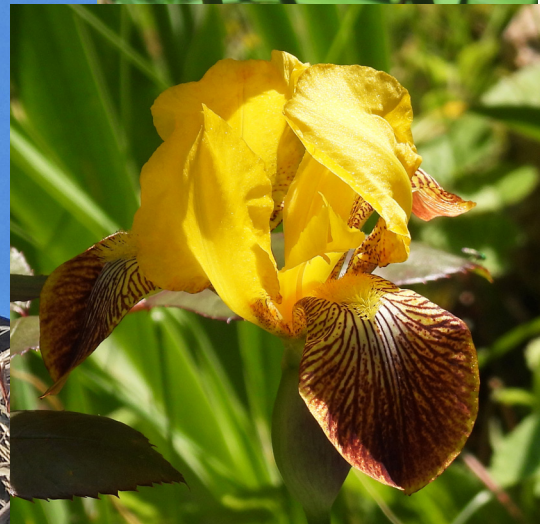


# NEIGHBORS

No. 218

May 2023

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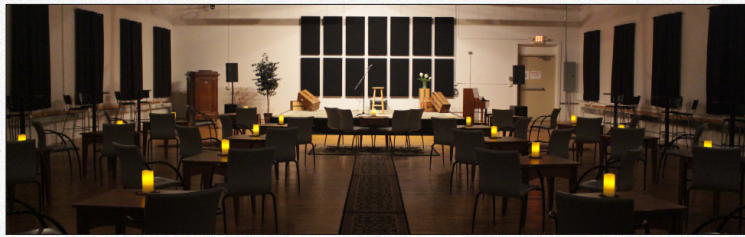


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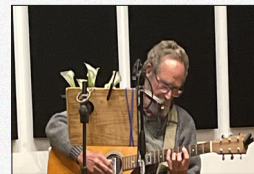
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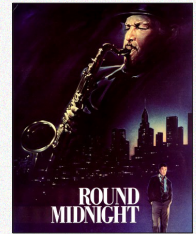
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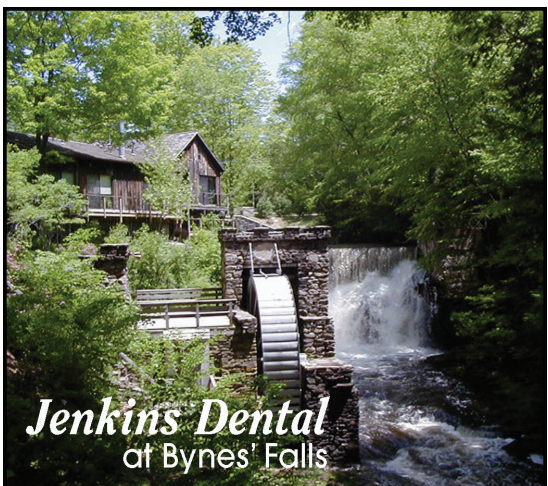
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Calen Nakash, Dennis Pierce,  
Bill Powers, Loretta Wrobel

No. 218 May 2023

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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On our cover:  
Photographs by Willimantic photographer Pat Miller. Clockwise from top: Great blue herons, tulip, iris and ospreys.  
Thank you Pat.



# A New Farm in Mansfield

By C. Dennis Pierce

*“In the spring, I have counted 136 different kinds of weather inside of 24 hours.”*  
-Mark Twain



Sunday, it rained cats and dogs. I think I saw a Siamese and a French Poodle, but I could have been mistaken. Monday, with a glimpse of the sun, I sensed nature began collectively breathing and doing what it does best. It smelled like warm soil, mixed brown mulch and that clear fragrance that comes after a hard rain. I cannot describe that scent, but I think we all know what it is. Years ago, I attended a conference in New Orleans. I landed the day after Hurricane Dennis (appropriately named), departed the city and two weeks before Katrina devastated the area. Now, I do not know about any experience that you might have had if you ever visited New Orleans but the last thing that would come to mind is that the city smelled great. On the day I landed, Hurricane Dennis had washed down the streets, sent all the odors down the drain and I could honestly say that had to be the cleanest air that I had ever experienced.

This month I had the opportunity to meet a unique individual, Alex Eitland. Alex, together with his “brother”, Miguel have joined together to create the newest farm project in Mansfield which is *Fern Mill Farm*, located on Warrentville Road adjacent to the Mount Hope River. The total acreage of the property is roughly 162 acres. The land is pristine and waiting to become a mainstay in the local agricultural community on many fronts. The plan for development is to use a permaculture approach for the gardens, continue to raise a flock of chickens for eggs and meat production and later introduce lamb to the farm utilizing a pasture-based system. The upcoming growing season will feature a selection of vegetables through successional planting: beets, lettuce, and radishes. Additional work in progress is creating twenty-four market rows for assorted other vegetables to include squash, zucchini, tomatoes, and cucumbers.

I referred to Alex as unique and that requires a further explanation. Fern Mill Farm has a history all its own. As Alex and I walked a section of the property, with new spring onions

popping up among the skunk cabbage, you could see the potential through Alex’s eyes. His entrepreneurial spirit imagines a farm that would provide educational experiences for inner city youth, enable the public to participate in the experience and provide paid internship opportunities for individuals that want to pursue farming. When approaching farming from a unique perspective Alex looks to *Never Sink Farm* in Claryville, New York. *Never Sink* has broken the mold or myth that farms cannot be profitable. Their farming practices are radical in the sense that they have resulted in their being one of the highest production farms per square foot in the country. They practice farming by hand, replacing the tractor with hand tools. All planting, cultivation, and harvesting is done manually, though at times, they do use modern tools and techniques that keep them efficient and competitive. They practice intensive planting and growing techniques. Their beds are replanted constant-



Alex Eitland and friend.

ly throughout the season from early April through late fall. Hoop houses produce vegetables year-round. All of this is accomplished by maintaining extremely fertile soil. As a result, they do not need to leave fields fallow. They believe that farming this way creates healthy vegetables resistant to diseases and pests. Alex has used this model as he envisions Fern Mill Farm as it develops. Currently, Fern Mill does not have a website in place as one is being developed. They are considering several farmers’ markets for this year’s crop and when details firm up additional information will follow. If you are interested in following up with Alex or have an interest in an internship opportunity you may contact him at [alex.eitland@synchronsystems.com](mailto:alex.eitland@synchronsystems.com)

In this month’s column I usually list the local Farmer’s markets and their spring opening dates or for some their transition from their winter locations to their summer locations. Unfortunately, several have not posted their opening dates so fell free to check out, [www.grownconnected.org](http://www.grownconnected.org), where you can find links to each market’s website.

The following is a summary of what is available to date:  
**Coventry Farmer’s Market** (at Hale Homestead) – Opens June 4<sup>th</sup>, 10:00am to 1:00pm  
**Storrs Farmer’s Market** (Mansfield Town Hall)– Opens Saturday, May 6<sup>th</sup> through November 18<sup>th</sup>, 3:00 to 5:00pm  
**Willimantic Farmer’s Market** (28 Bridge Street) – Opens

continued on next page



Saturday, May 13th, Saturday, 8:00am to 12:00pm

**Ashford Farmer's Market** (Pompey Hollow Park) – Opening day is May 14th, May to October, Sunday, 10:00 to 1:00pm

**Tolland Farmer's Market** (1032 Tolland Stage Road at the Country Butcher) – Saturday, May 6<sup>th</sup> through November 18<sup>th</sup>, 10:00 to 12:00pm

**Scotland Farmer's Market** (Route 14-Corner of Palmer Road & Brook Street) Opposite Town Green, they have not posted opening day information. Wednesdays – 2:30 to 5:30pm. Check out their Facebook page for updated details.

**Brooklyn Farmer's Market** (Job Lot Plaza). June 14 - October 2023, Wednesdays, 4pm - 6pm

**Lebanon Farmer's Market** – (Lebanon's Town Hall, 579 Exeter Road), Saturday, June 3<sup>rd</sup> to October 14<sup>th</sup>, 9:00 to 12:00pm.

**Ellington Farmer's Market** (Arbor Park – Ellington), May 6<sup>th</sup> until October. Saturdays, 9:00 – 12:00pm

**Columbia Farmer's Market** (Route 87, Heartstone Farm & Winery) no opening day listed. Thursday's from 3:00 to 6:00pm

Another great resource for Farmer's market throughout the state can be found at [www.portal.ct.gov/DOAG/ADaRC/Publications/Farmers-Markets](http://www.portal.ct.gov/DOAG/ADaRC/Publications/Farmers-Markets)

Yes, you might have guessed it, rhubarb is one of the harbingers of spring and I am a pretty big fan. Rhubarb - *Rheum rhabarbarum*, is translated, "wild growing from the Rha. The Rha is a river now called the Volga. It is a perennial form of buckwheat, interesting enough. The roots and leaves of the rhubarb plant contain oxalic acid and are toxic / poisonous. The desired part of the plant is the stalk. In the late 1700's first appeared in America. It is rumored that Benjamin Franklin, then ambassador to France, sent the first rhubarb to America for his relatives to cultivate. Rhubarb officially became a fruit on July 17<sup>th</sup>, 1947 when the U.S. Customs Court of Buffalo, New York declared it so. Since rhubarb's principal use was in

the kitchen as a fruit and since fruit carried a lower import duty than a vegetable it seemed a practical decision. Most scientists, however, consider it a vegetable. Amazing what you can find online!

Here is a quick and easy recipe to help you celebrate spring.

### Rhubarb Cake

Pre heat oven to 350 degrees

Ingredients:

½ cup of oil

1 ½ cup of sugar

1 egg

½ teaspoon of salt

1 cup of buttermilk or make your own by taking 1 teaspoon of white vinegar and mix it with 1 cup of milk (not skim). Let it stand for a few minutes as it breaks down the milk.

1 teaspoon of baking soda

2 cups of flour

3 cups of diced rhubarb

Mixed sugar and cinnamon to sprinkle on top.

Directions:

Mix oil, sugar, egg, buttermilk, together.

Mix salt, baking soda, and flour together.

Add moist ingredients to dry ingredients and gently stir.

Add rhubarb and mix well.

Place mixture in a greased and floured oblong pan

Sprinkle cinnamon sugar on top

Bake at 350 degrees for 45 minutes.

Check on it towards the end since oven has its own personality.

Remove from oven when done and let cool before serving.

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](mailto:Codfish53@Yahoo.com). So, Peas be with you. Come celebrate with me and remember, every day is a holiday, and every meal is a banquet. I'll save you a seat at the table!



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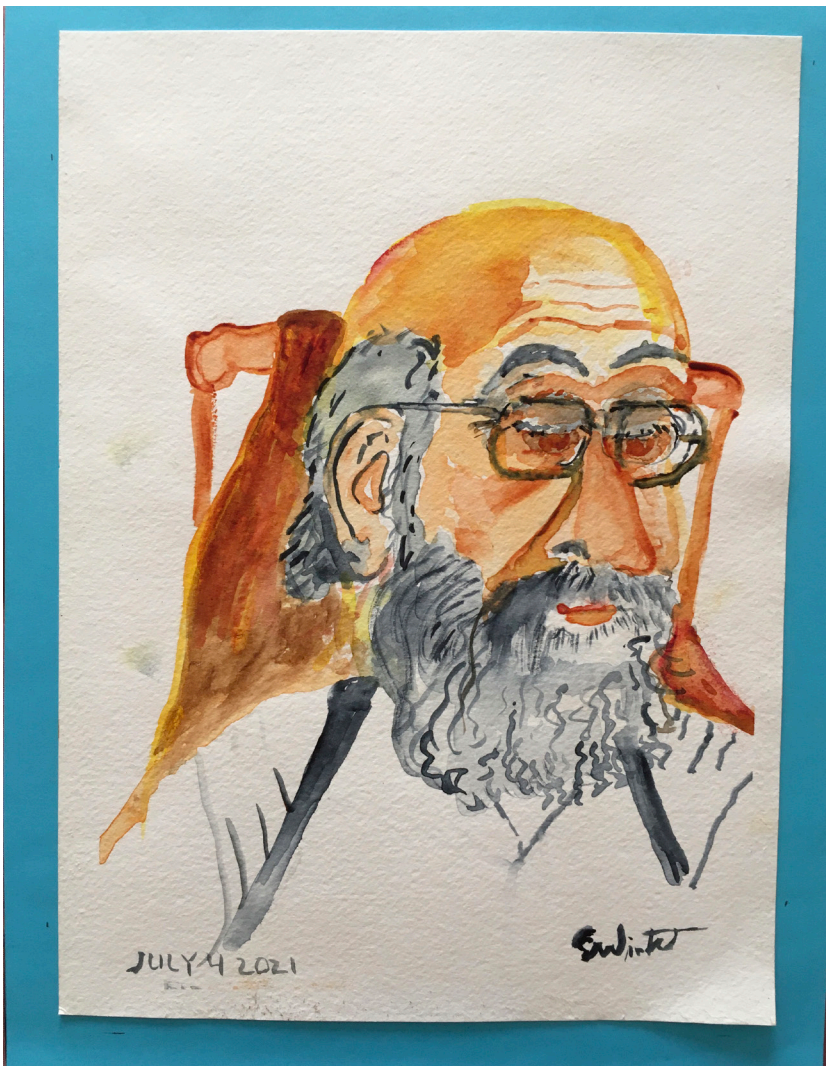
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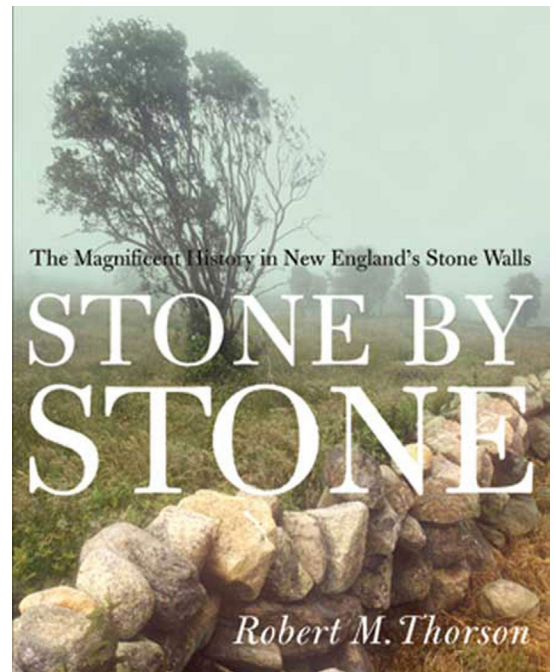
## Remembering Mark Svetz

Drawing a person gives one the unique opportunity of looking closely at them while spending time together. Mark Svetz was born and died in the month of June. The first anniversary of his death is just coming up and I would like to celebrate and remember him with Neighbors readers.

If you knew Mark or read his articles you were part of his life. I know he thought a lot about you. Something you might not know about Mark is that he loved to be drawn. Over the years I have sketched or painted Mark many times. Sometimes the light was just perfect or his face caught my imagination. Love was so present in those times when I took pencil or brush to paper and just  
6 Neighbors

looked. I have gathered up my drawings; untacked them from the walls and cut them from journals; I've mounted them on cardboard or colored paper. None of them is perfect, but nothing is. I'd like to share them with you. During the month of June they will be hanging in the Willimantic Food Co-op's Café. If you would like to spend a minute or two remembering Mark, please stop by the Co-op anytime in June.

Sarah Winter



## Thorson Talk in Eastford

Submitted by Terry Cote

Robert Thorson will present a talk on stone walls Friday, May 5th, at 5:30 p.m. in the gymnasium of the Eastford Elementary School, 12 Westford Rd., Eastford. The event is free and all are welcome to attend.

Robert M. Thorson, Professor of Earth Sciences at the University of Connecticut and coordinator of its Stone Wall Initiative. He is an expert on the historical archaeology of New England as revealed by the tangible clues left behind, most notably stone walls and other ruins. He is the author of three books on the region's stone walls, and a strong advocate for their conservation as signature landforms. Most recently, his interests have shifted to helping communities manage this legacy resource.

His best-selling *Stone By Stone: the Magnificent History in New England's Stone Walls* won the Connecticut Book Award for nonfiction in 2003. Twenty years after its original hardcover publication, Tantor Media published an audio version now available to libraries and for sale.

His public talk, cosponsored by the Eastford Democratic Town Committee and the Eastford Conservation and Historic Preservation Commission, will introduce the regional phenomenon, review its history, justify enhanced conservation measures, and make recommendations specific to the town of Eastford on how to proceed. A Question & Answer session will follow the talk.



# David Roth Concert in Storrs

Mother's Day Matinee at Storrs Friends Meeting House

"We all have different gifts, so we all have different ways of saying to the world who we are". ~ Mr. Rogers

Submitted by Dan Strebog

Poignant to Improbable, holistic to hilarious, the Chicago native (now living on Cape Cod) comes to Storrs with a roller coaster ride of song and story. Why David Roth is a must experience?

David Roth strikes many chords, hearts, and minds with his unique songs, offbeat observations, moving stories, sense of the hilarious, and powerful singing and subject matter. As singer, songwriter, recording artist, keynote speaker, workshop leader, and instructor, David has earned top honors at premier songwriter competitions – Kerrville (TX) and Falcon Ridge (NY) – and taken his music, experience, and expertise to a wide variety of venues in this and other countries full-time for three decades.

David's songs ("Rising in Love", "Earth", "Manuel Garcia", "May the Light of Love", "Nine Gold Medals", "Spacesuits", "Rocket Science", "I Stand for Love", "That Kind of Grace", and many more) have found their way to Carnegie Hall, the United Nations, several Chicken Soup for the Soul books, the Kennedy Center, Peter, Paul, & Mary's "Discovered" (Warner Brothers), the Kingston Trio's "Born at the Right Time", NASA's Goddard Space Center ("Rocket Science" went up on the Space Shuttle Atlantis's May 2009 mission to repair the Hubble Telescope), the classic folk song books "Rise Up Singing" and "Rise Again" (sequel), and 15 CDs on the Wind River and Stockfish (Germany) labels. Winner of 5 Positive Music Awards and the 2015 Grace Note (Unity Worldwide) for Outstanding Contribution to New Thought Music, David has also been featured on many of Christine Lavin's seminal Rounder Records compilations.

David has taught singing, songwriting, and performance at Augusta Heritage workshops, SummerSongs (NY – where he currently serves as Executive Director), Common Ground on the Hill (MD), the Woods Dance & Music Camp (Canada), WUMB's Summer Acoustic Week (NH) and for many other songwriting groups and associations around the country.

David is also founder/director of the Cape Cod Songwriters Retreat and creator/host of Cape Cod's "Full Moon Open Mic" which, for the past 16 years has provided a forum for musicians to connect and be heard while at the same time collecting donations for local non-profits to help neighbors in need.

A Mother's Day to remember at Storrs Friends' Meetinghouse, 57 Hunting Lodge Road, Storrs, CT  
Concert starts at 3 PM. Tickets \$25 Advance reservations \$20  
Contact Dan to reserve your seat in advance. Refreshments Served at intermission. This concert is sponsored by Glen Ridge Arts Travelers. Email: grartstravelers@gmail.com

# NCCO Spring Concert in Pomfret

By Jane Vercelli, NCCO President

The "Northeast Connecticut Community Orchestra and Friends" are excited to present a spring concert at Clark Memorial Chapel on the Pomfret School campus, Rte. 44, Pomfret, on May 19 at 7 p.m. and May 21 at 2 p.m. Admission is free. Donations are welcome. Masks are recommended.

Under the baton of our dynamic conductor Dylan Lomangino, the string orchestra will be joined by vocalists and soloists on violin and piano who have performed with the orchestra in the past.

Violinist Michael Winer will perform "The Lark Ascending," a beautiful piece by early 20th century British composer Ralph Vaughn Williams in which the violin sounds remarkably like a bird.

Pianist Yulia Tereshchenko Federov will play piano for the dynamic Ernest Bloch Concerto Grosso no.1.

Soprano Donna Dufresne of Pomfret will sing "Voiche sapete," a well-loved aria from Mozart's Marriage of Figaro.

Brianna Toedt, who is the orchestra's concertmaster, will set aside her violin to take center stage as the vocalist in the contemplative Stephen Sondheim song, "I Remember."



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## What Can You Do with a Small City Garden?

By Delia Berlin

Some weeks ago, the Garden Club of Windham ([www.GardenClubofWindhamCT.org](http://www.GardenClubofWindhamCT.org)) approached us about participating in their Open Gardens event this year. We happily agreed, planning to welcome visitors to our yard on June 6 from 5 to 7 p.m. (rain date: June 7) for this casual and free garden tour. Since then, an additional abutting garden has been added to the program, enabling visitors to experience two different models of urban gardens at the same time.

For those unfamiliar with the Garden Club of Windham, its mission includes promoting interest in gardening and conservation in the Windham community, collaborating with the Town of Windham in beautification efforts, and contributing to the protection of plants and animals in our environment.

