind a bank. From there, he witnessed men who were shot in the face, eyes, and arms being carried off the field. He also sends his wife a cotton boll, instructing her to plant it in the early spring in a box (hothouse) to protect it from frost. He describes his first meal of black-eyed peas from a bean “7 inches long.” He sends his wife the little money he has left from his last monthly pay and laments that the soldiers have not been paid for a while. From the letter, students were able to derive the character traits of Joseph Cross and create a snapshot of his familial networks and community in Connecticut.



Kevin Johnson as Civil War soldier Private William Webb. Photo by Fran Kefalas, Last Green Valley.

While working with primary sources, students learned about text evidence and reading between the lines to make inferences about individual characters and historical events. After analyzing the letter of Joseph Cross, students examined drawings and paintings of some of the battles and places mentioned in the letter to build context. They also examined photographs of the 29th Regiment.

With the help of their teachers, Joseph Lewerk and Dale Maxwell, along with Dufresne and other local historians, the students will identify and write about local 29th Colored Regiment soldiers. Eventually, they will share what they have learned through multimedia presentations and help to shed some light on the 29th Regiment.

A Rockefeller Christmas

By Angela Hawkins Fichter

This is a true story of events that transpired years ago to a family in Windham County, CT. The names have been changed to protect the guilty.

It was a great day (from a child’s point of view) to cut down the family’s Christmas tree. On this Saturday, a week before Christmas, the sky was overcast, and a fine, light snow was falling. There were already a couple inches of snow on the ground. Just enough to easily drag the freshly cut tree to the van, but not so deep that small boots would sink down into the snow over the boot tops. Of course, there was the endless argument over which tree was the best tree to cut down. John, who was 13 years old and already knew more than both his parents and his teachers (or thought he did), criticized every choice made by Mom, Dad, and his sister, Amy, who was age 5. Crocker, the family’s cocker spaniel, wanted to vote too, and he almost did so by way of his own unique doggy sign language, but Dad quickly dragged him back to the van.

After the family had walked up one hill of their favorite tree farm and down the other side, and up and down a few other hills, they were all cold and cranky. If Mom liked one tree, Amy found a big hole near the bottom. If Dad liked another tree, everyone found fault with it. After all, Dad thought the first tree they looked at was great. And the second. And the third. And any tree whatsoever as long as he didn’t have to stand out in the cold another single minute. If John thought he’d found the best tree, Amy was sure to find some unforgivable flaw. They all agreed on a tree at about the same time that they did so every year: when it was starting to get dark.

Their final choice looked wonderful. John cut it down, and John and Dad carried it back to the car. They grumbled that it was awful heavy, but they said that every year. When they got back to the house, John and Dad struggled to get the tree into the tree holder on the back porch. Then they triumphantly dragged the tree into the house, while Mom kept warning them not to knock off any branches. Once into the living room they

found that the tree was bigger than they realized. Much bigger. The easy chairs had to be removed as well as the side tables and lamps. In fact, everything was removed but the couch and the TV, and the poor couch was jammed up against the wall with the TV about 30 feet away on the other side of the room. Which meant that you couldn’t see the TV from the couch because the tree was in the way. They had forgotten the old maxim that a tree always looks smaller on the farm that it does in your living room. The tree was so big that they named it Rockefeller after the huge tree cut for Rockefeller Center. But no matter, they all had great fun decorating the tree while listening to Christmas music, and as usual they ate all the popcorn that they had planned on stringing around the tree.

Whiskers, the family cat, took great interest in the tree and the decorating. He chose a perch halfway up the staircase where he would occasionally comment on the progress of the decorating by mewing and switching his tail back and forth. Once the decoration was complete Dad turned on the tree’s lights and turned off all the house lights. That’s when it happened. It’s said that cats can see in the dark much better than people. Whiskers launched his assault on the tree from the staircase, and he made it in one mighty leap. The tree came crashing down. Dozens of glass light bulbs and glass decorations breaking does make rather a lot of noise. So does the screaming of four people at top pitch. But Whiskers was undeterred. This was his moment. He fought his way into the center of the tree, past the wires of tree lights, past tinsel, past glittering metal chains of stars, until he pulled out of the tree the mouse that had been hiding in there all along.

Mom swooned once she realized they had driven home in the van with that mouse in the tree, because the tree top came close to her head in the front seat. Dad frowned at the expense of all those broken decorations. The kids moaned. It took much sweeping to cleanup. Years later they could all laugh about it. But Whiskers knew from the second that Rockefeller entered the house, that Christmas is what you make of it, and he had a wonderful time.

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Light in our Darkness – Wings of Song returns!

Submitted by Nym Cooke

STURBRIDGE – After eighteen months of silence, Wings of Song, a premier community chorus in south-central Massachusetts and northeastern Connecticut, is singing once again. It’s a smaller group, for the time being—just 23 singers out of the full chorus’s 60, calling themselves the Wings of Song Chamber Chorale. These were the singers (all vaccinated) who were ready to don specially-constructed singer’s masks and participate in socially-distanced rehearsals. Nevertheless, according to Music Director Nym Cooke, the singers’ spirit is as strong as ever—and their sound is superb.

Cooke has chosen a program of twelve very special, soul-stirring pieces to mark the chorus’s comeback, and to gladden the hearts of their hearers in this very difficult time. He characterizes the program in this way: “These pieces dig deep, and touch wellsprings of beauty and spiritual richness that are sure to lift people’s hearts. There’s a line in Handel’s *Messiah*: ‘The people

who walked in darkness have seen a great light.’ We’ve all been walking in darkness for some time now. May the beautifully-crafted classical works on this program—representing a mix of joyful animation and deep peace—bring at least some glimpses of that ‘great light’ to our hearers.”

The music spans four centuries, the 17th through the 20th, with composers ranging from the German Johannes Eccard (1553-1611) to the American Morten Lauridsen (born 1943). In between are luminaries such as Georg Frideric Handel, Felix Mendelssohn, and Hector Berlioz. Handel’s “And the glory of the Lord” from *Messiah* and Berlioz’s “Thou must leave thy lowly dwelling” from *The Childhood of Christ* keep company with John Rutter’s “Christmas Lullaby” and Morten Lauridsen’s “O magnum mysterium.” And there will be familiar carols for the season, of course: Randall Thompson’s thrilling version of “Angels we have heard on high” and Felix Mendelssohn’s “Hark! the herald angels sing.”

Beyond the singers being vaccinated and masked, this will be an unusual concert in other respects. Audi-

ence members should be fully vaccinated, and masks are required throughout the concert. As far as possible, the audience will be seated with some distance between “pods” of family and friends. And the shorter-than-usual program (no more than an hour in length) will be sung through without intermission. Look for singalongs, and our traditional post-concert social gathering with refreshments, to return at our Spring concerts!

As always, there will be two performances. On Saturday, December 4th at 7:30pm, the chorus will sing at the St. Joachim Parish Center of St. Anne/St. Patrick Parish, 16 Church Street in Fiskdale, Mass., up from the corner of routes 20 and 148. On Sunday, December 5th at 3:00pm, there will be a performance at the Evangelical Covenant Church in Woodstock, Conn., 24 Child Hill Road. Admission to both concerts is free; a freewill offering will be collected. And both venues are handicap-accessible. Don’t forget your mask—and come prepared for a beautiful and meaningful experience, rich in both music and spirit. For further information, contact Wings of Song President Carol Curtin at carolcurtin77@gmail.com, or Nym Cooke at nymcooke@gmail.com.

Old King's Highway and Other Hampton Roads

By Angela Hawkins Fichter

I've been trying to figure out why one of the roads in Hampton is called Old King's Highway. I checked on Google, which supplied me with a number of websites using that term. Seems that English King Charles II ordered the building of a king's highway through his American colonies. It went from Boston to Charlestown (now known as Charleston), a distance of 1300 miles. Originally it was used by postriders to deliver mail, then it was widened so that horse drawn wagons could use it. It was constructed between 1650 and 1735. Much of it became Route 1.

Okay, but why is there a road with such a name in Hampton? It's not like Hampton is near the coast. In fact, it's not near anything but Pomfret, Chaplin, Scotland, Canterbury, Brooklyn, Eastford. Did the guy ordered by the king to supervise the building of King's Highway get lost, and after he started construction in Hampton, he realized his mistake, and hence the term Old King's Highway, meaning the formerly started King's Highway that was abandoned when the supervisor's mistake was discovered?

I have questions about other roads in Hampton. I recently attended a board meeting of the Huntington Trust for the Samuel Huntington Museum in Scotland, CT. The meeting is frequently held in the conference room of the fire department, but it was election day, so we were told to use the training room. I was fascinated by a map on the wall that showed not just Scotland, but some roads in Hampton. From that map I learned that Sarah Pearl Road and Windy Hill Road, which both start on the east side of North Bigelow Road in Hampton, used to be through roads to Cherry Hill Road (which runs north off Route 6) in Brooklyn. Once Sarah Pearl Road crosses the Brooklyn town line it becomes Grant Hill Road, and once Windy Hill Road crosses the Brooklyn town line it becomes Old Kimball Road. I drove up Cherry Hill Road from Route 6 and found a left turn with the name Grant Hill Road, but there is a sign in the driveway saying Dead End. I drove further up Cherry Hill Road and found a left turn with a road sign saying Old Kimball Road. I drove down Old Kimball Road. It is the narrowest town road I have ever driven on. It is paved, but is only one car width wide and has no shoulders or ditches. There are houses on either side of the road with woody lawns. When the

pavement ended after about one-half mile, I turned around and drove back to Cherry Hill Road, but I could see a dirt path that continued Old Kimball Road from where the pavement ended. Not a gravel road, but a wide dirt path. It would be fun to walk that to where it connects with Windy Hill Road in Hampton, but that's not something I want to explore in hunting season. There was a town stop sign at the intersection of Old Kimball Road with Cherry Hill Road, so it appears to be a town road in Brooklyn, but is not up to the usual standard of care of town roads. Legally, what happens when a town votes to abandon a town road is that ownership of the road then reverts to the property owners on either side of the road. Therefore, maybe the exceedingly rural character of Old Kimball Road is because the property owners on either side of the abandoned road agreed to pay for the paving and plowing of their private road. Or maybe the town of Brooklyn has a regulation for the care of such narrow roads, calling them "roadlets" instead of "roads" and assigning them the standard of being the width of only one car. Gee, what if your car breaks down on such a road, how could you be towed from a road that is only as wide as one car with no road shoulders?

Does any reader know what these roads looked like a hundred years ago or more and what trades, farms, businesses, or whatever existed on these abandoned roads? Were they abandoned because the farm or business stopped existing? Or are they still town roads, but maintained under a special town regulation?

There is one abandoned town road in Hampton that appears to me to have been a direct path downhill to the Little River. Reilly Road starts off of South Bigelow Road and goes down to a bridge over the Little River. Reilly Road continues on the other side of the bridge but not directly, but rather as a left turn on Windham Road and an immediate right turn onto Reilly Road. What interests me is what you see directly across from the intersection of Reilly Road with South Bigelow. It's a wide path, really an abandoned town road, uphill, starting next to the ABC school, that goes past the Cohantic ledges, all the way up to what is now called Route 97. What is Hampton's name for that part of Route 97? What was the purpose of this abandoned town road from Route 97 all the way down to the Little River? It's been said that Native Americans liked and used the Cohantic ledges. Did this road start as a Native American path from the ledges to the Little River?

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Gallery Exhibit at East Brook Mall

The Ashford Arts Council is pleased to announce the opening of our first member's gallery exhibit and sale. The exhibit is in the new Coffee Break gallery at Eastbrook Mall.

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December 16-19	10:00–8:30 pm
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December 24	10:00–4:00 pm

Among exhibiting Artists are the following:

Christine Acebo, photographer
Josh Adams, cartoonist
Debra Aldo, mosaics
John Boiano, potter
Christine Acebo, photographer
Debra Gag, painter
Gretchen Geromin/Lauren Merlo, wooden trays
Michael Hughey, calligrapher
Joan Blade Johnson, fiber artist
Maggie Kendis, printmaker
Frietha Lawrence, Zentangles, cards
Charles McCaughtry, painter
Pat Morris, wildlife artist
Sharon Punty, painter
Dan Rackliffe, potter
Jane Rackliffe, glassworks
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Suzy Staubach, potter
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Neo Environmentalism: Roadtripping Without Guilt

By Brian Karlsson Barnes

CHARLES RIVER was wide at its mouth, portending a great torrent of water from far inside the continent, thought Captain John Smith in 1614 from the harbor that would be Boston. But it doesn't reach Worcester!

The Charles does, however, wind, twist and turn through Massachusetts' rural wilds and suburban gardens to the urban riverfront. Some rapids, rocks and portage, but the River Charles is forgiving. And a history lesson flowing east from a native American past, winding through colonial traces to Boston's harbor, a major seaport with 13 harbor islands. Some offer camping and a ferry.

