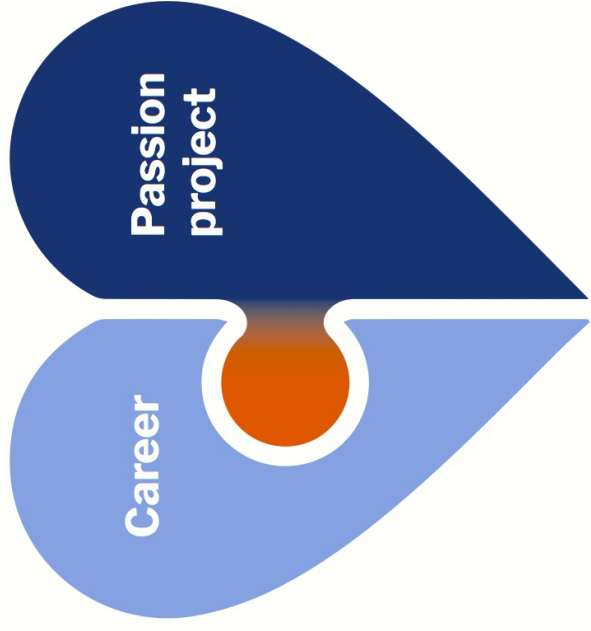


NEIGHBORS

No. 224

December 2023

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Looking Up:

The Moon on the Breast of the New-Fallen Snow

By Bob Grindle

This evening grew dark with light-switch suddenness...and as I sit looking out the window into a gloomy, damp and chill Thanksgiving eve, I can almost hear the childhood refrain, "over the river and through the woods, to Grandmother's house we go..." playing somewhere in the back of my head; reminding me of a time when nothing, not even the raw, blustery and gray weather that is so common this time of year could spoil the welcoming and warming excitement of the holidays. It was a time when the comfort of people getting together, cooking and sharing food, enjoying the companionship of telling the stories of how the year had unfolded and listening to each other's plans for the coming year felt genuine and could fill a child's head with a sense of enthusiasm for growing up. It was a time of hope.

As I get up from my nostalgic drift and head out to do evening chores, the lights in the barn offer a sort of warming promise despite the marrow-chilling rawness that late November is so good at. The oddly satisfying crunch of straw and shavings underfoot and the rich aroma and sound of animals eating timothy pellets make the barn feel deceptively warm despite the early and unseasonable cold. The texture of the moment is almost as filled with promise and hope and a satisfying sense of "all is well" as the memories of growing up that I left back at the desk just moments ago. There is certain self-centeredness though, that can weave its way into our human recollections of the way things were... into the stories we recall or recalibrate. Perhaps our brain's effort to clean up the frayed edges, replace the missing pages, or more, that have suffered the unrelenting wear and corrosive weathering of time.

A loud but distant crack of a gunshot clears my

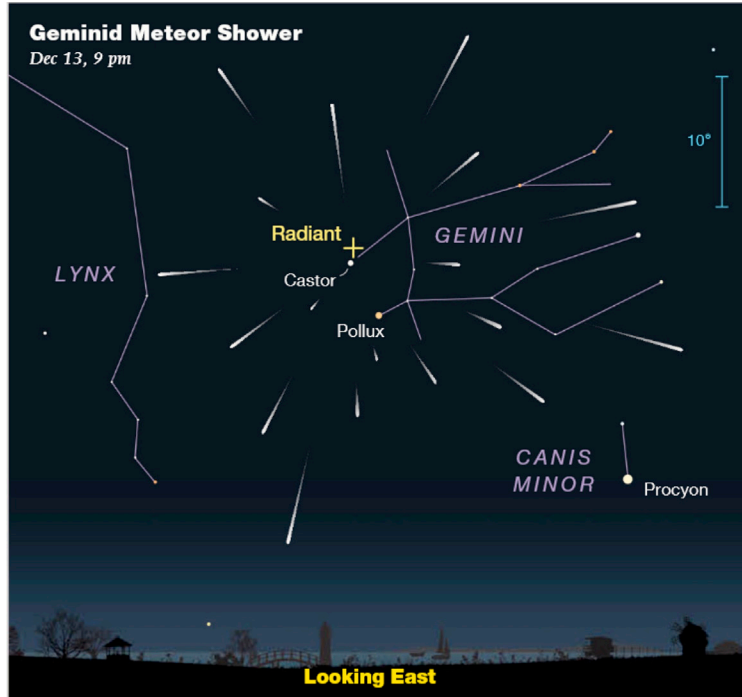
head of idling memories. The sounds of hunter's guns and members of the 'Fin' practicing at the range that echo across this narrow valley are mostly still now as the day wanes, and the narrow valley that snakes its way between Parrish and Beaver Hill to the south and Clark Hill to the north has quieted for the day. The time when our pond

railroad bed, and is a welcome newcomer to the many hikers and bikers and horseback riders who frequent the trail.

As I walk back to the house darkness is at hand and the wind has picked up...late after-noon is feeling a bit like pre-winter. No matter the chill in the air, though, the sound of the wind singing through the towering stand of Norway spruce at the back of the garden chills the imagination and cuts through human vanity, whispering that whether or not we understand it, our fate is intertwined with the world we live in and we ignore it at our peril. The night will be a clear one, and despite a few snowflakes in the air the nearly full Moon is at the eastern horizon and Jupiter announces the start of the show. The sky beckons

The skies of December are not known for being viewer friendly, with bluster and cold and occasional bursts of sudden winter snow, but with only a razor thin lunar crescent that will set early on the evening of December 13-14, this year's Geminid meteor shower in the eastern sky should be the best of the year...a dark sky early and the promise of as many as a hundred meteors an hour. Plus, the Geminids start earlier than most. By 9 pm, Gemini has risen high enough in the east that meteors can be seen without having to stay up till 2 or 3 am on the 14th. The show really gets impressive though when Gemini is higher in the sky later at night, with brighter trails and longer tracks across the night. While you're waiting for those shooting stars, enjoy looking for Orion to rise in the east and identifying Sirius—the "Dog Star"—just below and to the left of Orion's left leg.

For all of you who are inclined to a more traditional way of thinking of the skies of December, let's look forward to the Full "Cold" Moon of Christmas Eve and Clement Clarke Moore's class tale of Santa's visit, "The Night Before Christmas:" 'The moon on the breast of the new-fallen snow gave the luster of mid-day to objects below.' Yep. Now all we will need is snow before a clearing sky and the fantasy comes to life. Enjoy the coming season. Be kind to all living creatures and to all a good-night.



laden, brook laced, boggy, and gently undulating landscape through Haven & Hartford Railroad on its daily whistle-stop, milk-can and orchard basket pick-up and delivery schedule to Boston is long past. Instead, the Connecticut Airline Trail State Park is a Johnny-come-lately repurposing of the 19th century hand and machine hewn and blasted

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On our cover: A selection of photos taken by Lebanon photographer Thomas J. Nanos at Willimantic's Light Parade and at the Essex Steam Train. Tom is the photographer for the Lebanon Volunteer Fire Department.

**This is our time on Earth.
What are we doing with it?**

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The Purpose of Neighbors:

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

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Year End Blues and Hopes

By Loretta Wrobel



As December rolls around, I am struck by the sadness I feel because the days end so quickly. I barely turn around and night has descended, the lights are on and there went another day. I am a creature of the light and when the light diminishes, I start to feel myself diminishing. I find myself holding my breath until Winter Solstice arrives with the promise of longer days. This gives me such joy that each year I can be seen jumping with pleasure on December 21, the first day of winter. Bliss, because I have survived another dark cycle.

The other reality is that this time of year begs me to address how the past year has influenced me and what the new year holds for our human race. I know I have been dragging as the year progressed with ongoing reports of war and endless violence. The concept of peaceful resolution seems to be out of our reality in 2023. Will 2024 be different? The concept of peaceful dialogue has vanished as a strategy for resolving conflicts.

I do not dwell and labor over the many bombings and incessant violence that appear to have overtaken our planet. Conflict spreads as rapidly as the COVID virus, and can be found everywhere. It is so easy to become numb and overwhelmed by the latest news from anywhere in the Middle East, Ukraine, or in any state in our Country. It feels that conflict in all continents around the globe are constantly escalating.

Imagine my surprise when I came upon pearls of wisdom right when I craved them. I was reading the book, *On Time and Water*, by Andri Snaer Magnason, and read a chapter detailing his visit with the Dali Lama in 2010. A dear friend gave me the book to read, as it discusses climate change and the drastic changes happening in Iceland. The writer is Icelandic and the book has a variety of messages. He talks about his grandparents and their relationship to the then numerous glaciers in Iceland. He learns from their stories and he writes about all the high-speed changes that have occurred within the last half century.

He meets the Dalai Lama, is entranced, and secures an invitation to meet the Dalai Lama again at Dharamsala in India. The report of the Dali Lama's message is so uplifting and hopeful, it flabbergasted me. It was the intensely profound message I was seeking. I was shocked and pleased to find this enthralling answer that led me to a greater understanding as to what was weighing me down in our present world.

The Dali Lama spoke about the reality that without peaceful dialogue, no issues can be solved. When force is implemented, there is a winner and a loser. Under that scenario there can be no permanent or even longstanding solution to any conflict. Can we as humans begin solving the ubiquitous conflicts not by escalation of force but by constructive dialogue? This wise, holy man shared that the

twentieth century was characterized not by engaging in negotiations, but by using greater violence. He expressed his belief that this twenty-first century will focus more on emotions and teaching warm-heartedness.

As we become aware and expand our compassion, we are better prepared to listen and work on/out mutual solutions. The Dala Lama explained, "Ethics and compassion must be taught on a secular basis, otherwise it will cause problems in multireligious, multicultural communities." He adds, "Secular doesn't mean disrespect for religion, but rather respect for all religions."

A simple truth and so very difficult to practice in our world of such diversity and disparity among the innumerable groups, countries, races, and religions on our planet today!

This wise soul went on to elucidate the critical fact that we need to build real trust that comes from an abundance of compassion and respect. Trust is not generated with economic power or weapons. It is based on openness, vulnerability, and honesty. All of these come from warmheartedness. We need to educate ourselves and each other to graduate from the old-fashioned method of solving issues with guns, bombs, and power over. With an abundance of love, forgiveness, and forbearance, we can collectively tackle our conflicts without destroying each other.

This approach is easy to talk about and so very complicated to achieve, since we are creatures of habits and patterns. The old ways are hard to let go of. When we view history, we totally understand that these ways are always a failure. In looking back at the two World Wars, 1914-1918 and 1939-1945, we acknowledge how tragic it was with lives lost and devastation in several countries. Such catastrophic destruction in such a short period of time. We should have learned our lessons.

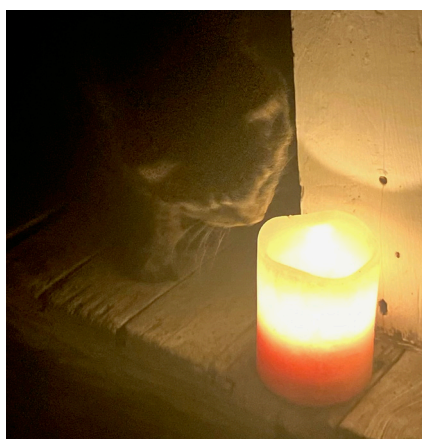
It is never too late to start a new path and a new approach to viewing the issues/conflicts confronting us today. Continuing to seek materiality is a fool's journey; it is unquenchable. The more we acquire, the more we are driven to strive for more. The enlightened vision is to strive towards better mental health, meaningful connection and nurturing ourselves. This we can continue to develop without negative impacts. When the central point is to move on a roadway that we can control, we stand a reasonable chance of reaching the goal. All of us can commit to attaining the goal of enhancing our friendships, improving our health, and making sure not to shortchange ourselves. If we can make that commitment to ourselves, we improve dramatically. And it doesn't stop there, because we will positively influence all of the people we encounter and lessen the huge amount of negatively and hostility in our world.

I now have found a new year's resolution for myself in our new year of 2024. What about you? Are you ready to take the plunge and let go of the unsuccessful and destructive ancient methods? You decide!

Hold the Candle, Feel the Spirit

Article and photos by Jesse R. Clark

Here I stand, looking at the warm glow of the candle in my hand. I look at the flame and see "Day of the Dead" celebrations with candles on gravestones. I see people holding a vigil on November 20th, Transgender Day of Remembrance - a day to remember those who have been killed from hatred's cold hand. Vigils on December 1st, World AIDS Day, thinking of those suffering from the physical disease made worse by ignorance and fear. I see candles on a dining room table on Veteran's Day, honoring those living and dead. Veterans sit at the table, but there is a space for those who never made it home. I see this as a song comes to mind. "Come now and gather, the table is ready and know that my spirit is there. For wherever you gather, my spirit will be. Remember, remember me." I think of the Trick-Or-Treating event I helped



my church put on Halloween Night. I chose the theme "Feel the Spirit," for we can connect to God's Spirit and the spirit of those gone. We are never alone, their love and light shines on. I see the candles that shine in other holidays, Diwali, Hannukah, Kwanza. All lights in the darkness. It seems, through this one object, this one candle, a whole world can be united in mediation, in prayer, in peace.

Here I stand in the choir loft Christmas Eve, looking at the candle, as I focus on my breathing. My breath is strong enough to see the light flick-

er, getting bigger, yet my breath is soft enough not to blow it out. I won't let anyone blow out this little light of mine. This light is my prayer of peace, as I focus on the Spirit of God, the Spirit of love, the Spirit of life - it's a light that will never go out and, with it, we shall overcome any darkness. We are called upon to be that light shining a soft, calm, caring light for all to see in a world of fast-paced violence. Those around me join me as we sing our prayer softly "Sleep in heavenly peace." It's a prayer for the word. I will continue to hold this vigil in my heart, long after this candle's flame is gone. This will be my mediation, my prayer - "Peace in the darkness, love in the light."



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From the Ground Up - Buying Local in Connecticut

By C. Dennis Pierce

"Mushrooms are miniature pharmaceutical factories, and of the thousands of mushroom species in nature, our ancestors and modern scientists have identified several dozen that have a unique combination of talents that improve our health." ... Paul Stamets



My dog decided that 3:10 in the morning was a great time to go outside and listen to the geese as they land in the nearby reservoir. She cocked her head and stared attentively into the dark as she listened to the geese who were checking in with each other as they settled in the water. I guess they were sharing whether to stay the night or head off to Chesapeake Bay as they headed south. Tinker, short for Tinkerbelle, ultimately decided the need to go outside at 3:10 in the morning was a false alarm and she did not have to pee after all and trotted back to the house back to the warmth of her bed.

I should have been upset being dragged out of bed in the middle of the night. Actually, not dragged since Tinker is a small terrier but more like licked to death which is her way of saying, "get up buddy I have to go". As I have gotten older, I find this is not really an inconvenience at all. It provides me with a glimpse of nature that I would have missed. The stillness of the middle of the night is something to experience. During this part of the season which I refer to as the "shoulder season" where fall is here, and it is trying to coax winter into making an appearance. Old man winter is reluctant. He is not ready to make his blustery appearance. He is holding back in hopes of bringing in snow for Christmas or at least much colder, sweater weather. During the middle of the night this time of year you do not hear the crack of the frozen branches in the stillness at 3:10 in the morning nor the soft sound of snow as it falls to the ground. You are only fortunate to listen to the sounds of the honking of geese and an occasional car whose driver is on their way to work to start their milk route for the local dairy.

Over the years I have been fortunate to share the stories from my many interviews with farmers, owners of vineyards, and owners of distilleries. My recent interview which I found educational and interesting was the opportunity to meet Randy Collins and his wife Amada, proprietors of Collinswood Mushrooms in Tolland, Connecticut. Randy was a parcel delivery person and Amada was studying to be a nurse when they got married. My interview with Randy was an eye opener. Mushrooms have always been a mystery to me. While walking through the many paths in Mansfield and those that are part of Josuah's Trust, I have seen mushrooms appearing like magic after a few days of rain. So, when I had the opportunity of meeting Randy at the Storrs Farmer's market, I arranged for an interview to learn more about mushroom farming.

In 2012, while on his route while employed by a delivery service Randy was severely injured as another vehicle failed to provide Randy with the right of way. Randy's injuries were mostly confined to his legs, but his rehab time was extensive and it was a critical turning point. During this period Randy realized that he needed to find a new path in life and through his research on the internet he came across several interesting articles that shared the knowledge on how to grow mushrooms. While this is a common practice of local farmers where they add inoculated plugs into fallen logs Randy was more intrigued with how to grow with the mycelium growing process in a petri dish. So, you ask what is mycelium? The dictionary defines mycelium as a network of fungal threads or hyphae. Mycelia often grow underground but can also thrive in other places such as rotting tree trunks. A single spore can develop into a mycelium. The fruiting bodies of fungi, such as mushrooms, can sprout from mycelium. In my interview with Randy, he shared the in-depth process, where he sources his strains such as one he buys from Mossey Creek farm in Tennessee and begins the growing process in

a petri dish. He also shared that in the process of growing mushrooms he is able to create hybrid mushrooms that take on new flavors or should I say shared flavors. I found this interesting. Much like a wine connoisseur describes a bottle of wine, Randy describes the attributes that the various mushrooms offer. The flavor profiles of different mushrooms might have hints of cashews, others were beefy with a slight taste of anise.

Collinswood's mushrooms have the ability to currently grow up to sixty pounds per week but also has the capacity to grow up to two hundred to three hundred pounds per week. They currently sell to chefs in the Hartford area, and in the Storrs, Ashford, and Tolland farmers market. Their mushrooms can also be found in the Heirloom's market in Wethersfield. In my conversation with Randy, I was curious on how best to store mushrooms

holds that universal access to a healthy and sustainable diet provides a global springboard to a better environment, functional democracies, stronger economies and increased social justice. While the concept might seem commonplace today, it was revolutionary at the time. For Lappé, focusing her research on the merits of a plant-centered diet was inevitable, even though she was not herself a vegetarian at that time, because it was clear that growing legumes for consumption was more cost-effective and ecoconscious than raising animals for food."

Over the years I have prepared the following recipe that is in Frances's cookbook when I had an excess of mushrooms and also when I needed a meal where a vegetarian guest was present.

Mushroom Stroganoff

Serves 4

Ingredients:

- ½ pound of egg noodles (the flat kind). I supposed you can also substitute rice.
- 1 Tbs. of butter
- 1 small onion, finely chopped
- ½ pound of mushrooms, cut in half
- 2 cloves of garlic crushed
- 2 Tbs. of fresh parsley chopped (plus 1 Tbs. if you want to garnish the dish when completed) or 1 Tbs. of dried parsley
- 3 dashes of Worcester sauce
- 1 cup of cottage cheese
- ½ cup of yogurt
- Salt and pepper to taste

Directions:

- Prepare noodles and drain.
- Heat butter and sauté onion, mushrooms and garlic until onion is translucent.
- Add parsley when onions are almost done.
- Stir in Worcester sauce
- In a blender or with a hand mixer blend cottage cheese, yogurt and salt and pepper until smooth.
- Add heated vegetables to blended mixture
- Serve immediately over hot well drained egg noodles.
- Garnish with chopped parsley



Amanda and Randy Collins from Collinswood Mushrooms in Tolland. Photo taken at Storrs Farmers Market by Dennis Pierce.

when purchased. Randy suggested that they should be stored in a paper bag in the refrigerator. Never a plastic bag since they are a living organism. Another lesson I learned from Randy was the proper way to prepare mushrooms. I have a culinary background and I can honestly say this was the first time I have ever heard of the dry pan method. The dry pan method is as follows: In preparing mushrooms they should be sliced or quartered as needed for your recipe. Use a heavy pan such as a cast iron pan. Use medium heat to heat the pan. Once the pan is warm add a handful of mushroom making sure not to crowd the mushrooms or they will release too much moisture. The heat of the pan will cause the mushrooms to release the liquid that they hold. This liquid will cook off as the mushrooms brown. Stir occasionally to prevent burning. When the mushroom are brown, they are done. That is the time you can add some butter and salt or garlic. The mushrooms will absorb the added ingredients, soaking up the richness of the butter. These can be added to omelets, or a mushroom quiche or to top off a burger.

Want to learn more about growing mushrooms? Randy follows Eric Meyers' YouTube channel, Paul Stamets who has several books available and Peter McCoy, whose book is, *Radical Mycology*. Collinswood Mushrooms specialize in gourmet and medicinal mushrooms that are locally grown in Tolland Connecticut. Randy's contact information is 860-906-2063 and randy@collinswoodmushrooms.com

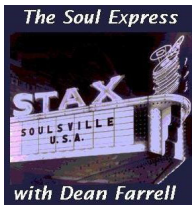
Several years ago, I was fortunate to introduce Frances Moore Lappe, author of the book *Diet for a Small Planet* when she came to the UConn Book store while on tour promoting her 20th Anniversary Edition of her cookbook. For those who do not know who Frances is, her book started a revolution in the way Americans eat. The Washington Post stated, "*Diet for a Small Planet,*

For those who embrace Nature and the earth's cycles. You might have missed the viewing of the Beaver moon in the early hours of Monday, November 27th. According to astrologer from The Cosmic Co, Betty Andrews, "This name has its origins in the traditions and practices of some Native American tribes and was later adopted by European colonists. The Beaver Moon is linked to the time of year when beavers begin to take shelter in their lodges, having gathered enough food to last through the winter." And least not forget Winter Solstices is December 21st. NASA, defines the Winter Solstice, or the December Solstice, as the point at which the path of the sun in the sky is farthest south. At the Winter Solstice, the sun travels the shortest path through the sky resulting in the day of the year with the least sunlight and therefore, the longest night. In the lead-up to the Winter Solstice, the days become shorter and shorter, then on the evening of the solstice from then onwards the days become increasingly long leading up to the Summer Solstice or the June Solstice, and the longest day of the year.