Even those who haven't heard about this wonderful club have probably enjoyed some of its work. With support from Windham Public Works, the club has transformed over a dozen urban spaces into beautiful public gardens, including those at the Willimantic Brewing Company, the Willimantic Public Library, the Windham Textile and History Museum, and the Schilberg Butterfly Garden, near Jillson House.

When David and I decided to downsize ten years ago,



we reduced our living space to one-half the size of our previous home. But it was our land that posed the biggest challenge. We were used to acres that we had landscaped and maintained as a nature sanctuary. There, in Windham Center, we had recorded 126 species of birds, 24 of mammals, 10 of amphibians, and five of reptiles. Our new lot was just one-fifth of an acre in the Hill Section of Willimantic. It included two magnificent oaks towering 100 feet over the house, but their third sibling had recently fallen in a storm, crushing a neighbor's top floor. At 135 years old, these trees were dangerous for their location and had to be removed.

It seemed impossible to replicate any version of an avian oasis in our new space. Many birds will not visit yards without mature trees. For example, ruby-throated hummingbirds and orioles nest in tall trees and will only forage near their nests. Fortunately, a huge shagbark hickory in front of the house passed a health check with flying colors, joining a smattering of trees nearby to meet this need. That gave us hope.

The previous owner of our city home had been a naturalist. One of his major contributions to the yard was the building of a garden pond in the lowest part of the lot. He surrounded the pond with native plantings that he bought at Goodwin State Forest. This pond collects rainwater and ranges in diameter from 10 to 12 feet, depending on rainfall. It is deep enough to winter over a few goldfish and to attract some frogs every summer.



During our first growing season, we mainly took inventory of previous plantings. But, since we had removed two large oaks, we also got a head start at planting several smaller trees. We decided to prioritize trees that provided food and shelter for birds and had a mature size under 40 feet. Some white cedars and a white pine met the shelter requirement, while also improving the privacy of our yard. We also planted two different kinds of cherry trees, a flowering crab, a redbud, a smoke tree, native viburnum, blueberry bushes, and assorted fruit trees.

Another task for our first season involved moving or propagating some of our favorite perennials from our former home. A tree peony, some particularly sturdy rudbeckias, sedum, a variegated forsythia, and a few others made their way to our new house.

Soon, we realized that most of the plantings around the pond had been selected for the deep shade of the oaks. There were 11 species of native ferns that did not look too happy with their new sunny conditions. But amazingly, as our new smaller trees started to grow, the perennials rebalanced themselves into a happy equilibrium. Instead of mostly ferns peppered with wild geraniums and celandine poppies, we now have mostly blooming native perennials

sprinkled with native ferns.

Gradually, we have been able to fit in all the elements of a bird sanctuary, with room to spare. Our little lot accommodated our buildings, deck, patios, pond, fruit trees, and many bird-attracting plantings. Lots of well-maintained bird feeders and baths add appeal. On one particular fall migration season, we counted nine different species of warblers passing by our yard. As our work continues, our mowed areas decrease. This year, we plan to add a tiny meadow for pollinators on the back end of our yard.

As a bonus, and by pure chance, our lot abuts my sister and brother-in-law's land on its back border. Their lot is bigger than ours and landscaped with a focus on organic food production. They have a small fruit orchard and a multitude of raised beds that provide them with all the vegetables they need year-round. Since they also grow flowers and feed birds, and our yard produces fruits too, our garden models are both contrasting and overlapping, which adds to their interest. Birds are always welcome in both of our gardens. And on June 6 from 5 to 7 p.m., humans will be too. Join us for the Open Gardens event at 251 Walnut St. and 16 Washburn St. in Willimantic.



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# The Other NRA

By Loretta Wrobel

We all know about the National Rifle Association and what it stands for and what many of its members support. However, do you know about the National Restaurant Association? This NRA is responsible for keeping the wages of millions of restaurant and service workers at an indecent, low minimum wage, as low as 2 or 3 dollars in some states. Here in Connecticut, it is 6.38 dollars!



I heard of this NRA while listening to a keynote speech given by Saru Jayaraman at this year's Bioneers Conference in April. She is my new heroine. I was mesmerized by her fire as she spoke with abundant passion about the plight of restaurant and service workers in the United States in 2023. She delivered inspiring and positive news about the historic worker revolt in the United States. I am always deeply moved by fearless, brilliant, and articulate women who stand up to the unfairness, injustice, and downright cruelty of powerful interest groups such as the National Restaurant Association. This NRA operates from a righteous stance, saying they are doing everything for the benefit of their members. What they do not say is they are destroying large numbers of innocent people in the process. My new heroine is an attorney, activist, and author, who is president of One Fair Wage and director of Food Labor Research Center at UC Berkeley. She also co-founded the Restaurant Opportunities Center (ROC). Saru is a magnificent woman who is fighting back and telling the truth about how the other NRA continues to reap huge profits, while denying a decent minimum wage to millions of restaurant and service workers.

Ms. Jayaraman has been focused on raising wages for workers in the restaurant and food service industry for over twenty years! She shared some appalling and alarming facts. During the initial stages of the COVID pandemic, over six million workers lost their jobs. Many were denied unemployment benefits due to their subminimal wage. They were ineligible for benefits as their pay was too low! We are talking about this happening in the United States, in our Country! If that does not ignite some fire within you, I cannot imagine what will.

Saru explained how tipping initially began as the entire pay for mostly Black workers in the early 1900s. In 1938 the NRA successfully lobbied to create a two-tier minimum wage scale. Again this system benefitted the restaurant owners, and kept the workers in poverty and subjected them to harassment by those they were serving in order to secure tips. Because of the low wages and lack of unemployment benefits, workers were forced to return to work early during the dangerous peak of the pandemic. The restaurant and service workers returned to a medically unsafe environment in the summer of 2020. At the federal level in 2021 the minimum wage was \$7.25 for untipped workers and \$2.13 for tipped workers.

Saru has received threats, due to her powerful stance

against the NRA and her unwillingness to not be silenced by their intimidations. She continues to organize and speak out for the workers who are struggling to feed their families. Since the pandemic, the amount of tipping has decreased considerably, so the wages have become even more unsustainable. And as inflation has zoomed up, a worker's meager salary is worth even less today than at the beginning of the pandemic. Plus, restaurant servers were blamed when they tried to enforce covid restrictions at the peak of the pandemic.

Despite all the negativity thrown at this woman, she does not back down. She just gets louder and more impassioned. She and her organization are working on a national initiative to have a livable minimum wage by 2026. This will be the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of America. This project will influence the largest segment of workers in our country. Saru speaks of the declaration of interdependence to educate Americans about the importance of a living wage for all workers. The initiative, launched last year, has a slogan of "25 by 250." The goal is removing unlivable minimum wage laws in 25 states by 2026, the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our Country.

Saru pointed out that restaurant workers are required to pass a food safety course that they must pay for. The NRA has a monopoly as the supplier of the food safety courses. The workers are paying the NRA for the courses that allow them to work for indecent wages! The business owners do not pay for the courses for their workers, and the NRA continues to rake in profits on the backs of the restaurant workers. With these profits the NRA continues to enhance their lobbying, which works to keep the workers at subminimum wages. A system that means win-win for the restaurant owners and lose-lose for the workers.

Ms. Jayaraman encouraged Bioneers to see that the oppression of millions of workers leads to disenfranchised people. Only 12% of these workers vote, as they are not motivated to leave work to vote when voting has never improved their lives. When people are given a decent wage, they have time, energy, and inclination to work for a more sustainable planet, to fight for body autonomy, and to know they deserve equal opportunity, including safety against gun violence.

Saru further elaborated on the power of all of us working together for the good of all. It must start with fulfilling the basic needs for the over thirty million people who are living in poverty in the United States. Once they have these needs met, they will work for a more sustainable, healthy planet where we all have an equal chance to thrive. At this time when workers are standing up to these inhumane conditions and leaving their jobs in record numbers, we need to support this massive revolution. She proudly reports that over 1.2 million workers have left their jobs. This massive leaving has forced restaurants to hire workers at higher wages. In some US cities, servers are being hired at \$15, \$20, and \$25 an hour plus tips. This is encouraging news, as workers are determined not to stay in jobs that keep them in poverty, expose them to intimidation and sexual harassment. You can assist the workers by paying attention

continued on next page





Family celebrations include you! Ruth Hartunian-Alumbaugh photo.

to any minimum wage legislation in your state, and by treating your server as a server not as a servant.

I totally embrace the concept that when people are not worried about buying food and paying their bills, they are ready to pay attention to the burning issues, such as climate justice, and equality for everyone regardless of status, money, race, or influence. The climate justice movement will be stronger when millions of Americans who are living in poverty are no longer preoccupied with basic survival. Keep your attention on minimum wage legislation (CT Senate Bill 1177). Watch for information on July 4, 2026, when we declare independence from inequality and slavery and move into interdependence where justice is indeed guaranteed for all Americans.

## Letters and Emails

Hello-

As a Mansfield resident, I always pick up your paper with great interest (at the Willimantic Co-op, but I also love your issues online). Phoebe Godfrey's April article, on 'The Grammar of Animacy,' discussing Robin Wall Kimmerer's *Braiding Sweetgrass*, was especially welcome.

I always enjoy reading her deeply felt, thoughtful articles, but this one, about honoring the earth and seeing ourselves as an integral part of nature, really struck home for me. I hope many others read and enjoyed the piece as I did.

Thanks,  
Irene Barnard

## Fletcher Memorial Library

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## Unsung Heroes of Soul

# Betty Everett

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 Betty Everett, who spent 1964 as one of Black music’s hottest stars.

She was born in Greenwood, Mississippi, on November 23, 1939. She and her siblings had a deeply religious upbringing. Beginning at age fourteen, Everett sang and played piano for choirs at the Joel Baptist Church and two other congregations in the area.

In 1957, she and her sister relocated to Chicago’s West Side, where Betty pursued a career in secular music. One night at Mel’s Hideaway, Everett caught a Magic Sam show. The bluesman knew she sang and asked Betty to get up on stage. As a result, she was both hired by Mel’s and got a contract with Magic Sam’s record label, Cobra. However, none of her releases did very well. And Cobra went out of business in 1959.

By late 1961, Everett was working with producer Leo Austell. He recorded four sides on her, arranged and produced by Monk Higgins. It was a departure from Everett’s earlier, bluesy, style to modern soul music. Austell put out “Your Love Is Important to Me” on his Renee label, then leased the master to George Leaner’s One-derful Records in early 1962. It made a bit of noise but was not exactly a smash. Leaner issued one more single on Everett, 1963’s “Please Love Me,” but it, too, did little.

Austell next made a deal with Calvin Carter of the big Chicago independent, Vee Jay. Their first release on Everett was a weak pop number called “Prince of Players.” The follow-up, however, was pure soul. Everett’s “You’re No Good” was one of two versions out at the same time; the other was by Dee Dee Warwick, sister of Dionne. Though Warwick’s record came first, Everett had the hit, taking it to #5 on the R&B chart at the end of 1963. (Eleven years later, Linda Ronstadt’s remake of “You’re No Good” hit #1 on the *Billboard* Hot 100.)

Everett’s next Vee Jay release became her only certified million-seller. An infectious uptempo with a punchy arrangement, “The Shoop Shoop Song (It’s In His Kiss),” spent three weeks at #1 on the R&B chart and hit #6 in the pop market. It also re-entered the charts in a 1990 remake by Cher for the movie *Mermaids*.

While she rode the charts as a soloist, Everett also sang duets with her labelmate, Jerry Butler. “Let It Be Me,” a four-year-old Everly Brothers hit, became a #1 R&B song and a top five pop smash. Everett closed out 1964 with “Getting Mighty Crowded,” a defiant mid-tempo written by Van McCoy (“The Hustle,” 1975). She also received that year’s BMI Pop and R&B Awards.

While 1964 was Everett’s biggest year, a combination of weak material and Vee Jay’s financial problems kept her from maintaining that success in 1965. When Vee Jay closed its doors a year later, Everett signed with ABC. She was there for just one year. By 1969, Everett was on Uni Records—home of Neil Diamond, Hugh Masekela, and Strawberry Alarm Clock (among others). Her initial release was the Deep Soul ballad,

“There’ll Come a Time,” co-written by Eugene Record of the Chi-Lites. It became Everett’s biggest hit in five years, peaking at #2 on the Soul chart and #26 pop.

By late 1970, Everett had moved on to Fantasy Records and would later sign with United Artists. In the early ‘90s, she got an indie-label deal and recorded a new single, “Don’t Cry Now,” but it was never released. She also made a 20-minute appearance on the TV show, *Current Affair*. In 1991, Everett starred at the Chicago Blues Festival. She was also booked that year to appear at the Taj Mahal in Atlantic City and the Greek Theatre in Los Angeles, but was unable to make the gigs due to poor health.

Everett was inducted into the Rhythm & Blues Hall of Fame in 1996. She made her final public appearance five years later on the PBS-TV special, *Doo-Wop 51*.

Betty Everett, 61, died at home in Beloit, Wisconsin, on August 19, 2001.

Rock critic Dave Marsh included “The Shoop Shoop Song (It’s In His Kiss)” in his 1989 book, *The Heart of Rock and Soul: The 1001 Greatest Singles Ever Made*.

Charted singles:

- “You’re No Good” (1963) R&B #5, Pop #51
- “The Shoop Shoop Song (It’s In His Kiss)” (1964) R&B #1 (3 weeks), Pop #6
- “I Can’t Hear You” (1964) R&B #39, Pop #66
- “Happy I Long to Be” (1964) Pop #126
- “It Hurts to Be in Love” (1964) Pop #109
- “Let It Be Me” (with Jerry Butler, 1964) R&B #1 (3 weeks), Pop #5
- “Ain’t That Loving You Baby” (with Jerry Butler, 1964) R&B #24, Pop #108
- “Getting Mighty Crowded” (1964) R&B #28, Pop #65





## Good Times at Goodwin!

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“Smile” (with Jerry Butler, 1964-65)  
R&B #16, Pop #42

“Gonna Be Ready” (1965) Pop #117

“There’ll Come a Time” (1969) R&B  
#2, Pop #26

“I Can’t Say No to You” (1969) R&B  
#29, Pop #78

“It’s Been a Long Time” (1969) R&B  
#17, Pop #96

“Unlucky Girl” (1970) R&B #46

“I Got to Tell Somebody” (1970-71)  
R&B #22, Pop #96

“Ain’t Nothing Gonna Change Me”  
(1971) R&B #32, Pop #113

“Danger” (1973) R&B #79

“Sweet Dan” (1974) R&B #38

“True Love (You Took My Heart)”  
(1978) R&B #78

Please check out the Unsung  
Heroes of Soul blog at [https://  
60459fe07898a.site123.me/](https://60459fe07898a.site123.me/)

Dean Farrell hosts “The Soul  
Express” twice a week: Fri-

## Doo Wop is Back!

By Susan Audette

Calling all music lovers of  
the 50’s and 60’s. We are bring-  
ing back the good ole’ days. The  
Willimantic Elks Lodge is proud  
to present our second annual “Doo  
Wop Revival”.

For those of you who love  
the earlier melodic tones and lyrics  
you can understand, this is the  
night for you! Last year was well  
-attended and folks really had a  
great time.

Join us for two of most  
renown groups in the genre.  
**Classic Blend**, harmonizers who  
grew up in the Providence area, all  
have a love of music since an early  
age will be appearing. The group  
performs 50’s and 60’s music  
throughout the country and will  
not disappoint.

The second group, **De-  
cades** will be performing all of the  
greatest Doo Wop and early Rock  
n’ Roll classics. Their group, a six  
-piece show band will two female  
soloists will bring you all the au-  
thentic sound and style of the ‘50s  
and 60’s.

The event takes place  
Saturday, May 20th, 2023. Doors  
open at 6:00 pm and showtime is  
7:30 pm. There will be a cash bar  
and food available. Tickets are  
\$35.00 per person available at the  
Willimantic Elks Club, 198 Pleas-  
ant St., Willimantic, CT. If you  
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ternating Saturdays from 2:30 - 5:30  
p.m. on WRTC, 89.3-FM ([www.  
wrtcfm.com](http://www.wrtcfm.com)). He plays vintage soul  
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obscurities. Dean’s e-mail address  
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# Why Putin Will Not Get Nailed for War Crimes

By Bill Potvin

It has been just over twenty years since the Iraq Invasion, generally recognized as one of the truly catastrophic military adventures in the history of the United States. We were lied into a war by the Bush Cheney Administration, under the pretense of “weapons of mass destruction” and the imminent danger of Saddam Hussein. We were told that he had important connections to Al-Qaeda, and thus the terrorist attacks of 9/11. All false! What resulted was the virtual destruction of an important Middle Eastern country, its society and its people. Civil war, chaos, suffering and over 300,000 deaths resulted and about two million refugees fled to neighboring countries. Horrendous consequences resulted, most of which are still with us today.

Prior to the attacks, a bus load of us left Willimantic and made the trip to New York City, to protest on February 15, 2003, joining close to 1 million others. Around the globe, there were similar protests. More global citizens protested than had ever protested in the history of the world. All of this was ignored by our government. Our media downplayed it. Why did this happen? What effects did it have on our country and on other nations? Was anyone ever held accountable?

Steve Markoff, in his book, “The Case Against George W. Bush,” documents the number of times that President Bush spoke of the importance of Iraqi oil, starting one week after his inauguration. (A full 23 months before the Iraq invasion!) Markoff also states that the push or sell of the war consistently involved different forms of fear: ninety-one quotes from administrative officials were gathered, containing fearful descriptions of the threat of Saddam Hussein (8 times) the presence of weapons of mass destruction (40 times) and the connections to Al-Qaeda (43 times)... all meticulously documented. Throughout Bush’s presidency, at least thirty-five references from various meetings, press briefings, news articles, and television interviews; including the State of the Union Address in January 2007, Bush discussed seeking or rationalizing the importance of Iraq’s oil.

The case against Bush is clear: “Intelligence” was manipulated to support the goal of invasion and regime change. When the attack finally occurred, I was wearing a button that said, “What’s our oil doing under your sand?” The invasion flaunted U.S. power, and the explosions and destruction had an official title: “Shock and Awe.” Bush’s popularity soared, and fully 70% of United States congressmen voted for the preemptive invasion. The cost to our respect around the globe was staggering, as nobody likes a bully. The cost to our economy was huge, perhaps three trillion dollars. We gave up any moral high ground we might have had and eventually dabbled in government sanctioned torture as well, calling it “enhanced interrogation” instead. Throughout the war, the reporting consistently presented the phony unity of the aggression, always describing the actions of “coalition forces,” 95% of which were United States and British units. The real coalition of nations was strongly opposed.

14 Neighbors

When Barack Obama was elected president, he decided to “look forward” instead of holding these perpetrators accountable. Bush, Cheney and other administration officials were allowed their horrific war crimes in Iraq without any recourse. How can you build a strong foundation as a respected world power on top of a mountain of blood? Today, as we maneuver against the growing power of China, our standing in the world community has faded (China is taking on new roles in negotiations that used to be ours alone.)

Following Donald Trump’s unpresidential style and unprecedented bizarre actions, George Bush is somehow now viewed by many as a diplomat by comparison. However, if you tally the consequences of deaths and suffering that Bush has generated, it is really, in my view, vastly beyond any consequences attributable to President Trump, even including the stain of the January 6th insurrection. Just simply count the deaths that occurred. Bush should be hunted down as a war criminal and tried under International Law. He most likely created the template for today’s actions of Russia, in regard to Ukraine.

The Bush name got him much in life, including entry and degrees from Ivy League Universities, a position in the National Guard that allowed him to avoid duty in Vietnam, and even further avoiding duty by going AWOL during his service time; all with no consequences. He now has a presidential library and an institute named after him. He has retired to a life of leisure, enjoying his wealth and expanding his artistic talents by painting benign objects, like vases of flowers. He should be forced to paint grotesque pictures of maimed and deformed Iraqi children that he caused by his decisions in the Iraq War, including the unmerciful sanctions against many innocent and nonthreatening civilians in Iraq.

As a Vietnam combat veteran, this is my opinion, and it may come across as extreme. War is extreme, and should always be the last resort. I believe that we are all responsible for the consequences of our actions. Until this is rendered properly and justly on our leaders, then any pretense about the United States as a beacon of democracy and good, is false. This is what true morality means to me. The more suffering you cause, and the more immorality you have exhibited, the bigger price you should pay! Bush has not paid a price commensurate with his actions. Not even close. His lies and the horrendous consequences that ensued have had devastating effects on Iraq and on our country as well.

The march to war in Iraq was in Bush’s own words, “a totally unjustified and brutal invasion.” This is exactly what Bush recently said in public about Vladimir Putin. In addition to Iraq, the damage has been incalculable to our country’s reputation, status, and moral standing. Citizens around the globe see this clearly, even as many American citizens cling to the concept of “American Exceptionalism.”