Kayaking the Last Green Valley is exhilarating!!! Less arduous is the bucolic Charles, 90 minutes away.



Charles River source in Hopkinton.

SOURCE I found the origin of the Charles River in 2011. Several brooks on the south side of Hopkinton's Sugar Hill -- 26 miles west of Boston, think Marathon -- trickle through woods to a pond called Echo Lake in Milford, then continue as the longest stream in a wide watershed that winds 80 miles across Eastern Mass to the sea.

The wildness of the Charles River is a New England treasure. Trickling south, it's navigable eastward across rural Millis-Medfield-Sherborn ... through secluded suburban backyards in Dover-Natick-Wellesley ... to the busy urban river in Newton-Cambridge-Boston, hub of 4-million people. Where the sea level is rising (critical where the original water line has been filled and developed, as downtown Boston).

Clean water is also important. Attention to the Charles watershed (and its "Dirty Water" anthem) had cleaned it up by 2004, and it is now one of America's cleanest urban rivers! Clean enough to swim, *not to drink*, not as clean as our Last Green Valley. "Urban" is the operant word. Great paddling.

I delighted learning the state as I drove throughout Massachusetts for Weston Nurseries. My station wagon has better mpg than the company truck, but still uses fossil fuel. I no longer fly. I heat with an ancient woodstove and two cords a winter. Do I get a carbon credit? Or do I forego pleasure driving and the Great American Roadtrip?

ENVIRONMENTALISM is a global issue with painful personal impacts amid climate change. Consequences were illuminated at the recent UN climate conference in Glasgow, Scotland. "Blah-blah-blah," Swedish teen activist Greta Thunberg told the assembly because adults keep talking, talking, talking... not acting. Because elites can *spend, spend, spend* in a pandemic of affluenza. Climatologists say the next century will be bleak. Extreme weather. Mass extinctions. Species that have lived on earth for millions of years gone forever.

But David Gessner mocks climate purists: "Drive your car too long or take a hot shower and you're contributing to the great, final doom." He published My Green Manifesto in 2011, having paddled the Charles as he peddled Environmentalism without Guilt, occasionally profane to show his disdain for gloom and doom. In 2013, I paddled the Charles River with friends, launching canoes at the Medfield-Millis line, using gas to get there, guilty, but we were learning of the river's wildness. Worry free.

"Paddling, it turns out, is a fairly effective way to shut up one's mind," wrote Gessner. It's work, a series of actions rotating and thrusting the paddle again and again. A dark secret of kayaking (as anything for 6 to 8 hours) is that it can wear you down. But anxiety-free. Paddling is good exercise and transformative therapy.

NEO ENVIRONMENTALISM

Gessner advocates enjoying our natural world, expending energy to become energized activists. He saw stunning stretches of the River Charles where deer waded, coyotes howled and hawks swooped, where you can sense wildness. Clear your mind.

**River teaches maverick
Go with the flow
as ashes in water.**

WILDS The river twists and turns across Millis-Medfield-Sherborn... riverbanks high with grasses, shrubs and trees... seemed like Africa to me, Gessner thought the Amazon. But the maple (*Acer*), beech (*Fagus*), swamp oak (*Quercus*) and willow (*Salix*) identify America's diverse Eastern Deciduous Forest. White water lilies (*Nymphaea odorata*) seem tropical, but are also native to the eastern U.S.

Touting New Environmentalism, Gessner says, "Yes, the world is overheating (but) before the flames of apocalypse consume the planet (can) we explore our own neighborhoods a little?" Can we learn to love a place and advocate for it?

Explore our Last Green Valley and beyond. Connect to something greater than any person, family, clan or tribe... the Land. The environmental elite believe the science, but what does that mean in our divided country? Politics obscures reality. How can the ecological threat of Global Warming motivate working men and women? Gloom and doom is not persuasive. How does anyone distracted by life's responsibilities and worries, become more concerned about the Land? By learning to love the Land.

Take roadtrips to natural wonders, regional treasures and local oddities like the state highpoint of 812 feet that is Jerimoth Hill in Rhode Island, a mile east of the Connecticut stateline on Route 101. Of course, frequency increases the connection.

FREQUENCY Better is a frequent local walk at home, like Mansfield Hollow in the Last Green Valley. Best is a walk in woods outside your door. Gessner wrote of a friend's home in Maine "right on a paved road, and in back was a shambling garden ... a path through the briars and woods down to the stream" where the owner went to "connect to the greater world." (Sounds like my house, thickets and woods in the Natchaug Valley, working on path to Diana's Pool.)

HERON AS TOTEM? Gessner travelled the Charles River to research his book; I'm at the Natchaug mornings with coffee and newspaper. We both observe the Great Blue Heron. A striking tall bird with blue-to-gray feathers, it remains very, very still fishing. -- until its bill flashes like a knife. Like the tipping point of climate change.

Hérons are colonial nesters, he notes; they gather at night after days on their own in summer; solitary in winter. Outgoing in warmer seasons, then antisocial; as my work in the landscape, dormant in winter, rejuvenating until spring.

Totem = A natural object or animal believed to have spiritual power and adopted as an emblem of belief. Origin: mid-18th century *Ojibwa* "nindoodem" meaning 'my totem.'

Our totems are youth who demand change, who will be here as the world warms. Go Greta Thunberg. We all need to breathe fresh air, to drink clean water and to love the Land.

"In youth, we learn. In age, we understand" -- Anita von Augspurg

ENVIROBIO Youth inherit the earth. IMHO, they should live in other places to understand others, to learn to coexist. My *Enviro-journey* began in a very unnatural place, the Borough of Manhattan NYC in 1946, then I lived in nine other states and the UK. Moved from Minneapolis to Boston in 2004 to avoid sweltering summers, and to Eastern Connecticut in 2018. The heat goes on.

Respect for Nature came from my gracious mother Ingrid, a Wellsville NY girl in the strict Swedish family of Per Hilmer Karlsson. The lustrous green leaves of Mom's *Phyllodendron* always gleamed (with milk and cotton balls), but no flowers. 1950s neighbors at Lake Ponemah



Sky reflected on the Charles River.

MI, were two elderly sisters growing African violets that bloomed all winter! My horticultural path to master gardening and design.

Love of Land is my most visceral path, a solitary summer in 1982 caretaking my friend Yujy's farm in Oge-ma WI. Mowed the lawn with paths off into the meadows. Built a firepit. Listened to Wisconsin Public Radio with a portable Olympia typewriter, but no words remain of my cross-species interconnections that summer of love for the land. Later learned the 7th Principle of Unitarian Universalism: "Respect for the interdependent web of which we are all a part."

Environmental Advocacy is the activist's political path, a core value for Minnesota Greens as I during the ill-advised 2000 presidential candidacy of consumer-celebrity Ralph Nader, more egotist than altruist, who first practiced law in Hartford CT.

"It's not that easy being green" -- Kermit the Frog



Tropical stretch of the rural Charles River.

My Green years were rewarding -- and exhausting. Now my transformative experiences are gardening the land and walking the river, aware that all water returns to the sea and the air we breathe. We are all connected.

IF YOU GO

SOURCE: From Interstate 495, take the Main Street, Hopkinton Exit east to the town center traffic signal at Route 85 and turn right / south. Right turn west on Granite Street to the stream along the cemetery and other smaller streams all flowing south under road to tiny Echo Lake, in Milford that also claims origin.

WILDS: From Interstate 95 or 495, take Route 109 to the Medfield-Millis Line and see what has survived on the north side of road. Once a café with a launch.

SUBURBAN: From Interstate-95, Rent at Paddle Boston, 455 Nahanton Street, Newton. Call 617.965.5110 to reserve. Located at Nahanton Park with 57 acres of forests, meadows and gardens, and 12 miles of uninterrupted river and marsh.

Brian Karlsson Barnes, Master gardener / designer and wanderer, Chaplin. Photos by author.



Archaeologist Dr. Nick Bellantoni (at right) conducts a workshop presented by the Pomfret Historical Society. Photo by Fran Kefalas from the Last Green Valley.

Digging the Understory

By Donna Dufresne

It's not easy digging into the understory of American history, those stories which have been buried deep between the lines of our national narratives and sometimes deliberately omitted. However, it's in the understory that we find the richness of our American soil/soul, the story of US. Participants in the recent "Waking the Dead" series of workshops, presented by the Pomfret Historical Society, learned that there are many facets to the lens of history. Experts in the fields of social history, archaeology, and genealogy shared their research and techniques for interpreting the lives of disenfranchised communities such as Native Americans, enslaved Africans, and free Blacks in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The series was funded by Connecticut Humanities.

Workshop participants learned how primary documents have informed the narrative of local history and how folklore has inspired new research into the enslaved Africans who lived and worked in the region. They also learned from state archaeologist Dr. Sarah Sportman that archaeology can inform the historical narrative through a more inclusive lens, using scientific methods such as ground-penetrating radar (GPR) and analysis of material culture. Emeritus state archaeologist Dr. Nick Bellantoni reminded the audience that Native and African American cultures have been hidden in plain sight and sometimes deliberately excluded from written history, yet archaeological investigations throughout the state have revealed communities of color which thrived, and people who struggled for freedom and autonomy for centuries.

One of the goals of the workshop series was to repair and clean some of the headstones in the Randall/Higginbotham Burial Ground, where the enslaved Randalls were buried in unmarked graves. On October 23rd and 31st, Ruth Brown (Connecticut Gravestone Network), Michael Carroll (Rediscovering History), and Keegan Day led workshops on cleaning and repairing gravestones and identifying gravestone carvers. Participants learned that gravestones and burial grounds provide vital information as primary sources and material culture that help to widen the lens of history. They provide data on subjects ranging from spiritual beliefs and practices to geology, economy, social structure, and cultural evolution, as well as individu-

al genealogy.

The final workshop, on November 6th at Abington Congregational Church with genealogist William Fothergill, was a perfect ending to the series. The audience learned that it can be difficult to research Native and African Americans, especially those in the 1700s, when documentation was sparse. However, like the archaeologists and social historians who spoke during the series, Fothergill reminded us that oral history provides an important starting point in searching for grains of truth. Lois Boyd joined in the conversation, reinforcing that the oral history of disenfranchised groups that were omitted from written documents can provide reliable sources, along with DNA. Both genealogists, who are African American and Native American, respectively, emphasized that *their* story is *our* story, and that we share *one* history, regardless of our heritage.

Fothergill shared his research on Ebenezer Bassett, the first African American to graduate from the State Normal School (a teachers' college), which is now Central Connecticut State University. Bassett, whose father and grandfather were both "Black Governors" (an unofficial honorific in the Black community) in Derby, Connecticut, in the 1840s, was the descendant of enslaved Africans and Native Americans. He was a friend and confidant of Frederick Douglass and was appointed as the first ambassador to Haiti by President Grant in 1869. But his story has only recently been brought to light, even though he was an accomplished educator, activist, and ambassador who spoke several languages.

Perhaps the greatest takeaway from the Waking the Dead workshops is that primary documents, artifacts, architecture, gravestones, and genealogy are the cornerstones of truth in our historical narratives. Historical research requires multiple perspectives, scientific analysis, and collaboration with experts while investigating people who may have been hidden in the understory of American history. Yet the gems found in the more inclusive telling of history reveal the perseverance, hard work, resilience, and forward motion of people who wanted to better themselves, their family, their tribal unit, and their nation. Digging the understory reveals *one* history, *our* history, in the story of US.

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It's High Time to Grow Your Own Cannabis

By Mark Mathew Braunstein

Last July, Connecticut turned over a new leaf when it legalized cannabis for adult recreational use. Legal to possess and smoke, but not quite yet to grow. The right to cultivate six cannabis plants was granted only to licensed medical marijuana (MMJ) patients, and was delayed until October. The rest of the state's healthy and able residents will have to wait even longer, until 2023. Why the wait? That's anybody's guess. My guess is the state is experimenting on its patients as its human guinea pigs, because the authorities know exactly who we are. But that delay until October meant patients would lose out on the summer growing season. So who waited?

Not I. And not the many impatient patients and non-patients alike who have confided to me that they, too, have already begun exploring a new hobby. I sowed my first two seeds symbolically on Independence Day. Until July, that same venture in home gardening of a handful of herbaceous vegetables might have entangled me in the courts, burdened me with fines, and maybe even thrown me behind bars. A Connecticut Yankee in Judge Arthur's Court, no longer. Now a first offense for rushing the timeline or exceeding the plant count is just a written warning. I'm trembling in fear.

Patients in Connecticut are now allowed to grow cannabis within limits, the same as anyone can brew beer at home within limits, and the same as have MMJ patients next door in Rhode Island since 2006 and next door in Massachusetts since 2012. Patients next door in New York are on track to follow our state's path in 2022. Yet, both patients and non-patients in all four states have been cultivating cannabis long before these milestone years. They just have been doing it clandestinely and only now have been admitting it. Now that it's legal for Connecticut's 53,700 patients, a question hangs in the air. How to get started?