So that ends another year of my *Neighbor's* columns. Most of my previous columns can be found online at neighborspaper.com. My first column was written in March of 2010. Seems just like yesterday. To all that follow my column, Happy Holidays. May the magic of the holidays fill your heart with peace and happiness. Wishing you a joyous holiday season! 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. 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!

Unsung Heroes of Soul: Jackie Moore

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 Jackie Moore, a Southern soul diva who transitioned to disco in the mid-1970s.

She was born in Jacksonville, Florida, in 1946. Not much is known about Moore's early life, except that her admiration of Gladys Knight and Aretha Franklin led her to pursue a singing career. By 1968, she was recording for Bert Berns' Shout label in New York City. Berns released two singles on Moore, neither of which made the national charts. However, one song, "Dear John," was a top ten hit on WJLD radio in Birmingham, Alabama. In 1969, another New York label, Wand, released one single on Moore. Although a fine ballad in the Deep Soul tradition, "Loser Again" did little.

It was in 1970, on Atlantic Records, that Jackie Moore enjoyed her first real taste of success. Released that fall, "Precious, Precious" got to #12 on Billboard magazine's Soul Singles chart and #30 pop. It sold over one million copies and was certified gold by the Recording Industry Association of America in March 1971. "Precious, Precious" also charted in Canada, peaking at #70.

Moore stayed with Atlantic through the middle 1970s, producing additional Soul hits like "Sometimes It's Got to Rain," "Darling Baby," and "Both Ends Against the Middle." She then signed with Kayvette records, where she enjoyed her all-time highest charting Soul single, "Make Me Feel Like a Woman."

By 1976, disco had overtaken soul as the driving force in Black music. Like many other struggling soul singers, Jackie Moore took a stab at the genre. Her efforts paid off with the top forty Soul hit, "Disco Body." However, Moore would enjoy her greatest success as a disco diva when she signed with Columbia. Her 1979 single, "This Time Baby," reached #1 on Billboard's Disco chart that summer.

In 1982, Moore recorded "Seconds," a duet with Wilson Pickett. It did not chart. That same year, Karla Bonoff's remake of Moore's four-year-old single, "Personally," reached #19 on the Billboard Hot 100 chart.

In his 1981 book, Christgau's Record Guide: Rock Albums of the Seventies, Robert Christgau wrote about Moore's 1973 LP, Sweet Charlie Babe: "Figures that this should fall somewhere between state-of-the-art and great-mean soul. The five hits go back to 'Precious, Precious' in the winter of '71, with the two latest cut at a funkier-than-usual Sigma in Philadelphia and the others by a simpler-than-usual Crawford-Shapiro team at Criteria in Miami. Moore's voice is simultaneously sweet and rough, an unusual combination in a woman, and the songs are pretty consistent. But she lacks not only persona but personality, so that what in technical terms is pretty impressive stuff never goes over the top."



Rock critic Dave Marsh included Moore's "Darling Baby" in his 1989 book, The Heart of Rock and Soul: The 1001 Greatest Singles Ever Made.

Jackie Moore, 73, died on November 8, 2019.

Charted singles:

- "Precious, Precious" (1970) R&B #12, Pop #30
- "Sometimes It's Got to Rain (In Your Love Life)" (1971) R&B #19
- "Darling Baby" (1972) R&B #26, Pop #106
- "Time" (1972) R&B #39
- "Sweet Charlie Babe" (1973) R&B #15, Pop #42
- "Both Ends Against the Middle" (1973) R&B #28, Pop #102
- "Make Me Feel Like a Woman" (1975) R&B #6
- "Puttin' It Down to You" (1976) R&B #37
- "It's Harder to Leave" (1976) R&B #74
- "Disco Body (Shake It to the East, Shake It to the West)" (1976) R&B #36
- "Make Me Yours" (1977) R&B #72
- "Personally" (1978) R&B #92
- "This Time Baby" (1979) R&B #24, Disco #1 (1 week)
- "Helpless" (1980) Disco #25
- "How's Your Love Life Baby" (1980) Disco #57
- "Love Won't Let Me Wait" (1980) R&B #78
- "Holding Back" (1983) R&B #73

Other worthwhile Jackie Moore recordings include "Dear John" (1968), "Loser Again" (1969), and "Seconds" (duet with Wilson Pickett, 1982).

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

Dean Farrell hosts "The Soul Express" Fridays from 7:00-10:00 p.m. on WECS, 90.1-FM (www.wecsfm.com) and alternating Saturdays from 2:30 - 5:30 p.m. on WRTC, 89.3-FM (www.wrtcfm.com). He plays vintage soul music of the 1960s and '70s, everything from #1 hits to long-lost obscurities. Dean's e-mail address is soulexpress@gmail.com.

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Questions: Dennis at knowdj@frontier.net

A contra dance is a social dance that one can attend without a partner. The dancers form couples who form sets in long lines. Throughout the course of a dance, couples progress up and down these lines, dancing with each other couple in the line. The dance is led by a caller who teaches the sequence of moves in the dance before the music starts. This sequence is repeated as couples progress up and down the line. Since there is no required footwork, many people find contra dancing easier to learn than other forms of dancing.

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the Neighbors paper
a little paper big on community

Fungal Fantasy

By Delia Berlin

Our health status does not change instantly when we turn 65. But for most Americans, their medical insurance does. This, in turn, triggers other changes. Neither patients nor their health care providers can escape the transformation that suddenly affects preventive exams and routines.

It could be said that as we hit Medicare age, we become metaphorical zombies. You may know that there is an entire genus of fungi that parasitizes insects and converts them into zombies, who live the rest of their existence exclusively satisfying their parasitic fungus' needs. In this allegory, the corporate health care system is the fungus. Both patients and health care providers are zombies, forced to

go through senseless motions to keep feeding the parasite. The following fictitious examples may illustrate some of the zombie motions that our parasite requires from us.

Situation 1:

You wait for 20 minutes in a doctor's waiting room. Finally, someone appears at the other end of the room and calls your name. You get up from your chair and follow the person into an office, where you are offered another chair to wait some more. In a while, someone comes in and asks you to step on the scale. You get up from this second chair and comply. Then, the person proceeds to ask you the same questions that you already answered in questionnaires previously mailed to you and, for good measure, also online. One of the questions asks if you have trouble getting up from a chair. By now, you have been seen getting up from a chair more than once and without any trouble. But the question must be asked. And answered.

Situation 2:

You arrive at a health care specialist's office and announce yourself. You are given forms to complete. One of the forms asks if you had a flu shot this season. According to the CDC, as of mid-November, there have been 330 flu deaths in the US this year, and just since September more than 1,000 covid deaths have occurred in the US each single week! Also according to the CDC website, only 17% of the total US population received a bivalent covid booster last year. While the CDC still shows no intake data for the newly updated covid vaccine, early indications indicate that it's been dismal so far. Yet, nobody asks you if you have received an updated covid shot.



But you are asked the question that must be asked, and you do answer it.

Situation 3:

You completed five lengthy questionnaires prior to a doctor's appointment. Some of the questions clearly relate to your mental health and social support system. Several are quite intimate, such as frequency of church attendance or sexual activity. You may also share other related information, like family difficulties or losses, but during your actual appointment there is no acknowledgement or exploration of these subjects. You then hear that the office cannot locate your printed questionnaires.



A fungus parasite living on an ant.

Contributed photo.

Now you wonder if your religious or sexual practices may have become public information. There was no benefit to the providers or you from asking or answering these questions. But both parties cooperated in their zombie dance.

I could list other examples of Medicare "wellness" practices that provide no benefit to patient or medical practitioner. They are as distracting and useless for one as they are for the other, but they must be followed because they are part of the established protocols. All the fields in the fungal databases must be checked off.

Some of these protocols may have started with good intentions. It would be fine to determine if patients are socially engaged, if something helpful could be done with that information. But in the absence of such interventions, those questions are at worst intrusive and at best a waste of time.

The times when one could walk into a doctor's office and openly share concerns, while the practitioner listened and acted solely according to experience and knowledge, are over. Doctors, selected from the best and the brightest and put through years of grueling training, are now unable to freely use their own brains and instincts for many of the problems they encounter. Burdened by the protocols established by their employers, mainly to maximize profits and minimize liability, many doctors are experiencing burnout and 20% plan to leave their field within two years.

The US spends more money per capita in health care than any other country in the world. Yet, our life expectancy is declining and is now five years lower than in the UK. I remember that my grandfather was reluctant to go to the doctor. In my youth, I saw his reticence as stubbornness, but recently a delayed sense of empathy woke up in me. Sorry Grandpa, I can hear you now.

The Ashford AREA Arts Council is looking for a Chairperson, is it you?



We have a wonderful artist community, a robust group of supporting volunteers and a strong board of officers. Our members are from all over Northeast CT who participate in our monthly meetings, workshops and artist shows. We are looking for someone to steer this wonderful ship in helping us to continually bring the Arts, Artists, and Community Together. You just may be a great fit if you have prior leadership experience and just a strong love for supporting the arts! We are looking for an organized leader for this volunteer position.

If you're interested in exploring the possibilities please

Contact us directly at: StaceyTheAAAC@Outlook.com

Someone will reach out to you very soon.

Willimantic's Mill Museum Celebrating Yuletide Traditions

Submitted by Ed Silverstein

The Mill Museum, formally known as the Windham Textile and History Museum, has scheduled two much-anticipated holiday events: the Festival of Trees and the Holiday Shop.

This year, a special concert featuring Willimantic's own ACT High School's (Arts at the Capitol Theater) Act A Capella Choir is scheduled for 11 a.m. on December 9 during the first day of Holiday Shop. Students will sing traditional carols. The event is free and all are welcome.

Previously, the choir has competed and won at the U.S. Music in the Parks festival and Canada's Festival of Music.

The choir is led by Katherine Popovic, the music director at the ACT Magnet High School.

The concert is followed by an opportunity to take selfies with Santa at the Mill Museum. (Santa will be available between 11:30 a.m. and 3 p.m. on Dec. 9.) The Holiday Shop craft show is scheduled for December 9 and 10. Hours both days are between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. Many local vendors will be participating at the free-of-charge event.

One of the vendors is Windham resident Liz Ostwald of Lost World Jewelry.

In her spare time, the full-time computer programmer makes pendants, earrings, and bracelets. She will also have some key chains and Christmas ornaments at the show.

"I hand paint on the back of glass cabochons and turn it into pendants and earrings," Ostwald said.

"The glass gives depth to the colors and the sparkly bits that are included in the paint. Some of them remind me of images of galaxies or nebulas, which I've always loved."

She had been making earrings for herself for many years. Then, during the pandemic, she began painting the jewelry. She soon started selling items through Willimantic's Swift Waters Artisans Cooperative. The Holiday Shop is her first craft show as a vendor.

"I love the Mill Museum's holiday sale, so I'm looking forward to trying it out," Ostwald said.

Another vendor taking part at the show is Mansfield resident Mary Jo Tryba, a former speech/language pathologist for the Windham schools, who since 2017 has made crafts through her firm, Baskets of Joy.

Her gift baskets focus on locally made products, tea, cats, and items that lead to relaxation.

She's taken part in the holiday bazaar sponsored by the Storrs Congregational Church and plans to participate this year again in the UCC church's December 2 show.

"I use an artist's eye to design unique gift baskets for the holidays," Tryba said. "I enjoy the creativity it allows me." The Mill Museum's Gift Shop also will be selling many items at Holiday Shop. Several products will be discounted.

Among the items to be sold are potholders, cloth bags, ornaments, aprons, bandanas, cards featuring frogs, holiday logo pins, and holiday hangings. Many of the items were created by Katherine "Kit" Eves, who has lived in Willimantic since 1988.

She's a long-time volunteer at the Mill Museum. She's a conduit for many of the Museum gift shop's fine knitted goods, which come from her wide circle of knitting friends.

During COVID, Kit made more than 10,000 cloth masks to distribute to people who needed them. For many years,



she organized the Museum's holiday gift wrapping fundraiser at the East Brook Mall. She's a former President of the Museum's Board of Directors.

She's also a social worker who works with the elderly. Currently, she's the director of the Ashford Senior Center.

For the serious quilter, the Museum will also be selling part of a significant collection of books on quilting.

They are recently published books in prime condition. Topics range from the history of quilting, art books, and instructional books. Prices include \$5 for hardcover, \$2 for softcover, and \$1 for magazines.

They are part of a major donation from Tora Sterregaard of Norwich. Over her artistic career, Sterregaard has had a quilt on display at Mystic Seaport featuring the Charles W. Morgan, the 19th Century wooden whaling vessel.

Some of the donated books were set aside for the Museum's library. Those now on sale promise to form a valuable addition to a serious quilter's reference sources.

Now in its second year, the Festival of Trees features holiday trees decorated by groups and businesses from throughout the region. Visitors get to vote on their favorite.

One group taking part this year is Willimantic Renaissance Inc. (WRI), a non-profit formed to revitalize downtown Willimantic. They participated last year, too, in Festival of Trees.

"It's a wonderful way to celebrate the season at the Museum with other town organizations," Erin Elizabeth Morelle Mainetti, WRI's event coordinator, explained. "It's a way to build ... teamwork and do something creative with ... fun on the mind."

WRI is particularly known for its involvement with 3rd Thursday Street Fests.

Last year, the group decorated its Festival of Trees tree with 3rd Thursday buttons that Jean de Smet, former Windham first selectwoman, collected over two decades.

What's going to be on their next tree?

"It'll be a surprise," Mainetti said. A reception with light refreshments to kick off the Festival of Trees is scheduled for between 6 and 7:30 p.m. on December 8.

The trees will stay up during the holiday season, Fridays through Sundays, until December 31 with viewing a part of normal Museum admission charge. The Museum is closed Christmas Eve and Christmas Day.

Those interested in volunteering during busy December days at the Mill Museum can contact the Museum at director@millmuseum.org.

The Mill Museum is located at 411 Main St., Willimantic, across from the historic mill buildings that formerly housed the American Thread Company.

The Mill Museum includes a museum, historical society, library, and archive. Through its exhibits, programs, activities, and collections, the Museum preserves and interprets the history of textiles, the textile industry, and textile communities in Connecticut.

Opinion

Cease Fire Now

By Bill Potvin

Jesus would be weeping. Gandhi would be cringing. MLK would be wailing. All these moral giants would be suffering to see what the world has become in 2023. Everybody should be outraged over the horrific actions that are occurring around the world today. Yemen, Ukraine, and now Gaza. War crimes piling up and yet many world leaders are silent and complicit. They show no shock in annihilating civilians anymore, despite rules of war that were instituted over 80 years ago. Humanitarian positions clearly recorded in the Geneva Convention, now being whited out.

Israel's leadership has made it perfectly clear that in their eyes, Palestinians are not human. They have described them as human animals and worse. That sounds like racism to me; lumping ethnic group members together as one, which makes it convenient and rational for the brutal actions now being perpetuated on the civilian population of Gaza. It's beyond revenge and violates the international rules of war that were fortunately and earnestly instituted after the publicizing of the Nazi's atrocities, in particular the Holocaust. Important international documents were made to never allow such evil acts to occur again, which was an encouraging step forward.

Surely we've seen the black and white scenes of the starvation and devastation generated by the German Third Reich in the 1940's against the Jewish people. We now see carpet bombing and other actions unfolding that defy all decency, including cutting off electricity and food supplies, that will in short time create color pictures of the results of ethnic cleansing, in today's world. Allowing this is truly a blight on world leaders here in 2023. As a global society, we are not living by the rules that we formulated with rational thought and moral fortitude following World War II.

Bibi Netanyahu is detested around the globe. His recent actions will only accelerate these negative feelings and severely reduce the State of Israel's respect and ultimately its security (while he avoids prison). Could Netanyahu be envisioning and emulating President George W. Bush standing on the rubble of the Twin Towers with his popularity soaring? Only a sliver of humanity, perhaps a few radical Zionists, could champion this ruthless hate.

I urge all to cease fire and avoid more horrendous human-made atrocities. Continuing on this path is leading to unforgivable consequences. Consequences that will provide black and white flashbacks reminding us of what we should have learned from history. No people deserve this kind of treatment, especially non-combatant civilians that have suffered already. World leaders sadly seem to have forgotten that annihilation is not the answer. This is a tragic backwards step for civilization.

We can do better, we must do better. Hold perpetrators of racist genocide accountable, like we did hunting down Nazis across the globe after WWII. Reestablish empathy that too many governments seem to have ditched. Follow the rules, both civil and moral. This is not impossible, as it's foundational to the major religions of the world. In my opinion, it is also embedded in the consciences of a majority of the Earth's population.

Fascist leaders are on the rise around the globe. Reawaken the golden rule... morality made simple. Doing unto others as you would have them do unto you says it all. If political strongmen rule nations, making decisions without a shred of empathy, you wind up with the Dick Cheneys, the Donald Rumsfelds, the Vladimir Putins, and the Donald Trumps of the world. 2023 Israel is being led by these kinds of monsters.

One major hope is that politicians are not actually representing the majority opinion of their constituents in the US or around the globe. Please make a call to let your representative understand that a majority of citizens feel for the oppressed and oppose ethnic murder. No people deserve to pick up pieces of their children. This is now happening daily! Make your representative understand and apply the golden rule! Ponder, ruminate, and activate, and peace will have a chance.

Neighbors
Locally Written
Locally Wread

No Good Deed Goes Unpunished

By Angela H. Fichter

Who was the person who coined the term, No Good Deed Goes Unpunished? Oscar Wilde, a 19th century poet and playwright. If you think that is sarcastic, then apparently it hasn't happened to you. Yet.

My husband and I lived in Providence when we were first married in 1971, but we longed to live in the country. We got into vitamins and health food and herbs, and while shopping at a health food store for vitamins and herbs, we got into a conversation with the proprietor about the herbs she was selling from Greene Herb Gardens. She told us that it was beautiful out there, so we decided to visit Greene Herb Gardens in Greene, RI, not far from the CT border. Greene Herb Gardens was an herb shop located in one tiny wing of a huge summer mansion that was built by a wealthy Arnold man around the time of the first world war. The store was run by two elderly women, Mittie Arnold and Margaret Thomas. I believe it was Mittie's father who built the summer place. We bought more herbs from them in small jars. We told them that we were looking for a place in the country to live. Mittie wondered if we would be interested in renting the apartment that the chauffeur had lived in. There was a five-bay stone garage behind the summer mansion and barn. Who in America owned 5 vehicles circa 1917? Only the wealthy. We went to look at the apartment. Obviously, it was on a second floor since the 5-bay garage took up the first floor. We fell in love with the apartment. Hardwood floors, soapstone sink in the kitchen, claw foot bathtub, beautiful view of the valley where the herbs had been grown. In the 1950's Greene Herb Gardens sold herbs to Pepperidge Farm for them to use in a tea bread. The valley where the ladies had grown herbs was a meadow now.

We moved in and loved the place. It took longer to drive to my job in Providence, but the miles driving through Coventry to get to Rt. 95 were beautiful and worth the long drive. We planted a garden behind the garage. The owners had their farm help plough a garden for us. We grew wonderful vegetables there. As the decades went by, of all the gardens we had when we lived in South Killingly, Burlington, and Scotland, CT, the best melons we ever grew were in Greene, RI. Not only was the soil rich, it had a little sand in it too, so drainage was good in the soil. At that time, I was doing the laundry with something called Ivory Snow Flakes, which was a powder that came in a box. Come winter I told my husband I found mouse turds next to the box of Ivory Snow and a hole bit into the box. I learned that mice eat the fat that is in soap. My husband set a mouse trap next to the box. In the middle of the night we heard a loud snap that woke us both up. My husband got up to check the trap. He did not find a dead mouse in the trap. He found a mouse that had reached into the trap for the cheese and got his foot caught in the trap. He carefully picked up mouse and trap in a way the mouse couldn't bite him and carried the whole thing downstairs, opened the door, bent over and released the mouse over the wintry grass. The mouse limped away.

The next summer we planted lots of veggies and included small watermelons plus cantaloupe. About twenty feet away from the garden was a very small copse, with one sapling in it and some brush. When the midget watermelons looked ripe, I leaned over and picked one only to be astonished to find that a hole had been bitten into it and the insides of the melon eaten out. What a disappointment after all that work of planting seed and weeding till the melons were ripe. The next day when I went to pick veggies and a watermelon, I saw a mouse limping out of the garden and over to the copse. He had made another hole in another watermelon and eaten the insides. He was living proof of the saying that no good deed goes unpunished!

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Locals Reflect on Christmas Customs and Traditions

By Bill Powers

The customs and traditions of the Christmas time holidays are an integral part of our culture and collective psyche. Many of the customs and traditions celebrated by families today are pretty common, such as the belief that Christmas time is a special time when families come together to celebrate in a festive atmosphere and to enjoy delicious food. It is a time for love and joy and a time of religious significance for Christians throughout the world. Many of the customs and traditions around Christmas are conventional, such as the belief that it is a time for family, while at the same time the practices by individuals and many families are characterized by degrees of diversity.