# The Place Where We Live - Ashford, CT

Article and photo by Susan Eastwood

We drive down Waterfall Road, under the canopy of maples and oaks, following their changes through the seasons. In winter, drive slowly, watching for fallen branches blocking the way, or bands of wild turkeys unable to scramble up the snowbanks on the sides of the narrow lane. Sometime in March, the maple sap begins to run, and tapping begins, heralded by old tin buckets attached to many of the tree trunks and links of plastic tubing on the more modern rigs. The cold snaps we have complained about have resulted in a good season for syrup!

As Spring arrives, the trees bud red to lime and leaves unfurl. Snowdrops then daffodils carpet the roadsides and lilacs bloom by the old farmsteads. We anticipate the blooming of the mountain laurel, in early June, when I make my annual pilgrimage to the laurel sanctuary nearby.

Summer is marked by two hayings, and commutes are slowed behind tractors pulling trailers of new mown hay. Summer storms cause the old barn on the corner to tilt even more precariously. Charlie stops to leave open cans of cat food for the

displaced barn cats. The bands of turkeys expand as growing chicks follow their mothers across the road, panicking if they are left on the far side. Cows and an occasional goat may be roaming loose, though most



often are safely pastured to graze.

As Fall approaches, the apple and pear trees are laden and yearling bucks with budding antlers venture into our yards to indulge. They are startled by our headlights as we return home from work in the capital, back to our fond rural home. Now the maples are decked out in stunning reds, yellows, and oranges, soon to bare themselves to glitter on icy morns. A fox stops to stare, red against the snow, then dashes on.



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# Finding the Right Place

By Bill Powers

*“Long ago, on a New York street, I heard someone say to a companion: ‘I have always maintained that that was the opposite of a coincidence.’ At the time I wondered what the opposite of a coincidence would be. Our coming to Hampton, could be so described. It was no accident, no happen-so. We worked for years to obtain it.”*

-Edwin Way Teale in “A Naturalist Buys An Old Farm”

Recently, as I read the first chapter of Edwin J. Teale’s book “A Naturalist Buys An Old Farm.” (1974), by the famous naturalist and author, I found that the process he and his wife Nellie described for finding their home “Trail Wood” in Hampton to be, not only interesting, but also familiar. He begins his book with a chapter called “Three Circles On A Map.” It left me wishing that I had read the chapter twenty years earlier. Edwin and Nellie began a national search for their longed-for home in the country as their decades long time professional responsibilities in the city had changed, and they became free to pursue that dream.

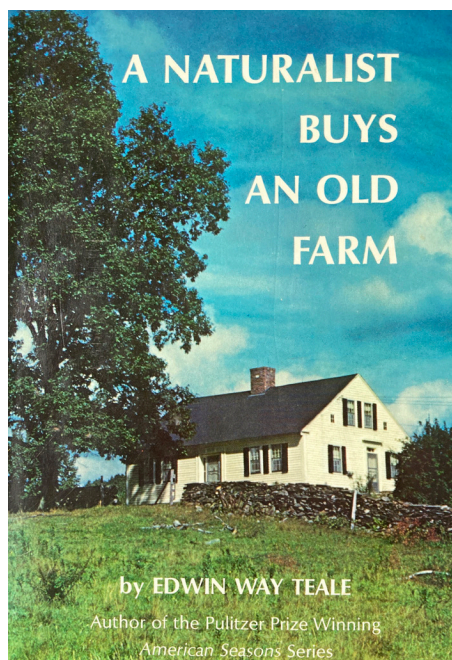
## A STRATEGY FOR FINDING A LONGED-FOR HOME

About twenty years ago, my wife and I began our own search for a longed-for home on water, perhaps on a river, a pond, a lake or the ocean. To identify likely locations, we used three maps. The first used Willimantic as our center and we drew concentric rings in red with a radius of 20 and 35 miles. We also did the same for maps of Frenchman’s Bay in Maine and Northern New Hampshire. This allowed us to identify bodies of water, and for five years we used the maps as the basis for our exploration. Edwin and Nellie Teale started their search with drawing three concentric circles with a red pencil with a radius of fifty, 100, and 150 miles while using New York City as their center point. Their three-year search had begun with a map, just as our had.

While Edwin Way Teale attributes their move to “Trail Wood” as a culmination of years effort to find the right place in the country, clearly *coincidence was a factor as well*. He wrote: “This was the way matters stood on a November evening when I attended a meeting of the Brooklyn Entomological Society. The speaker was Dr. James A Slater, of the University of Connecticut. After the meeting, he suggested: ‘Why don’t you try the northeastern corner of Connecticut? It’s still largely rural. There is a beautiful little village up there named Hampton. We call it the Gem of the East.’” The Teales soon followed up on Dr. Slater’s suggestion and during their first visit to Hampton

they were immediately enamored by: “the single main street of Hampton, its white houses and spacious lawns and sugar maples occupying high ground at the edge of an abrupt escarpment that provides a magnificent stretching away to the east over the valley of Little River and the rolling hills beyond. We wandered on the side roads through the companionable country around it. All this far northeastern corner of Connecticut is a region of little brooks, of villages, of hill-and-valley views. Even in November this was a fair land. The more we saw the more sure we were. This was it! This was what we had been looking for!

We drove home that day in great relief. At least we had narrowed down our search. Now all we had to do was to find the right place - and find it for sale!”



## ASSEMBLING A TEAM TO ACQUIRE THE PLACE THAT IS “JUST RIGHT”

Edwin Way Teale dedicated his book to two people in addition to Dr. James A. Slater who had first suggested a visit to Hampton. Wendell Davis, Hampton’s First Selectman and his wife Alison Davis, were instrumental in helping the Teales to find just the “right place”. The Teales had assembled a capable team to help them on their journey to achieve their goal and successfully purchase the property that would come to be called “Trail Wood”. There were several occasions when the properties they considered failed to meet their needs. Hampton residents Raymond and Leila Ostby were also very

helpful as part of their team. Fortunately, Teale wrote: “Alison Davis remembered that a few years before Margaret Marcus, a widow living on Kenyon Road, had talked about selling.” After a visit arranged by Wendell Davis, the Teales knew “with a soaring sense of elation - This was it!” Their team had helped them to be able to realize their dream and it would be named “Trail Wood”. The Teales by a fortunate coincidence were advised by Dr. James A. Slater about the wonders of Hampton. What led us to our place on water, after years of exploring, was innocently picking up a real estate publication while buying a bottle of wine. Reading such publications was not at our usual practice, and astonishingly there it was on page 3, this amazing place on a “23 acre pond”!

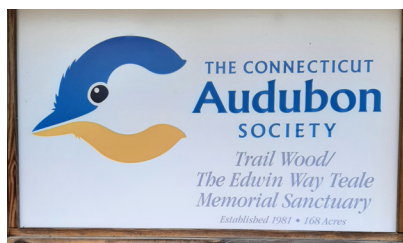
For us, purchasing a home in Maine or New Hampshire while we were still working was simply not practical. We assembled our local team consisting of: Mary Lou Bradley, our realtor; attorney Steve Bacon; Barbara Korsu from the Liberty Bank; and, Charlie Halbert from Eastern Connecticut Home Inspection in Willimantic. With their valuable professional counsel, we were not defeated by difficulties with three

continued on next page



At the Jillson House Museum, Darlene Haddad of Windham tried on a life jacket used in the movie 'Titanic'. Guest speaker and Titanic historian, Anita Sebestyen, looks on. Photo by Bev York.

different properties on our journey to find the house of our dreams. We had proceeded to the last stage of negotiations with the sellers of three properties until unexpectedly new factors surfaced during the home inspections. MTBE (Methyl tert – butyl ether) was an additive that was added to gasoline to reduce pollution emissions. Unfortunately, not only is it considered to be a carcinogen when taken in to the body, but when it gets into the groundwater it remains for a very long time. Two water samples were positive and there was no way of knowing the source of the MTBE. At the next place, even though the seller guaranteed that the floor of an upstairs bedroom in a small 1700s era house could and would be corrected by closing date, it was not, as we found during the home inspection. The floor was still tilted at such an angle that a piece of furniture could not stand against one wall without tipping over. To top it off, the day after of the home inspection, we received a telephone call from the water testing lab. It was apparent that a large amount of bleach had been added to the well in order to pass inspection. At the third location, a house on the Little River in Hanover, the seller refused to accept the results of the Radon gas test even when it



was verified by his own testing agent and he refused to pay for an effective mitigation system. He said that Radon testing was “a sham”. After all this, finally we were able to close on a place in Windham that made us exclaim – “This is it!” We were fortunate to have a strategy in order to search for a great place and a great team to work with; as did the Teales.

Without knowing it, in a way, strategically speaking, we were following in the footsteps of Edwin and Nellie Teale. Today when I visit “Trail Wood”, I imagine that I am physically walking in their footsteps and able to observe what Edwin Way Teale, a world respected Naturalist, photographer, and Pulitzer Prize recipient, observed and wrote about the “right place” he and Nellie called home. The Connecticut Audubon Society offers the opportunity for the public to share this magnificent property at Trail Wood / The Edwin Way Teale Memorial Sanctuary in Hampton.

**Noah King, Realtor, ABR, SRS, SFR**

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## Looking Up

# Sitting on a Pumpkin as the Moon Rolls Down the Road!

By Bob Grindle

Memories can tease the imagination and, like that first whiff of lilac on an ever so gentle breeze floating through the open window of a warm May dawn, transport us to places far from the shores of the current moment.

The conversation began over a bite of freshly baked blueberry coffeecake and quickly slipped down the group's memory flooded slope into a discussion about teaching 5<sup>th</sup> graders; planting young trees during a dry spell; volunteerism and community service; tragedy as the flip side of the inevitable and finally the exquisite, and almost other-worldly, beauty of the Milky Way viewed from any of the Rocky Mountain states. Like one of those drone videos that sweep through panoramas of jolting visual complexity and beauty and are simultaneously awesome and awful...never pausing long enough on any mind bending scene for the panting brain to catch its breath...the conversation splashed about in our memory pool with little regard for coming up for air.

So often, it is the interloping event intruding noisily in our lives that we allow to scrawl an algorithm's choice of menu across our day's to-do list... somehow, without challenging it, we accept that a curated list of important topics—from a think tank or heavy hitter, or someone else, somewhere “out there”—is worthy of our attention and we allow what is no more than

background noise in our lives to push out the small, and usually quiet, moments of living that can be so crucial to a sense of well-being. We are a complex species and we have presided over the explosive growth of a mind numbing tangle of societal loose threads; not just in this country but globally and before getting completely overwhelmed by the Gordian dilemma of cutting through the darkness that plagues our behavior and often threatens our painfully slow crawl into the future, maybe it is time, as Henry David Thoreau suggested, to: “... sit on a pumpkin and have it all to ourselves, rather than be crowded on a velvet cushion.”

I am reminded of a story I read several years ago about a retired history teacher who laboriously raked the leaves in her yard each fall...politely turning down help that was offered by family members. She would rake all of the leaves into long, randomly placed wind-rows before finally carting

18 Neighbors

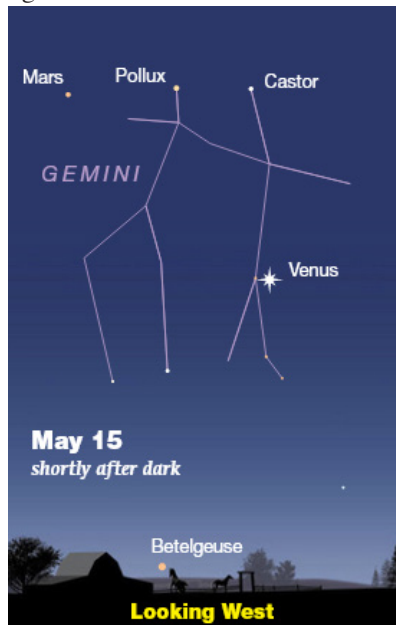
them off to a composting pile at the edge of the yard. When a leaf blower was purchased as a labor saving gift for her birthday—no doubt a thoughtful gesture of love and concern for her well-being— and she never used it, her explanation was that the wind-rows represented famous tactical battle lines in wars throughout history and recreating them in the process of raking the fallen leaves helped to keep her mind engaged and almost made her feel as if she was still in the classroom, preparing lessons for students. I wonder if there's an algorithm to select for such random and irrational, but warmly human behavior? More than 2,500 years ago Confucius noted that: “Life is really simple, but we insist on complicating it,” so clearly the problem still awaits a workable solution.

As the rain eases (more than 4 inches here at Clark's Corner in Hampton) and I walk up into a now saturated garden and begin to tidy things up I am reminded of Rudyard Kipling's observation that ‘good gardens are not made by singing “oh,

how beautiful” and sitting in the shade.’ A few days from now, as the ground dries out and after the all the work of keeping the garden tidy and harvesting the early lettuce and asparagus and chives and Egyptian onions, there is a feeling of ‘let me lay back in the soft wonderful smelling grass of an early May evening and watch as Venus flickers into view in the western sky.’ Turn to the southeast on May 5<sup>th</sup> and watch as the full Flower Moon rises, looking for all the world as

if it is rolling down Rt. 6, traveling perhaps from Cape Cod, to Long Beach, California...Rt. 6 all the way and lingering only a moment here in Hampton, Connecticut.

As May ripens and the apple and peach blossoms fall to color the ground and wisteria and lilac fill the air with glorious aromas and soft colors and humming birds seem to be everywhere, the twins of Gemini cross the western sky shortly after dark accompanied first by Venus, then Mars and finally, a week later, by the waxing crescent Moon...rising silently through Gemini, slightly below Castor and Pollux passing Venus then very near the red planet Mars. A marvelous docent of the western sky helping to guide you through one of the great stories of brotherly love and loyalty... Hope you are all looking forward to unfolding season ahead, discovering and enjoying some pleasant moments in the Cosmic neighborhood and working in some way to improve the neighborhood, someone else's journey and, of course, your own.



Now your toes are in the water  
and the fear you have felt is real and overwhelming.  
Every small step is full of trepidation  
and the tentacles of the current rush over your feet  
and you pray for some distant encouragement.

Where are all those who insisted you could make it  
that nothing could keep you from getting there?  
You know that if you look up  
the vastness of your undertaking would overwhelm your very being.

All you could do would be to turn around  
and head back to the safety of sandy shores.  
Stay strong amidst your fears  
and believe that you can navigate the unimaginable

Never forgetting, you are the champion of this challenge  
Each wave that knocks you down can also rise you up.  
Find your way, find your way...home



Poem and photo by Wayne Erskine.

## Tai Chi Home

By Joe Pandolfo

### Flower Moon

This month's moon is behind the face of every May flower, growing until it's full. You might say it's the nature of the Flower Moon to open our petals too, remind us to let our own faces light up again.

After a long season of being turned inward, sheltering like a seed, it can take a bit of a miracle to feel like blossoming. But a simple palm massage around your eyes and ears and heart can re-open you... enough to let in some warm May moonlight and fill the empty places.



## An update-

Last month in this space I requested photographs. Thankfully I received many. Unfortunately, in this issue, I had room for only one photo from a new contributor. Thank you Ruth. In the coming months I will make every effort to include more photos.

Also, this is a good time to talk about what keeps this paper in print - advertising. Our production costs were rising *before* Covid. I have been trying to acquire some new accounts. You can help - if you know a local business person, ask them to consider advertising on these pages. Our rates are very reasonable. Thank you. Tom King



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Update:

# Ashford Residents Outraged About Developer's Proposal

By Christine Acebo

On February 13 the Ashford Planning and Zoning Commission (PZC) held a public hearing about a proposed text amendment submitted by an out-of-state landowner and a large out-of-state construction and development company. The amendment would expand the allowable uses of land beside the I-84 exit (72) for Ashford to include warehousing facilities; research facilities, including research development and testing laboratories or centers; and distribution centers. Proposed changes would increase allowable building heights from 35 ft. to 55 feet and would allow buildings with a footprint up to 1.1million sq. ft. Approving these amendments would open the door for a **mega-warehouse or distribution center** and the applicant presented descriptions of massive potential facilities that could be proposed if regulations were amended. The applicants apparently would only build the structure(s); they did not disclose who might be potential users or final owners. This meeting and Public Hearing lasted 4 ½ hours with 29 comments by the public (21 in opposition to the proposal). At one point, there were 122 attendees on the Zoom meeting. Because of the late hour, the PZC decided to continue the public hearing at the March meeting of the commission.



Sign and photo by Marji Roy, Ashford.

At the March 13 PZC meeting several members of the developer's team presented "data" and "analyses" to address earlier public concerns about traffic and protection of water, and to tout the potential tax benefits a building of the size envisioned would bring to the town. During the Public Hearing portion of the meeting, 29 people spoke in opposition to the regulation changes, and 2 spoke in favor. The online attendance count reached 256 and this meeting lasted for 4 hours and 46 minutes. Due to the late hour (11:46), the Public Hearing was scheduled to continue at the April 10 PZC meeting.

The April 10 meeting lasted 2 hours, 40 minutes and at least 206 attended. 27 attendees spoke in opposition to the proposal and 1 in favor. After all public comments were heard, the Public Hearing was closed and the Commission decided to schedule deliberation and a possible decision on the proposal for the May 8 PZC meeting.

By the start of the April 10 meeting, over 430 letters and emails had been sent to the PZC; **93 percent of these were in opposition to the text amendment proposal.** Over 1,000 signatures on petitions opposing the text amendment were

collected and submitted, and over 200 lawn signs showing opposition appeared all over town. Ashford citizens came out in force, in a non-political way, and told the PZC they want the rural character of their town preserved. They told the PZC they do not want a mega-warehouse or distribution center in their town. Ashford residents are alarmed that the scenic and peaceful feel of the town could be destroyed by insufferable increases in traffic and noise and by an ugly building at one of the town's gateways. They are alarmed that the water from our pristine watersheds could be irreversibly polluted by such a building, its associated parking lots, and heavy truck traffic (particularly with no public water or sewer). They are alarmed that their dark skies could be lit. They are alarmed that a large piece of beautiful forest could be fragmented. They are alarmed

that nearby wells could be polluted and even drained and that their property values could decrease. They are alarmed that the ultimate owner/user of a potential warehouse or distribution center was not revealed, thereby making it impossible to predict what impact it could have on the town. They are alarmed that the tax benefits touted by the applicant would likely not trickle down to benefit residents but would be eaten up by a larger government and infrastructure that would be needed to support, protect, monitor and regulate a large warehouse facility. They are alarmed that if this development company

gets its way and builds their mega-warehouse, **as the largest taxpayer they will own the town.**

If the Planning and Zoning Commission accepts the text amendment, all of Ashford will change, and even neighboring town will be impacted. Ashford will have taken the first step toward creating an urban landscape. Learn more, go to the website: <https://www.keepashfordrural.net/>

The PZC is scheduled to hold their deliberations and likely vote on the proposal on **May 8, 2023 at 7:00 pm.** Although there will not be an opportunity to speak, **the public is welcome to attend the Zoom meeting and listen to the commission's deliberations.**

As soon as the agenda for the meeting is published by the town (probably by May 4), the Zoom link for the meeting will be posted on the website <https://www.keepashfordrural.net/>

**PLEASE ATTEND THE MEETING AND LISTEN TO WHAT YOUR ELECTED OFFICIALS DECIDE.**



Dawn Indermuehle and Rick Spencer.

Contributed photo.

## ‘America The Great’ Cabaret Series in Willimantic

Submitted by Jessica Polaski

The America Museum in the Eastern CT Veterans Community Center proudly presents its ‘America The Great’ Cabaret Series on Sunday, May 7 from 4-6 pm, at The America Museum in the Eastern CT Veterans Center, 47 Crescent St, Willimantic, CT. The event presents amazing local musical talent whose music not only entertains but also tells us fascinating stories about local History.

The upcoming show features Rick Spencer and Dawn Indermuehle who have developed and will present a series of theme-based music and history programs. They present songs that give cultural insight into interesting times, places and events in American history. Rick and Dawn carefully craft their vocals and accompaniment to sound as true to a song’s era or style as possible. Their vast repertoire includes music from the Colonial era to the present day. Rick and Dawn use these songs to illustrate the evolution of our nation’s culture and history in an informative and entertaining way.

‘Historical Songs of Outlaws, Villains and Rogues’ is a presentation that addresses the human obsession with and documentation of misdeeds using songs as the informational medium. Ballads collected by Francis James Child in the late 1800s (some going back hundreds of years), penny broadsides and popular songs from the 1700s to the mid 20th centu-

ry are presented to tell the stories of Captain Kidd, Jesse James, Stagger Lee, Pretty Boy Floyd and a number of others. This program includes a discussion of why we as a culture are so fascinated by misdeed, violence and mayhem. This program contains mature themes.