While it's easy and cheap to trawl the hinterland of the internet for conflicting instructions on how to grow pot, I prefer a single source with a single voice. For authority, I look to authors, and I found two authoritative books. One book to get me started, and another to keep me going. The book that got me started was Jeff Lowenfels's *DIY Autoflowering Cannabis* (New Society Publishers, 2019, 166 pages, \$25 for the paperback, \$19 for the eBook).

As a resident of Alaska where since 1975 cannabis has been legal to possess only in your home, Jeff has had many years to hone his skills for reaping a bountiful harvest. His book is perfect for the beginner indoor cannabis grower, and most of us are beginners. The text is well written with friendly flourishes of anecdotes and humor, yet still succinct. The chapters are organized to parallel the steps you would follow for growing autoflowering cannabis.

Shorter in height and requiring a shorter growing season than the more widely known Sativa and Indica varieties, autoflowers are ideal for indoor gardening. This new hybridized strain is especially suitable for home gardening because to spark blooming you do not need to adjust the light cycle to simulate the shortening days of autumn. While you must incrementally shorten the light cycle for Sativas and Indicas, daylength is not an issue with autoflowers, as its name suggests. In case you flunked out of that noncredit course Marijuana 101 studied late at night in college dormitory rooms, you might not know that the flowers are the most potent part of this leafy green. That's what the hippies really meant by "flower power."

A bountiful harvest had long eluded me. Beginning in 1987, I tried to grow marijuana in the woodlands of the Connecticut College Arboretum in which I lived. Back then, no mail-order seed banks supplied you with seeds. Instead, you winnowed them out from your black-market stash. Seeds were abundant because legendary sinsemilla (Spanish for "without seed") was sought for but seldom found. Smuggled over long hauls and under adverse conditions, those seeds suffered the maladies of old age, so yielded low germination rates.

Starting indoors, I sprouted some rare hearty seedlings, then transplanted them into the great outdoors. I pioneered garden beds with southern exposure where meadows bordered forests. Weeks ahead of planting, I mixed in organic fertilizer, allowing time for the raccoons and possums and skunks to dig up the soil when they followed their noses to something that smelled appetizing. Rabbits grazed upon my few seedlings. Deer browsed upon my fewer saplings. Posing as a nature photographer with a tripod balanced on my shoulder, I carried in water in a backpack. Summer after summer, my plants never ripened into flower. All I ever got to harvest was a handful of seven-fingered leaves. After five years of guerilla gardening, I gave up.

I achieved my first successful harvest of flowering buds in 2021, when I grew autoflowers by following Jeff's advice for indoor gardening. In addition, I exposed my potted plants to direct sunlight by moving them onto my backyard deck where they were hidden from my inquisitive human neighbors, as not to offend their sensibilities. By sundown, I moved them indoors to protect them from the coolness of night and from my marauding wildlife neighbors.

In the midst of my second crop, I was ready for a book to keep me going. Published just in time before my second harvest, that book is Ed Rosenthal's *Cannabis Grower's Handbook* (Quick American Publishing, 2021, 736 pages, \$45 for the paperback, \$19 for the eBook).

Ed's earlier *Marijuana Grower's Handbook*, first published in 1974, has been revised and rerevised, mostly recently in 2010. For 2021, his magnum opus was updated, enlarged, and retitled, *Cannabis Grower's Handbook*.

"Marijuana" hails from the dark times of pot prohibition. "Cannabis" belongs to the happy times of plant liberation. During pot prohibition, Ed even went to jail for his horticultural activities, thus anointing him with street creds that few other writers about cannabis can claim.

Widely acclaimed as the guru of cannabis cultivation, Ed has authored many books. His magnum opus was published in late October. An encyclopedic tome, it is not to be read from cover to cover, no more than you might read any single volume of a twenty-volume encyclopedia. Rather, depending upon your immediate needs, you first consult the table of contents or the index, and then proceed to a passage here and another page there. If you have any questions or problems, Ed has the answers and solutions. But first you must know enough to ask some questions or to recognize any problems.

The first-time grower should not buy Ed's new book. Not yet, anyway. You will barely know where to start reading, so will not likely know how to start growing. The weakness of Ed's book bolsters Jeff's book's strength. In preparation for my third crop that I will wait to sow this spring, I will be reading parts of Ed's exhaustive texts this winter. Also this winter, I will be enjoying the harvests from my first and second crops.

Mark Mathew Braunstein provided in-person testimony in support of Connecticut's medical marijuana bills at seven of the eight public hearings held from 1997 until its passage into law in 2012. He is the author of five previous books on health, food, and drugs, including Microgreen Garden and Sprout Garden. His latest book, Mindful Marijuana Smoking: Health Tips for Cannabis Smokers, is forthcoming July 2022. As a paraplegic since 1990, his use of cannabis is medicinal for below the waist and is recreational above. You can read his many articles and editorials about cannabis and medical marijuana at www.MarkBraunstein.Org



The author and his first crop.

Andrew Clyde Bell photo.

The Sacred Begins

By Judy Davis

As a Native descendant, the sacred begins when I listen to the echoes of Ha'na, my great-great grandmother.

Her language was of the stars, and it is in the gently falling rain.

A good wind is our road, whistling through the deep satisfaction of being me.

I run on the rise of each day, upon the road she once walked upon.

Her memory is a song, which creates anew.

I am in the circle of connection, and I feast on my life!

An Explanation:

The 2021 McDonald's Boycott

By Calen Nakash

Given the diverse nature of the internet, you've probably not heard of the trending "\$25 or Walk" slogan aimed at the fast food company McDonald's. Despite making almost \$20 billion in 2020, McDonald's still tends to pay its workers as little as it can get away with. In Australia, McDonald's pays its workers \$21 an hour (converted to U.S. dollars). In Denmark, McDonald's workers receive \$22 per hour, but that was only made possible by strong-arming the company through unionization. The same was true in Australia, which has a strong union force. But workers in countries without strong unions face an uphill battle, which is why the McDonald's boycott took off.

There's another reason for the sudden interest in McDonald's, however. The hope is if McDonald's ups its wages, so will other companies. Workers have been fighting for a \$15 minimum wage for so long that while states like Connecticut are slowly rolling it out, a \$15 minimum wage is now obsolete. If rents had risen with inflation, the minimum wage would be \$26 an hour, but at \$15 you're unlikely to afford rent, let alone the houses some people can afford, without finding multiple roommates.

The goliath McDonald's is not going out of business by paying workers a living wage in Denmark and Australia. On the contrary, it is still making money hand over fist. Focusing on goliaths who can afford to pay a living wage will normalize paying that wage faster than trying to get anything passed in an ever-changing Congress with members of an insurrection still on the payroll.

By the way, a permanent position in Denmark includes benefits like four weeks paid leave and two weeks paid sick leave, which are unheard of in the United States. And despite propaganda about "worker shortages," companies are turning away workers in droves, according to one source.

In terms of what the battle entails, the subreddit r/antiwork has some guidelines. (A subreddit is one of the online communities that make up the social media website Reddit.) Antiwork—which, contrary to its name, fights for living working conditions, workers' rights, and the autonomy to leave abusive jobs—recommends that anyone who wants to be a part of this movement apply to work at McDonald's, ask for a \$25 wage, and walk away when told no. Other than that, it suggests giving a cash tip to McDonald's workers with a slip that says "reddit.com/qtqzun," which is a link that will take them directly to the r/antiwork post about McDonald's. Most importantly, it warns against talking down to employees—"they are the ones we are fighting for."

The idea is to starve McDonald's of workers, to use social media to let the company know why this has happened, and to force it to pay what it already does in other countries. It's important to make a higher minimum wage the standard before inflation makes even that obsolete.

Finally, it's also important to note that while behemoth companies have power, word of mouth can be just as important as direct action. I counted three McDonald's ads on one page of the image-sharing site Imgur after that site was bought up by the giant holding company MediaLab. The ads, for Crispy Chicken Sandwiches, were placed next to user-generated content, which is the reason I go to the site. If users start removing their posts, the movement could gain traction. It took a long battle to gain living wages in Denmark. Let's start it here, before it's too late.

Neighbors
Locally Written
Locally Wread



WINDHAM UNITED TO SAVE OUR HEALTHCARE COALITION

A Local Nativity Story...

By Phoebe C. Godfrey

It is the darkest night of the year, when only a single star burns brightly in the unending winter sky. The cold makes Maria grasp her hands around her blue coat that just barely covers her enlarged and clearly pregnant belly, while her husband Jose manipulates his stiff and cold fingers on his phone to call a taxi. The young couple had had plans to visit family in North Windham but as Maria was getting dressed her water unexpectedly broke. Their baby was not due for another three weeks at which time they had planned to borrow her uncle's car, not owning one themselves, but most babies come on their own time and theirs is no exception.



Waiting for the taxi that never seems to come, the young and now very cold soon to be parents had not long ago arrived in Connecticut, having been granted asylum from religious persecution in their own lands, which they can longer call 'home'. Finally, the taxi arrives and not giving it a second thought they tell the driver in their broken English to drive as quickly as possible to the closest hospital, which is Windham. As they speed down Prospect Street they feel a sense of calm yet palpable excitement knowing that in no time they will be in good hands and able to have their baby in a place that is close to three family members who will soon be visiting their newborn. With great relief the taxi pulls into the emergency room drop off and Jose helps Maria out of the car as any movement is a challenge. Rushing in as best they can, the couple are confronted at the desk with the incomprehensible news that there are no longer any maternity services at this hospital. Thinking that it is his lack of English comprehension, Jose repeats that his wife Maria is having a baby and needs a room now. Once again the attendant says that they will have to travel to Manchester Hospital, 30 minutes away, but that they can provide transportation in an ambulance. Not having insurance and knowing this will add cost to their delivery expenses, Jose asks again if they cannot just stay there, as travelling to Manchester will be expensive.

Yet while all this is going on, Marias' contractions have alarmingly begun and so the ambulance is summoned and the anxious couple are urged to get in as it seems their baby is truly on its way. In fact, their baby, whose name

is to be none other than *Jésus*, is so eager to be born that he does not wait until arriving at Manchester but rather is born on Rt. 6 in an ambulance headed in the direction of the one bright star burning in the winter solstice night sky. Thus, like his namesake he is not born in an ideal place or time and his well-being and that of his mother have been put at risk but unlike him, his three family members who had wanted to come to Windham hospital bearing gifts cannot easily make it to Manchester, at least not on this exceptionally cold night.

The first version of this nativity story is said to have happened over 2000 years ago, and yet the proposed similarities force us to ask why is it that in 2021 our own local baby Jesus can no longer be safely born in his own town, at his own hospital, surrounded by his own loving family? The answer we are told is that Windham, now owned by Hartford HealthCare, NEEDS to close its maternity services after 100 years of safely delivering babies because it can no longer afford to keep trained staff. Yet such an answer invites another question and that is why the health and safety of people like Maria, Jose and little Jesus are being compromised even as its top officials all gross salaries and benefits in the millions. Additionally, how can Hartford HealthCare claim to value the health and healing of those in its community if it chooses to end previously successful maternity and reproductive services at one of its acquired hospitals? In my opinion, and that of many others in our community, the answer is that it can not. Thus, it is up to us to hold Hartford HealthCare accountable, as those who put cost analysis above the suffering of others, in this case 'the innocents', will continue if we who value reproductive justice do nothing. And so, if you have ever been touched by the original nativity story, or if this new version has moved your heart, especially at this time of the year when all like to claim that the first version brought us a child who would bring peace and good will to all, then please get involved and make your voice heard so that our maternity care can be kept local- for that is where our babies have been and should continue to be born.

For more information see:

<https://www.facebook.com/pages/category/Cause/Windham-United-to-Save-our-Healthcare-116068236895552/>

Windham Mill Museum December Events

Submitted by Chelsey Knyff

Nov. 27- Jan. 2: "Trees, Traditions & Tiny Treasures." Glenn Martineau displays his whimsical breadbox dioramas amid decorated holiday trees and ethnic and religious traditions at The Mill Museum, 411 Main St., Willimantic. Explore holiday celebrations and the transformation of not only our first, but also our second and third floors with cheer and traditions galore. Fridays, Saturdays & Sundays 10 a.m. - 4 p.m.

December 4,5 & 11,12: 10am-4pm. Holiday Shop. Support local artisans and The Mill Museum in 1 stop at the Holiday Shop! Shop will be hosted in Dugan Hall, 157 Union Street in Willimantic, CT.

December 11th, 1pm: Mill of the Month, Rossie Velvet Mill. Discover the rich history of velvet manufac-

turing in Willimantic in a brisk but short walking tour from the Mill Museum to view the exterior of the former Rossie Velvet Manufacturing building. \$10 Cash, meet at the Mill Museum, 411 Main Street Willimantic, CT.