The cherished annual Christmas traditions in our family include those stemming from the families of origin for my wife and me. They embrace the family gatherings for a Christmas feast, and that it is customary to exchange gifts and expressions of good will. The traditions go back for generations and involve long accepted beliefs and customs. At the same time, our family now includes *new practices* or customs that are now common to our family's annual celebration of Christmas.

During November of this year, I casually interviewed a total of 30 local residents at the Windham Senior Center, Blondie's Country Diner in Chaplin, the Bidwell Tavern in Coventry, and Bob's Windham IGA store. Each volunteer was asked to respond to two questions: 1) What is my favorite Family Holiday tradition or custom at Christmas time? 2) What is another Christmas tradition or custom that I enjoy practicing separate from my family?

Here are the results of their reflections:

Angela, age 47. "Getting together with family for presents, stockings and a meal. With my own children opening one gift on Christmas Eve."

David, who is an "ageless" senior. "Going to Hartford for the Wadsworth Athenium's annual festival of trees and traditions."

Casey, age 51. "Time with the family especially since the interruptions caused by COVID."

Bill, age 77. In addition to getting together for a wonderful meal, we love listening to Christmas music and singing Christmas Carols." Individually, I especially look forward to listening to Gene Autry singing 'Rudolf the Red Nosed Reindeer' and to versions of 'O Holy Night' and selecting and individualizing Christmas cards."

Jack, age 80. With family – "A lobster dinner on Chrisman Eve." Not with family – "Listening to carols."

Robin, age 46. With family- "Decorating the tree." Not with family – "Wrapping Christmas presents."

Lori, age 62. With family - "Getting together with family". Not with family – "Decorating"

Gail, age 72. With family – "Spending time with my family." Not with family – "Volunteering"

Gary, age 82. With family – "Family Dinner." Not with family – "Making Christmas cookies and stollen."

Jim, age 74. With family - "When I was young, going to my grandparent's house. Now we go to my sister's and do a Yankee Swap, which is a hoot."

Joan, age 79. With family - "In our family of two adults and eight children, we'd sit around the Christmas tree, each taking turns opening presents." Not with family – "Secret Santa gift exchange."

Joyce, age 79. With family- "Family getting together." Not with family – "Church"

Vibian, age 43. With family – "Cooking and baking." Not with family – "Decorating"

Ismael, age 75. (With the help from an interpreter) With family – "Family Christmas party, eating, drinking and having a good time." Not with family – "Celebrating with my friends and co-workers."

Amanda, age 38. With family – "Making molasses cookies with my 3 kids and decorating gingerbread houses with our family and friends." Not with family – "Setting the Christmas dinner table with the special Christmas China."

Marisol, age 61. With Family – "Decorating the tree together and spending time with family." Not with family – "Cooking."

Teresita, age 67. With family - "Cooking, eating, and time with my family." Not with family – "Church."

Jean, age 85. With family – "Christmas caroling." Not with family - "During the Christmas season coming to the Senior Center to work on Christmas jigsaw puzzles."

Kate, age 55. With family - "Our giant Christmas Eve gathering." Not with family – "Going ice skating in NYC."

Hermelinda, age 43. With family – "Singing carols." Not with family – "Make pumpkin flan."

Gaetane, age 68. With family – "Get the family together." Not with family – Flying to Florida."

Jack, age 48. With family - "My family is extremely large and we love to eat and watch football." Not with family – "I put up the Christmas tree."

Carmen, age 60. With family – "Opening presents on Three Kings Day." Not with family – "I make potato salad for the celebration."

Luquitas, age 71. (With the help of an interpreter) "Having fun with the children and opening presents." Not with family – "Visiting with my friends during Christmas time."

Rosa, age 60. With family – "A meal with my family, 8 members." Not with family – "Cooking all kinds of things."

Michelle, age 49. With family – "Celebrating on Christmas Eve."

Muriel, age 98. "As a child waking up on Christmas morning to the wonder of a trimmed Christmas tree that wasn't there on Christmas Eve. My children and grandchildren experienced the same excitement." Not with family – "During World War II years, when my husband was serving in the Navy, attending church on Christmas Eve with my friends."

Rob, age 57. With family – "Family Christmas feast." Not with family – Shopping for the perfect Christmas gifts."

Michele, age 55. With Family – "Getting together with family." Not with family – Listening to Christmas music and baking my apple cake for everyone to enjoy."

Candace, age 78. With family – "Spending time with family on a very special day." Not with the family – "Listening to my favorite Christmas music."

The Plastic Family - A Cautionary Tale

By Bob Lorentson

"It isn't pollution that's harming the environment. It's the impurities in our air and water that are doing it."
-Dan Quayle, former U.S. Vice President

The day the Plastic family moved in next door, I knew I was looking at trouble. I'd been seeing them for some time now, generations of them blowing through neighborhoods with ease, taunting people with their cheap and easy ways as if the whole world was their Great Pacific Garbage Patch. Now here they were. I figured I'd better introduce myself at least, try to be friendly.

The door opened at my first knock, and I was looking at a tall drink of water with curves that didn't quit, though the small number 1 stamped on her face almost stopped me. She said her name was PETE, but that I could also call her PET, or even Polyethylene Terephthalate if I had the tongue for it. A real hormone disrupter if I ever saw one, hers AND mine. I could practically feel my endocrine system looking for an escape hatch. I knew I should back away, but she just smiled, then ever so seductively removed her cap and stuck a plastic straw inside. What could I do? I drank her up, and immediately felt guilty.

"So, how did you like the phthalates?" she asked coyly.

"The what?" I answered dumbly.

"The phthalates," she repeated, sounding like a cat spitting out a hairball. She was a little less coy this time, either from having to say the word twice, or because of the hairball she had flung into the corner. "Esters of phthalic acid that leach out of the plastic and cause more health problems than ..."

"Stop – you had me at esters," I said. PETE, or PET, was doing things to my insides that I couldn't explain by my increased risk of cancer and birth defects alone. My hunger for more must have showed.

"There's someone I'd like you to meet," she said, prying my hands off her Aquafina logo.

I did a double take as a hot dish slid around the corner and presented herself to me. Her soft molded contours exuded a simmering sensuality that was easy on the eyes, but warned of danger. Luckily I had brought oven mitts. She smelled intoxicating, with a hint of leftovers she had reheated just for me. I tore off her lid and inhaled deeply, then, unable to control myself, devoured every last bit of what she had to offer. Ashamed of my behavior, I asked her name.

"Polly," she said. "Polypropylene." She showed me the number 5 stamped on her bottom that I hadn't noticed in my hunger to use her for my own selfish needs. "How did you like the BPA?" she asked.

"The what?" I said, beginning to think this Plastic family spoke a language I'd never understand, no matter how many times I heard the health alerts.

"The bisphenol A," she said. "You know, the stuff that makes me impact resistant, but leaches out to cause brain abnormalities and behavior disorders."

I must be made of BPA too, I thought, because this had absolutely no impact on me. Maybe my mind was in the gutter with all the plastic trash, or maybe I was too intrigued by the sweet cupcake that was peering at me shyly from a crack in her covering.

The cupcake was dressed in a flimsy green shell that concealed all her charms, but whispered an easy availability. I didn't wait for an invitation. I tore at her packaging, and her top came off like it was midnight at the Mardi Gras. I licked her clean, then, after she wiped the frosting from my lips, she tossed her cover out the window.

"Hey, isn't that recyclable?" I asked, feeling as empty as she looked, but trying my best to save the planet.

Sadly, she showed me her number 6 stamp, as if I was supposed to know what that meant. "Excuse me," she said, "I'm Polly's sister, Polystyrene, and I can leach the neurotoxins and carcinogens to prove it."

"Sorry, sister," I said, trying to brush off the little plastic beads that clung to me tighter than my self-respect. "I don't have time for any more of your plastic wiles. I have to go."

"You can't get away from us that easily," she smirked. "You haven't met the rest of the family." As she said this, a parade of plastic lovelies came out of nowhere, or everywhere to be precise, and approached, all calling my name and pleading, "Take me! Take me!"

"If you don't leave me alone," I shouted, backing up to the door, "I'll call the authorities and have you all recycled."

A cruel laughter filled the air. "Empty promises," one of them said, pointing out the window at the mounting trash. "Besides, we recycle ourselves now. We're in the air you breathe, the water you drink, the food you eat... You see, we recycle in Hell. Your Hell. This is our world now."

In horror, I suddenly realized that the Plastic family had MY number, and they weren't about to recycle me either.

Bob Lorentson is a local writer and a retired environmental scientist. This is from his new book, 'YOU ONLY GO EXTINCT ONCE (Stuck in the Anthropocene with the Pleistocene Blues Again).'

The Most Impactful Financial Changes of 2023

The Advisory Team
at Weiss, Hale & Zahansky
Strategic Wealth Advisors



2023 brought a number of important developments that had important implications for wealth management and financial planning. Here, the team of financial advisors at Weiss, Hale & Zahansky Strategic Wealth Advisors share their take on some of the most impactful changes they've seen this year.

Rising Interest Rates Create Opportunities

"Higher interest rates have presented additional opportunities in managing short term holdings and for those holding large amounts of cash or emergency funds, the ability to generate a higher rate of interest than they may be paying on the mortgages and car loans they may have taken out prior to the Federal Reserve's hiking policy," says Laurence Hale, AAMS®, CRPS®.

"The recent high inflation has given rise to increases in larger Social Security benefits, offsetting some of the rise in higher prices, particularly for those relying on this source of income in retirement. In addition, those fortunate enough to still have a traditional pension with a COLA (cost of living adjustment), may have received outsized increases to their benefit payments."

Navigating Monetary Policy Shifts in Portfolios

"Continuation of interest rate increases on US and global monetary policy fronts provided for pockets of opportunity across markets. Navigating those opportunities for client portfolios and business owner business plans has been a key focus this year," notes James Zahansky, AWMA®. "While interest rate growth continued, marketplace innovation also continues, particularly in AI and other technologies, and we should all consider this and be sure clients and investors separate the day-to-day headlines from market performance to be sure we are thoughtful about the future of strategic financial plan achievement at the client level"

Retirement Planning Changes from Secure Act 2.0

In the view of Leisl Langevin, CFP®, CDFA®, the most impactful changes were from the Secure Act 2.0.

"Student loan payment matching contributions (starting in 2024), for accumulators that are still paying off debt, this allows them to pay off debt while saving for retirement. RMD age was raised from 72 to 73. Those born in the 1960s and later it is age 75," Langevin says. "This has a big impact on accumulators as we plan for retirement and considering their tax deferred money might be growing for longer causing higher RMDs later in life."

Psychology and Human Behavior in Financial Decisions

"Importance of psychology in financial planning has become increasingly important in our field - recognizing and understanding the emotional and cognitive factors that influence financial decision-making helps us meet the client where they are," Michael Baum, CFP®, RICP® emphasizes. "When we are more familiar with the clients' goals, values, fears, and concerns, we can give more strategic and personalized advice that they are able and willing to act upon (next-best action approach)."

Baum adds, "High yields on cash/cash equivalents – for the first time in years, people could get actual interest from banks via savings, CDs, money markets. We encouraged a lot of clients to take advantage of this, but we're already seeing data indicating the best time to get out of cash (and into other asset classes) is before rates decline. In other words, enjoy it for now, but cash will not remain attractive forever."

Focus on Client Values and Goals

"I'm really happy to see the traction and recognition that is building in the industry for putting the client's specific needs, preferences and values at the center of the financial planning process, in alignment with their goals. That's something that's at the core of our approach here at WHZ, so that really resonates with me," says Holly Wanegar, CFP®.

"The best part of my career is getting to know our clients, hearing about their families, and watching them achieve their goals over time. This motivates me every day, and it makes me so happy to get up and come to work at a company that shares these values with me."

"By truly listening and understanding our clients' values and perspectives, we're able to build a plan together that really is tailor-built just for them, and that makes them more likely to stick with that plan and succeed at reaching their goals," Wanegar said.

Overall, 2023 has brought meaningful evolutions in the financial planning, investing, and wealth management industry, from responding to economic shifts to leveraging technology and focusing more deeply on the human side of financial planning. As advisors, we at WHZ look forward to continuing to adapt and provide the most strategic guidance to help our clients achieve their financial life goals. If you'd like to partner with us to set a path toward achieving your own financial goals, contact us at (860) 928-2341 or info@whzwealth.com, or schedule a complimentary consultation on our website at www.whzwealth.com.

Authored by Laurence Hale, AAMS®, CRPS®, James Zahansky, AWMA®, Leisl L. Langevin, CFP®, CDFA®, Michael Baum, CFP® RICP® and Holly C. Wanegar, CFP®. Securities and advisory services offered through Commonwealth Financial Network®, Member FINRA/SIPC, a Registered Investment Adviser. These materials are general in nature and do not address your specific situation. For your specific investment needs, please discuss your individual circumstances with your representative. Weiss, Hale & Zahansky Strategic Wealth Advisors does not provide tax or legal advice, and nothing in the accompanying pages should be construed as specific tax or legal advice. 697 Pomfret Street, Pomfret Center, CT 06259 and 392-A Merrow Road, Tolland, CT 06084. 860-928-2341. www.whzwealth.com.

Tai Chi Home

Old as the Hills

By Joe Pandolfo

Here we are in the season of bare trees. You can see the shapes of the hills revealed in the forest, and the moonrise slipping between branches in a slow dance. It's a secret glimpse of the old days. A whisper of stories as old as the hills, in the wind.

This is the season to nurture the deepest energy in you. The yuan qi, as the Taoists say, innate and prenatal, seeds your parents carried for you before you even arrived.

Winter time is the deepest time... deep as stars when it's midnight, carrying light from their ancestors all the way here.



Dear Reader-

Please consider contributing to Neighbors- Write an article about a person you admire or a local program you believe is important. Take a photo of a friend, loved one or pet. Write a poem or a piece of flash fiction. These pages would be full of press releases without submissions from local residents who care about each other and their community.

T. King, Publisher

the Neighbors paper
a little paper
big on community



WILLIMANTIC FARMERS MARKET

Winter Market Now Open!

Our Winter Farmers Market is open at the First Congregational Church* in Willimantic, 199 Valley St, Willimantic, CT 06226. The market, will be open the 2nd and 4th Saturday of the month November to April. It will feature many of our longtime vendors, as well as some new faces. Our hours are shortened to 9am-12pm. If you are interested in joining us this season please email us willifarmersmarket@gmail.com. The full list of dates are below!

2023-2024 Dates:

November 11th and 25th	December 9th and 23rd
January 13th** and 27th	February 10th and 24th
March 9th and 23rd	April 13th** and 27th

* Please note that the church has parking in the rear of the building, as well as accessible entrances.
** January 13th and April 13th the market will move into a smaller space downstairs to accommodate the preexisting repair café. Signs will redirect customers to the market.

1st and 3rd Sundays
10AM-12:30PM

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December-April

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The Community Cure to Isolation

By Maia Carpentino

My mother told me that her time at the University of Connecticut was the best time of her life, but I have never felt more stressed out and isolated during my time here. Truly, how can I feel lonelier in a college the size of a small city?

Yet this is how I feel...and ironically, I am not “alone”. In fact, college students are just not connecting to each other and their communities as they should be, despite students mostly returning to a more regular, in-person routine on campus. According to the 2022-2023 Healthy Minds Study, 61% of students surveyed reported feeling isolated from others. Additionally, the U.S. Surgeon General Vivek Murthy warned that our nation is experiencing an epidemic of loneliness; rates of loneliness have consistently increased every year for more than a decade.

As for my personal situation, I find the stress of college only adds to my isolation. My life is constantly filled with pending deadlines and exams to study for, making it too easy to prioritize grades over my mental and physical well-being. Even when I take a break, when I finally do something to prioritize my health, I just end up regretting it. I end up stressing myself out more because I feel guilty for taking a day off and because I have limited the amount of time I have to commit to school. I often-times blow off time with family and friends, even therapy appointments to prioritize schoolwork, which just further isolates me from support in some of the most stressful times of my life.

This brings me to the point I want to make—we need to prioritize more opportunities for our college students to build up a support network within their education and help them find community when they find themselves isolated.

In my own case, I found respite with a UConn’s Sustainable Community Food Systems Program. This academic program spearheaded by professors Dr. Phoebe Godfrey and Dr. Andy Jolly-Ballantine provides a greater breadth of specialization within UConn’s Environmental Studies Education. This interdisciplinary program offers its students a greater understanding of building sustainable food systems at a grassroots community level, as well as the social and environmental systems embedded in food systems. The program consists of a summer fellowship component, a credit-based internship, and a range of food-systems-related courses. For the context of this piece, this program places a strong emphasis on building community ties both within the university and the various community partners it collaborates with to provide its students with hands-on service-learning experiences working in sustainable community food systems.

I am forever grateful that I got involved with this program. Without the experiences they granted me or the people and mentors I met, I honestly believe that I would not have been able to finish my undergraduate educational career or find a career path that works best for me without this program. Service-learning programs, such as that of the Sustainable Community Food Systems can quite frankly be a matter of retention in some cases. Especially, for the growing number of students like me who have been struggling to find community and themselves during their educational advancement, or even their overall advancement into a meaningful career.

Through my experiences with the Sustainable Community Food Systems Program, I was able to build a close working relationship with CLiCK in Willimantic, in which I have been interning since May. CLiCK is a 501c3 nonprofit dedicated to building up food justice in its community. It operates commercially licensed shared-use kitchens to provide opportunities within the local food system to small food entrepreneurs and farmers. This is equitable because it provides a place for those in the local food system who otherwise would not be able to afford the steep overhead costs associated with operating their own licensed kitchen to make value-added products and grow their business. Thus, by offering equitable opportunity for more local food businesses to grow, CLiCK fosters local food sovereignty, promotes economic growth, and contributes to a more sustainable food system by minimizing the ecological and human rights issues occurring among the value-chains of the industrialized food system. Today, CLiCK serves over thirty local small foods businesses: 6 are farmers, 12 are owned by individuals from minority backgrounds, 13 are under the ownership of women, and 40% of these business owners come from low-income backgrounds. With CLiCK, I worked directly with member business owners, other food-systems stakeholders, and staff to build food systems reform. I really feel as if I have

built my own support network there as well as built up community ties in Willimantic.

I am not from Willimantic or even northeastern Connecticut, I grew up in Durham, Connecticut. However, being able to work directly within the community during my work with CLiCK has made me feel that I’ve been living here my whole life. Of course, it takes more than being part of a group to build community - it takes connection - a shared sense of identity. Willimantic does something very special to strengthen these community ties through fostering community events such as Willimantic’s Third Thursday, as well as the web of non-profits and volunteers that come together to support the Willimantic community and these community-building efforts. From my involvement with CLiCK, and their involvement in bringing community together, I have developed a sort of by-proxy support network with Willimantic. I have been honored to meet and work alongside amazing people, and role models in community stewardship. I met Dianisi Torres, a respected leader and advocate for Willimantic’s LatinX community, and Jean de Smet, former first selectwoman of Windham and prominent community volunteer who is essential to the operating of Willimantic’s Third Thursday Street Festival. Of course, even community members whom I have not had the pleasure to formally interact with always seem to trade smiles as they pass every time that I’ve been working within the community during these community-building events.

I have never experienced a time when I have felt more appreciated or supported in my professional and educational experiences than the work I have done with CLiCK to support the community. It could be helping with waste diversion, coordinating volunteers, helping set up and break down tents and chairs, or directly engaging in community outreach on behalf of the work that CLiCK does. Such tasks have kept me busy, focused on serving the community and making a good image for CLiCK. Feelings of anxiety, dread, and loneliness that so often have come up for me as a student are completely drowned out. So, I can and do feel accomplished and fulfilled in the work I have done with CLiCK and engaging directly with the Willimantic community.

I am not alone in holding community work in high esteem. Building a community, and directly engaging with it, helps build our sense of belonging, a support network and fulfills purpose. It is clear from attending these events that people enjoy being within their community. The atmosphere during these community events is always lively, full of love and kind energy - it is really unlike any other feeling you can experience.

No matter how alone I can feel, when I find myself falling down the rabbit hole of stress and isolation during the semester, I know that I can always turn back to my experiences during these community-building events. Working with the community helps me to feel a part of a whole—to find purpose, and something worth looking forward to with advancing my education and career goals.

So, for those students like me, who find themselves feeling lost and isolated under the pressure of school - I urge you to seek out service-learning opportunities that actively build up community. For parents who notice the same patterns of isolation in their emerging academics, encourage them to find opportunities in their school to work at the community level. To reiterate, building community could be a matter of retention and future success for students. Find a community that embraces you, one that you can find purpose in just like I have found with CLiCK and Willimantic.

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GIVING...ELLI SHARPE 2016

On the eve before Christmas

A sweet little mouse

Climbed through a window

Into the house.

He looked round the room

Making no noise

Was surprised to see

So many toys.

“Who was this Santa

Who brought so much stuff

When, clearly, these children had quite enough?”

“I didn’t bring them,” came a reply.

“It bothers me too,” Santa said, with a sigh.