Please join us by registering at [AmericaMuseum.org](http://AmericaMuseum.org). Tickets are \$10 per person, refreshments will be available for purchase. All funds support the museum. This series is made possible by the Leo J. & Rose Pageau Trust.

The America Museum’s mission is to expand the knowledge, deepen the awareness, and provide a greater appreciation, to both visitors and local residents, of the dedication and sacrifice of those people who served in the defense of liberty. We tell the story of America by sharing experiences, discussing our involvement in international conflicts-why they were fought, how they were won, and what they mean today-so that all generations will better understand the price of freedom and better appreciate the country in which they live. We present and interpret information through exhibits, presentations and discussions and engage others in such a way that we, as citizens of our nation, will have learned from our past and will build a better future based on liberty and justice for all.

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# Thinking About Paying Off Your Child's Student Loans?

## 5 Things to Consider

By Laurence Hale, AAMA, CRPS®  
Principal/Managing Partner,  
Co-Founder, & Chief Investment Officer



College tuition is at an all-time high. As of 2022, the average student loan debt is about \$39,000 per student, and the average monthly student loan payment is nearly \$400.<sup>1</sup> It's no wonder parents want to help their children pay off their student loans – it could help set them up for success as they take important financial steps like applying for a mortgage. But is paying off your child's student loans for them always the best option? Here are five things to consider.

### 1. It's important to consider any high-interest debt before paying off student loans.

Before helping your child pay off their student loans, you should consider if you have any high-interest debt yourself. Generally, student loans feature a moderately-low interest rate (around 4% to 7% depending on the loan).

If you have debt at a higher interest rate, such as credit card debt or a personal loan, you may want to consider paying off that debt first. Prioritizing debt repayment by interest rate can save you money and in addition to that, revolving debt balances could hurt your credit score more than student loans would hurt your child's.

### 2. If you do decide to pay off your child's student loan, consider ways to avoid the gift tax.

Some parents may want to pay off their child's student loans but are afraid of triggering a gift tax. Luckily, there are a few ways around this tax. According to the IRS, the tuition you pay for someone may qualify as a non-taxable gift.<sup>2</sup> However, this is applicable only when the payment is made directly to the school or university. With that in mind, if your child has any student loans that were issued by the university, payments towards these expenses may be tax-free from gift taxes. Talk to your CPA or a tax professional to be sure.

Another way to avoid this gift tax is to stay within the gift tax exclusion for the year. In 2023, the gift tax exclusion is \$17,000. This means that each parent can give up to \$17,000 a year (\$34,000 total for a married couple). As long as your gift stays within these parameters, you shouldn't have to pay a gift tax.

### 3. Explore Repayment Plan Options

If you're considering paying off your child's student loans because you're worried about their ability to make their payments on time, it might be worth having a conversation

with them, as well as their lenders, to see if there are any adjusted repayment plans available.

Most loans, especially federal student loans, offer repayment plans that can be stepped up or down depending on your child's income. This may allow them to comfortably meet their student loan obligations on their own. To be sure that you're selecting the right repayment plan for you and your child, it may be wise to consult a financial advisor.

### 4. Research Loan Forgiveness Options

In addition to student loan repayment plans, there are also some loan forgiveness plans available that your child might qualify for.<sup>5</sup> For example, there are student loan forgiveness options for students who pursue certain careers in the public sector. See if your child qualifies for any of these programs.

Also bear in mind that the Supreme Court is scheduled to come to a decision regarding President Biden's Student Loan Forgiveness Plan by June 7. If the program is allowed to move forward, your child may be eligible for up to \$20,000 in student debt forgiveness. If you took out a PLUS loan in your own name to pay for their education, you may be eligible for that debt relief as well. Borrowers are eligible for this relief if their individual income is less than \$125,000 or \$250,000 for households. You can learn more and get the latest updates on the program at [studentaid.gov/debt-relief-announcement](https://studentaid.gov/debt-relief-announcement).

### 5. Don't Forget Retirement

As important as it is to take care of your children, it's also important to take care of yourself. As you get closer to retirement age, it might make more sense to contribute the money you would have used for your child's student loans to your retirement savings. Your children have long careers ahead of them to make payments on their loans, but no one is going to give you a loan for retirement. As your earning years come to a close, it's important to prioritize retirement savings.

It can be very difficult to balance these competing priorities. That's why it can be extremely beneficial to work with a financial advisor. Feel free to get in touch with us at Weiss, Hale & Zahansky Strategic Wealth Advisors. We take a comprehensive and personalized approach to helping our clients meet their various goals through our strategic Plan Well. Invest Well. Live Well.™ process. Give us a call at (860) 928-2341 or schedule a complimentary consultation on our website at [whzwealth.com](https://whzwealth.com)

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*continued on next page*

# Dog Owner Inspired to Open Pit Bull Training Business

By Luen Yeung

My name is Luen Yeung. I am originally from Hong Kong but have been living in the United States since 1994, when I was five years old.

I grew up in the Mansfield area. At 14 years old, I developed a passion for the American Pit Bull Terrier. What captivated me about the breed was that it was seen as a misfit in society due to human negligence and mistreatment. The breed was targeted as public enemy number one by the media. At that age, I could relate to the breed as being a misfit because I myself was being judged by others and was made fun of by my peers. I had nobody to turn to for support but myself. The breed's persona was a tough image of a gladiator dog that would never give up in the heat of battle, but that also had a strong affection toward humans regardless of the circumstances. I could relate this to my own life, in that regardless of how many times you fall down, you always pick yourself back up again.

As a teen, I spent much of my spare time learning about the breed by browsing the Internet at sites such as Devil's Den Kennels. In 2003 I noticed a style of dog much different from the average skinny, muscular pit bull. This type of dog had a larger bone structure and an overemphasized head. When I was 18, I realized these dogs were created by mixing the American Staffordshire Terrier—which is a spinoff of the pit bull for showing in the American Kennel Club—with the bulldog for wider girth and with the mastiff for a larger size. The breed is named the American Bully.

In my early 20s I traveled to Bully shows up and down the East Coast, such as New Jersey's Bully Jump Off, Atlanta's Bully Palooza, and Tampa's Bullies Against BSL (breed specific legislation). I acquired my first dog from someone at one of these shows who was impressed that I had traveled so far all for the love of the breed. He gave me a blue female Bully named Dreamer.

Unfortunately, my first dog was too much to manage. Not because she was destructive. She was just very skittish! At a year old, she had never been socialized or even taken out in public. She was afraid of the outside world. I was frustrated and embarrassed by her at the same time.

Then I heard about a "dog listener" in my area named Pat Wright. She came to my house and taught me the basics



Luen Yeung and friends.

Contributed photo.

of dog listening. I eventually realized it's never the dog's fault when it misbehaves. It is usually because the owner does not understand the way the dog is thinking. A dog lives by a pack mentality. The owner must always maintain leadership and never let the dog outrank the owner's status in the pack hierarchy.

My second Bully, Royal, was the polar opposite of Dreamer (who passed away in 2016). She was full of energy and loved everybody. I applied the tools of dog listening for her as well. They have been very beneficial in establishing leadership, trust, and confidence in training my own dogs. I have witnessed significant changes within six weeks after applying dog listening.

This led me to create my own business, helping dog owners to train their dogs so there will be more dogs saved from becoming unwanted and ending up in the shelter. My primary focus is on the Bully breeds such as mastiffs, bulldogs, American Bullies, American Staffordshire Terriers, Staffordshire Bull Terriers, American Pit Bull Terriers, Boxers, and Rottweilers. Any other dog breeds are welcome as well. People can reach me through my phone number, (860) 428-4862. They can also check out my website at <http://luenyeung.com>. I'm available anytime people want my help and I can be of assistance.

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# Them Bones, Them Bones, Them - Malbones!

By Donna Dufresne

Recently, I scratched the surface of the understory for information about Cuff Fellows of Woodstock, Connecticut, enslaved from his birth in 1762 to his emancipation in 1797. In 1793, Fellows married Dinah Black of Brooklyn, Connecticut, who had been “the slave of Mrs. Malbone,” according to several sources. In the Trinity Church records kept by Rev. Daniel Fogg, the marriage record reads “Cuff Fellows and Dinah.” “Black” was not Dinah’s last name, but rather a note in the margins about the couple’s race. It was common practice to note race in vital records, most often as “negro” or “mulatto,” but sometimes as “black.”

Multiple primary sources help us reconstruct the story of Fellows’s life as a slave and later a free Black in Woodstock. But Dinah’s paper trail before marriage is scant. I have yet to find her emancipation records. Emancipations were common in the 1790s, often performed before the town selectmen—and recorded in land records, lest we forget that the human beings seeking freedom were legal property. A law passed in 1792 protected masters who freed their slaves from facing liability if the former slaves became ill or unable to support themselves.

In order to understand Dinah’s story, it’s necessary to dig into the history of the family that enslaved her. Scratching the surface of the understory in Pomfret, you are bound to find a pile of well-hidden bones—Malbones, that is. In the *Hartford Courant*’s 2002 special report on Connecticut and slavery, chapter 1, titled “The Plantation Next Door,” sheds light on the Malbones and slavery in Connecticut, but the local histories of Windham County generally glossed over the topic. We remember Godfrey Malbone Jr. for building the Old Trinity Church in Pomfret (now Brooklyn) in 1770. But the enslaved people—some of whom were brought to Pomfret as captives after a disastrous voyage on one of the Malbone ships—are hardly acknowledged except for descriptions in Ellen Larned’s *History of Windham County, Connecticut* that rely on the racist tropes common to the late nineteenth century. It’s hard to believe that there was a “plantation” with 27 slaves in Pomfret during the early settlement of our town. Slavery and plantations seem—well—so Southern, right?

During my exploration of the understory, I’ve found numerous descendants of the enslaved Malbones up to the late 1800s. Lucinda Malbone married Neptune Ingalls (born in Africa, 1790) in 1816; Elisa Malbone lived in the household of Roswell Park, the Episcopal cleric and friend of Whistler’s mother, in 1850; Mary Malbone lived in a little house across from Paine Road in 1870; and Rufus Malbone is buried, along with his horse, on Route 44. The descendants have been here all along. In Marcella Houle Pasay’s book *Full Circle: A Directory of Native and African Americans, Windham County, Connecticut, 1650–1900*, there are several pages on the Malbones and at least 29 Black Malbones indexed. Finding their stories requires tenacious research. But in order to understand their

lives, we have to examine the social construct of the time and, most importantly, *follow the money*.

\*

In 1740, Godfrey Malbone “the Elder” bought nearly 5,000 acres of land in Pomfret from Jonathan Belcher. Flush from recent ventures in privateering, slave trade, and the West Indies, he paid “ten thousand five hundred pounds lawful bills” for the property. It included several farmhouses, timber, meadows, improved farmland, water rights, quarries, and Kingswood Manor. Malbone continued to buy the surrounding land, absorbing multiple farms and their rustic Colonial houses. The property expanded to Pomfret Landing and westward to what is now Route 169, excepting Putnam’s Wiltshire. Malbone also owned a rum distillery and wharf in Newport; a plantation of 620 acres in Middletown, Rhode Island; a farm of 840 acres on Prudence Island; and 3½ acres near Newport where he built his famed mansion and gardens that burned in 1766.

Privateering and slave trading was economically risky. But Godfrey Malbone had been born into the landed gentry in Princess Anne County, Virginia. He was raised on a plantation similar to that of George Washington nearby. His family owned merchant ships and had multiple slaves. Although he was educated at Oxford and spent time in the military, Godfrey the Elder fancied himself a merchant and quickly learned the trade that would bring him great personal wealth beyond his inheritance from his father, Peter Malbone. However, by 1740 the seafaring boom had begun to fade. The loss of human cargo in the West African trade and of ships in privateering ventures were taking a financial toll. Malbone wisely invested some of his profits in land that would provide coveted timber, oak staves, barrels, and agricultural products to support the sugar plantations in the Caribbean.

In 1764 Godfrey the Elder gave his Pomfret estate to his sons, John and Godfrey Jr. The deed included what he termed “All my Stocks”: “eighty cows, forty-five oxen, thirty steers, forty two-year-olds, twenty yearlings and thirty-nine calves, six horses, six hundred sheep, one hundred-eighty goats and all the poultry and one-hundred-fifty hogs, and twenty-seven negroes (viz) Prince, Henry, Pero, Dick, Tom, Peter, Peter Virginia, Domino, Caddy, Adam, and Christopher[,] all negro men. Dinah, Venus, Rose, Meriam, Jenny and Rose Parks, all negro women, and three [their?] children, Primus, Christopher, Silas Sharper and Little Pero, all negro boys...” (Malbone did not list the remaining three children.)

The list of enslaved Malbones includes a woman named Dinah, but she would have been too old to marry Cuff Fellows in 1793. It’s possible she later had a daughter named Dinah, which was a common English name for enslaved women. The enslaved Malbones in Pomfret lived near the intersection of Day and Church Streets in a row of cabins. Godfrey Malbone the Elder considered his Pomfret land a “plantation” and used enslaved labor to improve agricultural production, cut and mill timber, and possibly work in the quarries. But Malbone also used numerous enslaved workers in Newport to

help run the large estate and farms in Rhode Island.

After his father's death in 1768, Godfrey Jr. moved to Pomfret to manage the estate and settle debts. There was a foreclosure on 3,000 acres which his father had mortgaged to pay debts on the Newport estates. Tired of "the bustle and noise" of Newport, Godfrey Jr. wrote to his brother in 1769 that he was happy to settle into the quiet of Pomfret. But he was soon disappointed to discover that proponents of rebellion and treason against "His Majesty" were just as fervent in Connecticut as they were in Newport. He sent cheese to his brother and friends in Newport with copious letters complaining about the "heathens and savages" in Pomfret who would lead the colony down a dangerous slide toward treason. In one letter to John, he starts every sentence with "Bah!" as if he were brandishing a tankard in a rowdy debate at Putnam's Tavern.

He was most incensed by what he considered the state-sanctioned religion of the Puritan church forcing him to pay taxes to help fund a new building which he claimed, jokingly, would be painted distastefully in bright yellow like the church in Pomfret. He advocated for freedom of religion and the separation of church and state. A devout Anglican and Tory, Godfrey Jr. built his own Episcopal church, which served Pomfret, Canterbury, and Plainfield. The Old Trinity Church in Brooklyn is said to have been built with enslaved labor. Certainly, generations of enslaved Malbones attended the church, where they left graffiti carved into the wood of the gallery; one image of a ship and a stork is reminiscent of Africa. The enslaved Malbones are listed by race and first name only in the marriage and baptismal records of Old Trinity Church.

The Malbones lost most of their Newport property and wealth during the Revolution, resulting in great debt. In a letter from Godfrey Jr. to John on June 16, 1779, he brings his brother up to date on the recent property sales, including the disbursement of the slaves. . "The

servants are: Purcio, Cady, Joe, Jack, Mag, and Quam... We took with us only Venus, Dan b, Jenny, & little Hab of the females... The rest of the negroes are dispersed, some of them are with Dr. Taylor and others at different places. Thus far Sias alone, I perceive by an advertisement in the newspapers[,] hath lately fled from his service at Squire Dorrance's."

\*

It saddens me to think about the enslaved Malbones being "dispersed" like dust in the wind to settle family debts. They were the last of the family jewels, an unfashionable and archaic asset in a rapidly changing world. But in the end they were valued first as property and at best through the lens of paternalism. Their ancestors did not choose to "emigrate." Some were the children of kings, captured and stowed in the hold of a ship bound for the West Indies. By a twist of fate, they landed in the cold wilderness of Pomfret, where they remained captives in the free labor system that became the bedrock of our national wealth.

Their dust has not settled. We know little about their daily lives other than a few snippets passed through a white lens. For instance, "Old Pero," who was baptized in Trinity Church, was yearly elected "king" and spokesperson. He was born a prince in Africa, and so was considered a trusted emissary. The enslaved negotiated for agency where they could get it, and tiptoed through the social construct that kept them in their place, seen in the shadows of servitude in needlepoint, canvas, wills, and probate. Since we do not have their firsthand accounts, we do not know how they were treated. Their enslavers valued "benevolent masters" and said so on their tombstones. Perhaps they were treated kindly, but in the end they were an insurance policy against insolvency. Their little cabins along Church and Day Streets became a "blighted" neighborhood that was torn down in the 1960s—a symbolic erasure of the past, replaced by expensive Colonial houses. Dust to dust. Black to white.

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# Bicycling in Connecticut (part two)

By Dean Farrell

I didn't get my first car until I was nearly 22 years old. Before that, my three modes of transportation were my feet, the bus, and a twelve-speed Schwinn.

After I put the first Deanmobile on the road, I didn't ride again for 20+ years. However, toward the end of the 2000s (and for reasons I can't recall), I obtained a two-wheeler and got back into riding. It was one of the best decisions I ever made!

Bicycling is healthy, it's fun, and you can view stunning scenery. You don't need a ridiculously expensive bike, either. I ride a \$200 Wal-Mart special. It's nothing fancy, but it gets the job done. And the cliché that you never forget how to ride a bike happens to be true.

The 2020s are an excellent time for two-wheeling. All over the country, new trails are being built and existing ones improved. In Willimantic alone, we have access to not one but two outstanding bike paths!

Here are some of the trails I have ridden in Connecticut west of the Connecticut River.

**Farmington Canal Heritage Trail (Southern Section).** The Farmington Canal was built between 1824 and 1835 to get farm products to market on barges towed by mules. It ran from Northampton, MA, to New Haven, CT. The canal became obsolete with the development of railroads and, by 1848, was replaced by train tracks between New Haven and Plainville. As the rail corridor fell into disuse in the 1980s, a group of citizens petitioned for a rail trail. The first section was completed in 1993. The completed asphalt segments currently run some 50 miles from New Haven to the state line of Massachusetts. It is hoped that one day, the path will extend another 25 miles into Northampton.

The trail's southern terminus is at the Long Wharf Nature Preserve in New Haven Harbor. As you head north, you'll pass through a narrow park. In Hamden, you pedal about three miles of green space surrounding Lake Whitney. Next you'll enter the Mount Carmel neighborhood, with Sleeping Giant State Park on your right.

In Cheshire, you'll pass through the Lock 12 Historical Park. There, you'll see a detailed restoration of the original canal lock, and plaques that recount the waterway's history. The trail proceeds north through a considerable industrial section in Southington, where volunteers have painted some splendid murals. This leg of the path ends at Lazy Lane.

**Farmington Canal Heritage Trail (Northern Section).** Between the Southington terminus and the Plainville trailhead, there is a seven-mile gap along two heavily trafficked stretches of road: Queen Street and Route 10. I don't recommend bicy-

cling on either one!

From Northwest Drive in Plainville, you'll proceed to Red Oak Hill Road in Farmington. There, you can either stay on the canal path or pick up the Farmington River Trail (see below). You'll cross a converted railroad bridge, which affords an excellent view of the river. In Avon, you'll find yourself riding through a hardwood forest. Follow the "bike route" signs to the Sperry Park trailhead. From there, you'll go through suburban neighborhoods and light-industrial areas. After about four miles, you'll be in Simsbury. The trail proceeds north from the Simsbury Railroad Depot (which is now a restaurant) some ten miles through Suffield and Granby, where it ends at Quarry Road.



**Farmington River Trail.** (photo above) At 16.5 miles, this path is made of asphalt and crushed stone. It begins on New Britain Avenue in Farmington and, at both ends, connects to the larger Farmington Canal Heritage Trail (see above). As you ride under tree canopies and past old mills, you'll have many opportunities to view the breathtaking Farmington River.

In Canton, some ten miles down the path, the route becomes a shared bicycle-vehicle lane. Follow the "bike route" signs into Simsbury. The trail once again (briefly) goes off-road at the intersection of Town Forest and Stratton Brook Roads. This will take you through Stratton Brook State Park.

At Bushy Hill Road, you'll go left and cross West Street to pick up another section of paved trail. At Drake Hill Road, you'll cross West Street again and go over the river on the Old Drake Hill Flower Bridge. You'll pass Collinsville Canoe & Kayak. The trail ends at Wilcox Street in Simsbury. Or if you wish to keep riding, you can pick up the Farmington Canal Heritage Trail at Hopmeadow Street (US 202) before the Flower Bridge.

In future issues of *Neighbors*, I will discuss bike paths I have ridden in the other five New England states.

# Struggling with Depression

By Erica Polnack

Seven years ago we had a small community gathering at my mother's house after the suicide of a friend's son. In addition to the grief that was expressed over his death, I witnessed several people opening up about their own struggles with depression. As I sat in this space I saw how much we, as individuals, as a community, as a society, deeply crave compassionate space to share the stories of our struggles. The most powerful, most effective medicine that I have witnessed, both in and outside of treatment/ hospital settings, is honest conversation with someone who is compassionate to our struggles and our suffering. To be seen without judgment. To know that we are not alone.