December 18-24th: 10am-9pm: Gift Wrapping Fundraiser. Come get your gifts wrapped in the East Brook Mall for just a donation! We are also looking for volunteers! Email themillmuseum@gmail.com for more info.

December 18, 10am-1pm: Drop-in Spinning Bee with Peggy Church. 10 a.m.-1 p.m. The Mill Museum's Dugan Hall, 3 Union St., Willimantic. Stop by and bring your wheel. Vaccinations required. All skill levels and visitors are welcome. Free admission. For information, directions, or just to let us know you're coming, email peggychurch@earthlink.net.

December 18th, 2pm. Teddy Bear Tea Kid's Club. Bring your Bear to the Mill Museum for a Holiday party. Discover that Americans celebrate many traditions that come from all around the world. Includes craft and Pinata. Masks and distancing are required. Free, donations appreciated. Held in Dugan Hall, 3 Union Street Willimantic, CT.

December 21st, 7pm. Merry Un-Christmas Virtual Celebration. Come all ye scrooges! Learn how the early European settlers of New England treated the holiday of Christmas, and how the Puritans handled this new merry affair in a not-so merry way. \$12 for members and \$15 for non-members. Sign up online at <https://millmuseum.org/tours-events/>.



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The Packing House – An Intimate Listening Room!

By EC-CHAP

December

*"I heard a bird sing in the dark of December.
A magical thing. And sweet to remember.
We are nearer to Spring than we were in September.
I heard a bird sing in the dark of December."
- Henry David Thoreau*

Here we are... shortly coming to the end of another year. We hope you enjoyed a restful Thanksgiving, and look forward to all the magic and festivities the Holiday Season brings. As we look back and reflect upon the past year, we remain grateful to all those who have provided support and continue to believe on our mission.

EC-CHAP continues to take necessary COVID precautions to provide a safe and enjoyable experience – maintaining a 50% capacity, mask requirement, social distanced tables, and sign-in should contact tracing be required.

We conclude 2021 with the following performances and events:

Saturday, December 4th: EC-CHAP Acoustic Artist Series – Singer/Songwriter Tracy Walton (Folk/Indie). Doors 7:00pm / Performance 7:30pm

Wednesday, December 8th: EC-CHAP Talent Showcase (2nd Wednesday of the month). Call to be placed on the schedule: 518-791-9474. Doors 6:30pm / Performance 7:00pm

Thursday, December 9th: EC-CHAP Information Exchange Meeting 5:00pm

Thursday, December 16th: EC-CHAP Film Screening – "It's A Wonderful Life" (PG) 1946. Doors 6:30pm / Screening 7:00pm

Saturday, December 18th: EC-CHAP Jazz Series – An Evening with Grammy Nominated Artist, Nicole Zuraitis (Contemporary Jazz). Doors 7:00pm / Performance 7:30pm

Advance tickets may purchased online or cash at the door. With the recent dynamic conditions, we strongly suggest checking our website for performance updates and cancellations www.thepackinghouse.us/upcoming. Advance tickets purchased for any performance or event that is cancelled will be promptly refunded.

Please consider participating in our monthly Talent Showcase the 2nd Wednesday of every month (October – May). Call to be placed on the schedule: 518-791-9474. Not performing – no problem - simply join us to see and hear local and regional creatives sharing their talent.

EC-CHAP continues to seek new volunteers! We need folks that may possess video production, photographic, and social media experience; as well as those that would just like to lend a helping hand. If you are interested in learning how you may be able to assist, please contact our Volunteer Coordinator, Julie Engelke, at: volunteer@ec-chap.org

We leave you with the following:

*"I heard the bells on Christmas Day.
Their old, familiar carols play,
and wild and sweet the words repeat
of peace on earth, good-will to men!"
- Henry Wadsworth Longfellow*

Happy Holidays!
EC-CHAP Board

DECEMBER 2021

"Tracy Walton Solo Performance (Indie/Folk). Saturday, December 4th, 7:30pm.



TRACY WALTON wears many musical hats: Singer songwriter, bassist, producer, author, and studio owner. He has toured the country with various groups including most recently the duo Belle of the Fall. Tracy has also played bass with David Bromberg, and Vernon Reid among others.

Tracy's 4th solo album, *Small Town America* has just been released (summer 2021). He also produces albums for artists at his studio, On Deck Sound Studio, in Northfield CT. Tickets: \$20.00 online / \$25.00 Cash at the door.

EC-CHAP Talent Showcase. Wednesday, December 8th, 7:00pm (2nd Wednesday of the month)



Acoustic musicians, film makers, poets, comedians, jugglers, puppeteers, and creative artists of all ages are invited to perform at The Packing House. Here is an opportunity to showcase your work in an intimate historic setting before a live audience. Test ideas and concepts and solicit feedback. PA / sound reinforcement, video projection, and up to 3 microphones provided (Please - No full drum kits unless prior arrangements have been made). Call to be placed on the schedule: 518-791-9474. Free Admission - Donations graciously accepted.

EC-CHAP Film Series: "It's A Wonderful Life" (PG) 1946. Thursday, December 16th, 7:00pm



This seasonal classic has been an EC-CHAP tradition with a screening each Holiday Season since 2016. Unfortunately we missed 2020 due to COVID-19, but

we're back to share this gem in a time that seems quite appropriate.

It's A Wonderful Life (PG) was written by Frances Goodrich and Albert Hackett; and directed by Frank Capra. Starring James Stewart, Donna Reed, and Lionel Barrymore. "An angel helps a compassionate but despairingly frustrated businessman by showing what life would have been like if he never existed." (IMDb).

Join us for the 4th annual showing of this Holiday classic "It's A Wonderful Life" (1946) at The Packing House. Suggested Donation \$5.00

"An Evening with Grammy nominee Nicole Zuraitis". Saturday, December 18th, 7:30pm.

Grammy® nominated NICOLE ZURAITIS is a New York-based vocalist, pianist, and songwriter who took home the Gold Medal and Ben Tucker Jazz Award in the 2021 American Traditions Competition. The musical chameleon brings her signature warmth and outstanding vocals to various genres and styles, as demonstrated on her newest multi-hyphenate album, *All Wandering Hearts* (DotTime Records). As a bandleader, a recording artist, and the premiere vocalist of the world-famous Birdland Big Band and Dan Pugach Nonet, Nicole has established herself as a staple on the New York City jazz scene and has made a significant mark on the global modern jazz landscape.



In 2019, Nicole's career blossomed when she and her husband, renowned drummer and bandleader Dan Pugach, were dually nominated for a Grammy® for their arrangement of Dolly Parton's "Jolene." Nicole graces the stages at both the iconic Birdland Jazz Club and Greenwich Village's 55 Bar monthly. Before Covid, she toured extensively nationally and internationally. She was named in the top 40 under 40 for 2020 in Connecticut Magazine, and her weekly live stream during the Covid 19 crisis "Virtual Piano Lounge" was featured in Forbes in October 2020.

Nicole has collaborated with such luminaries as Cyrille Aimee, Thana Alexa, Dave Stryker, Livingston Taylor, Tom Chapin, Omar Hakim, Melanie Safka, Helen Sung, and Bernard Purdie. She is a proud educator and teaches jazz and songwriting worldwide, with highlights including Berklee College of Music, NYU, SAM in India, The Australian Embassy, and the Lithuanian Consulate. Nicole is currently pursuing her Masters of Business Administration from LSUS and loves to rescue and rehabilitate pit bulls with her husband, Dan. For more information, visit www.nicolezmusic.com. Tickets: \$25.00 online / \$30.00 at the door.

Tickets, Reservations, CANCELLATIONS, and Contact

Tickets for all shows and program registrations are available for purchase online at www.thepackinghouse.us/upcoming; or may be purchased at the door (cash only) the day of the event. Unless otherwise specified, doors open 30-minutes prior to show time.

Unless specified otherwise, all performances will feature EC-CHAP's Exclusive Bring Your Own Beverage & Food "BYOB&F"™ model - wine & beer only (Not applicable to Meetings, School Programs). Snacks and soft drinks will also be available. You can also bring your paid ticket to Willington Pizza House (or WP Too) for eat-in or take-out the night of the show and receive 15% off your meal purchase.

If you're feeling sassy, SPECIFICALLY ask for "The Packing House" pizza! You won't go wrong. Visit www.thepackinghouse.us for the secret recipe.

Program cancellations will be listed on the EC-CHAP website (www.ec-chap.org), and The Packing House website (www.thepackinghouse.us). If you're unsure, just call (518-791-9474).

The Packing House is located at The Mill Works, 156 River Road, Willington, CT 06279. Parking is free and located across the street with limited onsite parking. For questions, program or rental information, please call 518-791-9474. Email EC-CHAP (info@ec-chap.org).

A Way to Study Trends in Popular Music

By Calendula

The Billboard Hot 100 chart contains songs that seem impossible to get away from. You hear them on the radio, at bars, in clubs, or filtering through the air from car stereos or shops as you walk down a street. They are songs that have captured the attention of massive audiences and signify an artist's "success." The chart for the Hot 100 has been published weekly since August 4th, 1958 and is archived on Billboard's website.

This thorough documentation of the most popular songs in the United States offers an incredibly valuable resource for music information retrieval (MIR). Simply, MIR is the interdisciplinary science of retrieving data from music. This is an area studied by computational musicologists as well as computer scientists.

Pair this long-standing archive of the Billboard top 100, with the open-source Spotify Web API, and one is able to determine a wealth of information about American popular music over the course of the past sixty years. Spotify, the popular music streaming service, categorizes and classifies songs on a number of acoustic features, and this information is all open source. For a course I took during my university studies, my classmate and I used Spotify's audio analysis features of danceability, energy, valence (mood), tempo, and loudness, and the top 40 songs of Billboard's Hot 100, to attempt answer the following questions: What are common audio characteristics of the top 40 songs? Can we identify any seasonal patterns in popular music? Can we identify any trends in the top 40 based on the selected audio features, over the past sixty years?

The research was conducted using a variety of coding tools – I won't bore you with those details, but through the analysis of the data, matching the songs from the top charts to their corresponding data features as classified by Spotify, we were able to draw some conclusions. Partially about popular music, and partially about Spotify's classification system. In total, 27,162 unique songs were gathered, and 21,870 songs could be identified by the Spotify API. The top 40 songs in the dataset consist of 10,743 unique songs.

Although the description of popular music as generally high energy, danceable, and happy, may seem obvious, our data supported it. Further investigation into this topic could lead to research which might be successful in predicting the top songs – an interesting subject in musicology and the music industry as a whole.

Our research was also able to find a seasonal trend in valence. You can view a visual representation of the data on the chart, "Seasonality for Valence." There is an observ-



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Artist-In-Residence: Music

able increase in valence from January to August each year, and then an observable decrease from August to December. These results might suggest that people generally prefer happier music from spring to summer, and more serious music from fall to winter. This pattern makes sense, as winter is a time of lower energy, cold weather, etc. – features which can affect a person's outlook or mood.