“It grieves me, deeply, when folks sign for me,

It just isn’t fair, why can’t they see?

I don’t play favorites, they get just one toy,

One for a girl and one for a boy.”

So here’s some advice from a sweet little mouse.

“Collect all the toys from around your house.

Wrap them pretty and give them away

So less fortunate children will be able to play.

Your children will learn, will become aware,

It’s better to give, much better to share.”

Closing Credits NPR’s ‘Car Talk’ Missed

Compiled by Dean Farrell

ACROBAT: Jim Nast

ASTROLOGER: Horace Cope

B&E EXPERT: Rob Stores

BARBER: Hedda Hair

BARISTA: Maxwell House

BLUES HISTORIAN: Beryl House (Maxwell’s wife)

CIVIL WAR RE-ENACTOR: Dick C. Land

CLIFF DIVER: Eileen Dover

COMEDIAN: Joe King

COMPLAINER-IN-CHIEF: Mona Lott

CULTURAL CRITIC: Hoyt E. Toity

CUSTOMER SERVICE REP: Helen Waite (If you need customer service, go to Helen Waite!)

DE-ESCALATION SPECIALIST: Amelia Raitt

DOORMAN: Rusty Hinge

DRAWBRIDGE OPERATOR: Stan Kleer

E.M.T.: Justin Time

EXCAVATION SPECIALIST: Doug Deep

EXPLOSIVES EXPERT: Dinah Mite

FENCE INSTALLER: Barb Wire

FIRE CHIEF: I. Fuller Cinders

FOLK SINGER: Eva D. Struction

GASTROENTEROLOGIST: X.S. Acid

GROUNDSKEEPER: Lorne Mower

INSURANCE AGENT: Polly C. Holder

LEO TOLSTOY BIOGRAPHER: Warren Peace

LEWIS CARROLL BIOGRAPHER: Allison Wonderland

LIBRARIAN: Page Turner

MALE PORN STARS: Felix Cited and Connor Lingus

MATH TEACHER: Lois Carmen Denominator

MEDIEVAL MUSIC EXPERT: Amanda Lynn

MEMBER OF CONGRESS: Phil E. Buster

METEOROLOGIST: Hugh Middy

MIDDLE EAST CORRESPONDENT: Rhoda Camel

MINNESOTA HISTORIAN: Lou T. Fisk

MOUNTAIN CLIMBER: Sally Forth

NOVELIST: Bess Sellers

ORCHESTRA LEADER: Phil Harmonic

PEACE NEGOTIATOR: Barry D. Hatchet

POKER CHAMPION: A.C. Ducey

PUPPETEER: Mary Annette

RACECAR DRIVER: Serge A. Head

RESIDENT NEUROTIC: Petra Fide

SEXUAL HARASSMENT TRAINER: Herbie Hind

SHORT-ORDER COOK: Chris P. Fries

SLEEP THERAPIST: Mel A. Tonin

SOFT DRINK DISTRIBUTOR: Ben D. Straw

SWITCHBOARD OPERATOR: Lee Van Umber



Take Note! Concert Benefits PFLAG Tolland-Mansfield

Submitted by Christine Dimock

A winter a cappella concert by Take Note! a cappella ensemble will benefit a local organization, PFLAG Tolland-Mansfield, which is a local grassroots chapter of a national organization of LGBTQ+ people, parents, families, and allies who provide support, education and advocacy in our community in order to create an equitable and inclusive world. Take Note! performs Sunday, December 10, at 3:00 p.m., at St. Paul's Episcopal Church, 27 Plains Road, Windham Center, CT. Tax deductible donations will be accepted at the door and will benefit the programs of PFLAG Tolland-Mansfield. The concert features songs of the holiday and winter season in various musical styles, including jazz, traditional, and multicultural.

PFLAG Tolland-Mansfield was founded in 2022 in order to serve the PFLAG mission and vision in Northeastern Connecticut. Through PFLAG, there are

hundreds of thousands of people and hundreds of chapters from coast to coast who are leading with love to support families, educate allies, and advocate for just, equitable, and inclusive legislation and policies. Since its founding in 1973, PFLAG works every day to ensure LGBTQ+ people everywhere are safe, celebrated, empowered and loved. Learn more, find support, donate, and take action at PFLAG.org.

Take Note! is a 21-voice a cappella ensemble based in Mansfield, comprised of select, talented, local singers from diverse backgrounds who enjoy challenging, diverse musical styles. Under the artistic direction of Linda Tracy, Take Note! performs without charge for the benefit of other nonprofit organizations. The ensemble's mission statement expresses its vision well: "Through performances in support of charitable endeavors, we are raising spirits, raising voices, raising hope." For more information, visit www.take-note.org, email take-note@earthlink.net, or call (860) 228-2390.

Ebenezer Scrooge: A journey of self-discovery

By Vincent Iovine

Why is that, year after year, for nearly 175 years, we are treated to another rendition of the story of, arguably, the world's greatest miser, Ebenezer Scrooge? So familiar is he that to be a "Scrooge" has become a common, colloquial expression. But what was really behind the sour, caustic, unfeeling curmudgeon obsession with wealth and an abhorrence of affection.

In the 19th century, Charles Dickens drew a picture of a man whose inability or unwillingness to embrace the human values that define mankind isolated him and, ultimately, would condemn him to an eternity of loneliness defined by the looming chains of greed and usury awaiting him in his next life.

At a critical juncture, Christmas Eve, Scrooge is given one final chance to gain redemption, to reconnect with people, experiences and his own young self in an ethereal form of regression therapy to recognize and, hopefully alter the sequence of events that brought him to his present state in life.

Historically, there is no evidence that Dickens was a student of psychology. Like Shakespeare before him, however, he was possessed of an acutely intuitive mind and an instinctual understanding of human nature.

He understood the lifelong emotional trauma and personality alterations that ensue from childhood abandonment. He empathized with Ebenezer's failed struggles to be "normal", to foster healthy relationships, to be an integral part of a real circle of friends, not just a fringe observer interacting, yet guarded, to be loved and love back, no longer retreating behind the locked doors and shuttered windows imprisoning what once was a loving, open heart whenever anyone threatened to gain entry. One did succeed, Scrooge's little sister, Fan, but when she died at a young age, his last and only trusted bond with humanity died, as well.

Ebenezer's nephew, Fred, his only living relative, tried to reopen the iron gates of Scrooge's heart, as did Bob Cratchit and Belle, the love of Scrooge's early years. All failed; all taking second place behind the false security of accumulated wealth while Scrooge frittered away the many opportunities he had to interact with his fellow man, becoming colder, more isolated and more distant as the years went by.

Herein lies the key to the lasting power of "A Christmas Carol"; Ebenezer Scrooge is 'Everyman'! In today's hectic, stress filled world that prides itself on success and power, it is easy, like Scrooge, to lose our sense of values and an appreciation of our

fellow man. It is common to choose gain over family and friends and justify it with the mantra of achievement.

Like Ebenezer, each of us needs that poignant reminder, that emotional wakeup call to regain a balance in our lives, to reconnect with those values and people that define us as human beings, to resurrect the innocence and simplicity of what our heart tells us is really important on life. Ebenezer Scrooge's enduring legacy is that he found that core of compassion, that innocence. His heart, shrouded for so long in sadness, bitterness and loneliness was uncovered. He held it lovingly in his hands and finally felt the inner peace for which he had been searching.

Let us all pay heed to the lessons of Scrooge's journey through time. Perhaps Dickens is telling us all to make that journey, ourselves. What better time to begin than at Christmas. Merry Christmas, everyone. Let us look to rekindling that sense of community, love and hope in the human spirit.

Vincent Iovine, Mr. I to his many former students is a retired English teacher and Vietnam Combat Veteran.

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Notes On a Southwest Ramble

The last word in ignorance is the man who says of an animal or plant: "What good is it?" - Aldo Leopold

By Dennis R. Blanchette

We landed in El Paso, Texas. A city of 678,000 people, it seemed as if there was a fast-food restaurant and strip mall for each person. We fled east slowly, due to traffic lights, to Hueco Tanks State Park. Wandering around the peaks, canyons, and caves brought the first view of desert vegetation – prickly pear cactus, chollas and a scattering of short bushy plants with long pointy leaves. The claret cup cacti were covered in brilliant orange/red flowers. The rock basins that trap water (huecos), that have been a source of water for animals for hundreds of years, were mostly empty.

Heading further east towards our next destination, Guadalupe Mountains National Park, we came first to a sign that read “Welcome to Dell City, Texas, Population 200.” Dell City is located in a flat, agricultural region, with unobstructed views in all directions. The sunrises and sunsets in the cloudless skies were a riot of oranges, yellows and reds, like a Jackson Pollock painting in the air. This was our kind of a “city.”

“How about dinner,” I said.

“It’s only 4:00 o’clock,” Janet said, looking at her phone.

“My phone says 5:00 o’clock and my stomach thinks it 6:00 o’clock,” I responded.

After a lively debate on whose cell phone was correct went unresolved, we cooked dinner then sat on the porch, reading underneath the reddening sky. At Guadalupe ranger station the next day, a sign announced that they were on Central Time. Turns out that instead of following a state line, the dividing line between central and mountain time followed a county line between Dell City and Guadalupe, pretty much giving us our choice of time zones. We decided to stay on Central time. Janet got an early start to the hikes and I got an early dinner.

Guadalupe Mountains National Park, located in western Texas on the New Mexico border, is one of the least visited national parks, simply because there are few places to stay nearby. It is a marine fossil reef, similar to Capitol Reef National Park. The goal was to hike Guadalupe Peak, the highest point in Texas, but it was closed,



On the Dog Canyon hike, Janet is at lower right.

Photos by author.

not by rain or snow but by high winds, the desert traveler’s nemesis. Instead, we hiked to Devil’s Hall, a narrow canyon, and Hunter Mountain via the Bear Canyon Trail.

Three days later we departed Dell City, with no doubt that the population figure of 200 was extremely optimistic, having seen no one but the gas station attendant who filled our tank.

On the way to Alamogordo, New Mexico, at the highpoint on Route 82, we saw signs for Cloudcroft Ski Area. Railroads were built in the 1800s for logging and in 1899 a railroad man, understanding that passengers would pay to use his railroads if they had a destination, built a resort at Cloudcroft. The rail road tracks have now been converted to miles of multi-use trails and some of the original wood bridges still remain. A block from Route 82 is the small village of Cloudcroft, the buildings converted to coffee shops, stores, and restaurants. After a hair-raising switch back ride down to the flatlands, we reached Alamogordo. Alamogordo is another urban sprawl like El Paso, but its location across the border in New Mexico serves as a gateway to both the Sacramento Mountains and White Sands National Park.

White Sands, upgraded to a National Park from a National Monument in 2019, is the largest gypsum dune field in the world at 275 square miles. By noon temperatures were in the 80s and the visitor center was packed full of people. Crowds are what we were trying to avoid and I was worried until I figured out that there are those who like deserts and those who think they do until they open their car door. The former were sliding down the dunes on plastic trays. The latter were driving through in air-conditioned cars, stopping only at the air-conditioned visitor center. Hiking the Back Country Loop Camping Trail only a few hundred feet from the parking lot we saw no people and no wildlife. The visitor center had a plethora of signs about the variety of animal life to be found, but most desert animals are nocturnal, humans not so much. Nevertheless, we decided to come back at night but then discovered that park is closed from sunset to sunrise.

For the next hike Janet picked The Dog Canyon Trail, a 9 mile out and back hike. Or should I say up and down since it also climbs 3150 vertical feet. The trail begins at Oliver Lee State Park at the base



A ‘selfie’ of the author and his wife, Janet, on the Dog Canyon hike. of the Sacramento Mountains. A short uphill section leads to the first bench or flat section, an area of desert scrub and grasslands. Fields of amber grasses waved in the wind. Tree chollas were ablaze with yellow flowers. The trail then heads up a ridge with amazing views to the west of the Tularosa Basin and White Sands. Ahead, the mountain face appeared vertical, with no sign of a trail or even a place for a trail. The vegetation changed to pinon-juniper woodland by the time we got to the second bench and the remains of an old rock cabin. A section called The Eyebrow is the toughest section, rising 1000 feet in 0.8 miles. At the high point vista, the vegetation became a ponderosa pine forest. 9 hours later back at the car we agreed that it was the toughest and most rewarding hike of the trip so far.

That first day at Hueco Tanks most of the vegetation had looked similar to us. Now the short bushy plants with long pointy leaves were becoming distinguishable. Agave, Yucca and Desert Spoon (aka Wheeler Sotol) were used by indigenous people for food, beverages (tequila and sotol), shampoo, fire, baskets and rope. The meager vegetation that at first glance appeared to be worthless scrub provided everything the native people needed to eke out a desert living.

The trip so far was immensely successful, both entertaining and educational. But these were only preliminary forays prior to reaching the final destination – The Gila Wilderness.

Dennis R. Blanchette is a semi-retired civil engineer and travel writer.



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'Willimantic Falls behind the Mill' by Bill Dougal.

Art at the Windham Senior Center

By Bill Powers

Casually strolling down the long corridor that connects the Windham Community Center and the Windham Senior Center, I became aware that the artwork currently adorning its walls seemed nostalgically familiar. Use of the corridor's space to display the work of our local artists is a wonderful idea. Almost from the opening of the Windham Community/Senior Center, the artwork by a different artist is displayed for a period of two months to be enjoyed by the public, and usually the works of art are offered for sale.

I always look forward to experiencing the artist's creations that appear in this space at the Center. But this time, it was different. There was a sudden realization that somehow, I was familiar with the style and the loose watercolor wash being used. Most of the works of art depicted local scenes, especially representing historic Willimantic. It finally dawned on me that this was the art of Bill Dougal. I met Bill two and a half years ago at the Windham Textile and History Museum, while reviewing a collection of caricatures that he had created. At the time, I was working on a local history story for the Willimantic Chronicle about the famous Trumbull family from Lebanon. Bill's drawings of the most famous Trumbull family members is titled "Spirits of Lebanon" and includes the thematic inscription "TRUMBULLING TIMES". He was kind enough to provide his drawing and to give permission to use his work to accompany my Chronicle story. "TRUMBULLING TIMES" was an absolute fit for the story, since it represented the difficulties associated with keeping the identities of all the Trumbulls straight.

Bill also writes books. One is titled "From the

Hills, To the Mills". It is written for young children, is humorous with many illustrations and rhymes. It portrays the transition in America to the Industrial Revolution from agriculture and provides a local historical focus on the transition of life on the farm to the mill town of Willimantic.

Bill Dougal's style has a sketch feel in the line work, and a loose watercolor wash. He tells me that he likes to "combine the simplification and stylization of cartooning, with strait forward realism. Most of the art displayed at the Windham Community / Senior Center shows historic Willimantic, including several of the American Thread mill complex. It's not all vintage though, as the Eastbrook Mall is also depicted. You'll also see Lebanon and Hebron represented."

The show is not limited to Bill Dougal's pen and ink / watercolors of local scenes, but also includes caricatures and book illustrations. He "loves to show the character of unique buildings. The origins of the style stem from his days at ad agencies drawing down renderings of photos that could be taken. For two dozen years the style has been put to work illustrating guide books for many communities, published by Distinctive Directories."

Bill's art will be on display at the Windham Community / Senior Center through December 2023. Gift givers should know that the art is for sale. Caricature orders can be filled by Bill or his wife Dori. The site DougalArt.com will lead you to the contact information.

Artists seeking to arrange to display their work at the Center should contact Kate Cox (860) 450-2100.

Bill Powers is a retired Hartford and Windham Public Schools teacher.

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Regional Community Media & Arts News

Submitted by John Murphy

Hi folks, I hope your Thanksgiving was a peaceful and positive recharge, we all needed one this year!

I want to begin by thanking readers of *Neighbors* for their feedback and comments this year. I appreciate your thoughts and suggestions for topics for programs. It was

wonderful for me to share the studio with so many people doing great things to help our community in an incredible variety of ways, small, large, and invisible! The stories are endless if you just look around and pay attention.

During the next year this series will continue to cover the arts in all its forms across our region. Artists and arts groups will continue to share their stories and special events every month. In addition, we will expand coverage of two major challenges facing people in our region that concern the quality of everyday life:

The increasing impacts of the recent structural and financial changes to the system of health care delivery. A special focus will be on maternal and child health care, including local response to changes in the operation and services provided by Windham Hospital and other hospitals in our region. We are living through the local effects of the ongoing national shifts in health care design, delivery, and support.

(see below and check out the October 18 and November 22 programs online for more information.)

The growing shortage of housing in our state, especially affordable housing and where it is located. Special focus will be on the growing power of tenant unions and the movement for tenant rights. We will include the challenges facing landlords when tenants face fiscal stress and cannot provide the support needed for maintenance and operation of rental property. The relative effectiveness of local government regulation and enforcement of failures on both ends will be explored. (see below and check out the *October 4* program online for more information.)

We will keep offering free and open microphones for people to share their concerns and plans to respond to these new realities. I will be increasingly proactive in seeking out people and points of view at the extremes, to present them in a more informed, less hysterical, and less manipulative context which often pollutes real understanding and exchange of opposing viewpoints. We need the polarities to emerge from their media silos and talk in the open in a safe and respectful public space.

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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 to plan the best date for your event calendars—the studio doors are wide open at john@humanartsmedia.com.

WILI YouTube Channel for all Monday-Friday local talk shows—all programs below are available here: <https://www.youtube.com/@wiliradio7000>. My program has its own playlist with all the shows. Subscribe and you will automatically get every new show!

The *On the Homefront* audio podcast archive is available 24/7. Subscribe to get every new program! <https://www.wili.com/on-the-homefront-podcast/>

Below is our archive of programs, topics, and guests for October—November. Many conversations are not dated, and they provide good local information that can be useful anytime.

October 4:

1. EC-CHAP History of Radio Series—Part 2—Tuesday October 17 at 7 pm
-Eastern Connecticut Center for History, Art, and Perfor-



mance

-Ryan Elgin, EC-CHAP
-Morgan Cunningham, WTIC Radio
-www.ec-chap.org

2. Connecticut Tenant Unions—growing across our state

-Katy Slininger, Cargill Tenants Union, Putnam

3. Voices of Concinnity—Concert on Friday October 13/Storrs Congregational Church

-Sarah Kaufold
-<https://www.consonare-sing.org/>

October 11:

1. Loos Center for the Arts at Woodstock Academy—a regional live music venue

-Eric Davidson, Executive Director
-Constantine Maroulis, American Idol and Tony Award Nominee
-www.theloos.org

2. CFECT—Community Foundation of Eastern Connecticut/Community Grants

-Jennifer O'Brien, Program Director
-www.cfect.org

3. Repair Café—Saturday October 14 /10 am—2 pm

-Virginia Walton, Recycling Coordinator, Town of Mansfield
-Rita Kornblum, Café Volunteer + Solid Waste Advisory Committee/Town of Mansfield

October 18:

1. Windham United Coalition to Save Our Health Care Coalition November 3 Vigil at State Capitol

Suspension of inpatient obstetric services impact/Office of HealthCare Strategy, people and families need legal support and help because of their immigration status
-Jose Salas-Blanco, Neighbor Fund Board
-Tatiana Gomez, Neighbor Fund Board
-www.theneighborfund.org

2. Arts Center East—update with news and events

-Liz Bolgna, Executive Director
-www.artscentereast.org

3. Assets for Artists Program at MASS MoCA/ Mass Museum of Contemporary Art 2024 Capacity Building Grant—eastern CT is a priority region

-Molly Rideout, Asst Dir Assets for Artists A
-www.assetsforartists.org/connecticut
-www.assetsforartists.org/workshops

October 25: (a repeat of October 18 program)

November 1:

1. Windham Regional Community Council Series Episode #5 Re Veterans Services

-Jeffrey Beadle, Executive Director WRCC
-Woody Woodbury, Director of Veterans Services

2. Live Music at ECSU—Thread City Jazz Trio—and Music Education

-Rick O'Neal, Trio member/bass + music faculty
-Anthony Cornicello, Trio member/piano + music faculty

3. Windham Textile and History Museum—Fall—Winter Update

-Kira Holmes, Executive Director

November 8:

1. Artist's Open Studios 2023

-Aline Hoffman, artist,

2. Live Music Connecticut Music—Patty Tuite w members of the Patty Tuite Band Live!

-Patty Tuite
-Jan Jungden (FUSE)
-Conversation about live music today, venues, audiences, using media to connect

November 15:

1. WAIM—Walk for Warmth Sunday November 18 + Victoria is Retiring!

-Victoria Nimorowski, Executive Director WAIM

2. Ashford Area Arts Council News/Update and Holiday Arts Market Sat-Sun Nov 18-19

-Deb Gag, President
-www.ashfordarts.org/new-winter-indoor-farmer's-market!

3. Michael Westerfield—local author, and historian, new book *Israel Putnam: America's First Folk Hero*

-Book is available at the Willimantic Food Co-Op

November 22:

1. Windham United Coalition to Save Our Health Care Coalition—Vigil Results and Update

Another in an ongoing series about the suspension of inpatient obstetric services, its local impact and the status of the review by the Office of Health Care Strategy
-State Rep Susan Johnson (Windham), Deputy Majority Leader
-Brenda Buchbinder, Coalition Member

2. The America Museum—Special Program November 27 Re Mother Jones and US Labor History

Bev York, Executive Director, Windham Arts
www.americamuseum.org

November 29:

1. Swift Waters Artisans' Co-Op

-Pat Miller, artist, founding member
-Robin Ritz, artist, new member
-www.swiftwaters.org

2. Mansfield Downtown Partnership—Creating a Local Cultural District

-Cynthia van Zelm, Executive Director

3. Windham Regional Arts Council—holiday events and year-in-review

Cathy Shires, President

Thank you for reading *Neighbors*. I appreciate your interest and support for local media—and hope you will stay connected with this project and join me in the studio! I know you have a story to share....