A fire was lit in me that day. I saw art as the gateway for creating this space. Creativity connects us to the deepest parts of ourselves. When we share our creative expressions they have the ability to communicate with the deepest parts of others. There is power in telling our stories. The power to heal. The power to heal the listener as well as the storyteller. The further I walk on this path that is life the more I see that it is often from our broken places that we shine the most light.

Since then, I have grieved the death of multiple loved ones to mental health issues, both to suicide as well to addiction. This grief completely shattered me. I was broken by these losses. And I was broken open. This grief also fueled the fire that was lit 7 years ago. Weeping, I questioned myself, and I questioned my dead,

"Why didn't we talk about this? Why didn't you say?"

What I see so clearly now, from conversations with others, from the deaths of loved ones, and from my own experiences with trauma, addiction and depression, is that many of us fall silent in the times we most need to be heard.

This show is an offering from the deepest place in my heart. From my grief, my pain, and my passion. Most of all, my love.

With this we honor the living. With this we honor the dead. This is for all the ones that we have met, as well as the ones we have not met, who have been affected by mental illness.

We invite you to join this courageous group of artists May 5-7 at Moulton Lava Gallery for this conversation about feelings and experiences that we so often keep hidden away. We will work together to create a safe space to be seen, to be heard and to connect to one another. Everyone has experienced some form of trauma- no one is unaffected by mental health challenges, though the severity of these experiences vary. And so we must guide one another to an ever deepening understanding and compassion for the emotional challenges that we all face as we continue on this journey that is life.

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Proceeds go to Natchaug Hospital  
for art & writing supplies.



# Taking a COVID-19 Breather

By Gregory B. Park, M.D.

Operation Warp Speed was a stunning success. Within a year of sequencing the RNA genome of the COVID-19 virus, the United States had three viable vaccine products in the pipeline. The winter of 2020–21 involved the highest mortalities from COVID-19, and the vaccines did not come too soon. People with diabetes and heart disease, two well-known comorbid conditions associated with more severe disease, were well-advised to roll up their sleeves and take the jab. For everyone else, the answers are not so clear, even though more than two years have passed. The federal public health emergency ends on May 11, 2023. It is clear that most Americans are ready to move on. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) states that roughly only 20% of Americans have received the bivalent booster (Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report, February 17, 2023).

This is an opportunity for federal agencies, academic institutions, pharmaceutical companies, and healthcare workers to take a step back and assess the successes and failures of the vaccination program to figure out what worked and what did not. How have the COVID-19 vaccines compared with prior vaccination programs?

Bill Powers in the April edition of *Neighbors* mentioned the MMR (measles, mumps, and rubella) vaccine. There are at least three important differences in comparing the MMR vaccine to the monovalent COVID-19 vaccines. First of all, time has passed since its development. Prior to COVID-19, the mumps vaccine was the quickest vaccine to be developed, but even that took four years, including clinical trials. The MMR has been in existence since 1971. I do not dispute its safety record.

Secondly, there is the relatively small number of adverse events, which reinforces the likely safety of the MMR vaccine. A Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System (VAERS) search on the website of CDC WONDER (Wide-ranging Online Data for Epidemiologic Research; CDC operates VAERS) reports 553 deaths associated with the MMR, in all its different incarnations and permutations, since 1990. The same search performed for COVID-19 vaccine products reveals 35,152 deaths since 2020. I imagine that a college-level statistics course is not necessary to realize that those two numbers represent a pretty sizable gulf, and the likelihood is that the actual number of deaths associated with the COVID-19 vaccine is probably much worse. The federal Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (digital.ahrq.gov) estimates that fewer than 1% of adverse events following vaccination are reported. Different studies have shown more serious events being reported at a rate of 2% to 76% (Blumenthal, *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 2021; *Miller's Review of Critical Vaccine Studies*, 2020). The data is poor due to the likelihood of underestimation.

Finally, only the MMR is currently available. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) recently stated,

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“The monovalent Moderna and Pfizer BioNTech COVID-19 vaccines are no longer authorized for use in the United States” (FDA press release, April 18, 2023). Note the language. The smallpox vaccine and the anthrax vaccine are not readily available, but they are still FDA approved and authorized for use in the United States; but the two mRNA jabs that were part of what was recently mandated for federal employees, students, and countless other workers are no longer authorized for use in the United States. The bivalent booster is still available.

I agree that correlation does not always imply causation; however, 35,152 deaths should prompt a thorough investigation as to whether there is a problem. The respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) vaccine was canceled in the 1960s after two subjects died. Our government agencies, including the CDC, have underperformed in investigating COVID-19 vaccine–adverse events. Many of their assertions published in the Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report and elsewhere are based on confounding, poor-quality retrospective analyses instead of definitive, randomized, controlled, prospective studies that the government is more than capable of running. There is more bluster than actual data in their statements. Even the evidence on the bivalent booster is based on a retrospective cohort study instead of a randomized controlled trial. This is simply inexcusable and unnecessary.

Instead of a technically detailed inventory of all the agencies' failings, I will present some statements by Rochelle Walensky, M.D., a Harvard physician who is the current director of the CDC. Dr. Walensky was chief of infectious diseases at Massachusetts General Hospital and a professor of medicine at Harvard Medical School. You can judge whether she and the CDC deserve your trust going forward.

**Dr. Walensky:** “We’re vaccinating so very fast, our data from the CDC today suggests, you know, that vaccinated people do not carry the virus, don’t get sick, and that it’s not just in the clinical trials but it’s also in real world data” (*The Rachel Maddow Show*, March 29, 2021).

**Fact:** The clinical trials, published in the *New England Journal of Medicine* (NEJM), looked for symptomatic COVID-19 infections and did not look for asymptomatic carriers. In fact, both Pfizer and Moderna plainly stated that a critical knowledge gap was the vaccine’s unknown effectiveness against viral transmission (Polack, NEJM, December 31, 2020; Baden, NEJM, February 4, 2021). As a former chief of infectious diseases, Dr. Walensky should have been familiar with this distinction.

Dr. Jay Bhattacharya, professor of health policy at Stanford University School of Medicine, criticized Dr. Walensky’s statement, stating, “Back then, Walensky didn’t know if it was true. It was just an irresponsible use of a bully pulpit as a CDC director to say something that she did not know for certain to be true at the time. Unfortunately, people used that information to discriminate against unvaccinated individuals and [it] would certainly have been used as fuel for very destructive

continued on next page

policies like vaccine mandates.”

**Dr. Walensky:** “In order to do a randomized clinical trial, you need to actually have equipoise in the question. And ultimately, what would happen—what happened is that there were so many studies that demonstrated time and time again, in the height of COVID transmission, that masks were working to prevent transmission that I’m not sure anybody would have proposed a clinical trial, because, in fact, there wasn’t equipoise to the question anymore” (congressional testimony, February 8, 2023).

**Fact:** “Equipoise” refers to a research uncertainty that is necessary to run an ethical trial—not knowing if the treatment is better or worse compared to a placebo or comparator. Dr. Walensky was asserting that there is no further uncertainty with regard to the merits of masking. This testimony was in response to a recent review by Cochrane, a British international charitable organization, that looked at 78 peer-reviewed randomized controlled trials with over 600,000 participants and concluded that masks, including N95s, made “little to no difference” in preventing COVID or flu. The evidence Dr. Walensky had was based on retrospective studies, including a study comparing two different counties in Arizona that had different rates of masking. In the world of evidence-based medicine, this would be like betting with a hand of two pairs against a hand holding a straight flush. The Cochrane review proved that her assertions were wrong and demonstrated the necessity of performing randomized controlled studies over relying on retrospective population-based estimates. Furthermore, it is disconcerting that the director of the CDC is not eager to do more studies. Providing leadership for research and analysis is literally in the CDC director’s job description.

**Dr. Walensky:** “I think it’s notable that the editor-in-chief of the Cochrane actually said that the summary of that...of that review was...she retracted the summary of that review and said that it was an inaccurate summary” (congressional testimony, April 20, 2023).

**Fact:** Dr. Walensky decided

to double-down in her April testimony. In response to her comments, Tom Jefferson, M.D., the lead author of the Cochrane review, said, “Walensky is plain wrong. There has been no retraction of anything. It’s worth reiterating that we are the copyright holders of the review, so we decide what goes in or out of the review and we will not change our review on the basis of what the media wants or what Walensky says.”

Instead of erroneous information, it would have been refreshing for Dr. Walensky to have answered the question in this manner: “We don’t currently know the answer to that question, but the CDC is sponsoring a large multi-center, randomized, controlled study to look into that very question and we’ll hopefully have the answer in another two months.”

We could have had even better information on masking by the summer of 2020 than the information provided in the just published Cochrane review. We could have had far better information on vaccination that led to better guidance instead of the one-size-fits-all policy that insanely recommends the same vaccination schedule for a six-year-old as for an 80-year-old. The CDC had a virtually unlimited budget to do any number of these studies with regard to COVID-19. Pfizer and Moderna made record profits, so money should not have been a barrier to performing these studies. We may never know the answers to some of these questions because these studies were not performed at the times they should have been, and that, in my opinion, was a gross dereliction of duty regardless of how well-trained or credentialed a person is.

COVID-19 has been an emotional issue for many. I think there is a rationale for vaccinating against COVID-19 for many individuals. I also think that there can be a rationale for prudently waiting for longer-term data on these interventions prior to subjecting oneself further.

*Gregory Park, M.D. is a physician at Pioneer Spine and Sports Physicians in East Longmeadow, Greenfield, West Springfield, and Northampton, Massachusetts.*

## The Most Precious Flower

Some may say the Rose would win—  
red, white, yellow or pink.

Others would choose the orchid—  
fragile, tall, with so delicate a stink.

Wildflowers, daisies, tulips and lilies  
all would make the list.

For they are all beautiful  
in their own unique way.

The Memorial Day Poppy  
is the most precious flower there is.

It appears just once a year  
and you cannot cultivate it.

It is a symbol for those who died  
on war-torn battle fields.

defending all of us  
while they served our country.

They fought; they shed their blood,

They who lost their lives  
for what they believed,  
for our country and our freedom.

A terrible, yet honorable,  
price to pay, on any day,  
as they lay on the field  
on their last day.

On Memorial Day  
someone may ask  
if you’ll wear the Poppy  
to show that you care.

A donation, they might ask.

It is your choice to make.

Others gave their life.

Remember that when you give.

The Poppy is the most precious flower.

It is a symbol for all who died,  
in any war, at any time.  
they died, so we could survive.

Just a small token, a declaration  
is all that they ask.

So remember the Poppy

On Memorial Day.

It’s our own special task.

By Jeanne Esterquest



# 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](mailto: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 (ECGA).

## A debate is brewing around CT Democrats' latest climate bill. What's actually in the measure?

*CT Post.* "Now at the start of his second term, the Democratic governor's team is hoping to follow up on what activists hailed as a "banner year" with new legislation that would extend Connecticut's existing carbon-reduction blueprint into sub-sectors of the economy...the bill, however, has continued to stir strong opposition among Republicans and the energy industry, setting up another potentially fierce debate over Lamont's climate agenda...The first, and perhaps most significant development written into the bill is the establishment of "sector-specific subtargets" for reductions of greenhouse gas emissions.... proponents of the measure hope that by setting new limits on a wide range of industries such as manufacturing, natural gas distribution, and home heating and cooling, Connecticut will soon get in line with its existing targets....Much of the debate surrounding the legislation hinges on a few sentences. That section reads, in part, that the DEEP commissioner may adopt "market-based compliance mechanisms developed independently or with interested states and Canadian provinces" to reduce emissions." Plus: Connecticut bill could allow for new CO2 markets

## Connecticut, other northeastern states will seek over \$1 billion in federal funding for hydrogen fuel projects

*CT Insider.* "Connecticut will join six other northeastern states in competing for over \$1 billion in federal funding to create a regional "hub" for clean hydrogen fuel, Gov. Ned Lamont announced last week...many environmental advocates have expressed skepticism about turning toward hydrogen as a way of combating climate change and lowering traditional emissions. "Hydrogen has a very discreet use to help with decarbonization that could easily be taken way further than it should," said Samantha Dynowski, the director of the Connecticut Chapter of the Sierra Club. Straying beyond a limited use on hard-to-electrify sectors such as heavy industry, aviation and maritime transportation, Dynowski added, "would be both costly economically and costly to our greenhouse gas reductions targets." The Northeast Regional Clean Hydrogen Hub will focus its efforts on other, cleaner methods of producing hydrogen fuel, such as water electrolysis that can be powered by solar and wind turbines."

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## Portland CT Installs Solar Panels At School

*Patch.* "Portland has installed a solar photovoltaic system at Brownstone Intermediate School. The 67-kilowatt system is projected to save the town more than \$10,000 annually in energy costs and more than \$206,000 over the term of the power purchase agreement, according to a statement...

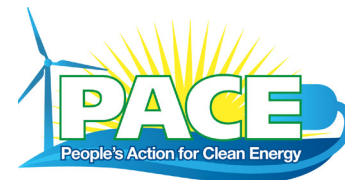
Through the Solar Municipal Assistance Program, the Green Bank provides technical support to municipalities to develop solar photovoltaic projects on municipal buildings, such as town halls, emergency services buildings, schools, and more."



## Electric school buses serve as mini power plants during the summer

*WBUR.* "Beverly Public Schools is one of the first in the country to use its electric buses for more than transportation.

The project uses bidirectional chargers that can both charge the bus battery and also allow the battery to send energy back to the grid...The concept is simple, but the execution is complicated. That's where



Highland Electric Fleets comes in; the company has made a business out of buying and then leasing electric buses to schools. It orchestrates everything from constructing the chargers on site to managing charging and discharging of the batteries. The company also maintains the buses and trains the drivers. Highland Electric Fleets sells this service to schools for about the cost of a regular school bus."

## It's more than an opportunity to decarbonize 15 Hartford buildings all at once

*CT Mirror.* "The Capitol Area System (CAS) in Hartford is a unique opportunity to show how Connecticut can transition away from heating buildings with fossil gas...CAS now heats its 15 buildings on a three-mile loop with hot water produced by gas boilers. But the system is outdated, continues to use fossil gas, and needs to be overhauled...There is more than one electrified solution for a redesigned CAS, but in my opinion, the most likely is something called network geothermal...

[where] multiple buildings share a thermal loop that can run under a street, with each building tapping into the loop with its own GSHP. The thermal loop can draw heat from the ground via wells, nearby bodies of water, sewer systems, or even other buildings on the loop...The DAS [Dept of Administrative Services] needs to follow through with its partial commitment to make CAS a decarbonized, fossil fuel-free design for the sake of the health of neighborhood residents and the opportunity to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. And if the CAS becomes Connecticut's first network geothermal system, it will serve as a model for how the state can make a wholesale change in the way it heats buildings."

# Out by the Clothesline (Facebook 40's Style)

By Elli Sharpe

I remember as a little girl one of the most fun days was Laundry Day, sometimes known as Monday. It was always a special holiday for me. *I wasn't much help I was too young for laundry but I chased a full laundry basket right out the back door.*

It was a time when mothers and daughters worked together to hang a *perfect line*, my Mother's starting with the sheets, then towels, long pants etc, until finally the *unmentionables*. *I never knew why they were unmentionable, everyone wore them...I hoped.*

While mothers hung clothes and gossiped with the neighbor, we kids played hide and seek under the newly washed sheets, being scolded and sometimes getting scuttled into the house until we learned to behave. *Laundry is a hard task*, we were told. I'm guessing we never learned because it was the same thing every Monday.

My mother said there was a lot to be learned from the clothes on the *clothesline*. Tattle Tale Grey either meant not knowing how to sort darks from whites or not using enough detergent, a sin according to the ladies of the day. When one of the ladies hung only hers and the children's clothes that meant the father was in the dog house...*I never saw any of the fathers in the dog house but all of us kids were always on the lookout.*

Did you hear Mrs. Jones is with child. It must have been the Geritol, there's a baby in every bottle, they say. *Well that's scary, why would anyone keep a baby in a bottle when everyone knows the stork brings them.* Mr. Brown ran away with Mrs. White last week. *They didn't run away, I saw them leave in Mr. Brown's car, I thought.* Between them they left 8 children behind, she should be ashamed. *They must have drunk a lot of Geritol. Shouldn't Mr. Brown be ashamed too, I wondered.*

It went on and on, they gossiped, we played. *I'll never forget the mud fights or the stinging bottom afterwards. I never understood why a little mud turned my mother into a madwoman who beat me...well maybe just a swat on the bottom but it hurt.*

It was post war (WWII) and looking back I realize just how poor we were. My mother, father, brother and I lived in a one bedroom apartment and shared a bathroom with two other families...*I never knew if someone would walk in on us, that could be a problem.* Poor? The word had no meaning for me.

My father was home from the war, my brother lived with us and I was as happy as a clam. My world was perfect.

In the evening after supper dishes were done the parents sat out on the front stoop and talked of how they would change the world if they could while we kids wouldn't change a thing. We played street games...do kids play street games anymore? Tag, hide and seek, kick the can...gone and forgotten? The grownups talked about everything except the war.

*I recall waking up in the middle of the night to my father's crying. I heard him tell my mother of the soldier who bet he could shoot a baby out of it's mother's arms...and did it.* The father who went to war never came back, this was a different father, one who didn't laugh as much, one who no longer played with me.



Vintage photo found on internet.

In spite of the changes those were the halcyon days of my childhood, things couldn't be better...*the thoughts of an innocent child. A child who knew nothing of hardship, a child whose innocence was protected. That would soon change.*

As a construction worker my father was hired to build homes for the veterans in the north end of Hartford. As a veteran my father got one of the first apartments finished. It was called the Barbour Street Project...fashioned after army barracks. Our backyard held a bunch of clotheslines, gossip heaven. My world changed drastically when we moved to the project...but that's another whole story for later.

At the tender age of eight I met my first love. His name was Roland, he was my hero. Along with my brother he was the most important boy in my life. He was eleven and he protected me from the world. It literally broke my heart when we moved. My parents were very understanding and would collect Roland for a visit and we would take him with us when we went to the lake but after a year or so that stopped...life goes on. I never really forgot the love I had for him. Roland? He became a well renowned priest. *Could it have been because he lost me, I always wondered.* I have never questioned the love I felt for Roland, at eight years old I truly fell in love with Roland. *If I were older it would be the talk of the day... Out By The Clothesline.*

I miss having a clothesline, the meeting place, a respite for the hard working women of yore. Now I meet neighbors down by the mailboxes, hit or miss but a place to chat but nothing beats *Laundry Day OUT BY THE CLOTHESLINE.*



# A Springtime Transition

By Jesse R. Clark

Springtime is an interesting paradox. Coming out of winter, it's still cold, muddy, and just gross. In winter, when we are in the snow in our coats, it doesn't feel that bad. We expect it. However, when it's cool weather in March, we shiver and complain in our lighter, springtime jackets. We want the warmer weather. We are ready. This year was strange due to the lack of snow, making everything feel a little off. Much like the past few years. So how do we transition to spring when we really didn't even have a winter? At least, not the kind of winter we are used to.

Winter, by nature, is a time for slowing down. In spring, we are springing forward, with our clocks, our ambitions, our human nature. We want to go out and explore. However, we may have it backwards, at least a little bit. We tend to work through winter, trying to keep ourselves busy, using the holidays, jobs, *anything* to get us through the long nights and the cold, short days. Distraction is what we want. But spring is when we stop. We assess our lives—spring cleaning, planning our gardens, taking a vacation. So we have the motivation, but it's the transition that gets us. We want to move past the transitions of our lives. But trying to move past too quickly is like going out in a T-shirt and shorts on the first day of spring. Your stubbornness will just make you more miserable. Dress for the weather. Don't be afraid to still have that winter coat on if it looks like snow. Use the transition to face the question we may fear: What comes next?

One of the blessings of the pandemic is that it caused us to stop. Stop with what we thought we had to do with our lives, what was expected of us. We had to stop because we did not know what was going to happen next. We had never been here before. Well, we never know what's going to come next. But we *can* choose what we want to do. We *can* take time to think about it. Plan, meditate, and prioritize what's important. Transitions happen whether we are ready or not. The pandemic was a sudden transition. Transitions *can* be sudden. But they are necessary in life, for in those transitions comes transformation.

No matter your culture or belief, everyone sees the transformation that happens in spring. The flowers that come back to life, the warmer, brighter days. In the Greek myth, Demeter, the goddess of the fertility of the Earth, lost her daughter, Persephone, to Hades. In response to her mourning, winter came. When Hades returned Persephone months later, Demeter celebrated and life came back to the Earth. Springtime. In other cultures, a bunny gives an offering of colorful eggs to a goddess named Eostre. This brings her so much joy she has the bunny share these eggs with the rest of the world, so they would know her joy. This is where we get the name Easter, celebrating the joyful resurrection of Jesus after his painful sacrifice. As with Jesus, it's the transition—his death—that is painful, but the reward—a rebirth—is so great. There are times

in our lives when we know something good is right around the corner. Something to celebrate. But first, we have to go through a transition to get to it. It is painful, but necessary. By letting go of the pain, we can start to move on to a new chapter. A new springtime chapter.