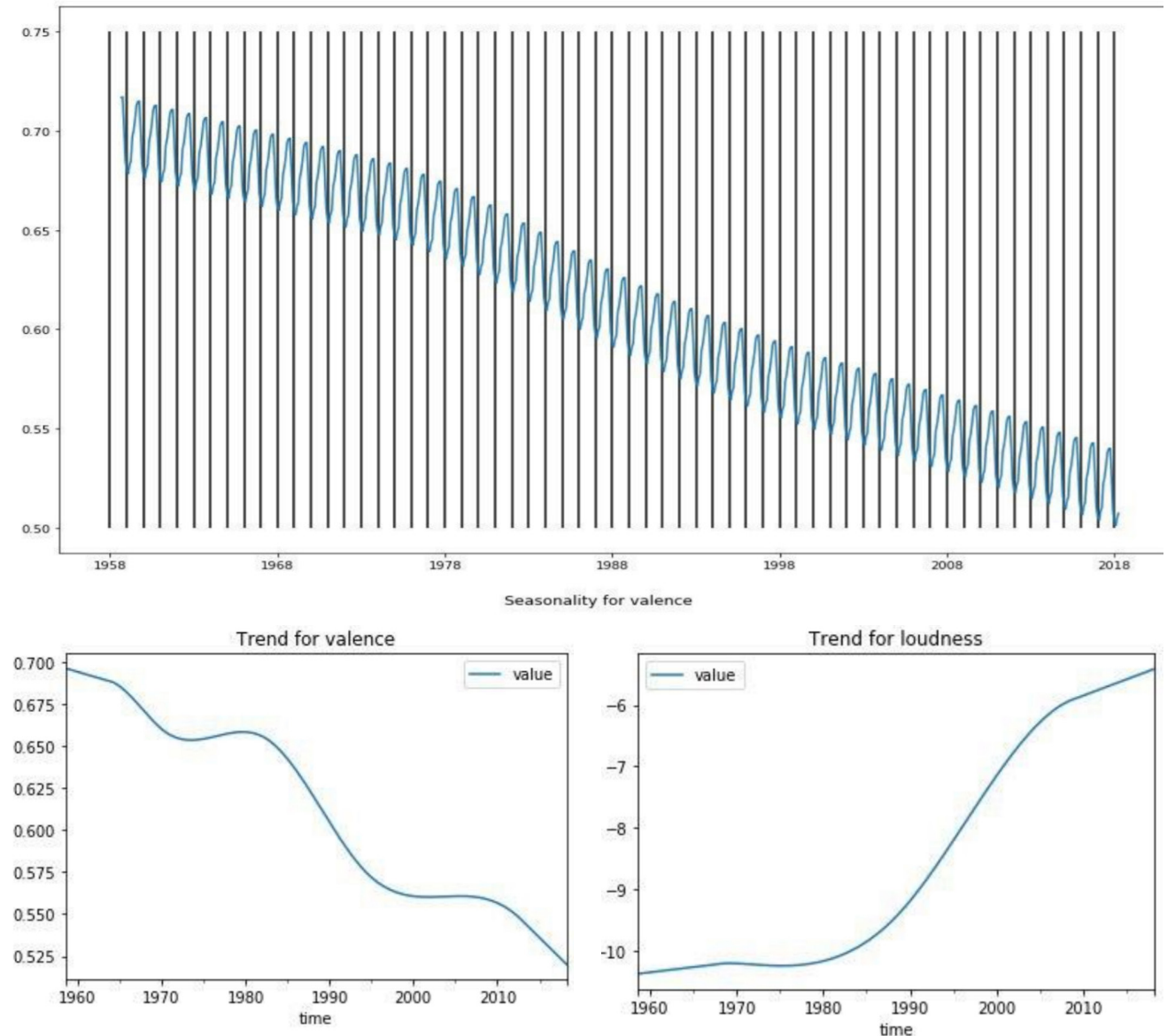
With regard to the general trends in overall audio features over time, we observed that valence decreased, danceability increased, energy increased, loudness increased, and there was a general increase in tempo from 1995 to 2018. In a nutshell, over time, popular music has gotten less happy, but more danceable, energetic, loud, and fast.

However, these results are just according to our little study. Before we go saying anything so conclusive, we should also be aware of other factors that might have affected our results. One big factor to consider is how Spotify's classification system works. For example, we noticed

that songs that are loud, with little dynamic range, were classified as low valence by Spotify (see the data represented on the charts "Trend for Loudness" and "Trend for Valence"). However, modern mixing and mastering practices have increased the overall loudness of popular music and decreased the dynamic range as well. This decrease in the dynamic range could be affecting the valence negatively, not because the song is serious, but just because it's loud. This means that even though our research says songs have gotten less happy overall since the 1960s, that might not actually be true.

Increases in technology, along with the wealth of data that's been documented and made accessible by institutions like Billboard and Spotify, make research like this possible. I wonder what other analyses will be able to be conducted, as these data archives continue to grow.

Abigail Golec is an Artist-In-Residence (music discipline) at EC-CHAP, advancing her singer-songwriter project under the musical moniker Calendula. Abigail can be reached at: AIR-Music@ec-chap.org



The Positive Impacts of Finding New Homes for Old Goods

By Virginia Walton, Mansfield Recycling Coordinator

Here is a statistic that might be surprising. 42% of greenhouse gas emissions in the United States comes from the products we consume. That is everything from food to building materials to clothing to office supplies to cell phones. In the life of a product, material extraction, mining and harvesting is where most of the greenhouse gas emissions and pollution is made. For every one pound of trash we toss out, there is an estimated 70 pounds of waste that was made in the products creation. Knowing this can inform our decisions. Reuse avoids the greatest climate, resource and pollution impacts. Reuse benefits all of us. Refurbishing and repairing expands our skillfulness and creativity. Shopping second-hand can be an adventure. Donating or selling gently used items can connect us to our community.

Before tossing out a gently used item, consider the outlets for donation that are available in our region. On Facebook,

there are Buy Nothing groups, tag sale groups and the Marketplace. Locally there is the Windham Area Interfaith Ministry, located at 866 Main St, Willimantic, 860-456-7270 and Goodwill at 232A Tolland Turnpike, Manchester, 860-643-2709.

For Mansfield Residents there is the Mansfield Swap Shop



Tucked in the back corner of the Mansfield Transfer Station recycle building is an area where Mansfield residents can

shop for small household items for free.

Donations from Mansfield residents await a new life in the swap shop. Residents do not need to donate items to take items. Dedicated volunteers pre-screen donations before setting them out for display and are marvels at keeping the swap shop organized. In the swap shop you will find a holiday table, athletic equipment, a craft corner, kitchen items, games and puzzles, books, stuffed animals, electronics and more.

There are some guidelines for donations. There is no charge for first box (16" x 20" x 11") of items that are in good condition. Subsequent boxes charged \$2.00 per box.

Items that are accepted at the swap shop:
Clean items needing no repair
Small items (what one person can handle)

Must be workable (no missing or damaged parts)
Children's clothing
Electronics

Items that are not accepted at the swap shop include items needing parts such as a coffee maker without the pot or a puzzle missing pieces, dirty items (clean it



and it becomes a welcome donation!), skis, ski boots, golf clubs, knives, record albums, hazardous chemicals or cleaning products and paint. If you have furniture to pass on, please call Willimantic Area Interfaith Ministry at 860-456-7270. Adult clothing should be donated to Salvation Army or Bay State Textiles. Hazardous chemicals such as adhesives or cleaners should be taken to the regional chemical waste drop-off facility in Willington.

Character-driven versus Plot-driven

By Felix F. Giordano

All stories have characters and all stories have plots. Without characters, we would have no back and forth discourse, behaviors, sympathy, disgust, or identification with characters' feelings and moods. We need characters to provide us with an assessment on how they perceive the events that occur in the story. Without plots, stories would weave in and out of relevance with no point to the story. We need plots to follow where and how a story begins and how it proceeds toward its eventual conclusion.

The point of this discussion is to identify if a story is character-driven, as defined by a character(s) determining how the story unfolds, or if a story is plot-driven, where the plot becomes the vehicle that drags the characters along for the ride. We will see how they can each be very different but still reach a satisfying conclusion to the story. It can sometimes be confusing to us when determining whether to write a character-driven or plot-driven story. It is an important element for every writer to decide whether what they intend to write is to be driven by the character or the plot.

In a character-driven novel or short story the protagonist or antagonist grows in maturity or stature, develops their personality, rights a wrong, or even wrongs a right. This enables the characters to discover something about themselves through the course of their experiences. They usually become a very different person by the end of the story and their personal development or degradation becomes the main focus whether it is physical, emotional, or ethical. Character-driven stories are meant to grab us and make us feel as if we're the protagonist. If it's effective in doing that we experience the joy, sorrow, and sometimes even the epiphany that the characters confront.

Here are a few tips in writing a character-driven story. Your protagonist needs to have a history that you can utilize to illustrate his or her personality, phobias, desires, motives, or behavior. The history could be as elemental as recovering from an injury or as unique as participating in the witness protection program. Conflict is a necessary element of any story and how your protagonist responds to that conflict will determine their character development. My writing professor once told our class that without conflict you have no story.

Show your readers the evolution that your protagonist goes through. Make your protagonist involved in the story and not simply a casual observer. Have him or her treat the conflict more like a private investigator than a newspaper reporter. And it's a good point to have your protagonist verbalize aspects of the conflict with other characters and even physically respond to the conflict rather than keeping it internalized. However, be cautious when having your protagonist say or do things that don't fit with their personality or background. Think hard and fast of the optics before having your bookworm protagonist capture a gang of bank robbers or a highly decorated hardened military veteran get embarrassed by the neighborhood teenage bully.

In a plot-driven story you still have the protagonist/antagonist relationship but instead of either one or both of them learning about themselves or becoming a different person; an event, a challenge, or a goal is the all-important objective in the story. The characters are minor in comparison to the fulfillment of the plot. In a plot-driven story the characters could be nameless or even faceless since they are abstract pinups in a tapestry of action, intrigue, or destruction.

Any development of a plot-driven story expressively needs an outline. That is the only way a writer can effectively develop the plot, stick to it, and finalize it. A plot-driven story needs conflict, action, plot twists, red herrings, cliffhangers, foreshadowing, and other techniques. Keep your readers guessing and make the plot so engaging that the reader wants to keep turning the pages. A good plot-driven story uses the different elements in the plot to weave the story together. Make the plot appear to be going in one direction and then make something happen that the reader doesn't expect but then realizes the clues were there all along. *Murder on the Orient Express* is a good example of a plot-driven story with information embedded in the plot that often goes unseen by the reader until it hits them square in the face later on in the story.

Notice the difference between how I described character-driven and plot-driven. The emphasis on character-driven stories is people, while plot-driven stories place occurrences as the glue that keeps the story flowing. In a character-driven story we can become emotionally involved with the characters and immersed in their happiness or sorrow. In a plot-driven story we simply read in awe at what transpires.

Both techniques can be real page turners and any book can have both elements. A character-driven story can have a complex plot but our main interest is in the characters and how they respond to each other and what may influence their decisions to take action. A plot-driven story can have compelling characters but our curiosity is to see how the story evolves as the plot thickens. In the course of literature and even in film, character-driven and plot driven stories abound.

Let's take the film industry for examples of character-driven and plot driven stories. Two good examples of character-driven stories are the biographical films *Pride of the Yankees* and *Gandhi*. They each show their protagonist's life, the greatness they achieved, their challenges, and why they will be remembered throughout eternity for the lives they lived. Other examples of character-driven films are *Back to the Future*, *Avatar*, *Jaws*, *Casablanca*, and *North by Northwest*. In each of these films the protagonist evolves. In contrast, plot-driven films are usually action films where any character's development is secondary to the progression of the plot. Examples are any Godzilla film, *Jurassic Park*, *Blade Runner*, and *No Country for Old Men*. In each of these films most of the characters are secondary to the ultimate progression of the plot. One big difference between these two types is that in character-driven stories we never know what the protagonist may do or what may happen to him or her. That is because people are inherently unpredictable especially under duress. In plot-driven stories, we can often guess where the plot is going or what may happen. At the very least we have an idea of two different scenarios, good will conquer all or evil will persist.

When you compose a character-driven story write it as if you are that character. When something occurs in your story, try to mentally experience how that character would feel and what they may be going through. You may find that your character begins to say and do things that you didn't expect. The character takes over and the story begins to write itself. That's when the creative part of your brain takes over. If you remember the film *Romancing the Stone*, in the beginning of the movie Kathleen Turner's character is a successful romance author writing a novel. She is so immersed in her writing and her characters that she becomes an emotional wreck over the novel's ending, breaks down, and cries. That's how connected we must become to our characters. We must capture that passion so that what they do seems real and we experience their emotions even if only in our minds for just a fleeting moment or two.

When composing a plot-driven story, figuratively place yourself in the middle of every scene. Try to envision the plot evolving right around you. Use your imagination. Let the scene play out in your mind. Again, if you can immerse yourself into the story, it will write itself.

We defined "Character-driven versus Plot-driven" as part of The Elements of Writing, and I hope I've piqued your interest in writing. Storytelling is inherent in us all. It is who we are as social human beings and we all have stories to tell.

Felix F. Giordano is a local author with books sales in excess of 7,000 and has had more than 4 million pages of his books read by Amazon Kindle Unlimited subscribers. His website is jbnovels.com.

Mr. Giordano also chairs a Saturday writers group and a monthly lecture series at the Willington Public Library. Please call (860) 429-3854 for more information.

Next Month's Topic: Turning Point

Read the Neighbors paper on your desktop, laptop, tablet or smartphone. Go to neighborspaper.com for link to current and past editions. All in beautiful COLOR!

Common Sense Car Care

By Rick Ostien

This month's article starts on a sad note. This last month we had the passing of a local independent repair facility owner. The reality of life makes you stop and think about how precious the time we have on earth is. This month please take some time to reflect on your own life and the positive things, not the negative.

The holiday months are here and so is the cold weather. New England weather reminds us again that if you don't prepare for winter driving you will be stuck out in the cold.

All drivers should have the good common sense to warm up their vehicles, allow a little extra time to travel, and for heaven's sake stop the talking on a cell phone during stormy conditions. The phrase common sense eludes many people as they go about the tasks of daily life. These tasks often are the cause of distractions and accidents. To everyone drive defensively.

I have heard the excuse, I'm too busy or I don't have time to service or bring my vehicle in for an existing problem. The automotive repair industry has made many changes to accommodate your busy schedule. The availability of rental cars, pick-up and delivery of your vehicle, and shuttle service are just some examples of what many repair facilities now provide their customers. Most people can't afford a large repair bill that could have been avoided if the problem was addressed earlier.