Always keep the faith,
John Murphy
john@humanartsmedia.com

Tony Sarg: Genius at Play Program at Ballard

To wrap up its 2023 *Fall Puppet Forum Series*, the Ballard Institute and Museum of Puppetry is pleased to host *Tony Sarg: Genius at Play* with Norman Rockwell Museum Chief Curator and Deputy Director Stephanie Plunkett, on Wednesday, Dec. 6, 2023 at 7 p.m. at the Ballard Institute Theater, located at 1 Royce Circle in Downtown Storrs. This forum will also be broadcast via Ballard Institute Facebook Live (facebook.com/BallardInstitute).

In conjunction with the Norman Rockwell Museum's recent exhibition *Tony Sarg: Genius at Play*, which closed on Nov. 5, Ballard Institute Director John Bell will speak with exhibition curator Stephanie Plunkett about the first-ever comprehensive exhibition exploring the life, art, and adventures of Tony Sarg (1880-1942). Sarg, a charismatic illustrator, animator, puppeteer, designer, entrepreneur, and showman, is often celebrated as the father of modern puppetry in North America and the originator of the iconic Macy's Thanksgiving Day parade balloons, floats, and animated store windows. *The Genius at Play* exhibition included puppets from Ballard Institute collections by Sarg and Sarg puppeteers Rufus and Margo Rose, and the exhibition's catalog includes an Introduction by Dr. Bell. The catalog, a beautifully illustrated, first-ever survey of Sarg's career, will be on sale at the Barnes and Noble bookstore next to the Ballard Institute. To learn more about this forum, visit bimp.uconn.edu/2023/10/20/sarg-forum/.

Admission to this event is free (donations greatly appreciated!), and refreshments will be served. For more information or if you require accommodation to attend a forum, please contact Ballard Institute staff at 860.486.8580 or bimp@uconn.edu.

The Ballard Institute & Museum of Puppetry
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Book Review

Seeing through the Smoke by Peter Grinspoon, MD

A Scholarly Book about Cannabis Not Just for Scholars

Seeing through the Smoke

A Cannabis Specialist Untangles the Truth about Cannabis by Peter Grinspoon, MD, Foreword by Andrew Weil, MD published 2023 by Prometheus Books ISBN 978-1633888463 (print) 440 pages, \$30 hardbound, \$21 eBook

Book review by Mark Mathew Braunstein

During the 20th century, few scholars wrote books about cannabis. The best known is the 1971 trail-blazer, “Marihuana Reconsidered,” by Lester Grinspoon, MD. Our 21st century has seen a bounty of cannabis scholarship. Among the cornucopia is “The Pot Book,” an anthology published in 2010 just before the wildfire of legalization had ignited in the U.S. and Canada. Dr. Grinspoon wrote the Foreword, and among its contributors was the renowned Andrew Weil, MD. In full circle, Dr. Weil wrote the Foreword to a new book by Lester’s son, Peter. With the publication of “Seeing through the Smoke” by Peter Grinspoon, MD, we have our century’s definitive scholarly book about cannabis. And a book written not just for scholars.

True to the adage that an apple does not fall far from its tree, Peter continued his father’s research into “the family herb” and his advocacy for its acceptances both by their own medical profession and by our own civil society. Having passed on the torch lighter to his son, the recently deceased dad would have been heartened to know that his family’s legacy continues.

Writing in a conversational and engaging style, Peter couples solid science with personal anecdotes, and tempers cold hard facts with his informed opinions. Bibliographic endnotes document the text, yet scholarly research rarely impedes the flow of the narrative. While credentialed as an MD, Grinspoon is no stuffy pedantic academic. As an undergrad lit major and grad student in philosophy, the medical doctor taps into his creative inner writer.

With wit and charm, he lightens the mood with colloquialisms and vernacular expressions. For instances: “OK, not really!” (page 56); “a big nothingburger” (page 148); “You can’t make this up!” (page 283); “If you ask me,” (page 290); “Egg, meet chicken.” (page 294); “Just kidding.” (page 303); and like on a social media video, “Wait for it!” (page 328).

Equally endearing are the one-word sentences sprinkled throughout: “Snore.” (page 75); “Bleh.” (page 144); “Easy.” (page 246); and my favorite, “Yuck.” (page 311). Humor, albeit sometimes sardonic or sarcastic, abounds in passages too long to quote here. And there’s winsome self-parody and social satire. One paragraph was prefaced as a “Mini Ted Talk” (page 42), and another as “mini-pontification” (page 141). Acknowledging his laziness to research a definition, he quipped, “Thank you, Wikipedia” (page 186).

Some of the book is akin to a lively debate staged between two opposing teams, namely the “Reefer Pessimism” portrayed in Chapter 2 versus the “Cannatopianism” depicted in Chapter 3. The author objectively summarizes both sides of the many contentious issues surrounding cannabis. While not shunning from controversy, he sometimes even reconciles the otherwise conflicting evidence. In the final chapter, Chapter 22, he issues a rallying cry for the pundits on both sides of that debate to remove their “cognitive filters” (page 361).

Chapter 4, “Doctors and the War on Drugs,” brands this MD as a heretic within his courtly profession. Nevertheless, he is respectful of and circumspect about his medical colleagues’ ignorance or skepticism regarding cannabis as a therapeutic herb. He lays blame mostly on the institutional bias of the old school medical schools whose curriculums are still teaching politically motivated falsehoods. In the United States, the falsehoods were propagandized during the losing War on Drugs and are still soldiered on by diehards and holdovers within the DEA, the FDA, and NIDA. If your own doctors plead ignorance about medical marijuana, bestow upon them copies of this book. If you must be thrifty, then make them photocopies of just Chapters 4 and 22.

Chapter 9 asks in its title the question, “People Get Addicted to Weed?” While it documents that addiction is real and does occur among some potheads, it provides ample evidence debunking the myth of the high rates publicized by government officials and addiction authorities. Some statistics claim that a whopping 30-percent of users become addicted. Grinspoon shows how the research is manipulated and the numbers are fudged. Makes me exhale a sigh of relief.

Chapter 21, as if channeling Beethoven’s “Ode to Joy,” could be subtitled, “Ode to Pot.” It begins with several questions, among them, “Why do people use cannabis?” and “What is its appeal?” Grinspoon eloquently and astutely answers his probing questions by exploring the “false dichotomy” between medicinal and recreational use. As though to placate those impatient among us who crave short answers, the chapter concludes: “Is cannabis a shortcut? That’s complicated. Is it harmless? No. Does it work for people? A resounding yes!”

Chapter 22, the final chapter, is the crowning highpoint of the book. In case you die tomorrow, you might want to first read this chapter today. The author calls upon science to free itself of government politics and corporate interests. He implores politicians, doctors, medical researchers, and the news media that reports the research, all to “forgo all the myths and superstitions of the past ... manufactured with an agenda.” (pages 340 and 341).

Chapter 14, “The Endocannabinoid System: Our Brain on Drugs,” warrants reading by all potheads who have ever wondered what’s going on inside their potted heads. This chapter within its sharply focused eleven pages explains the ECS better than did an entire book and the many articles that I have

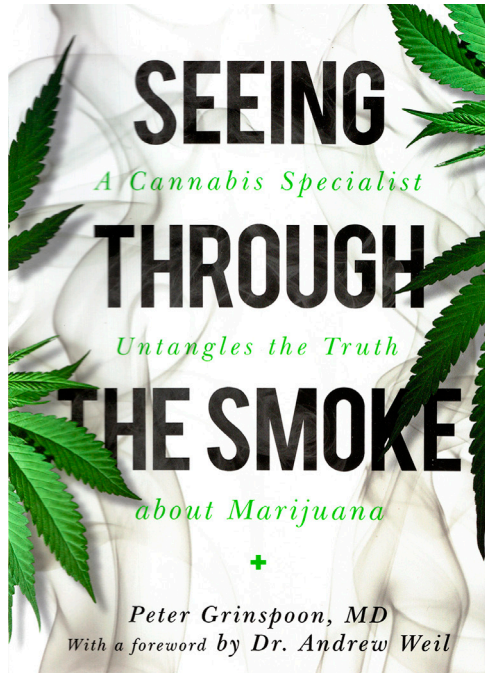
read on the subject. Unfortunately, other chapters are not as succinct. Too much of a good thing is not a good thing. Like most of us, especially those of us who sit on our duffs reading books, this book could lose some weight.

Confession. I did not read one-quarter of the book. Its scope is too encyclopedic and some discussions too detailed for even this omnivorous reader to consume in its entirety. I did read the chapters whose subjects interested me. Those on topics outside the orbit of my small world I omitted, just as I would not read from cover-to-cover any single volume of a thirty-volume encyclopedia. Hence, I skipped the chapters on use during pregnancy (I’m male), on use by teenagers (I’m already old), and on any link with psychosis (I’m already all messed up). Likewise, I dropped from my reading syllabus the chapters on using medical marijuana to treat for insomnia (I’m a sound sleeper), for autism (I’m childless), and for symptoms from cancer and for side effects from chemo (I’m planning on dying, just not of cancer).

Among the three-quarters that I did read, the author’s exhaustive analyses sometimes exhausted me. The book is grouped into four parts. Grinspoon shines in Parts One and Four, where he engages the reader in a friendly conversation as he recounts both past history and current research. In Parts Two and Three, however, momentum slackens when Grinspoon meticulously picks apart and pokes holes into long excerpts from scientific studies. Readers should tread lightly upon those overquoted studies. For our convenience, the excerpts are indented and their font size reduced, so easy to spot. And to skip.

Barbers cannot give themselves haircuts. For superfluous text and overweight chapters, I lay blame on the publisher, not on the author. Akin to an uncut and unpolished diamond, this very good book could be transformed into a very great book with some judicious deletions. Too late now for this 440-page hardbound tome, but not too late for a revised and leaner paperback edition that could appeal to the wider audience that it deserves. Until then, this sprawling big fat book is still worth reading. I just wish there were less of it to read. And if you persevered this far, you probably wish this review, too, were shorter.

The book reviewer, Mark Mathew Braunstein, is the author of *Mindful Marijuana Smoking: Health Tips for Cannabis Smokers* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2022). www.MarkBraunstein.Org



Foot Soldier Turned Footnote

By Judy Davis

Elizabeth O’Farrell was born into a working class family. While she was a midwife, she and her best friend, Julia Grenan, were suffragettes who joined a women’s paramilitary organization. They were trained in weaponry and first aid by the rebel Constance Booth.

Elizabeth and Julia were life partners, whose sexuality remained hidden from many.

But Padraic Pearse and James Connelly, both feminists, co-wrote “The Proclamation of The Irish Republic”, for men and women. The proclamation also included orders to allow women soldiers to fight.

During the 1916 Easter Rising, they hid medicine and ammunition in their skirts. They braved constant gunfire to run dispatches from the GPO to outpost battalions, and to nurse wounded soldiers and civilians.

Escaping the British soldiers, Elizabeth and Julia helped their fellow rebels as long as they could. Eventually, the two women were arrested, and sent to jail. After their release, they continued in the fight for Irish independence.

When Elizabeth O’Farrell died in 1957, she was buried in Glasnevin Cemetery.

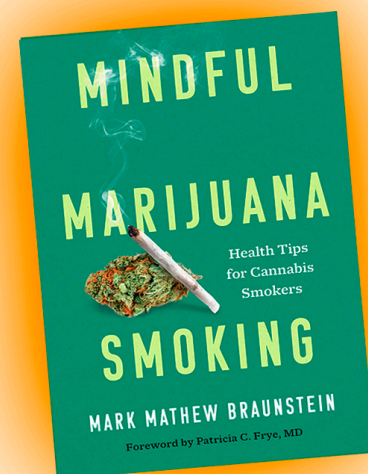
Julia died in 1972, and joined her love at Glasnevin.

For the longest time, Elizabeth’s name was never mentioned.

Now, she is remembered. Her gravestone has a verse by the poet Brian O’Higgins: “When duty called on the field of battle, she went, under orders, the foe to meet, bearing sadly, unfearingly, proudly, the flag of surrender, but not defeat.”

Remember Elizabeth and Julia as you may – just do remember them.

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CT Green Energy News

Submitted by Peter Millman

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

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

Facing defeat, Lamont withdraws regs phasing out new gas car sales

CT Mirror. "A majority of the legislature's Regulation Review Committee was poised to vote Tuesday to kill regulations prohibiting new gasoline-powered vehicle sales by 2035, forcing advocates and the administration of Gov. Ned Lamont to open talks on a new plan for passage by the full General Assembly in 2024. "It's really an embarrassment all the way around when it comes to this," Rothenberger [a climate-and-energy lawyer with the environmental group Save The Sound] said. "We are walking away from our longtime partners in the effort to clean up our air and protect public health in terms of Massachusetts in New York and Rhode Island, Pennsylvania, Virginia," Rothenberger said. "And we are declaring that we are content to align ourselves with the standards that are good enough for Alabama, and Mississippi, and West Virginia. And those are the states that we want to stand so it is you know, it boggles my mind." Chris Herb, president of the Connecticut Energy Marketers Association, a trade group that represents gasoline and heating oil distributors, applauded the withdrawal of the regulations..."



Opinion | Don't Fall For Scare Tactics: Myths And Reality Of Electric Vehicles

CT News Junkie. "In the ongoing battle over whether climate change is a problem we should be addressing, the latest round of punch-or-be-punched concerns electric vehicles (EVs). Those who benefit from our fossil fuel dependence, including the Yankee Institute and the Heritage Foundation (both of which get money from fossil fuel giant Koch Foundation) have once again put out false and misleading information, and have mobilized people to block the transition from internal combustion engines to those with electric motors...Please, folks, consider the source whenever swallowing anti-environmental rhetoric. So as a state legislator, I am, along with my colleagues, once again responding to the disinformation campaign that is duping unwitting citizens into thinking EVs are the devil's own handiwork." [The author goes on to list myths and their rebuttals.]

Mark Mitchell: Air pollution harms public health. It's time for change.

Hartford Courant. "Diesel tailpipe pollution is toxic and has immediate and long-term health impacts. Big trucks and buses makeup just 6 percent of all on-road vehicles but are responsible for over 50 percent of traffic-related smog-forming NOx pollution, which can lower your resistance to pneumonias, and can be life-threatening for people with lung diseases like asthma and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, or COPD...Connecticut has the highest rate of deaths from air pollution of any New England state. Death rates for Black children are eight times higher compared to white children... Pollution reductions associated with electrifying medium and heavy-duty trucks and buses alone will save Connecticut \$270 million dollars in avoided health care costs over the period of 2020-2040, but could be as much as \$500 million to \$1.4 billion by 2050... As for the feasibility of transitioning our heavy-duty sector, despite what naysayers have said to block progress, we know the technology is ready and here to stay, and utilities in the region are working hard to assess needs and step up to the challenge as well."

Power for CT homes: First offshore wind farm wins final approval

Hartford Courant. "Revolution Wind, an offshore wind project to provide electricity to Connecticut and Rhode island and one of the relatively few in the Northeast to emerge intact from a flurry of economic setbacks, has received final government approval to begin construction. It will be the first utility scale offshore wind farm serving the two states and is on track to be the second in the North-

east. The project is designed to deliver 400 megawatts of electricity to Rhode Island another 304 to Connecticut, powering the equivalent of 350,000 homes and helping both states meet their aggressive carbon reduction goals... Unlike other offshore developers, the partners locked in costs for Revolution Wind and two other projects planned for the same area — Sunrise and Southfork Wind — before inflation and interest rates shot up and the war in Ukraine created global supply chain problems." Plus: New York picks 1.4GW project in third offshore wind solicitation

Her Retirement Home Said 'No' to Solar Panels. She Got It to Buy 1,344.

New York Times. "Susan Auslander, at 89, is an energetic, convent-educated, white-haired Prius driver, and when her retirement community told her it was not feasible to convert to solar power, Ms. Auslander decided to push back. That push turned into a five-year campaign. "It became my hobby — not my obsession," she said, as people do sometimes when evidence points the other way. "I wasn't going to sit here in my rocking chair, clutching my pearls." Whether hobby or obsession, her efforts are now producing results. After years of demurrals, Meadow Ridge, the for-profit care community in Redding, Conn., where Ms. Auslander lives, recently announced plans to erect solar panels over two parking lots and the roof of one building in the complex. The panels — 1,344 in all — are expected to offset 607.2 metric tons of carbon each year..."None of us would have stepped forward without Susan,"

Natural Gas Utilities Seek Rate Increases

CT News Junkie. "Connecticut Natural Gas (CNG) and Southern Connecticut Gas (SCG) have requested rate plans they hope will bring in millions more in revenue to help pay for replacing aging infrastructure and improving safety...CNG has requested a one-year rate plan, starting Nov. 1, 2024, which the company says will increase its revenue by \$20 million. If approved as filed, customers will see a 5.2% increase in their bills. Meanwhile, SCG requested a one-year rate plan that will increase revenues by \$41 million, meaning an overall bill increase of 11%. Connecticut Consumer Counsel Claire Coleman said that the applications don't take into consideration what people can afford, adding that she and her staff will review all information in the case, including company financials, to make sure residents are paying a reasonable price for reliable service. "When gas rates are out of sync with a utility's actual costs and consumer needs, individual customers and businesses across the state suffer," said Coleman in a written statement."

Rivian CT Service Center Moving Forward

EV Club of CT. "The electric vehicle manufacturer, Rivian, which currently produces the fully electric R1T pickup truck and R1S sport utility vehicle, is finally able to move forward with its proposed Connecticut service center... a dealership...sued Shelton to stop the service center...We've seen this movie before. When a company that employs a direct sales model seeks to open a service center, the dealerships do all they can, including going to court, to obstruct it. Direct sales is not legal in CT and the dealers further attempt to make it as inconvenient to service the vehicles as it is to buy them. In so doing, the dealers seek to restrict competition and consumer choice...Shelton and Rivian fought the lawsuit and won every ruling...Rivian has moved quickly to break ground."

Mystic nursing facility finishes rooftop solar energy project

Hartford Business Journal. "The Mystic Healthcare Nursing and Rehabilitation Center recently completed a 317 kW rooftop solar installation, with the expectation that it will offset about 95% of the facility's annual energy consumption. Stratford-based Ryders Health Management, which manages eight skilled nursing and rehabilitation centers in Connecticut, plans to pursue clean energy options at additional facilities too, according to the family-owned company...The new array will provide the facility with no-cost, emissions-free power...Budderfly has provided Ryders with ongoing energy measurement, monitoring and maintenance. Ryders estimates it has saved more than \$100,000 to date through the partnership."

Groton Considers Solar Array on Landfill to Offset Town Electric Bills

CT Examiner. "The town could wipe out its Eversource electric bills by building a 5 MW solar array on its capped landfill, a consultant told the Groton Town Council Committee of the Whole on Tuesday...changes to federal tax incentives under the federal Inflation Reduction Act finally make it financially feasible to put a solar array on top of

the landfill next to Flanders Road Transfer Station — a project the town has looked at for years...The council was unanimously in favor of the town working with [Robert] Klee on an RFP to find developers for both smaller and larger array options on the landfill site...The goal of the RFP is to evaluate which options are financially viable... The project also benefits from new federal tax credits that can cover anywhere from 30 to 50 percent of project costs, and of the necessary Eversource infrastructure upgrades that previously made the project infeasible. There would be no out of pocket cost for the town..."

ClimateHaven becomes new hub for climate tech startups in CT

WHSU Public Radio. "New Haven has a new hub for climate technology startups. ClimateHaven, a 10,000 square-foot space in the heart of downtown New Haven, is already supporting 17 startups that are working to slow climate change. It offers young companies the opportunity to work together, attend workshops and share resources...Some of the startups at ClimateHaven are turning carbon dioxide into green methanol, keeping package waste out of landfills and filtering toxic chemicals out of water...ClimateHaven hopes to support more than 70 startups as it grows."



Customers May Pay Less For Heating Than Last Winter, Utilities Say

CT News Junkie. "While both United Illuminating and Eversource have announced their standard service supply rate filings...the companies and the office of Consumer Counsel are reminding customers that they can consider third-party suppliers as a more affordable option. United Illuminating last week filed their standard service supply rate with the Public Utilities Regulatory Authority for the 2024 winter season — under which UI customers will pay 17.06 cents per kilowatt-hour in supply charges on their monthly electric bill from January 1 through June 30, 2024. UI representatives say this is close to a 20% decrease and \$34 in monthly savings compared to the same period last year for the average customer. Eversource, meanwhile, filed new standard service rates that would be a 39% decrease over last winter. The new Standard Service rate, if PURA approves, for residential customers will be 14.71 cents per kWh — lower than last winter's supply rate of 24.17 cents per kWh, but slightly higher than the current summer rate of 13.82 cents per kWh."