Now, this isn't to say that winter is full of discontent and despair, as Shakespeare and Charles Dickens have put it—something to fear, or dread. It is just part of your life, a different experience than spring. Yes, many prefer spring to winter, but your experience of winter changes with where you live. Likewise, your experience of life changes with where you are in life. Those who complain about winter focus on the cold and the snow. Well, it's not cold and snowy everywhere. But there is a reason you live here. This is your home. And, although you may complain about the snow and the cold, you wouldn't skip over the winter months. Especially when you see a bright day with the sun shining down on the snow, creating a multitude of tiny prism diamonds. Besides, springtime isn't perfect. There are cloudy days, rainy days, and all those allergies. It may even snow here or there. But there is the celebration of the beauty of Earth being reborn.

The point is, once we are settled down in a season, or in a part of our life, it becomes easier. Not perfect, just easier. No season is bad; it's the transitions that are tricky. And there are a *lot* of them in life. But you'll get through it in your own time. We are not alone in these transitions. We *all* experience them. Some changes we experience at different times, like the different stages of life, others we experience all together, like the pandemic. We can use this time to take a step back and take care of ourselves, opening ourselves to what comes next, finding the balance between not knowing what each day will hold and knowing that spring will always follow the winter.

## Song-A-Day Scholarship Open

Submitted by Ruth O'Neil

The Song-a-Day Music Fund is pleased to offer its Annual Scholarship to a graduating senior pursuing further study in Music. This scholarship is open to all students graduating from an area secondary school who are planning on further study in music following graduation. Homeschooled students are welcome to apply. Deadline to submit an Application is June 15, 2023.

This year the scholarship is in the amount of \$250. The Scholarship Recipient will be announced on or about July 15, 2023. To obtain an application, contact [songadaymusic.com](mailto:songadaymusic.com) or call 860-742-6878.

The Song-a-Day Music Fund is operated by the Song-a-Day Music Center and is committed to supporting practicing and emerging musicians.

For more information on, or to make a contribution to the scholarship or the music fund contact Song-a-Day Music Center, 860-742-6878, [songadaymusic.com](http://songadaymusic.com).



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# A Summer's Palette

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# The Packing House: Season Finale

By EC-CHAP



May

*"All things seem possible in May."*

- Edwin Way Teale

Please join us as we conclude our 2022-2023 Performance Season!

## "SONGS FOR UKRAINE" – BENEFIT CONCERT NOW STREAMING

The entire benefit concert, *"Songs for Ukraine"*, is NOW STREAMING! The concert features three performing artists: **Xavier Serrano with Derrick Bosse; Foolish Wisely; and Frank Critelli with Muddy Rivers. Scot Haney**, Meteorologist for WFSB Eye-witness News 3 TV served as Master Of Ceremony! To learn more about how you can help and to donate to this cause, please visit: <https://www.ec-chap.org/benefit-for-ukraine>. 100% of all funds raised go directly to the people of Ukraine through our Charitable Partner, **Direct Relief**.



## EC-CHAP PROGRAMS AT THE PACKING HOUSE

**SATURDAY, MAY 6, 2023: "Amy Rigby in Concert" (Indie).**

**Doors: 7:00pm / Performance: 7:30pm.** AMY RIGBY is best known for her album *Diary Of A Mod Housewife*. She started bands Last Roundup and the Shams in NYC's East Village before launching a solo career. From a Nashville publishing deal to Little Steven's *Underground Garage Coolest Song* ("Dancing With Joey Ramone") to guest on NPR's *Fresh Air* with Terry Gross, *World Cafe* and *Mountain Stage*, Amy Rigby has never outgrown her manifesto from that 1996 debut.



**WEDNESDAY, MAY 10, 2023: EC-CHAP MONTHLY TALENT SHOWCASE – EXTENDED EDITION 2<sup>nd</sup>. FREE ADMISSION. Doors: 5:30pm / Performance: 6:00-10:00pm.** We have had an overwhelming response to our Talent Showcase by musicians, poets, and creative artists of all ages! As we conclude our season, we will extend this final session to provide time to the local and regional participants to share their talents. We will begin at 6:00pm this month.

**THURSDAY, MAY 11, 2023: EC-CHAP Monthly Film Series (2nd Thursday): "Round Midnight" (Unrated) 2005. Suggested donation \$5.00. Doors: 6:30pm / Screening: 34 Neighbors**

**7:00pm.** *Round Midnight* is a 1986 musical drama film directed by Bertrand Tavernier and written by Tavernier and David Rayfiel.

It stars Dexter Gordon, François Cluzet, and Herbie Hancock, the latter of whom also composed the film's soundtrack. Martin Scorsese, Philippe Noiret, and Wayne Shorter appear in cameos.

**FRIDAY, MAY 12, 2023: "An Evening with Spiritual Medium Maura Geist". Doors: 7:00pm / Performance: 7:30pm.**

MAURA GEIST is a well known Spiritual Advisor, Angel Communicator, Author and Energy Healer. She has dedicated the last 12 years to helping those who have lost loved ones receive healing and closure through the heavenly messages of those that have crossed over.



**SATURDAY, May 13, 2023: "Leala Cyr Quartet" (Classic Jazz). Doors: 7:00pm / Performance: 7:30pm.**

LEALA CYR is fast becoming one of the most sought-after jazz vocalists of her generation. As a member of Esperanza Spalding's "Radio Music and Chamber Music Societies," she has performed around the world and has appeared on *The Late Show*, *The Tonight Show*, *The View*, *The Daily Show*, *Jimmy Kimmel Live*, *Austin City Limits*, and more. Leala will be joined by Jen Allen on piano, Will Goble on bass, and Ben Bilello on drums.



**WEDNESDAY, MAY 17, 2023: "The History of Radio: Part 1". FREE ADMISSION - REGISTRATION REQUIRED.**

**Register online at: <http://thepackinghouse.us/upcoming>. Doors: 6:30pm / Lecture: 7:00pm.** JOHN ELLSWORTH, Director of the Vintage Radio and Communications Museum of Connecticut, will present the first segment in a multi-part Series about the evolution of Radio – from its beginnings to what it has become today.

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](mailto:info@ec-chap.org)).

We leave you with the following:

*"Don't wait. The time will never be just right."*

- Napoleon Hill

Keep the faith!

EC-CHAP Board

# Vantage Points: A Photo Exhibition of the David Hayes Sculpture Fields

By Sarah Moon

Have you ever been to the David Hayes sculpture fields? You may have driven past them and never known they were there. The sculpture fields are behind Hayes' former residence at 905 South Street in Coventry. In a series of fields and grassy spaces of varying size, visitors find a vast array of Hayes steel cut-out sculptures. Some, called totems, are tall and narrow, some are square or circular, forming a kind of screen through which to view the world. Some are hanging and twist gently in the wind.



This unique setting of rural fields, less manicured than a "sculpture garden," allows viewers to appreciate the natural world in a different way, and vice versa to appreciate the art in a very different setting than static gallery spaces. There is something about Hayes' pieces that feels very right being out in the open air. In this setting, one feels that the spirit of the art exists in relationship with its ever-shifting environs.

I first viewed the fields on a balmy January evening. The sun was just beginning to set and cast that fiery orange glow that the setting sun offers in winter. The sculptures that are painted in bright colors like red, yellow, and blue appeared, even more vivid in this fiery light. I visited with my children, and they enjoyed the opportunity to see art pieces in a setting where they could run jump and tumble (and of course it made the experience more relaxing for us parents).

Now, in spring, one views the art against the backdrop of fresh growth, white cherry blossoms, spring-green buds, and birdsong. The natural setting of wide open spaces encourages visitors to come back with each new season for a new vantage point on Hayes' work.

In our latest show at the Dye and Bleach house gallery you'll find a series of 30 photos taken by Hayes' son, David M. Hayes, and photographer Karl Warner depicting the different pieces in the fields at different times of year and different times of the day. In some, tall grass grows at the base of the sculptures bathed in summer morning light. In others, a field of untouched snow provides a pure backdrop, not unlike a gallery wall.

This photo exhibition helps viewers appreciate the unique vantage points that a natural setting offers for viewing Hayes' wide array of sculptures. The show asks viewers to think about the way that setting influences how we experience a piece of art and helps us realize that there are no rules about where art does or does not belong. Because the photos depict the interplay between the art pieces and the natural world, they also help us to see how facets of nature can be experienced with the same kind of appreciation we bring to studying a work of art.

David Hayes was born in Hartford, Connecticut and



received an A.B. degree from the University of Notre Dame in 1953 and a M.F.A. degree from Indiana University in 1955 where he studied with David Smith. He received a post-doctoral Fulbright award and a Guggenheim Fellowship. A recipient of the Logan Prize for Sculpture and an award from the National Institute of Arts and Letters, he has had some 400 exhibitions and is included in over 100 institutional collections including those of the Museum of Modern Art and the Guggenheim Museum in New York. He worked in Coventry, Connecticut and Paris, France over a period of six decades.

David M. Hayes is president of the David Hayes Art Foundation and curates museum exhibitions for the work of his late father, sculptor David Hayes. Karl Warner is Connecticut-based composer and photographer, and teaches music at Manchester Community College.

We hope this show will please both those who have been to the sculpture fields and those who have never seen them, inspiring them to visit in person. As an extension of the show, David M Hayes will be leading a guided tour of the fields in June. Please check our website for a date and time for that event.

*Sarah Moon is an Artist-In-Residence (Theater discipline) at EC-CHAP; Director of the Dye & Bleach House Community Gallery; and Assistant Professor of Humanities at Massachusetts Maritime Academy. Sarah can be reached at: [communitygallery@ec-chap.org](mailto:communitygallery@ec-chap.org).*



## Tai Chi Classes for Health and Balance

### Windham Senior Center:

Mon, Wed 10-11a; & Wed, Fri 9-10a  
Call or text Sarah Winter: 860-931-8636

**Ashford Senior Center:** Tue, Fri 9:30-10:30a

**Chaplin Senior Center:** Thu 1-2p

**Columbia Senior Center:** Tue 1-2p

**Coventry Senior Center:** Wed 9:30-10:30a

**Lebanon Senior Center:** Tue 4-5p, Thu 6:30-7:30p

Call or text Joe Pandolfo: 959-444-3979





## Watercolor Scenes at Fletcher

Submitted by Janice Trecker

The May-June show at the Top Shelf Gallery, 'Scenes along the Road', watercolors by Lori Smolin opens May 6 with an artist's reception at noon. The Storrs artist paints both landscapes and animals and draws much of her inspiration from her extensive travels from Connecticut to Africa and the UK.

Her visits to the United Kingdom have been especially inspiring. She spent 2001-2 living in England. She returned in 2011 for a year in Scotland where she and her husband spent almost every weekend on their bicycles, exploring and photographing the countryside from Edinburgh to the Orkneys.

The changeable and often stormy Scots weather, she says, "provided both an inspiration and a challenge," but clearly one she welcomes as she and her husband return every year to bicycle in a different part of the UK. There she "tucks a camera in my cycling jersey so I can bring home new images to paint."

Smolin has been painting watercolors for over 30 years, and her works have won awards in the Academic Artists Association's National Exhibition of Traditional Realism, the Red Thread Network Annual Art Show, and the Tolland County Art Associations Annual Open Art show.

"Working on a challenging painting," Smolin says, "is like reading a good book: I don't ever want it to end."

The Top Shelf Gallery is at Fletcher Memorial Library, 257 Main Street, Hampton. Info 860-1086. 36 Neighbors

## At the Mill Museum

Submitted by Kira Holmes

**Present - August 13: The "Here All Along" exhibit.** It is included with admission to the Mill Museum at the regular price. Mill Museum members may attend for free. This exhibit will explore the African American experience in northeastern Connecticut (with an emphasis on Windham and Willimantic) from the 1600s to 1910, with an additional section relating to the 20th century. Learn the stories of Jo, Eliza, Job and Jesse Leason, Lyman and Clarissa Jackson, Ceasar and Julia Hall, and others who experienced Connecticut, its rural communities and mill towns, and the meaning of freedom in different ways than their white neighbors.

**Sun., May 7: Mother's Day or Mother's Figure Day Craft.** Dan Thomacos will have some vacuum formed flower portraits for children to paint and give out the next weekend. This event will take place in the Dugan building at 157B Union Street at 2 p.m. \$12 for members and \$15 for the public. The ticket price includes paint, paint brushes, and smiles. Please purchase your ticket in advance through our website, by PayPal, or at the Museum Gift Shop, cash or credit card. Please purchase or reserve your spot for this craft by May 2.

**Thurs., May 18: Third Thursday,** 6 p.m. - 9 p. m. on Main St., Willimantic, CT. The Mill Museum and the CT Eastern Railroad Museum will be handing out flyers. Provide your name and contact information for a chance to win free tickets to the Mill Museum in a drawing. When you visit, make an Irish flag craft.

**Sat., May 20: The Drop-in Spinning Bee with Peggy Church,** 10 a.m.-1 p.m., in person at Dugan Hall, 157B Union St., Willimantic. Bring a spindle or wheel and join us at this free event. Beginners are welcome. We are still requesting that you be COVID vaccinated. Please let us know that you plan to come, and if you have questions, contact Peggy Church at [peggychurch2@gmail.com](mailto:peggychurch2@gmail.com).

**Sun., May 21: Willimantic's American Thread Merger: A Model of Incorporation**

## Fire danger today

Days of warm dry winds have stayed the greening of grasses,  
burned petal edges  
of full open magnolias,  
yellowed and crisped  
the pond's sphagnum carpets.

I'd rather a *mud-luscious* spring  
of bursting green leaves  
and jellied salamander eggs in  
vernal pools.

I'd rather the smell of  
wet, warming earth  
inviting beetles and worms  
up.

Regardless,  
turkeys gurgling in the woods  
find acorns missed all winter  
when winds make flight of  
winter-worn leaves.  
Blackbirds defend new nests  
in old cattails,  
ospreys and herons define  
their boundaries,  
and small-town citizens  
(having learned the value of  
black-fly tactics)  
swarm money men  
who would move their mountain  
for a mall.

Christine Acebo  
April 2023

**rating Connecticut?** Donald Rogers will lecture about this legacy company at the Dugan building at 157B Union Street. Rogers' lecture will be at 2 p.m. \$12 for members and \$15 for the public. Please purchase your ticket in advance through our website, by PayPal, or at the Museum Gift Shop, cash or credit card.

**Fri., June 2: Justice - Michelle Thomas Art Opening.** On June 2 from 6 - 7:30 p.m. The Mill Museum will have a free opening. She will give an artist's lecture to pair with her exhibit that will run with "Here All Along," the ongoing exhibit that explores the African American experience in northeastern Connecticut from the 1600s to 1910. She creates artwork in her Artpeace studio. She is a professor at Pratt

# Solar Today - Honoring Earth Day Every Day

By John Boiano

Greetings all,

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

## Is Solar a mystery?

Well... yes and no. It depends who you ask. Unfortunately more often than not, I am speaking with homeowners who have been absolutely baffled by the amount of different information they are receiving from solar sales people.

From online “information” sites that end up being click bait traps to uninformed sales people, or salespeople that are thoughtfully and purposefully misguiding people.

I see this new influx of mis-information as being the largest challenges for today’s solar professionals. I use the word professionals to discern us from people selling solar who have limited knowledge except to repeat what their sales manager tells them to say. They are trained to make the sale and the “company” will figure it out later to see if a home and homeowner fit all of the qualifications to get to the end game of having solar installed on their roof. Sometimes a homeowner doesn’t even know they are disqualified because the company just walks away from them and does not have the courtesy to call and inform them about this.

## It is important to educate, rather than to sell solar.

If a homeowner is unclear with their options and not informed enough to make their own decision, then they should hold off on making that decision until they are 100% comfortable with committing to go through the process.

Some sales people take the language of the small print and twist it within legal limits and do not disclose the small print in the contracts. From promised (actually, contracts usually say estimated, where it should say guaranteed) solar production to financial obligations. Each situation is different. This is where a lot of the misinformation stems from. I’ve seen too many to count solar contracts that do not line up with what homeowners tell me what the salesperson told them. Usually after a long debriefing, a homeowner can repeat back to me the difference of what they were told and what the agreement says.

Some companies use questionable information, most of it is NOT dishonest but it’s like a magician using sleight of hand to distract you from what’s hiding behind the veil.

Philosophy of some companies are: train new sales people to lead with a lease, make a quick sale, some may stick and some may not. A pretty high fall out rate is built into the equation of doing business this way. The less information a sales person is trained on, the less likely there are to be mis-steps outside of that companies message or sales path. How do I know this?



Besides having a lot of friends in high-up positions in the industry, I lived it in real-life while I was a training sales manager for SolarCity/Tesla during the time it was the largest solar sales org in the country.

## Is going solar complex?

For the homeowner side of it, no it is not. From an installers perspective, yes, it is very complex!

Solar is science and math, first we have to figure out the dynamics with a site survey and engineering evaluation. Then sprinkle in the ever changing state and town regulations along with utility guidelines (including the new set-back regs), the process is extremely complex. Most all of the back end work is not seen by the homeowner, and that’s a good thing for sure.

You can put 10 different brand panels on a roof and it is subject to the same exact factors.

Roof direction, roof angle/pitch, the sun path over that roof plane for 365 days, obstructions (trees, vent pipes, dormers, neighbors house, etc..) and of course weather.

You add of these together and put numbers to them, this equates to the same mathematical and scientific equations. There are different panel particulars to take into account to include wattage, efficiency and degradation. This is one of the baffling things to me when I see over promised production numbers from a sales proposal.

The entire process is “currently” 4 to 6 months from sale to install. All solar companies have to go through the exact same process!

It’s a long and sometimes tricky road to go solar so my advice is to make sure and work with someone who is being transparent, open and honest and that they promises to keep you in the loop with any changes along the way. And most of all, make sure that you have the gut feeling of trusting that person!

*If you’d like to know more about Solar and how it could possibly help you to save money, please reach out to me directly.*

## Keep it simple, keep it honest, keep it local... Zen Solar

*Thanks for reading my article and let’s make every day Earth Day!*

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



# Traditional Publishing vs. Self-Publishing, Part 2

By Felix F. Giordano

We covered two of the first three aspects of publishing in the last issue of Neighbors Newspaper, traditional publishing and vanity publishing. In this issue we will discuss self-publishing.

Self-publishing is within everyone's budget. For less than \$1,000 you can have your book professionally published on both Amazon and Kindle. There's a bit of legwork and patience associated with this effort but nothing that's beyond the ability of anyone with a basic knowledge of computer software. You can self-publish your book with Amazon and reach readers who are interested in your book from across the globe all from the comfort of your own home.

An Amazon self-published book creates a real potential earning opportunity while retaining all the rights to your work. Many authors decide to self-publish after years of frustration pursuing the traditional path or even worse, being victimized by scam artists working for predatory publishing companies.

Amazon's KDP is a legitimate alternative to traditional publishing without the dangers of vanity, subsidy, & fee-based publishers. Amazon is a P.O.D. service (print on demand). Therefore there are no costs to Amazon or to you (no inventory) until someone places an order. There are costs associated with establishing a self-published book but they're a small fraction of the cost that scammers demand. Also, the important thing to remember about Amazon's KDP is that unlike traditional publishers and scammers, you control the entire process of publication from beginning to end and retain all rights to your work including any subsequent inquiries from interested film producers.

Choosing a publishing name provides legitimacy if your intent is to someday have your book available in bookstores and libraries. To ensure the name is available in your state go to your state's website where a new business would register and search for the business name of your choice. If it's not taken you can then register it with your state and receive a tax registration number. Also search for the domain name using a domain provider such as GoDaddy and purchase it. Then use that domain name to have a web designer create a website for your writing business. A website provides you as an author with a certain level of legitimacy and provides a platform where people can find you, learn a bit about you, and discover where they can order your books. I'm registered with the State of Connecticut as a small business and my publishing name is Red Road Publishers which reflects the Native American content of my novels.

You can create a free account with KDP (<https://www.kdp.amazon.com/>). Go to the bookshelf and add your book title and complete the setup. Ensure your manuscript is in MS Word Arial 11-point font and that you have the chapter numbers and

pages established the way that you want. Create a professional looking title page & copyright page. Go to Amazon and search for my novel, Montana Harvest and view my title page, copyright page, and overall format as examples of how to construct your own book's format.

- 1) Order an ISBN number from Bowker = <https://www.myidentifiers.com/>
- 2) Register your work with the U.S. Copyright Office = <https://www.copyright.gov/>
- 3) Apply for a Library of Congress Preassigned Control Number = <http://www.loc.gov/publish/pcn/>

These three steps are necessary to protect your intellectual work and dissuade plagiarists to copy your book's content.