SUVs, vans, and light trucks have become a very large percentage of the vehicles on our highways. The false security these vehicles provide has caused many mishaps during the winter. The last couple of months we have seen all sorts of advertisements marketing this kind of automobile. The TV ad starts off with a proud owner of a brand new all wheel drive vehicle plowing through mounds of snow, passing plow trucks, and even towing a police car up a hill. This sort of marketing targets sales and sales only. The problem with this type of advertisement is that some people actually think they can drive like this. Most of the drivers in the ads are professionals and have spent a lot of time learning to deal with these types of conditions. We also need to remember that they can edit anything they film. What you see may not be what you actually get. I would encourage you to use common sense because I might just be the other driver you meet on the road.

The price of gas or fuel has continued to climb. The rule to keep your tank full in the winter is becoming a large expense for the average driver. One thing you might try is to fill your tank and then every time you use a quarter of a tank, refill it. The cost won't be as high and you'll head off rust and water contamination. The cost of replacing a rusted tank or repairing a fuel system is a lot more expensive than the price of gas.

The last thing I would suggest is to have your tires inspected for wear and correct tire pressure. This is the time of year your tires may not grip the road surface as well because of tread wear or problems with air pressure. Improper inflation can cause premature tire wear. It can also cause the vehicle to drift to the left or the right and give you an unstable feeling.

January, February, and March are coming. Be sure to service your vehicle, use common sense when you drive, and above all drive defensively. Stay warm and drive safely.

From all of us at Franc Motors, Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays!!

Voices of Concinnity Concert

Submitted by Sarah Kaufold, Artistic Director

"Concinnity by Candlelight" is a luminous program sung by Voices of Concinnity featuring a beautiful collection of contemplative holiday choral favorites. The concert concludes with an audience carol sing with Voices of Concinnity of songs chosen beforehand by our audience. There are two chances to enjoy this program live and in-person:

Sunday, December 4, 2021 at 7pm at Saint Ann's Church in Old Lyme, CT

Sunday, December 5, 2021 at 5pm at St. Peter's Church in Hebron, CT

The concert will feature Christmas and holiday songs such as "Love came down at Christmas" by Eleanor Daley, "In the bleak midwinter" by Gustav Holst, "Halcyon Days" by Melissa Dunphy, "In Bethlehem Above" by Yshanni Perinpanayagam, "The Waiting Sky" by Oliver Tarney, "Hymn to the Virgin" by Benjamin Britten, "Gabriel's Message" arr. by Jim Clements, and more. Tickets can be reserved here: <https://www.consonare-sing.org/concinnity-concerts>

Solar Today:

Questions and answers about solar in our community and beyond

By John Boiano

Honor Earth Day every day!

Greetings,

I invite you to join a peaceful revolution by simply changing how you buy your electricity.

PSA: Eversource announced another 21% delivery rate increase starting 1/1/22. The CT new net metering program also starts on January 1st, 2022. More on these topics next month!

This month's article is titled **"Buyer Beware – part 2"**. I will talk about Solar specific financing options.

Solar Financing Options:

Solar Specific Loan –

This is where a homeowner uses a solar finance company that has a partnership with a solar installation company. These loans offer as low as 1% interest and an interest free grace period where the federal tax credit of 26% rides interest free for up to 18 months (depending on the loan start date cycle). Loan periods are from 5 to 25 years. Some of the loans offer an option where if a homeowner sells their home before the end of the loan term, the new owner could choose to take over the existing loan payments instead of having to buy out or pay off the loan balance. Try that with your bank or credit union! This is an incredible option for the seller and the buyer of the home! All of these loans are simple principal where there is no penalty for paying off the loan early or applying more money to the principal.

Lease or Power Purchase Agreement-

Leases and PPA's are where a solar finance company invests in the solar infrastructure and charges a kilowatt rate to the homeowner. This is what the utility company does. They own the equipment and you pay for the power that the system they own delivers to your home.

I personally prefer PPA's over a leases any day of the week! Both offer the ability for a homeowner to transitioning to solar without any other financial obligation except to pay a monthly solar/electric bill at a reduced rate to what the utility charges.

With a PPA, you simply pay for the power that the panels produce each month just like the utility company but for a lot less. If for some reason the system goes down and doesn't produce, you don't get charged a fixed monthly fee such as you would in a lease. I love this because if the system goes down, it is in the solar finance companies best interest to get out and fix the system as fast as they can so they can start charging you again. "IF" a system goes down, a PPA financed system usually gets fixed WAY faster than a leased system. With a PPA, there are options to purchase the equipment after 5 years and annually after that at fair market value, which is a lot less than buying out a lease. If the home is sold, the new homeowner can either take over the monthly payments or purchase it at fair market value. Both are great options.

With a lease, you pay a set monthly fee for solar. If you sell the home, you can either transfer the payments to the new homeowner or buy out the system at what the remainder of your 25 year agreement would be. If you remain the homeowner for the term, leases usually do not offer a buy out option. If the system goes down, you still pay the monthly rate and then either yearly or every three years, there is a true-up and they would reimburse you for the down time.

In the end, a lease is more expensive than a PPA.



Homeowner loan or re-fi –

A homeowner secures their own loan to finance a solar installation. This option usually has a higher interest rate than a solar specific loan. It also does not offer an interest free grace period for the 26% federal tax credit. These loans have to be paid off when you sell your home.

Cash purchase -

A homeowner uses their own money to pay for a solar installation. Although some people do use their own money to pay for solar, this is the least used option.

Depending on if your home is eligible for solar or not, ANY of the above mentioned solar finance options are less expensive than staying with utility pricing.

If you're interested to learn more, please give me a call and I can go over the different options in greater detail with you.

Have I been Bamboozled? – A worthy repeat from last month!

It's VERY IMPORTANT to work with someone you trust and who is not pushing you to sign up.

One of the bad actor tactics companies use is that they will not show you proposal numbers without you first signing something. Guess what, if you sign something, you have signed a contract! I can't tell you the amount of times I've been working with a homeowner and they show me a proposal from another company and it is actually a legal binding contract for a solar system. If any solar rep makes you sign something before they show you accurate production numbers, cost of system and energy offset, they should be swiftly shown the door. It's a sleazy old school tactic that some use to get you to sign with them. Yeah, but don't worry... you can cancel at any time... Yikes!

You've been bamboozled if a solar company tells you that you have to sign something before they can show you a proposal.

I also see a lot of engineering designs that falsify shade readings to give a homeowner an impression that you are getting a better bang for your buck than what an honest tree shade reading shows.

You've been bamboozled if a solar company tells you that you're going to get better production value out of the solar system than any other quotes – Simply put, a tier 1 panel produces like a tier 1 panel, like a tier 1 panel etc.. A change of tree height will give you false production numbers. It's an old solar trick to make their company look better. Once the system is live it will not produce as they stated.

You've been bamboozled by a solar company if they say.... "Don't worry, you can cancel at any time!"

You've been bamboozled if a solar company tells you they are going to roll in a re-roof and it doesn't list the EXACT roof planes they are replacing and the cost of each on a line item.

You've been bamboozled if you click baited an online ad that says solar is FREE, no cost, free battery or re-roof, you get money back and NEW programs!

Keep it simple, keep it local.. Zen Solar

Next month I will cover the new Net Metering changes and Eversource's rate increases.

Until next month... ENJOY!

John Boiano 860-798-5692
john@zensolar.net www.zensolar.net

Friends, Neighbors and Sisters

By Bill Powers

I was always kidding my sister-in-law, who recently passed away, by saying: "You are my favorite sister-in-law" and she would always laughingly and quickly counter with: "Yah, but I'm your only sister-in-law." It turned out that way because I am the eldest of four children with three wonderful sisters. In difficult stressful times of trouble and sadness, they have always been there for me and my wife, just like my sister-in-law always had been. Judy is the name of one of my sisters.

"Judy! Judy! Judy!" is a quote sometimes incorrectly attributed to Cary Grant but now is assigned to impressionist Larry Storch who, while impersonating Cary Grant at a nightclub, acknowledged that Judy Garland was in the house. My wife and I fortunately, have three Judies in our lives and in order to avoid confusion we have named them: "Sister Judy"; "neighbor Judy"; and, "poet Judy." It actually works well for the respectful identifications of the individualities of these judies!

My "Sister Judy" is a loving woman who herself has experienced tremendous sadness due to the loss of her twenty-year-old son. She is compassionate and always seems to know not only what to say but also what to do to comfort and encourage someone who is grieving. My sister Eileen, who lost her husband to Cancer, is the first one at our door to console us. My sister Pat, who lives in Virginia, immediately offers us long-distance comfort of wonderful warm advice.

Our "neighbor Judy" and her husband Rob, living next door to us have always been extraordinarily helpful and caring in our times of need. Our friend "Poet Judy" provides helpful and wise perspective in such times while using her sensitive and insightful words that help to comprehend the situation in a meaningfully reflective way.

My wife and I are grieving for a family member who has recently died due to the slowly progressing and devastating effects of ALS, and at the same time to another member who suffered catastrophic injuries due to a motor vehicle accident.

In the past, all these friends, neighbors and sisters have given strength and wondrous healing blessings during difficult times of hurting. Bless their souls for reaching out to us with such compassion, kindness and love while comforting us through difficult times.

Bill Powers is a retired teacher and resides in Windham.



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Consider Cutting A Break For Folks With Autism and ADHD This Holiday Season

By Michelle Baughman



Holidays are extra stressful times for individuals with neurodivergent conditions like autism and ADHD. This is largely due to the miss-match between the ways in which neurotypical (NT) people like to celebrate the season and certain challenges inherent to neurodivergent conditions. For example, many of us have sensory sensitivities that make it very difficult to contend with the extra hype and commercialism of this time of year: Businesses and private homeowners alike adorn their homes and stores with bright colorful lights. Christmas music is played continuously everywhere one goes. Many stores stock up on strongly smelling cinnamon decorations or scented candles and department store employees squirt unsuspecting shoppers with potent perfumes and colognes which they are trying to hawk to passersby. Crowded stores and long checkout lines offend our proprioceptive, interoceptive, and olfactory senses and intrude upon our somatic-emotional interpersonal boundaries, causing our autonomic nervous system (ANS) to go into hyper arousal. The uncomfortable sensations of a hyper aroused ANS include racing heart rate, dry throat, shallow breathing, increased body temperature, and tunnel vision. In other words, PANIC! It takes all our cognitive resources to regulate our emotions to suppress the impulse to fight or flee. Then to top it all off, navigating busy parking lots demand even more cognitive functioning and emotional regulation on an already over-taxed nervous system.

Even if all this retail store hype can be successfully avoided by shopping online, there is still extra pressure from family, friends and co-workers to live up to the social expectations and to keep up the traditions of the season. Even on an average day, navigating social situations involves a great deal more cognitive energy for us than it does for neurotypicals, and it leaves us feeling exhausted and drained. (I explained this in detail in a previous article that can be found at <https://www.autismwellnessfoundation.org/post/why-autistic-friendships-should-not-be-measured-by-neurotypical-standards>). During the holidays there are so many more social obligations, and they are compacted into a few weeks, so that we do not get an opportunity to recover from one before we have to attend the next one. There are office parties at work, church bazars and cookie exchanges, kids school concerts to attend, holiday gatherings with friends or neighbors, relatives to visit (which often includes the added stress of traveling), or alternatively, hosting gatherings.

Hosting includes a whole other whirlwind of cognitive demands, nervous system bombardments, and energy expenditures because it means planning menus and shopping for ingredients (which are areas of executive dysfunction for us), the extra work cooking and cleaning (which exposes us to even more sensory stimulation from the smells of cooking food and the smell of cleaning supplies, the noise of vacuum cleaning, and the heat of a hot kitchen), and the cognitive demands of the multi-tasking that is so essential to meal preparation. (Multi-tasking requires working memory, which is another area of executive dysfunction for us).

Holidays also mean a departure from predictable routines. Routine are often a source of comfort to neurodivergent folks. Indeed, it is the very fact that we have something predictable to count upon that allows us to cope! And this disruption in routine is everywhere during

the holiday season: Visiting house guests cause changes at home. On the job, workload and schedules often change to accommodate co-workers vacation time off. Grocery stores rearrange aisles, so shopping becomes more challenging. Extra traffic at this time of year makes commute times longer. Even the time we look forward to winding down at the end of the day to watch TV is affected because regularly scheduled programs get cancelled so as to have special holiday shows. The frustration and disappointment caused by these changes is a source of internal stimulation that adds to the sensory overload and takes more effort to regulate our emotions.