December events in our community

Submitted by Bev York

America Museum

Dec. 16 Liber TEA The Boston Tea Party! This very day is the 250th anniversary of one of the first major protests for American independence. Join in a reenactment of this most famous event. We will take roles of actual Sons of Liberty and throw (and retrieve) boxes of tea into the water. Optional: dress disguised as a Mohawk. 4 p.m. Heritage Park by the Willimantic River, 355 Main Street, Willimantic. Sponsored by the America Museum. bevishistory@yahoo.com

Windham Arts

Dec 2 - 9 Candy House Display and Contest, for families, individuals, young and adult. Create a decorated house, bridge or other and bring it to the Veteran Community Center on Sat. 10 to noon. or by appointment. Judging will be in different categories and age groups. register at info@windhamarts.org Center is located at 47 Crescent Street, Willimantic.

Dec 7 Veteran Center Open House...Welcome one and all for some holiday cheer. 4 to 7 p.m. Eastern CT Veteran Community Center. 47 Crescent Street, Willimantic

Dec 9 and 10 Holiday Emporium Arts and Crafts Show (spaces still available info@windhamarts.org) Sat. 10 to 4 and Sun, Noon to 4. Veteran Center, 47 Crescent Street, Willimantic.

Jillson House

Dec 27 Tavern Night at the Jillson House. Learn the truth about Santa! He eats and drinks more than milk and cookies. 5 to 6 p.m. Jillson House Museum, 627 Main Street, Willimantic. JillsonHouseMuseum.com

Solar Today - Honoring Earth Day Every Day

By John Boiano

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



This month I'm going to touch on recycling solar panels.

Once in a while I have folks ask about end of life recycling for solar panels. The short answer is that research is being done on how best to mass recycle solar panels. Solar panels from 25-ish years ago are starting to become of age and the world is looking at how best to handle this. Back 25 years ago, residential solar was not yet mainstream. That happened only about 10 – 12 years ago that in the USA, Solar entered the mass market early adopter stage. At that time saw a huge increase in residential installations. Since then, panel life expectancy has increased quite a bit. The panels sold today are rated to be between 80 and 91 % efficient in 30 years from now. Then a slow degradation after that. However, the panels manufactured 25 & 30 years ago are starting to be replaced. The solar industry knows this and they are starting to put things in place to handle it.

As the need becomes greater for solar panel recycling, companies are preparing to make profits on the process. The next 3 segments have links for interesting deeper information than what I am including in the article.

From Greentech Renewables: How are Solar Panels Recycled?

Silicone Solar Modules are primarily composed of glass, plastic, and aluminum: three materials that are recycled in mass quantities.

Despite the recyclability of the modules, the process in which materials are separated can be tedious and requires advanced machinery. Here are the main steps involved in successfully recycling a silicon module:

1. Removing the aluminum frame (100% reusable)
2. Separating the glass along a conveyor belt (95% reusable)
3. Thermal processing at 500 degrees Celsius- This allows for the evaporation of small plastic components and allows the cells to be easier separated.
4. Etching away silicon wafers and smelting them into reusable slabs (85% reusable)

Because many European nations installed greater PV capacities in the 1990s, a solar PV module recycling market is steadily maturing. The Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment Directive (WEEE) of the European Union helped found a member-based organization called PV Cycle to build out a robust recycling infrastructure.

Look up this URL to see the plant in action:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=81-MEpcA-Rc&t=100s&ab_channel=PVCYCLE or look *YouTube title: PV CYCLE - Recycling of silicon based PV modules*

From: EPA.GOV; <https://www.epa.gov/hw/solar-panel-recycling>

Waste from end-of-life solar panels presents opportunities to recover valuable materials and create jobs through recycling. According to the *International Renewable Energy Agency*, by 2030, the cumulative value of recoverable raw materials from end-of-life panels globally will be about \$450 million, which is equivalent to the cost of raw materials currently needed to produce about 60 million new panels. Diverting solar panels from landfills to recycling saves space in landfills in addition to capturing the value of the raw materials.

Solar Panel Reuse: Another way to keep solar panels out of landfills is through panel reuse, either by direct reuse or after refurbishment. When reused, solar panels get a second life generating clean energy at a different location. The secondary market has not yet gained traction in the United States, and regulatory considerations include electrical grid interconnection regulations, and fire, building, and electrical codes that must be examined when planning for solar panel reuse. However, there are many beneficial ways solar panels could be reused in situations where they aren't connected to the electrical grid, including electric bike or vehicle charging stations, or other remote locations.

And from, The Yale School of the Environment: <https://e360.yale.edu/features/solar-energy-panels-recycling>

In Odessa, Texas, workers at a startup called SolarCycle unload trucks carrying end-of-life photovoltaic panels freshly picked from commercial solar farms across the United States. They separate the panels from the aluminum frames and electrical boxes, then feed them into machines that detach their glass from the laminated materials that have helped generate electricity from sunlight for about a quarter of a century.

Next, the panels are ground, shredded, and subjected to a patented process that extracts the valuable materials — mostly silver, copper, and crystalline silicon. Those components will be sold, as will the lower-value aluminum and glass, which may even end up in the next generation of solar panels.

This process offers a glimpse of what could happen to an expected surge of retired solar panels that will stream from an industry that represents the fastest-growing source of energy in the U.S. Today.

Recycling advocates in the U.S. say increased reuse of valuable materials, like silver and copper, would help boost the circular economy, in which waste and pollution are reduced by constantly reusing materials.

So, as you can see, we're not there yet and we have a ways to go! However, it is not going unaddressed and there are some really great solutions being implemented.

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

Holiday Gift Wrap

Submitted by Kira Holmes

The Willimantic Lion's Club and The Mill Museum will be teaming up to offer holiday gift wrapping at the East Brook Mall this year. This event will run December 18-24: assorted hours between 10 a.m.- 9 p.m. Get your gifts wrapped by volunteers for the Lions and Mill Museum for just a donation! It does not matter how odd a size, nor how big the present is, it will be wrapped in holiday splendor. One hundred percent of your donations will be used to support the Museum and the Willimantic Lions charities. Also, you can learn more about two splendid organizations that love Windham/Willimantic.

While learning about the Lions and the Museum, join in. We are also looking for volunteers! Answer the call of your Inner Elf and email info@millmuseum.org for more info. Dress up in holiday attire and count down the days to your holiday season!

Christmas and Solstice Service in Coventry

Second Congregational Church of Coventry will have a Blue Christmas and Winter Solstice Service at 6:00 p.m. on Thursday, December 21st.

Join us as we acknowledge that the holiday season is not always an easy time for everyone. That many feel the pain of loss, the anguish of broken relationships or the anxious insecurity of unemployment or poor health. For all these reasons we need a time of being together to receive the words of strength, courage and hope that speak to us in the midst of sorrow.

We will have a time of prayer, reflection, music and a candle lighting ceremony. The church is located at 1746 Boston Turnpike in Coventry. The church is wheelchair accessible. For more information call the church office at 860-742-1616.

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Beginning at 9AM
Special event: Children's Carol Choir at 12 and 1PM

Artist-In-Residence

The Eastern Connecticut Center for History, Art, and Performance (EC-CHAP) is a 501.c.3 nonprofit cultural organization serving Eastern Connecticut and beyond.

EC-CHAP offers an Artist-In-Residence (AIR) program and will have an opening effective **February 1, 2024**. Artists of all disciplines are welcome to apply. The term of the residency is one (1) year, with possible renewal.

Please visit www.ec-chap.org/artist-in-residence to learn more and to apply online. Questions may be addressed by email to: info@ec-chap.org; or by calling: 518.791.9474.

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25 Tremko Lane, Ashford

Revisiting 1979 Music

By Tom Woron



More 1979. Yes! Only this time the focus is only on the music of that year. After my writing of "1979" for the October issue of *Neighbors*, it was pointed out in the next issue that when I discussed the music of 1979 in my article, I neglected to mention any female and non-caucasian bands or singers that were popular that year. I can assure that there was no deliberate intent to snub or disregard the musical contributions of female and non-caucasian musicians in the year 1979, rather it was more or less short sightedness that led me to only mention the bands and musicians that I did mention. I knew that putting together a long article about a rather tumultuous year in the world would only allow me limited space to discuss the music of the year. Facing the deadline for submission I chose to "wing it" by just going with the music that I remembered being exposed to on an almost daily basis in 1979. I remember thinking that I could write a whole article on just the music of 1979 in which, of course, I would have thoroughly researched into the greater picture of the songs and all of the musicians that made the year a great one in music.

In the summer of 1979 I started working my first job, as a dishwasher in a restaurant. Just around the corner from where I did my work were the restaurant's cooks. They had a radio on at all times that I could hear clearly. That radio, I believe, was always set on to just one rock station. Prior to taking the job, my exposure to rock and pop music was somewhat limited. I was familiar with a few bands and song artists such as Elton John, Steve Miller, Linda Ronstadt, the Beatles, the Rolling Stones and a few more but I couldn't always identify who sang most of the songs that I did hear. Working a seven hour shift though, with a nearby radio set to one rock station that bombarded me with the same songs by the same bands and artists day in and day out burned those songs into my collective memory. All day long when I worked I heard Supertramp, Kiss, The Knack's "My Sharona," (and also the Knack's "Good Girls Don't"), Rod Stewart, The Charlie Daniels Band, Electric Light Orchestra, Styx, Robert Palmer, The Eagles, Foreigner, Warren Zevon and some others. I don't really recall hearing any female singers on that particular radio station with the exception of Pat Benatar with her hit song "Heartbreaker" in late 1979. I heard the Little River Band's "Lady" often at home because in the morning my mother used to listen to radio personality Bob Steele who played the song frequently.

It was actually in the early months of 1980 that I started to become aware of the music of Michael Jackson, Donna Summer, Blondie, Kool and the Gang and many others that I could not identify with before. Sure, I heard their songs at times but didn't always catch what the title of the song was and who sang it. That all changed in early 1980 due to the fact that it was only then that I started to tune into other radio stations rather than just be exposed to the one I heard at my job. (I got a radio for Christmas 1979!) So I have long incorrectly associated many songs that were hits in 1979, or even earlier, with the year 1980 as that was when I began to identify specific songs with who sang them. Without a doubt many more bands and singers than just those that I mentioned previously in my October article deserve to be recognized for their contributions to popular music in the year 1979. An analysis of some of them follows.

First of all in the late 1970s America was in the peak of what is now known as the disco era. Disco was basically dance floor music. As a different musical culture it was usually characterized by repetitive lyrics, a sort of catchy, hypnotic rhythm, and sounds that were electronic in nature. A disco was a nightclub specifically set up for dancing to such music.

The biggest name in disco was undoubtedly American singer and songwriter Donna Summer from Boston, Massachusetts. Now known as the "Queen of Disco" Ms. Summers was well established as a highly successful musician and she was internationally famous by the late 1970s. Her highly successful album "Bad Girls" was released on April 25, 1979 and it didn't take long for it to reach the top of the U.S. Billboard 200 albums chart. The album contained several hit songs. Among them was the album's title song "Bad Girls." Also big hits from the album during the year were the songs "Dim All the Lights,"

"Hot Stuff," and "Heaven Knows." Ms. Summers won many award for her music and was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame On April 18, 2013 eleven months after her death.

Led by Robert Earl "Kool" Bell, the American Rhythm and Blues band Kool and the Gang had their beginnings as a band in New Jersey in 1964. Their hit album "Ladies Night" was released on September 6, 1979. The single title song of the same name became an instant hit and a regular on many radio stations. Described as "funky motion music," "Ladies Night" is considered by many to be one of the best songs of the disco era.

In 1971 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania four sisters, Debbie, Joni, Kathy and Kim Sledge formed the musical group Sister Sledge. The group rose to international notoriety during the peak of the disco era with the release of their breakthrough album "We Are Family" in early 1979. The single "He's the Greatest Dancer" from the album charted number one as a Rhythm and Blues hit. As I did mention in my October article, the 1979 World Series Champion Pittsburgh Pirates adopted the Sister Sledge title song "We Are Family" from the album of the same name, as their team's anthem.

Another example of a song that I heard occasionally over the years and found very appealing but never really identified who sang it was "Reunited" by American duo Peaches and Herb. The song came in number 5 on the Billboard Year-End Hot 100 singles of 1979.

The song that came in number 6 right behind "Reunited" on the Billboard Year-End Hot 100 singles of 1979 was Gloria Gaynor's hit "I Will Survive." Gloria Gaynor is an

American singer from Newark, New Jersey that has been active as a singer since 1965. Ms. Gaynor achieved fame during the disco era especially after the release of her album "Love Tracks." The album was released in November 1978 with the single "I Will Survive" having been released the month before. "I Will Survive" was to become one of the most popular disco songs of the disco era. Again, I found "I Will Survive" to be a very appealing song when I did hear it however I tended to associate it with a later time rather than the year it rose up the charts.

Obviously with limited space to work with it is impossible to analyze and discuss all of the songs and musicians on the Billboard Year-End Hot 100 singles chart for 1979. However, one more certainly deserves special recognition and that is Michael Jackson, "the King of Pop."

Michael Jackson, considered to be a major cultural icon of the 20th century, began his musical career as a child as a member of the Jackson 5 in 1964. The Jackson 5 (later The Jacksons) were a pop music band consisting of Michael and four of his older brothers. Michael was later to be catapulted to stardom as a solo artist with the release of his fifth solo album "Off The Wall." in August 1979. It was the first album to produce four hits that made the top 10 on the U.S. Billboard Hot 100 singles chart. One of those hits was "Rock With You" which also charted as the third best number one hit of the whole decade of the 1980s. Michael Jackson's hits dominated the pop singles charts for many years and "Rock With You" is considered to be one of the last big disco hits of the disco era.

It was in a bar in New York City in early 1980 that I first recall hearing "Rock With You." I was certainly glad to have the opportunity to catch the song there as no one questioned my age. (\$2.87 for a bottle of Heineken in a NYC bar! Outrageous!)

Michael Jackson outdid himself with the release of his 1982 album "Thriller." The album has the distinction of being the best selling album of all time. Seven songs from "Thriller" charted in the top ten which set a record for the most top ten hits from one album. Two of those songs, "Beat It" and "Billie Jean" charted number one.

In 1983 I was a fan of the band The Police and their hit album of that year "Synchronicity." I was quite pleased when I saw "Synchronicity" on top of the album charts for a little while. It didn't take long though for "Thriller" to take over the top spot and remain there for many weeks. I preferred to see "Synchronicity" on top but when I saw the MTV videos for "Beat It," "Billie Jean," and the title song, I went out and bought the "Thriller" album. At the record store I saw several people also buying "Thriller." I could see why the album was on top of the charts. It just seemed at the time that when the "Thriller" album was taking over the top spot on the charts it was telling the "Synchronicity" album to "Beat It."

Among them was Michael Jackson's hit "Rock With You" from his 1979 hit album "Off the Wall."

Don't Put Things You Cherish in a Safe Place

By Angela H. Fichter

One of the things I cherish is a small village that I created to look like downtown Scotland, CT. I lived there 32 years and found it great place to live. Had my law office right in my house on Route 14 near the center of town, so I frequently saw the Samuel Huntington Homestead Museum, the Scotland Congregational Church, where my husband was the minister, the town's general store, the town hall where I did title searches for people wanting to buy a home in Scotland, and loads of old houses. In the clerk's office in the town hall, on a ledge up high up on the wall are a number of very small buildings created by Polly Miller from scraps of lumber she got from her carpenter sons. These buildings are replicas of old buildings in town. I bought from her a replica of the Congregational church. To this I added a replica of the Huntington museum, which the museum ordered to be made and sold as a fund raiser for the museum. The company that made it has manufactured these kind of replicas as fund raisers for lots of organizations, including churches.

The town hall replica was a matter of good luck. I was at a tag sale and amongst a bunch of old wooden toys was a building that is similar to the town hall. Got that for under a buck. The general store was a gift from a client. It had the same architecture as the Scotland General Store, including the gas pump in front of the store, same colors, but on the back of the store was the name of a general store in Somesville, a small town in Maine. The client lived in Mansfield, CT, but had a summer home in Somesville, Maine. I was very happy to get this replica because it was almost a duplicate of the Scotland store. I put it and the other town replicas on the mantel in my office. Not long after I got that store replica, I had another family come in for legal service, and they exclaimed that on my mantel was a replica of the market where they had their summer home. These people also lived right in Mansfield, CT. As an attorney you can never reveal your client's information to other clients, so I couldn't ask these clients if they knew each other, but it seemed such a coincidence that they both lived in Mansfield, had summer homes in Somesville, Maine, and that the store appeared very similar to the Scotland store.

The fifth building in my replica of Scotland town center is just a tiny cape cod style house, which I bought at a craft store, already built and painted. What was particularly good luck was the wooden evergreen trees, already painted green with snow painted on them and the tiny family of mom, dad, and two kids, all with red scarves and red coats. The trees and people I got a Christmas Bazaar at a church one year. In Scotland this whole replica village lived on the mantel in my office. But my Hampton home has no mantel. I put the buildings of the village on a table. After Christmas I put the trees and people in a clean, empty metal storage bin along with other tiny Christmas decorations in the basement. The following year after Christmas I decided to put the people and trees in a "safe place." That was a big mistake. Why? Because the next Christmas I could not remember where the "safe place" was. I looked all through decorations in the basement. Not there. I looked in drawers everywhere in the house. No luck. Guess how they were finally found. When looking for something else. A member of the Huntington museum's board of directors and of the Scotland Historical Society came to my home to photo records he thought I might have that my son created when, for his Eagle rank in Boy Scouts, he created a map of the cemetery where hundreds of people were buried in the 1700's and 1800's. When I went into the corner of a closet that I knew had those burial records, there were my people and trees for the replica Scotland village. The connection? Both were Scotland, one burial records, the other the people and trees for the replica village.

I had clients that suffered from the mistake of finding lost stuff in "safe places". One was trying to find her deceased mother's jewelry, which had some real value. The mother had no safe deposit box and only junk jewelry in her jewelry box. Finally, the client's sister said, why don't we look in the freezer? They did and found the jewelry with real gemstones and real value. Frankly, I think when thieves break into your house and don't find stuff they want, they look in the freezer since that has become a supposed "safe place" for valuables. Another client remembered that his father kept gifts of cash in books, so when dad died, he flipped threw all his books and found several hundred dollars of cash gifts.

continued on next page

Couple Opens Cannabis Store in Willington

By Erik Wolfgang
Assistant Manager, Higher Collective Willington

Believe it or not, my unique cannabis story begins with the Marleys. Yes.... those Marleys!... While growing up in Manchester, CT my best friend at that time moved to Miami, Florida. For years I took annual trips to Miami to visit him. His next-door neighbor in Miami was none other than Bob Marley's family. One of Bob's sons, Rohan Marley, was our age, and the 3 of us were constantly together each time I visited. Let's just say I learned a lot about the benefits of this amazing plant at an early age...

Unfortunately, while attending high school in CT, a couple of friends and I were arrested for the possession of a small amount of cannabis. As a result of this arrest and my name being in the paper, some close friends were no longer permitted to hang around with me. Despite being a multi-sport varsity athlete with good morals and ethics, I was suddenly labeled a bad kid. This eventually led to my dropping out of high school. I was searching for answers. I eventually transferred to a different high school and earned All-State honors in basketball, while helping to lead our town to their first State Championship appearance in 27 years. From there I went on to play basketball while attending and graduating from Eastern Connecticut State University. Post college graduation, I earned a master's degree in social work from the University of Connecticut and in addition to assisting in operating Higher Collective Willington, I am a Licensed Clinical Social Worker with a small private practice. Throughout my journey, cannabis has remained a companion and assisted in an increased ability to self-reflect while living a disciplined, purposeful life.

While attending graduate school at UConn, I began boxing at the San Juan Center in the North End of Hartford. It was in that gym that I met Yanira Marrero (her father trained her brother there) and we eventually married in 2007. Like a lot of inner-city areas throughout this country, the community in and around the San Juan Center had been torn apart by the war on drugs- more specifically, the war on cannabis. Yanira and her loving family lived in the infamous Bellevue Square projects less than a mile from the Center.

Akin to her family's boxing lineage, Yanira fought her way out of the projects via an inspiring work ethic. In addition to being a mother of 3, Yanira holds a bachelor's degree from Central Connecticut State University, a master's degree in social work from the University of Connecticut and is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker with private practice. She is also currently the General Manager and majority owner of Higher Collective Willington.

On July 1st of 2021, CT legalized the recreational use of cannabis and like many people in Connecticut, Yanira and I were determined to establish a footprint in the legal market. Little did we know how difficult the entry process would prove to be. Currently, cannabis is the most regulated industry in the country and Connecticut is the most regulated state within our industry. Essentially, Yanira is the owner of what is literally the most regulated business in the world.

I have a friend who joined a craft class recently and made some tin stars. She made the mistake of putting them in a "safe place", and cannot find them. I haven't had the heart to tell her to check the drawer where she keeps aluminum foil. Why there? Well, before there was aluminum foil, there was tin foil. My grandmother was born in 1891. They didn't have aluminum foil then; they had something called tin foil. They also didn't have refrigerators then; they had ice boxes. An ice box is a cupboard where you kept ice. An ice house is a building where you put ice you sawed off of ponds in winter, and covered with sawdust to keep it from melting. Once refrigerators came along, my grandmother called them iceboxes. She lived 95 years, no senility, no nursing home. And she referred to aluminum foil as tin foil till death. Who cares about that when she was such a good cook and looked for new recipes to try until her death. I cherish her recipes and keep them in a recipe box, not a "safe place."