Then create a dynamic cover. Generic covers are free and created right in the KDP program but you can have a graphic artist create a professional looking cover for typically between \$100 to \$300. A high end book cover by a graphics firm can cost upwards of \$1,000 or more. Then upload your manuscript and cover through the KDP Bookshelf. KDP recommends that you upload your manuscript in a formatted PDF file but you can also upload files in the following formats: DOC (.doc), DOCX (.docx), HTML (.html), or RTF (.rtf). Cover files can only be uploaded in print-ready PDF format. Instructions to accomplish all of this in KDP are easy to follow.

As I mentioned, Amazon books are sold on-demand so there are no printing costs you must absorb before a book order is received. The costs of the paperback printing or Kindle transmission costs are collected by Amazon and deducted from the retail cost of the book which you set yourself. Shipping and state and local taxes are collected by Amazon from the customer. Therefore, books sold on Amazon will have had the sales tax already collected and reported by Amazon.

Amazon, in turn pays you monthly royalties for each book sold based upon the retail price. For paperbacks the royalty rate ranges anywhere from 26-32% of the retail price. On Amazon's KDP website you will find the details to price your books. Amazon also allows you to purchase author copies at cost through the bookshelf. When you register your publishing name with your state and receive your state tax registration number then you can also complete a "Sale for Resale" certificate that can be downloaded from Amazon's website. Amazon allows you to purchase these author copies without paying upfront wholesale sales tax to Amazon. The expectation is that you will collect the retail sales tax when you make an in-person sale at an author event and pay the appropriate retail sales tax to the state. I have to report my collected in-person sales taxes quarterly to the State of Connecticut. You will receive a 1099 from Amazon which reports your royalty earnings to the IRS after the end of the year. You will need to file this with your tax returns.

Once your book is published with Amazon's KDP, the next logical step is to have your paperback book converted to an eBook format via Kindle Conversion. Amazon offers up to 70% royalties based upon a minimum eBook price of \$2.99. That is unheard of in the traditional publishing world. Create an account with Kindle Direct Publishing (KDP) or add a Kindle version if you already have a paperback version of your book. Create a new title in your Bookshelf or match the title of your paperback book for your Kindle eBook and complete setup. You can either use KDP's Kindle Conversion or pay a professional to convert your manuscript to Kindle format. Enrolling your eBook in Amazon's optional KDP Select program gives you the opportunity to reach more readers and earn more money. You can enroll a single book, your whole catalog or anything in between. If you make your eBook exclusive to the Kindle Store, which is a requirement during your book's enrollment in KDP Select, the book will also be included in Kindle Unlimited.

Kindle Unlimited is a subscription service where customers can read as many books as they like and keep them as long as they want for a monthly subscription fee. If you have a book enrolled in KDP Select, it will automatically be enrolled in Kindle Unlimited. Customers will see a badge next to your KDP Select-enrolled book indicating the book is available. To determine a book's page count in a way that works across genres, devices, and display settings, Amazon developed the Kindle Edition Normalized Page Count (KENPC). KENPC is calculated using standard formatting settings (font, line height, line spacing, etc.). They use KENPC to measure the number of pages customers read in your book, starting with the Start Reading Location (SRL) to the end of your book. A customer can read your book as many times as they like, but Amazon only pays you for the number of pages read the first time the customer reads them. It may take months for customers to read all the pages in your book, but no matter how long it takes, Amazon will still pay you once it occurs.

You'll receive a share of the KDP Select Global Fund as individual customers read pages in your book for the first time. Amazon deposits tens of millions of dollars each month into this fund and disburses it to participating authors. They announce the monthly deposit into the fund in their community forum on [kdp.amazon.com](http://kdp.amazon.com). You'll get one combined royalty payment according to the same payment schedule and payment method you selected for your other KDP sales. Author earnings are then determined by their share of total pages read, up to a total of 3,000 pages per customer per title. In my experience, the KENPC equates to about .004 cents per page. So if you have a 300-page book, you would earn approximately \$1.20 if one Kindle Unlimited subscriber read your book within one month's timeframe. If 100 people did this then your monthly royalty would be \$120. The more books you publish the greater your earning potential can be.

Self-publishing can be rewarding, empowering, lucrative, and fun. If you do decide to self-publish remember to lend your expertise, what you've learned both the good and the bad to other writers. All writers need the support of other writers whether it's through organizations, writers' groups, instructors, classmates, or family and friends. If there is one thing I've

learned on my journey to publication it is that the market for books can support many self-published authors. There is room for all of us to grow as writers and enjoy the fruits of our labor. The important thing to remember is to make your product as professional as possible, be true to your talent, and treat your writing with passion and respect. Don't let scammers or critics lead you down a path you shouldn't travel.

If you have questions regarding this material and last month's submission, you may contact me at: [felix.jbnovels@gmail.com](mailto:felix.jbnovels@gmail.com). I'll make every effort to respond to your questions in a timely manner. If enough people have questions and would like step-by-step guidance, I would be pleased to coordinate and present a free lecture on publishing at the Willington Public Library and would accept registrations for that lecture.

We defined "Self-Publishing" 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 7,500 and has had more than 5 million pages of his books read by Amazon Kindle Unlimited subscribers. His website is [jbnovels.com](http://jbnovels.com).*

This submission ends the Elements of Writing Series. If you wish to review the entire thirty-seven submissions go to <http://neighborspaper.com/> and then to view the back issue list, go to the latest issue and see the Archives icon in the right lower corner.

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## Windham Arts and Jillson House Museum May events

Submitted by Bev York

- May 2 through May 29** The "Coventry Arts Guild Member Art Show." The show includes works by over a dozen Coventry artists. The opening reception will be Monday, May 8 from 5 to 6:30. The hours are staffed by volunteers daily Mon through Fri from 9 to 5. The Gallery is managed by Windham Arts and is located in the Eastern CT Veteran's Community Center, (ECVCC) 47 Crescent St., Wmtc.. [Director@windhamarts.org](mailto:Director@windhamarts.org)
- May 7** Cabaret Concert- see article on page 31.
- May 13** Mother's Day Weekend Tea Party featuring Women of America, 3 p.m. Take tea with heroine Sybill Lyddington, activist Maya Angelou or others. Each table features a different woman. Tea and dessert. \$20 per person. Reservations at [Americamuseum.org](http://Americamuseum.org) Tickets at door if still available. ECVCC (address above).
- May 6** Bev Willnauer presents "Health and Healing in Early America." What herbs to use to cure a sore throat, prevent pregnancy and so much more! 2 p.m. Jillson House Museum, 627 Main Street, Willimantic CT free, donations appreciated.
- May 24** Tavern Night at the Jillson House Museum. Meet First Lady Dolly Madison. 5 p.m. (program 5:30) Discover fascinating facts and her favorite food and drink. Jillson House Museum, 627 Main Street, Willimantic CT Suggested donation to the museum \$10.



# Microforesting a small site

By Brian Karlsson-Barnes

**MicroFORESTS** are small spaces that mimic woods. Native trees and shrubs are planted densely. Leaf mulch provides nutrients to sustain shady groundcovers, bright shade shrubs and a dense canopy of fast-growing deciduous trees. But why a residential microforest?

**Aesthetic Delight** An ornamental *microforest* of shrubs and trees with showy flower, bark and fall color, perhaps fragrance, can be planted in Boston, Hartford or Connecticut's Quiet Corner.

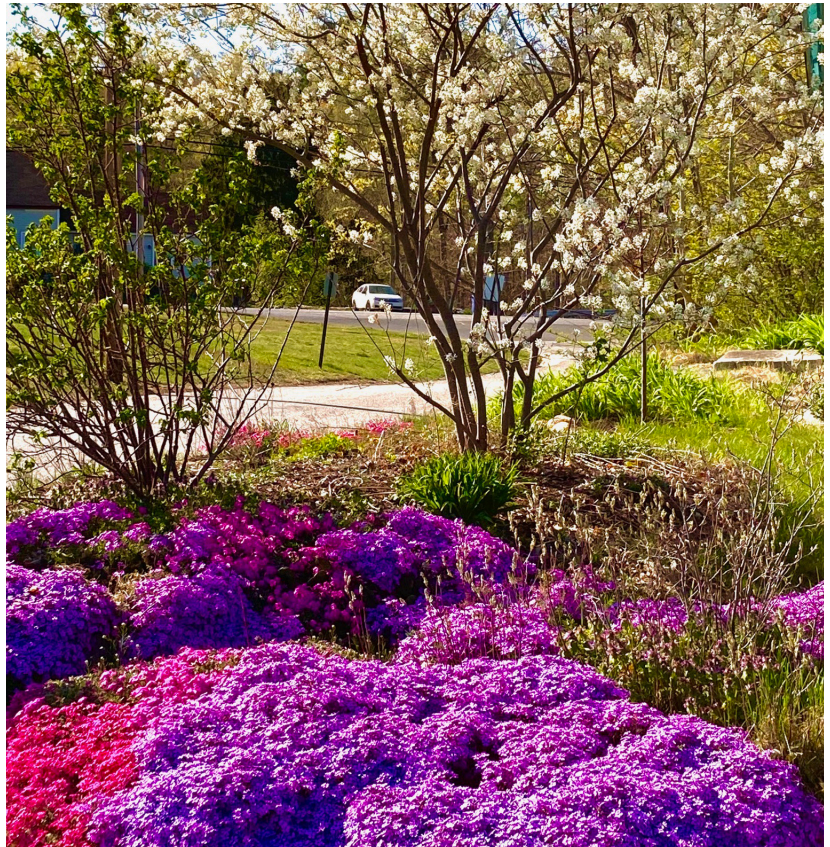
**Economic Profit** Mature trees increase residential property value 10 to 20%. Statistics may not yet reflect *microforested* values, but a densely screened sanctuary always has landscape value.

**Therapy in the Canopy** Trees release *Phytoncides*, calming chemicals that reduce stress, anxiety and pain... *Science Says!*... the essence of Japanese *forest-bathing*, first popular in the 1980s. Is the 6-foot Benjamina Fig (*Ficus*) calming next to my bed? I like to think so.

**AS IN NATURE** Trees are planted densely in *Microforests* -- competing for sunlight to grow faster. Three feet apart. Three to five saplings per square meter (about 11 square feet) advises Japanese Microforest expert Akira Miyawaki.

But scientific fascination with trees is not necessarily a gardener's prescription in New England, nor solar energy the only factor. Water makes plants grow. Mindful of climate change, higher temperatures and drought, I reduce density, thus less root competition for water. Soil is amended with compost, saucers are created to retain water, enriching mulch conserves moisture, and I water when dry. To reduce density, the *on-center* planting distance expands to five feet apart from the three feet of purist design. Limiting mature tree height to 40-feet also reduces water need in small spaces.

Mariana Salgado was fascinated by the idea of a *microforest* in her Fort Hill neighborhood, Boston borough of Roxbury. We planted in March when 6-to-7-foot trees were available in bud; Bigelow Nursery, Northborough, delivered the trees in excellent condition. On a narrow south terrace that had been lawn, some 350 square feet allowed a small grove of eight native redbud, serviceberry and whitebarked birch with some upright azaleas. Three small-sized (only 3-feet to better adapt) multi-stem Himalayan Birch were also planted. Herbaceous flowers to follow in the bright shade-to-full sun.



Serviceberry and colorful creeping Phlox in writer's garden.

**SUN** exposure is critical, allowing plants to photosynthesize energy for growth. Most trees want full-to-part-sun (6+ hours direct exposure). Understory plants can do well in bright shade (3 to 5 hours); fewer thrive in more shade. If enough sun, summer flowers support native bees and other pollinators.

**SOIL** nutrients enable plant growth. Forests naturally create soil with leaves and microorganisms. This gardener uses such amendments as kelp, copious compost and annual leaf mulch. Leaves can be mulch-mown into a lawn in fall. Better is mowing and dumping pulverized leaves into garden beds when autumn leaves are thick on the grass. Best is enjoying the healthy gardens.

**WATER** makes plants grow. Wild landscapes and naturalistic gardens both need moisture; the difference is what can be irrigated in drought. (Roots extend well beyond the canopy drip-line, so water lawn around any treasured tree.) Dense plantings need more water, especially in the Fort Hill backyard that slopes steeply downhill, losing water. Drainage is guided to plantings.

Eastern Connecticut's water supply seems abundant with three watersheds flowing from the Worcester Hills. Boston water – if one affords it -- is not yet jeopardized, but climate

continued on next page



change is changing the global water supply. Western reservoirs seem safe, but that might change in five years.

Water in drought. Roof water can be stored in rain barrels to reduce city water use. Draining downhill helps water the bottom and a “dry stream” can be trenched toward plants, lined with larger accent stones, smaller river rock and peastone. Drought limits natural irrigation. No rain, no drain. Desert plants can survive years with little moisture; temperate plants die.

**CLIMATE** Choose plants carefully. New England’s warming climate has more humidity, bug and fungal problems. Remove crossing branches to improve air circulation. Observe closely. Remove pests by hand or spray with water. Less-toxic systemic controls may be needed if too many caterpillars or fungal anthracnose -- avoid Eastern Flowering Dogwood.

**SITE PREP** Good to define bed lines – not specific plants – the year before. Prepare a site with screened compost in the fall. Aerate with a garden fork and mound 4 to 6 inches of compost to inoculate the land. Most tree roots occupy the top 18-inches, and half are in the top 6 inches. Winter helps with freeze-thaw cycles that expand and contract to promote leaching. Some amend soil to a depth of a meter (3.3 feet) in spring, but compost leaches nutrients and no need to dig as much if planning ahead. (Unless removing rocks)

In winter, neighboring windows are more visible -- so they see you -- and it’s a good time to visit forests and arboreta to see mature deciduous and evergreen trees. Arnold Arboretum’s 282 acres are both a Museum of Trees labelling most woody plants, and a spiritual sanctuary for Boston. I’m minutes from woods in the Quiet Corner.

Timing may not be optimal. Closing on our Connecticut farmhouse in June 2018, planting couldn’t begin until summer. The compacted driveway was mounded with 15-inches of compost plus 3-inches of wood mulch for three ‘Whitespire’ Birch (*Betula populifolia*) and one Himalayan Birch (*Betula utilis* v. *jaquemontii*) in 25-gallon pots dug into the loosened hardpan. Somewhat established in five years, watered from a 115-ft well in drought two years ago. Mounds are raised beds that drain quickly; I’m adding enriching mulch with a kelp tonic this spring.

**PLANTS** Three species of showy native trees for temperate New England were used on Fort Hill: **Redbud** (*Cercis*), **Serviceberry** (*Amelanchier*) and the **Whitebarked Birch** (*Betula*). Deciduous **Azalea** (*Rho.*) shrubs completed the woody planting.

**Redbud** (*Cercis*) Dark red buds open to magenta-pink flowers in April before leaf-out along wide-spreading branches -- best at edges to reduce crossing branches. Mature height 20 feet.

**Serviceberry** (*Amelanchier*) Pure white flowers cover the tree in April and bring tasty berries in June -- but birds beat



Newly planted Fort Hill terrace with microforested birch, redbud and serviceberry.

you to ‘em -- plus orange-to-red fall color. ‘Autumn Brilliance’ is a brilliant red. AKA Juneberry and Shad (blooms when the shad/herring run). Height 25 feet.

**Whitebarked Birch** (*Betula*) Striking bark in every season. Native cultivar (nativar) ‘Whitespire’ resists native bugs; height 35-40 feet. Smaller nonnative Himalayan Birch is the purest white.

Native shrubs are **Redtwig Dogwood** (formerly *Cornus*, now *Benthamidia*), and evergreen **Mountain Laurel** (*Kalmia*) and **Rhododendron**. Plants native to Japan are also at home in our temperate climate, as colorful **Japanese Maple** (*Acer palmatum*) and evergreen **Umbrella Pine** (*Sciadopitys*).

Large sizes provide visual impact, but small plants cost less and adapt better. Both can be planted in naturalistic groups to mimic nature. Dry-tolerant plants are better in global warming. Best using plants native to the conditions of your site’s microclimate; they establish sooner to thrive not simply survive.

My nativar (native cultivar) ‘Whitespire’ is not as damaged by caterpillars as nonnative Himalayan Birch (that also suffers borers). Improving horticultural conditions help plants to survive pests. I use copious compost and kelp, and pay close attention. Also planted are Paper, Sweet and Yellow Birch at my “*Chapel of the Birch*” in Chaplin.

Native plants feed the local web of life, but everything is connected in our global village where people and plants, pests and viruses now travel freely.

Brian Karlsson-Barnes, Master gardener / designer, Chaplin CT and Boston MA. *Photos by the author.*

KB garden design briankarlssonbarnes@gmail.com



# Being Honest in the Abortion Debate

By Conrad McIntire Jr.

In the April issue of *Neighbors*, Robert Enright attempted to reply to my January/February article, “Why I Am Pro-Life: A Rational Defense.” However, his article, “Let’s Be Honest about the ‘Choice’ vs. ‘Life’ Debate,” misrepresents what I stated and, on top of that, presents what is called in logic a “slippery slope argument.” While I appreciate any dialogue, when you respond to an article you should accurately respond to the position of the author on the central issue, rather than focus on (or worse, misrepresent) other parts.

Enright accuses me of incendiary rhetoric but, rather than deal with the heart of the abortion issue, he launches into his own. A slippery slope argument attempts to discredit a proposition by arguing that its acceptance would undoubtedly lead to a certain sequence of events, one or more of which are undesirable (in the view of the writer). Although the sequence of events may be possible, this fallacy plays on the suggestibility of the audience and is related to a number of other fallacies such as the “false dilemma” and the “argument from consequences.” His whole article is a distraction from the central question about abortion: Is the unborn child a human life?

Let’s start at the point where he misrepresents me and from which he proceeds to launch his argument. In his first paragraph, he takes me to task for having said I am both pro-choice and pro-life. Now, I do not think I could have been clearer in the section in my article, at the second paragraph, where I said, “I am literally both pro-choice and pro-life. You do not get pregnant by email. A choice takes place before anyone can get pregnant.” It should be clear that what I am referring to is that if someone makes a choice to have a sexual relationship, then basic biology would tell them that there is a potential to get pregnant. This is what I was referring to as to being pro-choice. It’s clear in the context. It should also be clear, based on my article, that I exclude rape. That clearly is not a choice, which is why I stated I am open to the morning-after pill and the rapist should be in jail! I have always been open to further discussion on rape, because it is not a choice. I would think this ought to be clear to Enright; I know of no one who has read my article and those I have written in the past who has not understood this point.

To be charitable to Enright, I can agree with his point that “choice” can be imposed upon by “governmental restrictions and regulations.” We experience that every time we put on a seat belt and come to a stop sign. There are restrictions on our choices for the greater good of ourselves and others. Enright brings this up in relation to the life of the mother being at stake unless there is an abortion, which I clearly supported in my article as a justification for abortion. But then he plays the illogical “hasty generalization” card by fantasizing that such an abortion cannot take place “until a panel of ‘independent’ physicians” signs off that the mother’s life is at stake. Now, I know several doctors, and if the mother’s life is known to be at stake, they are not going to wait for a panel that “certifies to

a governmental authority” to vote on it. Enright employs the same emotional (and imaginary) rhetoric that he claims to be against in my article.

Does Enright offer any examples of this? Imagination is not a substitute for facts! As I stated in my article, danger to the life of the mother, rape, and incest represent less than 2% of the number of abortions. They are a distraction from the real issue that it’s an undisputed scientific fact that abortion ends a human life!

Enright next has a problem with my statement that the pro-abortion position is “scientifically unsupportable, philosophically and logically incoherent, as well as socially destructive and humanly degrading.” He adds, “And, to boot, ‘racist.’ The pro-choice position is linked [in my article] to Nazi ideology, and the Holocaust is invoked.” Okay; to quote from Enright, “Here is where honesty gets brutal.”

First, he presents no argument at all regarding the central case against abortion, the scientific fact, as stated by the American College of Pediatricians, that an abortion ends a human life.

Second, he doesn’t attempt to answer my point that abortionists must turn to a metaphysical philosophical position to try to escape this fact by attempting to redefine “personhood.” It was in this context that I referred to slaveowners and the Nazis, who justified their positions on Blacks and Jews, respectively, by redefining personhood. Rather than offer any evidence to the contrary, Enright plays the appeal-to-emotion card, saying my argument provides “more than enough rhetorical fuel to put any prospect of a reasonable debate to the torch.” Now, why is that, if what I said is true? If you’re going to engage in a reasonable debate, you need to present facts, not emotional distractions.

Third, he presents no answer to my charge that “it is humanly degrading to say that the baby in the womb has no intrinsic value unless we choose to give it.” Enright doesn’t answer my questions “Do children gain value only by who their parents are? Is it morally right to eliminate someone because they’re an inconvenience?”