Neurotypical (NT) people can take all of this in stride because their nervous systems are quite different from ours. NT brains do not register as much, nor as intense, environmental and internal stimuli as neurodivergent

vergent children and parents are often bullied and shamed by unenlightened family members who make comments about “lack of discipline” or “spoiling” or “indulging poor behavior” when they think we are not responding in ways that they think are appropriate because they do not understand our limitations. (Their brains, after all, are like the motorcyclist who wore the helmet with the face shield, and they assume that everyone is like them...they are completely unaware of all the extra stimuli our nervous systems have been bombarded with, so they have no patience or compassion for us). Then there is the most dismissive, disrespectful, gaslighting thing an NT can possibly say: “Oh, well, everybody is a little autistic, so buck up butter cup!” This is extremely emotionally and psychologically damaging to say to young or undiagnosed NDs because it leads them to believe that everyone experiences the same

WHY CHRISTMAS DOESN'T SUIT 'MY' AUTISM, BY ME, AN AUTISTIC TEENAGER

CHANGE IN ROUTINE FOR EVERYONE, and it's everywhere. Home, school, shops, restaurants, radio, TV... Everywhere!

SENSORY OVERLOAD, Extra lights, colour, decorations, music, new unusual smells & foods

EXCITEMENT FROM EVERYONE, whether I know them or not. Processing all of this, makes everyday life harder work than usual.

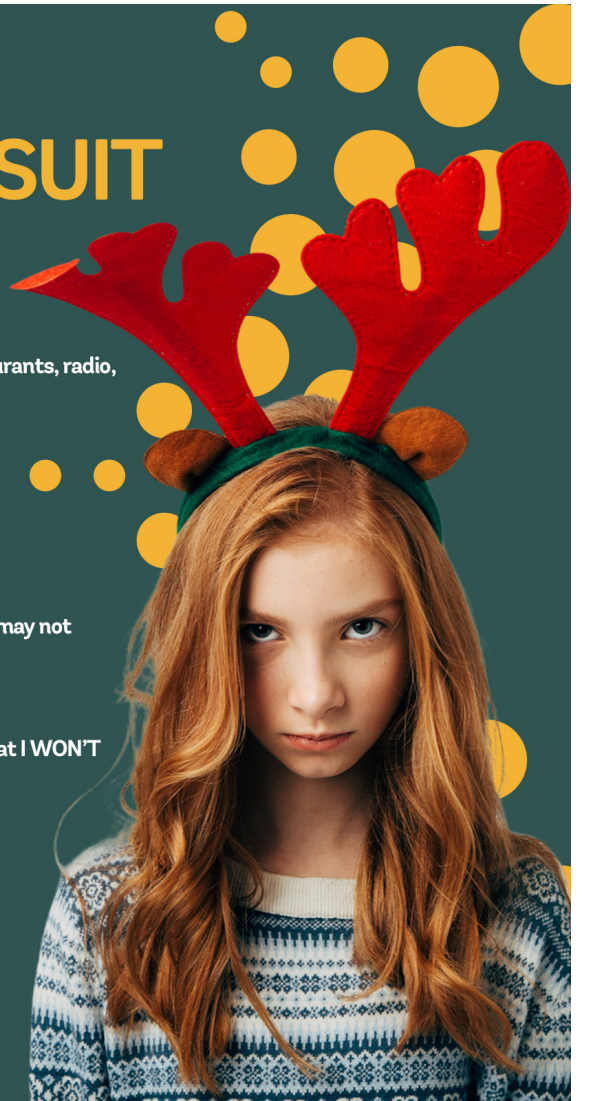
MY 'BEHAVIOUR' MAY BECOME INAPPROPRIATE, I may push for control more, I may not be so great socially, I may seem sad, I may seem withdrawn, I may refuse to do things, & I can't help that...

PLEASE RESPECT IF I NEED TO HIDE A LITTLE. I'm NOT being awkward, it's NOT that I WON'T participate, I CAN'T participate.

IF I'M NOT RESPONDING THE WAY YOU BELIEVE IS APPROPRIATE, HELP ME. Don't punish me or push me further into the festivities.

GIVE ME SOME CHRISTMAS-FREE SPACE IF POSSIBLE. Just to get my normality back. It's my experience, and I hope it's useful to others.

www.sunshine-support.org



(ND) brains do. To illustrate this point, consider the analogy of a motorcyclist on a hot buggy day: In this analogy NT brains are like the motorcyclist who wears a helmet with a face shield, and ND brains are like the motorcyclist who does not wear one. (If you have ever been hit in the face by a bug while speeding along on a motorcycle on a hot buggy day, you understand how intensely painful and thus, distracting it is! It isn't something that one can shake off very easily). In this analogy, the bugs are the sensory stimuli. Obviously, wearing a motorcycle helmet with a face shield allows one to enjoy the experience pain free and distraction free, reaching their destination whole and intact, and with energy and composure to go about their day because they were protected from the onslaught of “bugs,” i.e.: sensory stimuli. However, the motorcyclist who does not have the benefit of wearing a helmet with a face shield arrives at their destination disheveled with welts on their face and bugs in their teeth, hair, and eyes (and perhaps swallowed a few bugs along the way, so feeling a tad nauseous) and is in pain and frustrated and already reaching their threshold of tolerance and on the verge of losing their composure...not in any condition to carry on with their day...

...Unless, of course, they are given a break to tend to their wounds, clean themselves up, and allowed to rest and recuperate. In other words, given the time and space to do what they need to do to take care of themselves (without the unhelpful criticisms, judgements, bullying and unfavorable comparisons NTs often subject NDs to).

Some of the ways in which neurodivergent individuals get bullied by their family include being badgered about being “rude” (for wearing noise cancelling headphones which help us minimize sensory stimuli), or “unsociable” (when we need to withdraw from the noise and chaos in order to rest, recuperate, self-regulate, and let our brain process all the sensory stimuli). Neurodi-

level and intensity of sensory pain, and that others are just better at hiding the pain than they are. This causes them to feel that there is something wrong with them for not being able to tolerate the pain as well as others. Gaslighting is the term for the abusive practice of denying another's reality for the purpose of causing psychological harm. NTs need to remember that just because they do not share another's reality does not mean that the other person's reality is invalid...this is such a self-centered attitude that NTs are prone to, yet the irony is that we are the ones they call self-focused!

One thing ND folks of all ages are very good at is recognizing patterns. When we recognize the patterns of this bullying behavior every holiday season, we are demotivated to put forth all this extra effort and it makes us become proponents of “boycotting Christmas.” So if you want your ND loved ones to partake in the holiday festivities and traditions, you need to cut them a break!

Michelle Baughman is a late-in-life diagnosed adult on the autism spectrum, an advocate, an educator, and a trauma-informed AANE certified life coach for individuals with neurodivergent conditions. She is a proponent of the Neurodiversity Paradigm, and she writes to help debunk general misconceptions, bridge an understanding, and to change the negative cultural narrative surrounding neurodivergent conditions in order to help ND individuals live their best lives.

Ed. note: Sunshine Support, the non-profit organization that created the graphic, is based in England, hence the different spelling of some words.

The Gales of November

By Tom Woron

Over the years I heard the song only occasionally in the background of wherever I happened to be at when it was playing. I did not know the song's title or the singer who sang it. I couldn't even make anything of the lyrics. I just heard the song with its melody but knew absolutely nothing about it. One thing I did take notice of though, the song had a rather *haunting* sound to it.

It wasn't until some time in the last couple of years that I finally learned the title of the song, who the artist is and what the lyrics are all about. The song tells a true story, a tragic true story.

The song is "The Wreck of the Edmund Fitzgerald" by Canadian folk-rock singer and songwriter, Gordon Lightfoot.

I'm not sure what finally made me aware of the title of "The Wreck of the Edmund Fitzgerald" and what it was all about. Most likely I heard the song on the radio. The DJ probably mentioned Gordon Lightfoot as the artist and perhaps spoke a little bit about what the song was about. Now with something to go by and realizing that the song had a catchy, albeit haunting sound to it, I just had to research it.

The *SS Edmund Fitzgerald* was an American Great Lakes freighter ship that was owned by Northwestern Mutual Life Insurance Company. The ship, named after Edmund Fitzgerald, the president and chairman of the board of Northwestern Mutual began its Great Lakes shipping career with a christening and launching ceremony on June 7, 1958. For 17 years the *Fitzgerald* carried heavy loads of iron-ore pellets from a port on Lake Superior in Minnesota to iron works in Detroit, Michigan as well as to other iron and steel works near other Great Lakes ports.

At 2:15 p.m. on the afternoon of November 9, 1975, the *Edmund Fitzgerald* left Superior, Wisconsin carrying a full load of iron-ore pellets and headed toward its destination, a steel works near Detroit. The ship carried a crew of 29 men with seasoned Captain Ernest McSorley in command. Little did the crew of the *Fitzgerald* know, they were sailing off to doom...and immortalization in a song.

A couple of hours after embarking on her voyage, the *Fitzgerald* joined up with another freighter, the *SS Arthur M. Anderson*, that was destined for Gary, Indiana. All seemed to go well at first but the National Weather Service did predict that a storm would pass south of Lake Superior around 7:00 a.m. the next morning. Captain Dudley J. Paquette, in command of the *Wilfred Sykes*, another freighter that was on Lake Superior at the time, believed that a major storm was going to pass across all of Lake Superior rather than to the south. Captain Paquette chose to travel along the relative safety of Superior's north shore to try to avoid the worst of the storm. At 7:00 p.m. the National Weather Service changed its forecast and issued a warning of gale force winds for all of Lake Superior. It was then that the *Edmund Fitzgerald* and *Arthur M. Anderson* changed course northward toward the Ontario shore. They ran into a severe winter storm around 1:00 a.m. on November 10 with the *Fitzgerald* reporting 10 foot high waves and strong winds of around 60 miles per hour.

The crew of the *Wilfred Sykes* listened in on the radio conversation between the captains of the *Edmund Fitzgerald* and the *Arthur M. Anderson*. They overheard Captain McSorley say that he was reducing his ship's speed because of rough waters.

At 2:00 a.m. the National Weather Service changed its forecast from gale winds to severe winter storm, predicting winds up to 58 mph. The *Edmund Fitzgerald* was sailing behind the *Arthur M. Anderson* until about 3:00 a.m. when the *Fitzgerald* overtook and went ahead of the *Anderson*. The storm hovered over both ships and the winds slowed down a bit as they swirled in different directions. It was around 1:45 p.m. that the winds picked up speed again with the *Arthur M. Anderson* recording wind speed close to 60 mph. It then began to



snow heavily and the *Arthur M. Anderson* lost sight of the *Edmund Fitzgerald*, which was about 16 miles ahead at the time. At about 3:45 p.m. Captain McSorley radioed the *Arthur M. Anderson* to report that the *Edmund Fitzgerald* was taking on water as two vent covers and a fence railing were lost. McSorley also reported that they had two bilge pumps running to discharge water that had come into the interior of the ship, but in spite of this, the ship began listing. After that, the U.S. Coast Guard warned all ships on Lake Superior to seek a safe location and drop anchor.

Around 4:15 p.m., with zero visibility ahead, the *Edmund Fitzgerald's* radar, that was essential in determining location, malfunctioned. Captain McSorley then slowed down his ship so that the *Arthur M. Anderson* could close the distance between them. He then called the *Anderson* and requested that they track his ship since the *Edmund Fitzgerald* was, for all practical purposes, blind.



Using its radar, the *Arthur M. Anderson* guided the *Edmund Fitzgerald* toward Whitefish Bay. Captain McSorley then called a nearby U.S. Coast Guard station asking whether any nearby navigational aids were operational. The USCG station reported that the Whitefish Point light and navigational beacon were not active. McSorley then called for any nearby ships to report the status of any navigational aids in the area. Some time after 5:30 p.m. Captain McSorley spoke to Captain Cedric Woodward of the nearby ship, *Avafors*, and reported that the *Edmund Fitzgerald* was taking heavy seas over its deck and was listing badly.

Late in the afternoon of November 10, the *Arthur M. Anderson* was recording sustained winds up to almost 70 mph and waves as high as 25 feet. Later on the *Anderson* recorded winds up to 86 mph and reported being struck by rogue waves 35 feet high. Shortly after 7:00 p.m. the *Anderson* contacted Captain McSorley to inquire as to the status of the *Edmund Fitzgerald*. McSorley's reply was "We are holding our own." That was the last contact anyone had with the *Edmund Fitzgerald*. The *Edmund Fitzgerald* disappeared from *Arthur M. Anderson's* radar and sank in 530 feet of water in Lake Superior about 15 nautical miles from the entrance to Whitefish Bay near the twin cities both named Sault Ste. Marie, one in Michigan and one in Ontario. All 29 crewmen aboard were lost.

It is said that Superior never gives up her dead. On November 14 a U.S. Navy pilot flying an aircraft with special equipment to locate magnetic anomalies, usually submarines, located the spot where the *Edmund Fitzgerald* lay in 530 feet of water. No bodies of any of the crewmen were recovered.