Once it became clear Yanira had successfully navigated the process of obtaining a retail license, we had to find a location for which to operate. How did we end up deciding to open our store in the beautiful town of Willington, you might ask? We are part of a collective (Higher Collective) that was founded by former Curaleaf executive, Patrik Jonsson. Higher Collective is in the process of opening 8 adult-use cannabis stores in CT. As part of Connecticut's strict regulations, each one of The Collective's stores in CT are required to be more than 20 miles apart from each other "as a crow flies." With 44% of towns in CT still having moratoriums or outright prohibiting the sale of cannabis within their borders and Higher



Yanira and Erik Wolfgang at their Higher Collective Willington location. Contributed photo.

Collective locations having already been secured in Hartford and Killingly, we found a willing host town in beautiful Willington that qualified from an ingroup distance standpoint, is less than 1 minute off of Interstate 84, has a town and state approved drive thru and good foot traffic as a result of being located in a plaza that contains the popular Willington Pizza Too in addition to multiple other fantastic businesses in our plaza.

Quickly falling in love with how beautiful Willington and the surrounding towns was easy. However, not only did we fall in love with the ambience of the area, while going through the approximately 6-month process of gaining town approval via multiple public and private meetings, we also fell in love with the people in and around town. We were honestly surprised to receive the tremendous amount of support we received not only from the Phelps Way Plaza owners, but also all of the other business owners in and around the plaza, as well as Troop C in Tolland. Not only is Willington Pizza Too tremendous, Flat Pennies restaurant just outside the plaza is also tremendous. Our little area in CT is quickly becoming a destination location containing the gorgeous Nye-Holman State Forest, Wilderness Lake Campground and Resort, Moose Meadow Camping Resort, Willington Wine and Spirits, Lots and More, Anything Printed, Elegant Edge Hair Salon, Lotus Nutrition, Dollar General and a Dunkin Donuts.

I could go on and on, but this article must be 1,000 words or less. Having said that, I would be remised if I didn't mention how fair and wonderful the Planning and Zoning committee was to work with. However, as we wind down, I must mention what sets us apart from our current and future competition- as I'm sure that eventually there will be a store in just about every town. What sets us apart is our in-store culture that we've established and our tremendous staff. I know a lot of owners who interviewed most of their prospective employees virtually and/or delegated the interviewing process out. Not us. We truly wanted to interview each prospective employee in a face-to-face setting and were willing to meet people where they were at, with a goal in mind of having the least turnover of any store in CT in an industry known for having a tremendous amount of turnover. As Licensed Clinical Social Workers, we truly care about people and their well-being, which goes hand in hand with this amazing plant. A plant that increases well-being and brings people from all walks of life together, like Bob Marley's music and messages.



Seeking New Board Members

The Eastern Connecticut Center for History, Art, and Performance (EC-CHAP) is a 501.c.3 nonprofit cultural organization serving Eastern Connecticut and beyond.

EC-CHAP is positioning its Board of Directors to ensure we have the capacity to oversee a **major facility project**, and respond to a **changing environment**. At this time we are inviting interested individuals possessing Facilities Management, Legal, or Nonprofit Development experience to apply.

Please visit www.ec-chap.org/board2023 to learn more and to apply online. Questions may be addressed by email to: info@ec-chap.org; or by

WWW.EC-CHAP.ORG

156 River Road, Suite 2106A, Willington, CT 06279 | 518.791.9474 | info@ec-chap.org

Mansfield's 'PowerSmart' Campaign

Learn How Solar+Storage Helps Homeowners Take Control Their Energy Use

Submitted by Ginny Walton, Recycling Coordinator

The Mansfield Sustainability Committee is announcing a partnership with SmartPower, the nation's leading non-profit marketing organization dedicated to promoting clean energy and energy efficiency. Together, the groups are co-hosting a special PowerSmart Mansfield Info Session at 6pm on Wednesday, December 13th at the Municipal Building's Town Council Chamber, 4 South Eagleville Road in Storrs/Mansfield. The presentation will explain how a home battery system can be paired with a new or existing residential solar array to provide power at night and especially during a power outage, and how various financial incentives can be accessed.

Energy storage at the local level can provide stability and resilience to Connecticut's power supply. Home-owning members of the public are invited to attend this presentation — virtually or in person — by Bob Wall, Vice President of SmartPower. More details can be found at <https://powersmartmansfield.wee.green>

PowerSmart Mansfield is a special 20-week community outreach campaign that is funded by a grant from the US Department of Energy, and features a team including Yale School of the Environment, New York University - Stern School of Business, and SmartPower. The program is designed to present local residents with the various opportunities and incentives available to them to have solar and battery energy storage systems, which allow residents to convert sunlight into electrical energy and store that energy in a battery for use at a later time. The "EnergyStorageSolutions" solar+storage combination also allows program participants to sell their excess stored energy to Eversource and helps make the grid more resilient during critical "peak demand" periods.

"Mansfield has been leading the way in helping residents to make smart energy choices," said Lynn Stoddard, chair of the Sustainability Committee. "Now we're pleased to help accelerate the transition to solar plus energy storage in our homes. This combination helps to provide greater independence and autonomy with respect to personal energy use."

Mansfield is among the first dozen communities to launch a PowerSmart campaign in Connecticut. Over the years, the Town has been a sustainability leader in many ways including:

- The achievement of a Silver Level Certification in the Sustainable CT initiative
- Participation in the "Neighbor-to-Neighbor" home energy efficiency program
- Conducting a Solarize CT Program
- Conducting a Solar for All campaign
- Connecticut's first net-zero public school (Mansfield Elementary School)
- Climate Emergency Resolution pledging net zero carbon emissions from municipal operations by 2030

There are three different incentives that make battery storage systems an attractive investment opportunity. First, homeowners who enroll in the Energy Storage Solutions program can get a generous upfront rebate incentive. (Residents who live in areas that are prone to power outages and lower income residents may qualify for additional incentives.) Second, they get a 30% federal income tax credit, per the Inflation Reduction Act, for the net cost of the solar panels and/or battery system that they have installed. Finally, they will get payments from Eversource for agreeing to have their batteries partially drawn down during the summer months and for a handful of days during the winter. Eversource has safeguards in place so that drawdowns are suspended in the event of a potential grid power outage.

Homeowners who purchase a battery system can choose not to participate in the Energy Storage Solutions program. By doing so, they would forego the state incentives, but would be free to use their stored power however they see fit.

"There's no doubt that battery storage 'saves the day' — both literally and figuratively," concluded SmartPower president Brian F. Keane. "So let's get PowerSmart!"



Sam Harvey alongside Stone House Brook mill falls. (Circa 2000)
Photos were provided by Sam Harvey's daughter, Paula Spangler.

A Friend and Conservationist Remembered

By Warren Church
(reprinted from the Joshua's Trust Fall 2023 Newsletter)

In 2023 Samuel Harvey (Sam) donated 180 acres of largely forested land in northwestern Chaplin to Joshua's Trust. This is the second largest land donation to the Trust only exceeded by the nearby 253-acre Tower Hill Preserve which was donated by Antoinette Monnet in 2022.

Sam was an accountant who spent most of his childhood and adult work life in Maryland. He was very proud of his Southern and his Chaplin heritage.

He cherished his childhood visits to his grandfather Samuel's farm in Chaplin. The Harvey family ownership of the land goes back to the 19th century when one of Sam's ancestors was part owner of a sassafras mill along Stonehouse Brook.

When Sam's grandfather died in 1950 the Chaplin estate was divided into three parts. One part going to Sam's dad (another Sam Harvey), his uncle John Harvey and His aunt Margery Harvey. When Sam retired around 1994 he moved to Chaplin with a goal of putting his grandfather's farm land back together. In just a few years he was able to purchase the outstanding parcels which luckily were still owned by relatives.

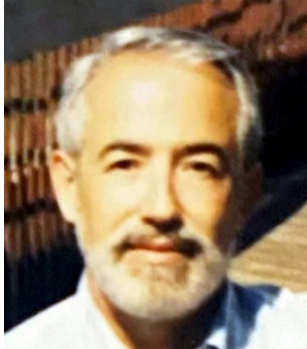
The property that Sam gave to the Trust permanently protects this historic property with over 2,000 feet of frontage on North Bedlam Road, and over 3,000 feet of frontage on Federal Road. The property abuts a larger, unfragmented forest and other open space that contain high-quality habitats for a variety of wildlife. It also protects both sides of over 2,500 feet of the Stone House Brook which includes over 1,000 feet of scenic gorge including several waterfalls. The Trust plans on developing a trail on the property which showcases these impressive features.

We look forward to safeguarding this land not only for the benefit of the wildlife and waterways that run through the property but also for the benefit of future generations who will be able to enjoy this beautiful Chaplin landscape much as Sam did for almost 30 years.

We are grateful for Sam's commitment to land conservation and for his generous donation to Joshua's Trust. We send our deepest condolences to the Harvey family and a special thank you to Sam's daughter, Paula Spangler, who provided photos for this article.

If you would like to see this lovely preserve for yourself, join us on December 9 for a preview hike. Details are below.

Joshua's Trust activities, events and walks for December and early January are summarized below. For details, updates or cancellations, go to <https://joshuas-trust.org/events/>



Samuel Jackson Harvey
1934-2023

Harvey Preserve Preview Hike

December 9 @ 1:00 pm - 2:30 pm
Harvey Preserve 41°48'N, 72°9'16" W
(Federal Rd, Chaplin. Midway between Tower Hill Rd and Davis Rd on west side of road), Chaplin.

Join us at the newly blazed Harvey Preserve across the street from 68 Federal Rd in Chaplin as we pay tribute to Sam Harvey and showcase the land that he cared for and generously donated to Joshua's Trust. We'll meet at the new parking area before hiking along the approximately 1.2-mile trail.

Nature Journaling with Arts & Crafts

December 9 @ 10:00 am - 1:00 pm
Atwood Farm 624 Wormwood Hill Road, Mansfield Center, CT

Bring your enthusiasm for the natural world and leave with a personal journal, inspired by the landscape of Atwood Farm. This workshop is an opportunity to engage with nature in a dynamic way. Ages 12 and up. Activity limited to 12 participants.

First Day Hike at Pigeon Swamp Preserve

January 1, 2024 @ 10:00 am - 12:00 pm
Pigeon Swamp Pigeon Swamp Road, Lebanon, Connecticut

Join us for a 2.25 mile New Year's day hike through multiple habitats including pasture, wetlands and forested areas.

Willington Events

Submitted by Julie Engelke

Friends of Willington Public Library Holiday Craft and Bake Sale

The Friends are holding their annual Holiday Craft and Bake Sale on December 9, 2023; 9 am to 2 pm at the Willington Public Library. This year brings 28 vendors, a visit from Santa, mouth watering homemade baked goods and gift baskets all set to go. Stop by and find the perfect gifts for your Holidays with one stop shopping.

Willington Historical Society
presents:

Dr. Sarah Sportman,
CT State Archaeologist

First Peoples of Connecticut:
The Paleoindian Period

Dr. Sportman returns to Willington on December 3, 2023; 3 pm at the Willington Public Library. She will be speaking on the First peoples of Connecticut noted in archaeological records as the Paleoindian Period approximately 12,000 years ago at the end of the last ice age. The program is open to the public, FREE and light refreshments will be served. The Willington Public Library is located at 7 Ruby Road (RT 320) Willington 06279.

Windham-Tolland 4-H Camp News

December 3, 2023

Join us for Lunch with Santa at the Windham-Tolland 4-H Camp on Sunday, December 3, 2023 from 11 AM to 1 PM at 326 Taft Pond Rd in Pomfret. Have lunch upstairs in the lodge or just come for a photo with Santa and avoid the lines at the mall. Made to order Pasta Bar, salad, drinks and desserts (gluten free pasta available). Join us in making holiday crafts, cookies, S'mores and more and shop our selection of silent auction baskets. Tickets available ahead of time by calling 974-3379, email registrar@4h-campct.org or at the door. No reservations necessary. \$8.00 for children up to age 8, \$12.00 for those 9 and older for lunch, 5 x 7 Photo with Santa \$8.00.

December 28, 2023

The Windham-Tolland 4-H Camp in Pomfret is offering a Camper Game Day from 9:00 am - 3:00 pm for children ages 6-12. Games, food and fun for the kids during the holiday vacation week from school. Lunch and snacks included and outdoor gear required as some time will be spent outside. Admission is \$20/child, everyone welcome. Pre-registration requested by 12/22. Call 860-974-1122 to register or email: campdirector@4h-campct.org

Holiday Decorating Headquarters

- Live potted Christmas Trees and Fresh Cut Trees
- Wreaths - ANY SIZE - Pre made or Made to Order
- Poinsettias, Christmas Cactus, and Cyclamen
- Evergreen Roping Garland
- Cemetery Logs and Entryway Arrangements
- Gift Ideas! Statuary, Wind Chimes, Dreamcatchers, and more!
- Large selection of fantasy gifts like Fairy garden accessories, Dragon figurines and Furrybones

671 Windham Road
South Windham, CT 06266

860-456-4340

\$10 off any **\$50** or more purchase
or \$5 off a purchase of \$25 or more before tax

Limit 1 per household
Not to be combined with other specials | Excludes much, special orders, landscaping, wreaths expires 12/12/23 | Not valid on past purchases



A BIZARRE HOLIDAY BAZAAR

FRIDAY DEC. 8
6-9 PM

SATURDAY DEC. 9
11-4 PM

@ MOULTON LAVA GALLERY

31 MOULTON COURT * WILLIMANTIC

MUSIC! * PUPPETS! * VENDORS!
ART FOR SALE! * TAROT READINGS!
VICTUALS & LIBATIONS!

GUESTS ARE ENCOURAGED TO JOIN US DRESSED IN EDWARDIAN/STEAMPUNK STYLE! (IT IS THE BIZARRE BAZAAR AFTER ALL)

SUGGESTED MINIMUM DONATION ~ \$5 DONATIONS GO TO OUR LOCAL NON-PROFIT CLICK - THE FOOD INCUBATOR KITCHEN IN WINDHAM

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

Willimantic First Impressions

By First-Year Students who have spent less than two months at ECSU and in Willimantic

Compiled by Professor David L. Stoloff,
Education Department, ECSU

My First Impressions of Willimantic were fairly good. Going downtown I really loved the street art. Especially the art by Dairy Queen and the art by the Thai place! Speaking of the Thai place my favorite memory I have gained while being at Eastern Connecticut State University is my 18th birthday, being able to walk downtown with my friends and eat dinner with them! I've also enjoyed walking to dairy queen at night when it's cooler with my friends and getting ice cream with the girls. The few concerns I do have is safety for young women. Sometimes walking downtown, I do feel unsafe, and I feel often violated by catcalling. Something I might mention to the town leader about this issue is even just having more police just walking around town in a causal manner to prevent these incidents. And I may consider it but I wouldn't be quite sure about it. - Selena Garcia-Cyr, Bristol, CT

When I told my family members and friends what town Eastern Connecticut State University was in, they were all looking at me, concerned that I was about to live in Willimantic, and I did not understand why. The stereotype of Willimantic that I have heard has been dangerous and ghetto. But so far during my first two months as a first-year student, I absolutely fell in love with not only the campus but the community that Willimantic brings with it. I love the atmosphere that Main Street brings and how it pulls members of the community together. Not only does it make the community stronger but allows it to grow stronger together as a whole. My best memory of Willimantic so far has been driving through Main Streets with my roommates and exploring what is around Willimantic. Being an out of state resident at first was super stressful but the community has made me feel like Willimantic is my home in a sense, and I could not see myself anywhere else. I feel like the town leaders have done a wonderful job bringing the community together and I am extremely excited for the town's upcoming events. Willimantic has several opportunities, activities, and good restaurants for Willimantic residents to enjoy. I can see myself being part of the Willimantic community and cannot wait to make more memories within my four years here at Eastern Connecticut State University. --- Hannah Johnson, Holland, MA

Hello, I am a first-year student at Eastern Connecticut State University, and I wish to share my first impressions of Willimantic, both as a place to visit, and a new-found home. I am originally from Mystic, a much less rural area than some of the long rolling hills and expansive farmlands found here. At first, I could not have seen myself ever visiting this place, as it seemed so cold and uninviting, almost exclusionary from the outside looking in. However, upon my first look into the area due to ECSU giving me some hefty financial aid, I knew I had to visit it in person to get a better look at the area before making any decisions. On my first ride in, I was highly skeptical and fearful. I am a part of the LGBTQ+ community, and as I got closer to the campus, I noticed more and more stores and homes with much less favorable flags hanging from poles and windows. I grew to wonder if my opinion of Willimantic mattered because it seemed like it had already made its mind up about me. But I did my best to go in with an open mind and give it a shot. And Willimantic surprised me greatly. I found so many people relating to my experiences, feelings, and identity traits, allowing me to find a place where I knew I wasn't alone. I felt like I had finally found my community, in a way that felt authentic and right, not forced or sought out. I grew so fond of the locally owned businesses, the people who own them are some of the sweetest people that I've

ever met. Even in the stores owned by a large conglomerate, the people working at our local branch feel like genuine people running the store, and not people out for profits alone. One of the fondest memories that I've formed so far was one of my first nights on campus when I decided to take a late-night stroll through the streets and clear my mind. The way that the streetlights and signs from stores illuminated the streets mixed with the wet roads from the passing rain made the entire space feel comfortable. It felt safe and like I could walk those streets forever. Willimantic made a deep, long-lasting impression on me and I want that feeling to continue for as long as I can stay here. - Anonymous

When I arrived in Willimantic on move-in day my family wanted to tour the town. The drive to school from my hometown was beautiful and had very nice scenery. This makes it easy for my family to come visit me often. I am within walking distance from almost everything I could need: Grocery stores, gym, Dunkin, gas stations, the hospital, etc. I have only been around Willimantic a few times so I do not have many memories. I have been to Shaboo Stage where I saw Hunter Hayes perform. It was a great set-up and had a lot of land for more events. There are a few concerns to have about the town. There are a few places in Willimantic that I would never visit alone or at night. Downtown is pretty during the day but I often see some sketchy people while driving through it. The other side of the town is nice with Walmart, Dunkin, and a few nice restaurants. If I had to give our town leaders advice I would tell them to build more shelters to take people off the streets. I would also like to see downtown freshen up a little so we can shop, go for walks, and enjoy dinner at fancy restaurants. I would not live in Willimantic because I would rather not live in a college town. I would live in a nearby town such as Coventry because it still has all the same or similar places as Willimantic. Overall, Willimantic has a wide range of diversity in the community. Also having small shops on our local main street is a great way to explore this small town and what we have to offer. - Reagan Lalor, Danbury, CT

I'm from Long Island, New York so I've never heard of Willimantic before I applied to Eastern for college. My first impressions of Willimantic were pretty mixed. I thought it looked pretty nice, but people said Willimantic wasn't necessarily safe. The main street part of Willimantic is nice, and it reminds me of my hometown which was nice. I also noticed all the frogs and I really liked it because I thought it was cute. Since I don't have a car, I can't really make any memories but once my sister visited and we went into town and got sushi at Oriental Café. This is a good memory because I got to bond with my sister, and I got some good food. I plan to make more memories in the town of Willimantic in the future. Some concerns I have about the town of Willimantic are some safety concerns. I volunteer at Natchaug Elementary school and some of the experiences the kids talk about raise some concerns to me. One of the kids said he got stabbed in the cheek by a pocketknife last year. I also have concerns about safety because of the things people at this school have said about Willimantic. They said Willimantic isn't really safe. I don't really have much advice for the town leaders to improve the town but maybe have more police officers around, so people feel safer while there in Willimantic and won't be scared to walk around. I also think more money towards the school would be good because the school I volunteer at looks a bit run down compared to the elementary schools I'm used to seeing in New York. I probably won't become a neighbor in Willimantic or other towns nearby because I love Long Island and once, I graduate I want to live there and I want to live on a beach. - Anonymous

Trash Can

Wasted words trashed in all the corners
Crumbled distant reminders of nothing that seemed to matter
Page, after New England winter white, page
Vanquished and soiled and now meaningless
Shaped into a pile of self-righteous discarding of anything I was trying to say
Why do these words haunt me in slumber?
I find no comfort whatsoever in the vocabulary
of nocturnal musings
My head full of useless rhymes and rhythms
They find me, torture me, insist I listen
to all these things I don't comprehend
Prompting me mostly
to just pitch them
near the gluttonous basket
again and again and again...

Poem and photo by Wayne Erskine.



DMV aka Twilight Zone

By M. McCain

I wrote two checks this morning: Eversource and DMV. Making note of the recent rise in postage stamps and the "List Of Places To Pay" enclosure included with the electric bill, I stopped by Stop and Shop first but there was a long line at the courtesy desk so I drove around the corner to Walgreens.

The clerk looked confused by my inquiry, pointed toward a photo kiosk which, of course, was occupied. So I turned my focus to DMV to drop off the car registration check. The door sign indicated "appointments only" but since I only needed to drop off the envelope I entered the foyer, was admitted after explaining to the uniformed guard why I was there.