Fourth, surprisingly for someone writing an article about “choice,” he is silent about my pointing out that almost three-quarters of women who have an abortion felt pressured to do so. The procedure is mostly pushed by predatory men because it evades responsibility.

Fifth, he seems to take exception to my position that the great majority of abortions are done for convenience. Yet he offers no examples of why that is not true.

Sixth, he never addresses the fact that with two million families on a waiting list to adopt a baby, abortion is not necessary.

The one area that Enright attempts to argue against is my position that abortion is racist. I pointed out its racist roots and its uneven application to the Black population in my article. He notes that I quoted Gary Franks, the first African American elected to the U.S. Congress from Connecticut. On

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this, I could have quoted a number of African Americans (and others who agree). Treneé McGee, a Black pro-life Democrat who serves the 116<sup>th</sup> District of Connecticut, spoke openly during a debate on House Bill 5414 (the Reproductive Freedom Defense Act) against the abortion industry and its tendency to push abortion on the Black community. Let Enright deal with her words:

In my journey and quest for racial justice when it comes to reproductive rights, it began in a classroom of Black girls who knew about abortion when they were seven years old. They were taught in their classrooms...about abortion as a birth control method. They were taught that at any point in time, when they were 13 or 12 or 15, they could go to a Planned Parenthood and receive an abortion without their parents knowing.

She continued by describing how the abortion industry doesn't push itself on white women in nearly the same way, saying, "This differed when I traveled...into the suburbs... where there were young white girls who had access to all sorts of preventative methods, as well as even organizations that helped them to transition their births to their adoptive parents." McGee further cited statistics on how abortion affects Black women, saying, "The majority of abortion clinics are located in the Black community... I want to speak to the history of this industry and why I think it's destructive to my community."

As I pointed out in my article, it's never been a secret what Planned Parenthood founder Margaret Sanger had in mind regarding the Black population when she opened her first clinic and wrote about "the Negro problem." Enright needs to engage with people like Franks and McGee before further commenting on why the Black population has so many abortions, out of proportion to its numbers.

Enright ends by saying, "I otherwise remain 'open' to discussion, as long as it is 'real,' i.e., dispassionate." Let's be honest about that. I presented a number of factual statements in my article, yet Enright chose not to address them but instead call them "rhetorical fuel" to torch any debate. The word "dispassionate" is defined as not being influenced by strong emotion, and so able to be rational and impartial. Whether anyone can be fully dispassionate is doubtful. Our worldviews shape our positions on every issue. But we can have discussions and present facts, not imaginary examples, that lead to rational conclusions. We also need to be clear about what we are talking about. I suggest that anyone interested in why I oppose abortion simply Google the "This Is Abortion/Abort73" video. Then you can decide.

*Conrad McIntire Jr. is a member of the Society of Christian Philosophers, the Evangelical Philosophical Society, and the International Society of Christian Apologetics, and a co-director of the Christian Apologetics Research & Education Service. He welcomes questions and comments to: caresipeter315@aol.com.*

## Pencil Neck

By Diane Rutherford

I was a Realtor and was showing a house and there was a stray cat there. The buyers said they will buy the house and keep the cat if I would take care of her until then. Well - they didn't buy the house and didn't take the cat. I fed her and then one day took her home. Pencil lived for 21 years. Her last day she came to get me and we spent the night on the couch together until she took her last breath. Rest-in-peace dear Pencil.



## The Spirits' Lass

By Judy Davis

In County Kerry, around the mid-19th century, a woman named Kate Kearney, ruled her own small part of Killarney.

A local girl, Kate was not only a beauty, but, also, a shrewd business woman who made herself well-known.

Out of her humble cottage, Kate sold poteen (illegal moonshine). She knew that her "establishment" was the last chance for eating and drinking before the travelers would make their way, approaching the Gap of Dunloe.

The Gap was the route through The mountains, with the Macgillicuddy Reeks on one side, and the Purple Mountain (with its fields of heather), on the other.

Kate knew there would always be customers, for it was seven miles before the next establishment.

Known as the "The Spirits' Lass"; Kate's hospitality was known to all. Men believed her moonshine gave them courage (real or imagined!)

Yet, when The Great Famine came, the potatoes she used to make her famous drink, were rotting in the fields.

Kate disappeared one day, never to be seen, or heard from, ever again.

But for years, and years, travelers would be passing the ruins of her cottage, sure they heard men laughing, with a woman laughing the loudest!



# Regional Media and Arts News

By John Murphy

Happy Spring Everyone,

I hope the returning warmth brings good feelings and good thoughts to your everyday. Works for me!

Two things for this month:

1. Radio and media update—did you miss any shows?
2. Arts resources and news for individuals and groups—move forward this year!

*Town of Ashford coverage reminder*—you may recall I have been covering the economic development and zoning situation there for the past three months. The town is amid protracted debate over the pros and cons of proposed zoning rule changes and the subsequent possibility for construction of a very large mega-warehouse/storage facility near the intersection of Route 89 and I-84.

The May meeting of the Planning and Zoning Commission could produce a decision or it may continue the conversation between town leaders and the applicant. If I am correct, the public comment process that ran over three meetings is complete. The Economic Development Commission previously approved the proposed zoning change. I will get some folks on both sides in the studio for an update later in the month after the hearing. And it's not just Ashford—this challenge is happening in towns across the state in recent months and the locations and environmental impacts and economic benefits are under intense review and study to balance local interests and short/long term impacts.

## ON THE HOMEFRONT IS ON RADIO AND YOUTUBE

The *On the Homefront* series is available on YouTube for 24/7 access anywhere. Subscribe and you will automatically get every new program in your inbox. Guests get links for their own media sharing!

Programs air live on Wednesdays from 5-6 pm on WILI AM 1400 and 95.3 digital FM. They are videotaped and posted on the radio station's YouTube channel. To share information or be a guest use email—the studio doors are wide open at [john@humanartsmedia.com](mailto:john@humanartsmedia.com). Don't be shy, no animals will be harmed!

April 5: <https://youtu.be/QjOGaW8dfws>

1. Repair Café Update for Saturday April 8—Virginia Walton, Recycling Coordinator/Town of Mansfield  
Rita Kornblum, Café Volunteer + Solid Waste Advisory Committee/Town of Mansfield
2. Eastern Arts/Theatre— The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee—opening and schedule

44 Neighbors

Tim Golebiewski, Director/ Theatre/Lighting Technology Specialist and Lecturer

Three cast members:

Allie Sawtelle, Kyle Tinker  
Palaia, Jillian Martin

April 12: [https://youtu.be/\\_Uz-TUaxCdVc](https://youtu.be/_Uz-TUaxCdVc)

(a short program this week due to Red Sox coverage)

1. Windham Textile and History Museum  
Kira Holmes, Executive Director  
Doe Hentschel, Author

April 19: <https://youtu.be/LNFz7q9xf7o>

1. Arts Center East/Vernon & Dionysus Theatre Company Re: Private Wars May 5—13

- Phil Dodeck, Director  
Gabbi Mendelsohn, Founder/Manager/Director  
[www.artscentereast.org](http://www.artscentereast.org)
2. Ashford Arts Council News & Events  
Richard White, President  
[www.ashfordarts.org](http://www.ashfordarts.org)
  3. Putnam Arts Council  
David Sullivan, Board Chair  
[www.putnamctartsCouncil.com](http://www.putnamctartsCouncil.com)

April 26: <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLgpHwaCn-feKqxQD5QSS1rX0k97ks6gf-x>

1. YONO Yoga & Meditation Willimantic & Quiet Corner Float/Health and Wellness Fair June 10

Angie Jacques, Owner, Practitioner  
[www.yonowillimantic.com](http://www.yonowillimantic.com)

2. ECSU Jazz Ensemble and Jazz Combo Concert—

April 29, 2023

Anthony Cornicello, Musician, Professor & Chair,  
Music Department

WILI YouTube Channel for all M-F local talk shows:

<https://www.youtube.com/@wiliradio7000>

Subscribe and you will automatically get every new show!

## RESOURCES FOR THE ARTS COMMUNITY

**Cultural Coalition Serving Northeastern and Southeastern Connecticut (<http://culturesect.org/>)**

### Mission—Location—Service

The Cultural Coalition's mission is to improve the economy, vitality, and quality of life in Southeastern and Northeastern Connecticut by supporting the arts, cultural and creative community. The Coalition is a 501© (3) nonprofit organization with



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an office in Norwich governed by a board of directors comprising cultural, community, and business leadership.

The Cultural Coalition serves core constituencies:

Arts and cultural organizations, entities and individuals that make up the creative community

Forty-two (42) Municipalities in eastern CT; to benefit Southeastern CT's and Northeastern CT's residents, employees, and visitors.

Register yourself or your group in their database, so they can send appropriate information to help you learn and grow your art and your business. Sign up for newsletters to keep current and connected!

## Background

Until 2012, Southeastern Connecticut was the only region in the state without a Designated Regional Service Organization (DRSO) supporting the CT Office of the Arts in the Department of Economic and Community Development to organize and advocate for the creative sector. In the fall of 2012, a group of more than 50 regional business, arts, tourism, government, and education leaders conducted cultural assessments in both the greater New London and greater Norwich areas.

In November of 2013, a founding Board of Directors was established. An executive director was hired in January of 2014. In the fall of 2019, the Cultural Coalition began developing a new strategic plan for 2020-2025, which was adopted in early 2020. In January 2021, the Cultural Coalition became the Designated Regional Service Organization for the Northeastern region of CT, and now serves 42 towns in eastern CT.

Arts and culture can create more vibrant, healthy, and equitable communities. The Cultural Coalition seeks to authentically represent the region we serve, recognizes the breadth and depth of cultural expression, and ensure that all community members have access to arts and cultural activities. The Cultural Coalition will be a model for improving diversity, equity and inclusion, and provide the tools, resources, and motivation to inspire change in our sector and region.

Check their website for arts news, resources, and training opportunities. Sign up for the newsletter to receive regular updates and join network meetings to share the work you are doing with others.

## Creative ground ([www.creativeground.org](http://www.creativeground.org))

CreativeGround is a project of the [New England Foundation for the Arts \(NEFA.\)](http://www.nefa.org) It is the dynamic regional directory that celebrates and reflects the vital work of New England's artists, creatives, culture bearers, creative organizations and businesses. It is the place for all to gain insight into the vibrant regional creative ecosystem.

CreativeGround is a tool that supports the visibility, connection, and knowledge building of the New England Creative Economy Network. Whether you're rooted in the creative community, or are cultivating creative relationships, CreativeGround invites you to explore and connect!

CreativeGround is NEFA's primary creative economy tool for doing this. A unique combination of database and directory, the user-generated and maintained profiles on CreativeGround provide a real-time picture of the broad spectrum of creative people and places at work in the six New England states and the important connections between them. A website to search for grants: <https://www.nefa.org/grants-programs/find-grant>.

## New England Creative Economy Network (the Network)

The Network is comprised of what we call the Creative Core (artists/creatives and creative entities that exist to produce, distribute, support, or train in creative work - like art studios, radio stations, and libraries); as well as Community Leaders from Creative-Related entities that are not creative in business mission but also distribute or otherwise support creative work (like Senior Centers, School Committees, and Foundations.)

## Mission & Values

NEFA's Creative Economy program's vision for our region is a sustainable, inclusive, and connected New England creative economy that is valued by all New England communities. This means that creative people and places are recognized, supported, well-informed, and connected to each other and the broader ecosystem.

In pursuit of that vision, we work to strengthen the creative community by supporting its visibility, connection, and knowledge building.

Spring Profile Workshop Series—just do it!!

To register: <https://www.creativeground.org/blog/register-now-spring-profile-workshop-series>

Part 1 was in April, about how to register and create your profile in Common Ground. Look for the recording.

Part 2: Add "Artists Only" Information  
May 3, 2:00pm - 2:30pm

Valuable tips on how artists, like teaching or touring artists, can best update the sections of the Common Ground profiles just for them including applying for special designations.

Part 3: How to Add Images, Video, and other Media  
May 17, 2:00pm - 2:30pm

Learn how to add images and videos to your profile's Media Gallery, add links to other content, and get tips on what types of media make for a strong profile.

Always keep the faith, reading Twain always helps,

John Murphy  
[john@humanartsmedia.com](mailto:john@humanartsmedia.com)



# Voting with Gold Nuggets

By Gary Bergquist

The process of voting is one of the simplest acts in our representative republic. You look at a list of names and pick the one you want. If the candidate for whom you vote is picked by the most voters, he or she is declared the winner and is sworn into office. Admittedly, the peculiarities of the presidential electoral college system do not adhere tightly to this model. In presidential elections, the candidate with the most electoral votes, rather than popular votes, becomes president. Still, elections within the states are determined by popular voting.

When a ballot contains more than two candidates and no one gets 50% of the vote, a runoff election may be required. The second election costs money to administer and is inconvenient to the voters, who must return to the polls. To avoid this problem, a process called ranked-choice voting (RCV) has been gaining traction. In short, RCV goes beyond the pick-one-candidate format by allowing voters to rank their preferences of all candidates relative to one another. Once the preferences of voters are known, a simple method can be applied that simulates the results you would get if the same voters participated in a runoff election with the same preferences but with fewer candidates.

Alaska and Maine use this method for federal and state elections. Some big cities, including New York, Minneapolis, Santa Fe, and San Francisco, use RCV for local elections.

In addition to the obvious advantage of avoiding runoff elections, the use of RCV encourages the participation of third-party candidates. In the United States, there are usually only two serious candidates since we essentially have a two-party system. The two parties, Democrats and Republicans, possess a virtual monopoly on the determination of candidates. The byproduct of this two-party system has been the dysfunctional battleground we euphemistically refer to as the legislative branch of our federal government. The Senate and House are each sharply divided into two camps, both claiming they know what's best for the citizenry.

Some voters have become so frustrated by the ineffectiveness of the two parties that they have relinquished their party affiliations. A quick trip to Wikipedia ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Political\\_party\\_strength\\_in\\_U.S.\\_states](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Political_party_strength_in_U.S._states)) shows 31% of voters are registered as Democrats, 25% as Republicans, and 41% as Independents.

The effect of this gradual exodus from the two major parties of voters with moderate views is that the concentration of those with extreme views increases. Consequently, in primary elections the extreme members (hard right for Republicans and hard left for Democrats) play a significant role in choosing the eventual candidates for the general election. The Independents are often left with distasteful options from which they must choose.

In such elections, a third candidate would be wel-

come. However, for serious candidates to consider running in a third party, there must be a voting system that gives them a real chance to receive votes, which RCV does.

Advocates claim that RCV is simply a better way to vote since its results more accurately reflect the will of the people. The belief that RCV gives better results derives from the following argument. Suppose there are three candidates running for president: Curly, Larry, and Moe. Further suppose that all voters think highly of Curly and believe he would be a fine stooge to lead our country. However, no one has him at the *top* of their list. Half of the voters like Larry just a little bit more than Curly but despise Moe, while the other half like Moe just a little bit more than Curly but despise Larry. With conventional voting, Larry and Moe each get half of the votes while Curly gets none, being everyone's second choice. Either Larry or Moe wins the election by a hair, delighting half of the voters, while the other half want to move to another country. Curly, who would have pleased everybody, returns to his day job.

The current pick-your-favorite voting system gives voters no opportunity to express their fondness for Curly, where the ballot looks like this:

Place an "x" by your choice:

Curly

Larry

Moe

The winner is the one who gets the most votes. With RCV, the voter instead ranks the candidates, using 1 for the one she likes best, 2 for her second choice, and 3 for her last choice:

Rank your choices 1=best, 2=next, 3=worst:

[2] Curly

[3] Larry

[1] Moe

In this example, the voter places the number 1 next to Moe, her first choice, 2 next to Curly, with whom she would be satisfied, and 3 next to Larry, whom she despises.

The idea is that if her first choice (Moe in this case) does not win, she still has an opportunity to express her preference among the remaining candidates (she prefers Curly to Larry). The ballots are tallied via a process that considers all preferences of all voters in determining the winner. Through this process, the voter's approval of Curly is acknowledged, and Curly has a better chance of coming out on top.

There are two significant drawbacks to RCV. First, ranking is more mental effort for voters than just picking one candidate. At some elections, there may be a dozen or more offices to be filled. Voters may be unwilling to expend the extra effort needed to rank each one. For some local offices, they may barely know who's running. And if voting becomes a chore, citizens may be discouraged from participating. It is for this reason those communities who do use RCV limit its use to certain offices.

The second drawback to RCV is that the process by which ranked votes are tallied can seem like magic. There are different methods in which the votes might be tabulated, but none as intuitive as counting checked boxes. If you're an actuary or computer programmer, you may feel comfortable with the RCV "algorithm," but not so for the rest of us. With the chants of "fake elections" ringing in our ears, it might not be prudent to have the winner decided by a mysterious computer algorithm. In a close election, voters would be marching in the streets and the Supreme Court would be called in to referee the battle.

Still, the premise behind RCV is a good one, and Curly does deserve to win, both for him and for us. Let me propose an alternative, which I'll call Gold Nugget Voting (GNV). Like RCV, GNV is not as simple as just picking one candidate, so we would reserve its use for just certain elections and only when there are more than two candidates.

Here's how it works. Suppose there are *three* candidates. You may give up to three Gold Nuggets to each candidate. (If there were *four* candidates, you could give up to four Gold Nuggets to each candidate.) This is what the ballot looks like:

Assign each candidate 0 to 3 Gold Nuggets.  
The candidate with the most total Gold Nuggets wins.

- Curly
- Larry
- Moe

If you like Curly and Moe but despise Larry, you could give 3 each to Curly and Moe, and 0 to Larry:

- [3] Curly
- [0] Larry
- [3] Moe

If you like Moe the most, and Curly a little, you might vote like this:

- [1] Curly
- [0] Larry
- [3] Moe

You can give each candidate up to *three* Nuggets. If you give the same number (say, 3) to each, then there is no point in your voting since the candidates benefit equally from your allocations.

An advantage of GNV is that it relieves you of the need to "game" the system. As an example, consider the presidential election of 1992, in which Bill Clinton received 43.0% of the popular vote, George H. W. Bush received 37.5%, and Ross Perot received 18.9%. Many conservative voters of the day were torn between Bush and Perot but could only vote for one. Some preferred Perot but voted for Bush anyway because they didn't want to "waste" their vote on a candidate who was unlikely to win. With GNV, such voters could give three Gold Nuggets each to Bush and Perot, and zero to Clinton.

A similar situation occurred in the presidential election of 2000, in which George W. Bush received 47.9%, Al Gore received 48.4%, and Ralph Nader received 2.7%. In this case, some liberal voters were torn between Gore and Nader.

In either of these elections, it's not clear who would have prevailed if GNV had been used, but it would have been

simple for the voters to understand and accept that the winner was the one with the most Gold Nuggets. Moreover, winning politicians sometimes claim that they have earned a "mandate" from the voters to promote their policies if they get more than 50% of the vote. Under GNV, the notion that a tally of 50% earns the winner a voter mandate no longer applies. "Percent of the vote" no longer has meaning, since each voter can give Nuggets to some or all the candidates. Results might look like this:

Curly 5,400 Nuggets  
Larry 2,800 Nuggets  
Moe 2,750 Nuggets

The candidate with the most Nuggets wins and has the mandate. As far as we know, Curly may have received at least one Nugget from every voter. The notion that a runoff election is needed if no candidate receives 50% of the vote is meaningless. As with RCV, runoff elections become obsolete, thereby saving taxpayers the cost of additional elections.

The forgoing discussion makes no mention of the complexities of the electoral college system for presidential elections. Those complexities live on. GNV simply allows an election within a town or state to be conducted in such a way that the results better reflect the desires of the voters in that election—which should be what we all want.

*Gary Bergquist is a freelance writer. His latest book, Becoming What We Watch: Television's Unintended Legacy, is available from Amazon.*

## A Summer's Palette 2023

Submitted by Debra Gag

The Ashford Area Art Council is holding their second Summer's Palette on June 24 from 10:00–4:00, rain date June 25. The Summer's Palette is held at Westford Hill Distillers, 196 Chatey Road, where there is a still pond, an 18<sup>th</sup> century house, a yard full of flowers and the quiet venue of the distillery. Where's that? At one of the most beautiful rural scenic spots in Eastern Connecticut.

The Ashford Area Arts Council and Westford Hill Distillers are providing an opportunity for the public to come view the scenery and create works of art.

-Don't have supplies? We will provide paper, paints, and brushes.

-Don't want to paint? Come and enjoy the many vendors who have created works of art already.

-Have already created works of art? Then please join the Ashford Arts Council with your own tent. Contact [boiano.darcie@gmail.com](mailto:boiano.darcie@gmail.com). We are adding spaces and opening it up for our artists members as well as non-members to display and sell their art.

Want to enjoy any or everything? Join us on June 24 (rain date June 25) at Westford Hill Distillers, 196 Chatey Road in Ashford on June 24, rain date June 25. A distillery beverage will be available.





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