Having read the story of the loss of the *Edmund Fitzgerald* and its crew in the November 24, 1975 issue of *Newsweek* magazine, songwriter Gordon Lightfoot subsequently composed his famous 1976 hit song about the disaster.

While we will never know what the crewmen of the *Fitzgerald* may have said to one another when they knew that disaster was impending, some of the lines in Lightfoot's song contain hypothetical words of conversation. Other lyrics in "The Wreck of the *Edmund Fitzgerald*" ring true. The church bell at the service for the crew did chime 29 times.

Your assignment: Watch the YouTube version of Gordon Lightfoot's "The Wreck of the *Edmund Fitzgerald*" (the HD version with lyrics).

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ACT Student Wins Video Competition

Submitted by Michael Hamad

(Willimantic, CT) – Madison Stevenson, a senior at EASTCONN's Arts at the Capitol Theater (ACT) magnet school, won first place in the Fall 2021 "Just Drive" PSA Video Contest for her 30-second video "Missed Memories." Impact Teen Drivers (ITD), a California-based non-profit organization that educates teens about the dangers of reckless and distracted driving, hosts the video contest, which is sponsored by NJM Insurance Group.



ACT senior Madison Stevenson. EASTCONN photo.

Individual students aged 14-22 are eligible to win an educational grant of up to \$5,000 by creating a 30-second PSA with a strong empowerment message.

A representative from Impact Teen Drivers will present Stevenson with her award at ACT (896 Main St., Willimantic) on Thursday, Dec. 2 at 3:00 p.m.

"Missed Memories," which features a montage of video clips of Stevenson's sister and two-year-old niece, won First Place for Video in the Connecticut High School/Middle School Category. View Stevenson's entry by visiting <https://justdrivepsa.com/fall-2021>.

"Whenever I drive, I always want to drive safely, just so I can be home with them and get to experience life with them and watch my niece grow up," Stevenson said. "I've gotten a really good positive response, and I'm really grateful for that, because this is the first big project that I've done by myself."

"Mad's work and accomplishment displays what we hope for all ACT students; the ability to clearly communicate and to make a meaningful impact in the community," said ACT principal Sarah Mallory. "The commitment to teen safe driving is something that we value as a community and Mads was able to execute this project at an exemplary level."

Dan Boisvert, Stevenson's Media Arts teacher at ACT, said that teen safe driving is an important element in the school's audio-visual curriculum. "Madison was able to showcase her independent learning style by creatively communicating an original and complex idea effectively with the hope of changing teen safe driving outcomes," Boisvert said. "I'm really proud of her and her commitment to her community and the arts!"

Stevenson, who plans to attend college next year, said she will use the award to cover the cost of books, tuition and fees.

"I don't want anyone to go through that loss of losing someone or being hurt from a car accident," Stevenson said, "so it makes me feel good to know that my video will help people realize: you'll miss these little things in life."

ACT is a public, performing arts magnet high school administered by EASTCONN. ACT is currently recruiting academically motivated students who will enter grades 9-12 in the 2022-2023 school year. To learn more about ACT or to download an application, visit www.eastconn.org/act or call 860-465-5636.



How Single-Use Plastics Are Driving Climate Change

(StatePoint) Did you know that single-use plastic is a major driver of climate change and is harmful to human health -- even when it's recycled? According to a new report, leading consumer goods companies are driving the expansion of plastic production. And by doing so, are threatening the global climate and the health and safety of communities around the world.

The Greenpeace USA report, "The Climate Emergency Unpacked: How Consumer Goods Companies are Fueling Big Oil's Plastic Expansion," exposes the business links between the world's largest consumer goods and fossil fuel companies. Without this transparency, the report's authors say that consumer goods companies are largely able to avoid accountability for environmental or human rights violations committed by the companies that supply plastic for their packaging.

"The same well-known brands driving the plastic pollution crisis are helping fuel the climate crisis," says Greenpeace USA global plastics project leader, Graham Forbes. "Despite their best efforts to appear climate-friendly, consumer goods companies are working alongside the fossil fuel industry to expand plastic production, which could lock the world into catastrophic emissions levels and a planet warmed beyond saving."

Indeed, over 99 percent of plastic is made from fossil fuels, and according to industry estimates, plastic production could triple by 2050. This projected growth would increase global emissions from the plastic life cycle by over 50 percent on 2019 levels by 2030, equivalent to nearly 300 coal-fired power plants. This is the same timeframe that the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has warned human caused emissions must fall by nearly 50 percent to limit warming to 1.5 degrees C.

The report also details how single-use plastics hurt people who live on the frontlines of its production. Plastic production has been linked to health issues like cancer and asthma, and these impacts are disproportionately felt by poor communities and communities of color.

Despite the many adverse impacts of single-use plastic packaging, the report finds that consumer goods companies have partnered with fossil fuel companies for decades to advocate recycling, while opposing legislation that would restrict its production.

"The world's largest brands are working with the fossil fuel industry to use recycling as a smokescreen. Recycling will never be the answer to the plastic pollution crisis," says Forbes.

Greenpeace is calling on consumer goods companies to urgently move toward systems of reuse and package-free products, to phase out single-use plastics and to be more transparent about their plastic and carbon footprints. To learn more and to read the full report, visit greenpeace.org/usa/reports.

"These companies can no longer hide behind their nostalgic, happy brands. We urge them to support an ambitious global plastics treaty that addresses the entire lifecycle of plastic and emphasizes reduction," says Forbes.

Women Business Owners Take Decisive Action During the Pandemic



(StatePoint) As the country takes steps toward economic recovery amidst an ongoing pandemic, women business owners are reporting increased optimism about the current economic outlook, which may be accredited to their resilience and decisive action, according to a recent survey of women-owned businesses by PNC Bank.

Leading the way in employee vaccination. According to the survey, nine in 10 (89%) women business owners have taken action to encourage employee vaccination, compared to 78% of male business owners. In fact, half (49%) are providing assistance or education about the vaccine and nearly half (48%) are requiring their employees to receive vaccinations.

Those efforts may well be making an impact: eight in 10 (79%) women business owners estimate that a majority of their employees have been vaccinated, and eight in 10 (81%) of those with 100% vaccinated employees report they are highly optimistic about their company's prospects over the next six months. Among those with fewer than 100% of their workforce vaccinated, 56% are highly optimistic.

"The optimism reflected in this survey is significantly higher than in our previous surveys of women business owners and this year, there is an undeniable correlation between safeguarding their workforce and their future financial prospects," said Beth Marcello, director of PNC Women's Business Development.

Supporting employees through the pandemic. In addition to encouraging COVID-19 vaccination, female business owners have outpaced men in taking other actions since the start of the pandemic on behalf of their employees, such as implementing health and safety improvements (49%), allowing more flexible work arrangements (49%), and providing caregiving support and other benefits (14%).

Both women (36%) and men (44%) increased wages and salaries during the pandemic to retain and attract talent, and said they plan to increase compensation (27% and 37%, respectively) in the next six months.

Taking action on social responsibility. Women business owners differed substantially from their men counterparts in the area of social responsibility, according to the survey. Six in 10 (60%) women business owners have formally considered or reviewed policies supporting diversity and inclusion, gender pay equity, volunteering or charitable giving, or sustainability or the environment in the past 12 months. This is double the percentage of men business owners who have done the same (30%).

"It is clear from the data that female business owners are prepared for the challenges they face; in fact, more than half attributed their optimism to their own resilience and resourcefulness," Marcello said. "The support they provide for each other and their employees is key to thriving, and why we're optimistic about the future for women-owned businesses and their growing contribution to economic prosperity overall."

About the survey and Project 257: Accelerating Women's Financial Equality. The survey, among small- and medium-sized businesses with self-reported revenue of \$100,000 to \$250 million, was conducted by telephone among a national sample of women's business owners during August and September of 2021.

Under the leadership of Marcello and with support from the bank's 4,000 PNC-Certified Women's Business Advocates, PNC recently launched Project 257: Accelerating Women's Financial Equality, an initiative designed to help close the 257-year economic gender gap and expand on PNC's decades-long track record of supporting female financial decision makers. More information can be found at pnc.com/women.

One thing is clear. Women business owners have taken decisive action during the pandemic, and these efforts are making a positive impact on their employees and their business.



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Submitted by Elisha Sherman

You can help end homelessness in eastern CT! Access Community Action Agency and the Eastern Coordinated Access Network (ECAN) teamed up with the Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness (CCEH) to fundraise for the “be homeful” project, a campaign to end family homelessness in our region and around the state for Giving Tuesday November 30th and throughout the Holidays.

This project allows nonprofit organizations like Access to raise funds online to end family homelessness in Eastern Connecticut by establishing an emergency fund available to all caseworkers serving families at the front door of the shelter. With a donation of just \$25, an adorable Paddington™ plush bear will be given to a child in a shelter. Your gift will provide critical emergency assistance to give families on the verge of homelessness what they most want: a home. Visit: <https://diem.life/access-ecan/be-homeful-for-the-holidays-2021/1107/67701>

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By Focus on Veterans, Inc.

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T. King, Publisher

Random Thoughts of an Aging Curmudgeon

By Alan Smithee

- When I buy a homeless person a meal, they call me a saint. When I ask why a rich country *has* so many homeless, they call me a socialist.
- If we're at a concert and you pull your phone out and start playing audio, I should be allowed to slap you.
- A fitting response to "OK Boomer" is "Grow up, loser." Or if you'd prefer, "I may be old, but you're stupid."
- Don't ring my phone and ask, "Who's this?" If you dialed my number, you should bloody well know who you're talking to.
- You can learn to hate or you can learn to spell, but you clearly can't learn both.
- If you see me working on a crossword puzzle, do not tell me "I don't have the patience for those" or "I prefer Sudoku." Because I really don't give a damn.
- "Antifa" is short for "anti-fascist." That's the default position of a decent human being. If you're not anti-fascist, what are you?
- If "progress" means "to move forward," what does "Congress" mean?
- Why do so many Americans care about the British Royal Family? We broke away from England because we'd had it with royalty!
- Since the 1980s, I've gone from being a moderate Democrat to a far-left socialist—all without changing my views.
- At one time, liberals were happy, fun-loving people and conservatives were uptight, humorless prudes. Why did they trade places?
- If it's not the Fourth of July and you're setting off firecrackers, I should be allowed to kick your ass—particularly if it's after 10:00 p.m.
- Not all Trump supporters are racist, but all Trump supporters decided that racism was not a deal-breaker. Therefore, all Trump supporters can go to hell.
- If you refer to biological women as "menstruating persons" or "people with ovaries," you're not supporting the transgendered—you're dehumanizing half the population.
- If you can't discern between "burro" and "burrow," you don't know your ass from a hole in the ground.
- I didn't mean to press all your buttons; I was just looking for "mute."

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Tri-County Greenhouse
- North Windham**
Bagel One
Subway
No. Windham Post Office

- Pomfret**
Weiss, Hale & Zahansky
Vanilla Bean Restaurant
Pomfret Post Office
Baker's Dozen Coffee Shop
- Putnam**
Subway
Putnam Post Office
- Scotland**
Scotland Library
Scotland Post Office
- South Windham**
Bob's Windham IGA
Landon Tire
So. Windham Post Office
- Stafford**
Stafford Coffee Company
Stafford Library
Subway
Artisans at Middle River
Stafford Post Office
Stafford Cidery
Hangs Asian Bistro
- Tolland**
Birch Mountain Pottery
Subway
Tolland Library
Tolland Post Office

- Willington**
The Packing House
Franc Motors
Willington Pizza I & II
Willington Post Office
Willington Library
- Windham/Willimantic**
Willimantic Food Co-op
Design Center East
Schiller's
Windham Eye Group
CAD Marshall Framing
Clothespin Laundromat
Main Street Cafe
That Breakfast Place
All Subways
Super Washing Well
Willimantic Public Library
Windham Senior Center
Elm Package Store
Not Only Juice
- Windham Center**
Windham Post Office

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Forget all the things I asked you to remember,
 they were only yesterday's guilty admissions.
 I will ask you to dance when the record stops playing,
 and together we shall miss all the other chances.
 Gather the language that swells as we speak,
 we will ask that each other does the talking.
 And in the small circles that bicycle around us,
 tell about all the mornings when we refused our turn to wind the little music boxes.

Poem and photo by Wayne Erskine.

Susan Gerr Thank you to the Community for your support! Your local Potter for 38 years.
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Santa Claus is on his way to the Camp CONNRI Lodge on Saturday December 18, 2021!!!

Enjoy an All you can eat Pancake Breakfast, served with home fries, bacon, milk, coffee, tea, juice, all the while Santa is in the house!

Decorate a Gingerbread Man at your family table and then take a socially distanced photo with Santa Claus. Each child receives a gift and a Christmas mug filled with goodies.

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 Third Seating: 11:30am-12:30pm

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