The DMV woman stationed at the front desk looked at my envelope quizzically, as if it were written in some foreign language. I thought I must have handed her the wrong envelope until I saw – no, it's the one imprinted with the DMV address. I looked around, made sure I had actually come to the right place ... yup, the sign says DMV. True story: she pointed to the top corner of the envelope, said "just put a stamp on it." "But I'm here; I just want to put it in the drop box."

The DMV worker left her post with my envelope in hand, found her way into some inner sanctum while I stood waiting beside her now vacant desk. Sometime later she returned to report "there hasn't been a drop-off box for years" but she would bend the rules to give me a number so that I could take a seat to wait my turn to be summoned to pay the registration fee with the check in my envelope.

Driving back home down Main Street, I slapped Forever Stamps on my two envelopes, dropped them into the Out of Town mail slot, gave thanks for the United States Postal Service all the way home.



Forty and Still Counting

Words and photo by Diane Rutherford

Here is a sampling of 40 cats in 35 years. They were all strays except two. Oh, how I loved them. I must have been sent here on a mission. Just a few in the photo - Buffy, Scrap, Killer, BC and Pencil.

Ashford's Zoning Regulations Need to Be Updated

Submitted by Christine Acebo

The Ashford Planning and Zoning Commission (PZC) is under a moratorium to update their regulations pertaining to the Interstate Interchange Development Zone, the land near Exit 72 off I-84 where applicants tried to modify the regulations to allow for a mega-warehouse last Spring. Now the PZC is asking citizens to provide input about this area with an online survey available on the town's website or with a paper copy from the town hall. The survey must be completed by Dec. 31. The report below by Charles Vidich provides information about best practices that should be used for determining the kind of development that would suit this area. The PZC will be sent this report and Ashford residents can note their support for the "Report about Buildable Land in the IID zone" in the Comment section of the survey. The full version of the report, as well as other information about this important piece of land can be found on the website: <https://www.keepashfordrural.net/>

The 95.82 Acre Lot in the Interstate Interchange Development Zone: Site Development Constraints

Introduction to Parcel Prioritization Source Water Tool

With the advantage of sophisticated land use planning tools, we now can determine the land use characteristics of the 95.82-acre lot that represents the most significant component of the Interstate Interchange Development Zone located on the north side of I-84. The University of Connecticut Center for Land Use Education and Research (CLEAR) program has recently released a mapping tool known as the Parcel Prioritization for Source Waters. For the first time ever, municipalities and developers can evaluate the relative importance of any given parcel that falls within a public water supply watershed to determine its importance to the water quality of the affected drinking water resource.

Buildability Site Assessment

Using this mapping tool, the 95.82-acre parcel in North Ashford was evaluated to determine; 1) the amount of wetlands on site (8.9 acres), 2) the amount of riparian buffer acreage that should be protected (2.5 acres), 3) the amount of land with extremely steep slopes (41.1 acres) and 4) the amount of land with shallow soils to the water table (8.8 acres). All total these four factors represent 61.3 acres or 64% of the entire 95.82 parcel.

The mega-warehouse developer intended to level this 95.82-acre parcel without regard to 1) its environmental constraints or 2) to the impacts of the destruction of the core forest that exists at this site. Core forests (blocks of forests of greater than 500 acres) represent the most important forest resource in Connecticut and are given priority protective status in the state's 2020 Forest Action Plan. The Forest Action Plan indicates; "Connecticut will increase the amount of forest protected from development following priority criteria based on core forest areas, forest legacy potential, and vulnerability." ¹ According to that Plan, "Core Forest, especially large core forest, provide important benefits for wildlife habitat, forest connectivity, and forest resiliency among other benefits."²

With 64% of the 95.82-acre site not suitable for development due to the presence of wetlands, steep slopes, riparian buffer zones and shallow soil to groundwater there are only 34.5 acres without significant environmental constraints. Ashford's zoning regulations do not have buildable lot standards for the IID zone – which implies that these development constraints would be ignored without explicit buildable lot standards. Yet buildable lot standards exist in Ashford's residential zones. This regulatory inconsistency reflects an implied bias for development – without considering its cost to the environment in the IID zone. Yet the IID zone falls within one of the most pristine public water supply watersheds in Connecticut.

Assuming the site assessment tool developed by the UCONN CLEAR program is an accurate portrait of the land use constraints on the 95.82-acre parcel, it would be appropriate to reassess the development capacity of the land. However, before a detailed site assessment of the IID zone is completed, it is worthwhile to review current statewide zoning practice with respect to land use controls in those municipalities with the unique responsibility of protecting public water supply on privately owned land. To determine best practices, we have reviewed the 167 municipalities with zoning regulations and identified which have water quality protection standards relevant to the town of Ashford and adjoining municipalities that fall within the Mount Hope and Fenton River watersheds.

Land Use Controls Adopted in Municipalities with Privately Owned Public Water Supplies

Ashford's Planning and Zoning Commission has not explicitly adopted land use controls for the protection of the Fenton and Mount Hope watersheds. Both rivers supply the water to the Windham Water Works which serves the 18,669 residents of Willimantic. The Fenton River also serves as the water supply for the University of Connecticut. In contrast to Ashford, fifty-two municipalities with land falling within a water supply watershed have adopted land use controls to limit water pollution and provide effective countermeasures in the case of accidental releases of hazardous materials.³ More than 350,000 acres of water supply watershed land is privately owned in Connecticut – representing about 67% of the water supply watershed land in the state.⁴ The protection of water supply watersheds depends on municipal zoning regulations to establish appropriate watershed protections.

The land use controls that have been adopted within privately owned public water supply watersheds are relatively basic in scope focusing on permitted and prohibited land uses in water supply watersheds. Current zoning practice in Connecticut has benefited from the regulatory controls developed for aquifer protection areas. The basic water quality concerns pertinent to aquifers are substantially similar to those pertinent to water supply watersheds. However, while municipalities with aquifer protection areas have developed well formulated zoning requirements to protect groundwater resources, no such similar effort has been undertaken for lands falling within water supply watersheds feeding surface water reservoirs.⁵

Given the limited regulatory oversight of privately owned land in water supply watersheds by the Connecticut Department of Public Health, we can expect the water quality protection tools developed by UCONN CLEAR to immeasurably improve source water protection in Connecticut. Specifically, the UCONN CLEAR mapping tool places greater importance on reducing impervious cover and expanding the use of riparian buffer zones. Only ten of the fifty-two municipalities with land use controls governing privately owned land in public water supply watersheds require setbacks from wetlands, rivers or shorelines. The limited adoption of riparian setbacks is, in part, a reflection of limited training offered to planning and zoning commissions on the well documented value of riparian buffer zones in reducing surface water pollution. It is instructive to note that under Section 25-37c of the Connecticut General Statutes public water companies are required to establish stringent protections for water company owned land including land falling within 100 feet of all watercourses.⁶ In contrast, privately owned land within public water supply watersheds do not enjoy the same protections – unless a municipal zoning commission adopts comparable riparian corridor protections.⁷ We can expect to see greater consistency of approach as the CLEAR mapping tool gets greater use amongst municipalities seeking to protect their watersheds. Municipalities that have not taken any action on this score will benefit from reviewing the zoning tools currently in use. Ashford is one of sixty-one municipalities with privately owned public water supply land that could benefit by using UCONN CLEAR's site assessment tool.⁸

What is the Proper Size of a Building in the Interstate Interchange Development Zone:

Establishing the maximum size of a commercial or industrial building is never determined by a popularity contest or town-wide survey that asks residents how big a building is appropriate. Professional land use planners and those with expertise with land development constraints never ask that question. The real question is how much land remains available for development after deducting for 1) traditional lot constraints (such as setback standards, building and lot coverage standards) and 2) science based land use controls (such as impervious cover standards, riparian setbacks, buildable lot standards and soil based zoning) and 3) public water supply based protection standards (including low impact development, septic system setback standards and net zero stormwater runoff). Applying science-based standards to the 95.82-acre parcel, no more than 11 to 15% of the entire parcel should be covered in buildings, parking lots and other impervious surfaces. Extensive studies conducted by the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection and numerous other research organizations have determined impervious cover exceeding 11% is a threshold where surface water quality deteriorates.⁹ In addition, numerous studies by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency support the importance of a 150-foot riparian buffer zones in land areas falling within a public water supply watershed. The

maximum developable land area based on the 11% impervious cover standard results in 10.5 acres of land suitable for development (i.e., 95.82 X 11% = 10.54 acres). This acreage includes land set aside for buildings, parking areas, stone walls/retaining walls, accessory buildings, sidewalks, driveways, septic system leaching areas, wellhead protection areas, and compacted soils that function as impervious to stormwater infiltration.

In theory, assuming 65% of the impervious cover is associated with driveways, sidewalks, walls/retaining walls, septic system leaching fields, wellhead protection areas, fire protection storage tanks and parking areas, the 95.82-acre parcel could accommodate a 160,692 square foot building footprint. However, this analysis over-estimates the maximum building size because the actual buildable acreage within the 95.82-acre parcel is not concentrated in one place. This parcel has some of the steepest slopes of any location in Windham County since it is located within a few hundred feet of the highest peak in the county. The most realistic estimate of the building footprint for this parcel ranges from 50,000 to 100,000 square feet (or multiple smaller buildings that total this amount or less).¹⁰

Rather than arbitrarily establish a maximum building size for the IID zone the Ashford Planning and Zoning Commission should consider using traditional and science-based setback and lot coverage standards to achieve that objective. Since this zone falls entirely within one of the most pristine public water supply watersheds in the state of Connecticut, it behooves the commission to establish stringent impervious cover and buildable lot standards to ensure long-term protection of the Fenton River watershed for generations to come.

Summary

In summary, the question is not how big a building should be allowed in the IID zone. Except for Ashford's building size standards for the IID zone, Connecticut's municipalities do not stipulate the maximum building size allowed in any commercial or industrial zone.¹¹ There is a simple reason for this. Zoning can limit building size through a range of accepted regulatory tools. The most common tools for achieving this goal are by 1) limiting building height and lot coverage; 2) establishing lot line setbacks and buffer zones to protect abutting property owners from incompatible development, 3) limiting floor area ratio standards consistent with fire protection capabilities of the town and parking space constraints caused by increased employment levels associated with increased building square footage, 4) applying science-based performance standards aimed at protecting water quality – especially public drinking water quality, 5) eliminating or reducing off-site stormwater discharges and 6) enabling solar conscious land development practices that promote energy efficient patterns of development.

The Ashford Planning and Zoning Commission should consider using the site assessment tool developed by the UCONN CLEAR program as the first step in better understanding the land use constraints of the Interstate Interchange Development Zone. While this report investigated the largest parcel in the IID zone, the commission should consider evaluating the remaining parcels within this zone to make an overall assessment of the development potential of this zone.

¹ 2020 Connecticut Forest Action Plan, Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection Forestry Division. p. 9.

² Ibid, p. 108.

³ Research completed by Charles Vidich Associates, November 2023.

⁴ The Trust for Public Land, *Protecting Land to Safeguard Connecticut's Drinking Water*, 2003, p. 4.

⁵ Seventy eight municipalities have aquifer protection area regulations approved by the Connecticut Department of Public Health. There is no similar oversight function of water supply watersheds regulated by municipal planning and zoning commissions.

⁶ Connecticut General Statutes: Classification of Land Owned by or acquired from a Water Company, Chapter 474 Pollution, Section 25-37c(a).

⁷ For details on statewide municipal riparian corridor strategies see, *The Case for Riparian Corridor Protections: Zoning Strategies to reduce Pollution of Inland Waters and Resultant Hypoxia of Long Island Sound*, WestCOG,

Common Sense Car Care

By Rick Ostien

Last month we talked about getting ready for winter. One thing I forgot was the time change. Most of us go to work in the dark and come home in the dark. I have noticed recently that many vehicles have one headlight out or headlights that look like two dim candles. If you cannot see in bad weather or be seen by others then bad things will happen. I encourage you to have your headlights checked. Sometimes they need to be replaced or realigned. This can be very important in bad weather and may help you avoid trouble on the road or even an accident.

This month I would like to share something that affects every licensed driver in our state. At some point many of us will replace or buy a first vehicle. Many of these vehicles are used. The last few years more people are selling vehicles privately with many of them unfit for the road. I want to remind people that when you purchase a vehicle from a private owner it comes with no warranty. This vehicle could be unsafe for the road. Usually with no warranty or recourse to return it, the buyer loses their money and may be saddled with very costly repairs to make it safe for the road. The state of Connecticut, as of right now, does not perform a vehicle safety inspection when someone is registering it. This does not protect the licensed drivers of our state. Please, before you make a purchase from a private owner have the vehicle inspected by a licensed repair facility. This will help to head off both current and future problems. The unsafe vehicle you drive can cause as much hardship as a loaded gun. Be sure to have it inspected and be sure to maintain it.

Another issue lately is that driving habits have gone to the wayside. This week I saw a vehicle drive through a stopped school bus with red lights flashing when a child was crossing the road. It appears stop signs, traffic lights, and double lines to indicate no passing have become nothing but a decoration. It is time for these infractions to have consequences. Work zones seem to mean go faster. What has happened to the move over law on the roadways? Then there is the driver who is trying out for NASCAR, switching lanes with no turn signals, and weaving down the highway trying to get ahead of anyone and anything in their way. The world is in a big hurry and many drivers just do not think far enough ahead. Sometimes what people call an accident really is not one. I encourage everyone to think about what you are doing when you drive and please drive defensively.

The new year is coming soon. Be kind and courteous on the roads. Think of the many positives in your life. With that being said, we at Franc Motors, wish everyone a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

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August 10, 2021.

⁸ The Parcel Prioritization for Source Water Protection Mapping tool can be accessed to view the results for the 95.82 parcel at the following link: https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/36ca1e3c376444e6a60ad6899ec71da7/?data_id=dataSource_2-1851bd2862c-lay-er-93%3A36496

⁹ Arnold Jr. Chet, et.al, "Impervious Surface Coverage the Emergence of a Key Environmental Indicator, American Planning Association, 62, no. 2 (Spring 1996): 243-58

¹⁰ Ashford zoning regulations stipulate, under the Interstate Interchange Development Zone Article 4D, Section 4B Development standards, "The owner of each lot within the consolidated parcel shall give to the owner in each other lot in the consolidated parcel by deed, easement, or agreement filed in the office of the Town Clerk, the right of entrance, exit, passage, parking and loading." This regulation enables a developer to avoid the subdivision of land.

¹¹ Unpublished research prepared by Charles Vidich Associates, March 2023.

'Out of Bounds' and Unethical Behavior

By Bill Powers

Most of us have a pretty good understanding of the concept we call "out of bounds". It is a term we often connect with sports, when operating within the predetermined field of play. Being out of bounds can refer to something that is forbidden, off-limits, barred, illegal, prohibited, or banned. In a close game of football, when the wide receiver inadvertently steps out of bounds just short of the goal line as time has just expired, it can be a tragic event. The team has lost on the very last play. There are times in government when employees, or elected and appointed officials step out of bounds.

Designed to provide guidance for those serving in government about right and wrong behaviors, ethics codes are established, and rules of conduct are officially recognized. Some examples of ethical issues in government are: corruption, use of authority for private gain; the withholding of information from the public; the disclosure of confidential information; and, nepotism. Regardless of the level of government: federal, state or local, a code of ethics set in law is important so that the public's trust can be maintained. Mechanisms for enforcement will help to assure ethical conduct, transparency and accountability if government employees, and elected or appointed officials are found to be ethically out of bounds.

In my town the "CODE OF ETHICS" is in the form of an "ORDINANCE". It's "goal is to establish clear standards of ethical conduct for all those who serve the Town of Windham, whether in a paid or unpaid capacity, without discouraging participation in Town government by talented and committed individuals on whose service the town relies." The ordinance consists of the following sections: "A) Preamble; B) Standards of Conduct (including definitions); C) Organization and Administration; D) Procedure for Advisory Opinions; E) Whistle Blower Protection; F) Procedure for Complaints; and, G) Determinations (following the hearing)."

Our Ethics Commission believes that the education of the public as well as for town employees and officials about ethical behavior is crucial to its role. By Ordinance, there are five commissioners. At this time, we have an opening for someone who is interested in serving as an appointed volunteer member. If you are Windham resident, who is interested in and dedicated to assuring ethical conduct, transparency, and accountability, while helping to preserve the public trust in our local government, please contact the Windham Town Manager's office for an application. However, if you are a registered Democrat, you need NOT apply at this time. It's not that we dislike Democrats; the Code of Ethics specifies that "No more than three shall be registered in the same political party" and we already have three. You also may NOT be a town employee or serve concurrently on another town board.

Bill Powers is the chairman for the Town of Windham Ethics Commission.

Spreading Christmas Cheer for a Cause

Submitted by Annetta Miller

Storrs Congregational Church-United Church of Christ (UCC) will hold its annual Christmas Bazaar on Dec. 2 and 3 at 2 North Eagleville Road, Storrs-Mansfield. Shopping hours will run from 9 a.m. through 1 p.m. Saturday, and 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. Sunday. The public is invited.

Proceeds will support the Windham Area Interfaith Ministry (WAIM) Energy and Housing Assistance Fund. The fund helps hundreds of area families each year stay housed and keep the heat and lights on.

The Bazaar will feature a variety of items suitable for holiday gift giving. Handmade fair-trade gifts from SERRV International, a nonprofit that supports small-scale artisans and farmers from around the globe, will be featured, along with assorted tag sale items, fresh holiday greens, plants, crafts, jewelry, quilted and fabric items, greeting cards, baked goods, homemade soups, and more.

The event is in keeping with Storrs Congregational's mission as a Just Peace Church, which calls on it to affirm the right of people everywhere in the world to basic needs such as food, heat, and safe housing, said Diane Peterson Seaborn, the church's senior minister. "Our SCC congregation takes very seriously our mission of seeking justice and caring for all people," she said. "I want to invite folks to begin their holiday shopping at the SCC Christmas Bazaar, knowing that every dollar spent will give back to your neighbors in need. And thank you!"

Helping Residents Reduce Waste

Submitted by Virginia Walton,
Mansfield Recycling Coordinator

On November 13, 2023 the Mansfield Town Council approved three new services for residents, all intended to reduce waste, which is a priority in Mansfield. The first option rewards residents who generate low volumes of trash, and the other two deal with handling food waste and promoting composting.

Once-Per-Month Trash and Recycle Collection

The first new service is a once-per-month trash and recycle collection option. For residents who barely fill a 20-gallon trash container every week or use the Transfer Station infrequently for trash disposal, they can now opt to have their recyclables and trash emptied one time a month curbside. The cost is \$4.00 per month, just one quarter the cost of the weekly 20-gallon trash service.

Food waste accounts for 22% of waste deposited into landfills, according to State of Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP). To help Mansfield residents trim their trash, the Town is now also offering two new options for handling food scraps. Currently resident options for handling food scraps are backyard composting (the most environmentally sound option) or bringing them to the Transfer Station for composting in the leaf pile. Two more options have just been added - curbside food scrap collection and dehydrating food scraps at home with a FoodCycler.

Curbside Food Scrap Collection

Blue Earth Compost, a family-owned business based in Hartford, will be providing the curbside food scrap collection service. They have been connecting the loop between food waste and compost for a decade and have collected more than 35 million pounds from dozens of communities.

The program is an optional add-on to trash and recycling services and it will cost \$14.75 per month. The Town is offering the first month free to residents to encourage participation. In order to make this service viable, Blue Earth Compost needs at least 100 households to sign up before beginning collection.

Blue Earth will collect the food scraps and haul them to a composting site approved by the DEEP. For now, the material will be brought to Quantum Biopower in Southington, but more local options are being explored. Within 21 days, Quantum converts food scraps into compost, and contains the methane byproduct inside the facility into biogas that generates electricity for the Town of Southington.

FoodCycler Dehydrator

Another option for Mansfield residents for reducing food waste is to rent a FoodCycler, which dehydrates food scraps, including meat and most bones. Dehydrating converts scraps into an odorless, dry material that looks like peat moss that can then be sprinkled on lawns, gardens or added to a compost pile. Casella, based in Vermont, has teamed up with a Canadian company called Food Cycle Science to provide the FoodCycler to participating households. The cost is \$20 per month to rent the equipment, receive technical support and replacement charcoal filters.

Mansfield pays \$115 per ton to have municipal solid waste hauled to the Preston Incinerator. Pulling food waste out of the regular waste stream helps lessen the overall amount of waste that Mansfield throws away. Incinerating food creates greenhouse gasses, and burns off any valuable organic nutrients that are inside of food. Boosting access to composting is a major benefit of these new service options. Compost is a well-known soil type that improves overall soil quality, reduces the need for chemical fertilizers, helps to retain water in the soil, and reduces soil erosion.

"By choosing backyard composting, composting at the Transfer Station, using the FoodCycler material to add to soil or participating in curbside food scrap collection, the nutrient cycle is kept intact," states Mansfield Recycling Coordinator, Virginia Walton. "Mansfield's commitment to overall sustainability is a part of our culture. We hope that residents will take advantage of these new opportunities that help us connect to our earth."

Residents can sign up for these new services by going to mansfieldct.gov/setupservice or by calling 860-429-3333 or emailing Virginia Walton, Mansfield Recycling Coordinator, at waltonvd@mansfieldct.org.



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