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Catnaps, Landfills and Soul

By Bob Grindle

The barn is cold this early afternoon in mid-February...it's a damp and chilly sort of gloominess that can settle in when the lights are off, and the sky is gray. The daylight filtering through the windows of this earth-floored building seems tired and lacking in the energy that bright sunlight usually brings. Still, resting here on a couple of stacked hay bales watching the snow fall, charmingly framed by an open door that faces our warmly-lit house on this day before Valentine's Day, I feel a cozy, dream-like sense of comfortable satisfaction...almost as if the goats are back. Sitting here staring at the date 'November 1981' carved into the cement window ledge, I am transported back to that summer when we built this still unfinished building more than 40 years ago. What triggers our mind to replay these episodic memories with such clarity? ...a smell?... a sound?... a vision?... a pattern in, or atmosphere of a place?... Perhaps something less familiar; harder to quantify, an ether of the place?... the ancient civilizations might have offered such an explanation. Something so ethereal and yet so familiar that I wonder how far across a dream can we travel before the curtain rises and we tumble off the proscenium into a reality that challenges our sense that moments and places and things have soul. Many of the indigenous peoples that inhabited the western hemisphere in the millennia before they encountered Europeans had developed spiritual beliefs that viewed the Earth as the mother to all things, and since all creatures and plants depended upon Mother Earth for water, food, shelter and clothing, it followed that we are all bound together as

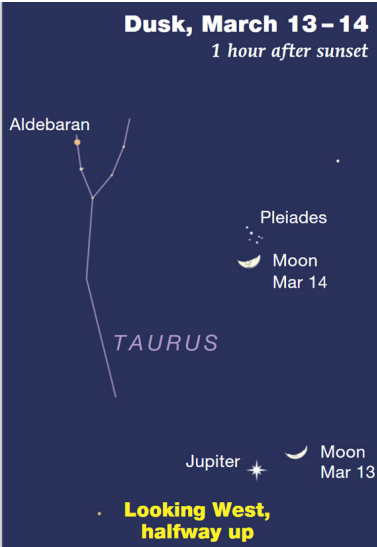


After 42 years our first large building project is still a work in progress. kin. History took another path though and civilization has drawn us away from our roots in the planet. We built this barn in 1981. Sitting here on the hay, my feet up on the old milking stand as the snow falls, I close my eyes, lay my head back against the stone wall and can see my wife Linda's concrete smudged cheeks, our 3 year old son struggling with stones bigger than his age, a couple of near-teen nephews who spent that summer of 1981 with us so my sister could deal with a crumbling marriage and, of course, the cute-as-a-button Nubian goat kid we had just bought locally that would set us on a journey of milking, morning and night, for more than 30 years. In less than the span of a catnap, I relive an entire summer, building a barn that we needed but could not afford...so many trips back and forth to the Hampton/Scotland dump, like some sort of reverse landfill, to scavenge virtually everything but the concrete...we made it affordable. Yes, this place has soul. As the Earth turns slowly eastward the afternoon cools, the pulse of the wind quickens and the snowfall slows. I open my eyes. The decades old images and sounds

of a temporal lobe in replay mode dissolve quickly into the damp, chill atmosphere of the afternoon and are quickly, safely shelved again in the vaulted recesses of my brain. Heading back to the house, I start composing this piece for the March issue of Neighbors knowing that the brief reverie of how the barn got built will stick with me long enough that I won't have to stop right away and write it down. Stopping to gather eggs at the chicken house, I turn to look back at the barn as a fleeting thought occurs about whether the swallows will return this year...last year's nearly unending rain seemed to reduce the success of their nesting...and I feel a certain excitement to think about the coming season. It will feel good to step into the warmth of the house. Yes, this moment has soul.

There has been so little sun these last six weeks that I am beginning to think of the night sky as something of a pen-pal. Even the dawn and dusk transitions have mostly been cloudy with mist, rain or snow present or threatening and this early evening is no exception...as I enter the house I kick the snow off my boots, turn to look to the east where Orion is rising, along with his hunting companions Canis Minor and Canis Major as they chase Taurus across a cloud shrouded cosmic stage. Oh well, there are clear skies to come and perhaps April's eclipse will dazzle us all. For the time being, though, March is on it's way with its own streaming service at no charge...Venus has vacated our morning skies, to be replaced by Saturn and Mars, Jupiter will remain in the night sky until Venus reappears late in April as the evening star outshining Jupiter.

If evening skies are agreeable on March 13th, one of the month's more dramatic sights will be a very brilliant Jupiter and a waxing crescent Moon hanging high over the western horizon about an hour after sunset...that would be nearly 8 pm because, yes, daylight savings time begins Sunday morning, March 10th! And just a week later Spring arrives on the 19th of March. No matter the uncertain vagaries of Spring in southern New England, you can feel our delightful landscape peeling up and out of its layers of winter-time slumber and calling out to each of us to shake off the dust of last year's not quite completed projects (perhaps finish shingling the barn) and find the energy and joy that comes with the changing of the season. Be well and enjoy the coming change of the Spring equinox, and if there's a place where you enjoy peeling back the layers that modern life often weighs us all down with, spend a little extra time there.



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Tulips in the Elizabeth Park greenhouse in Hartford.
Karen King photo.

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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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Viral Hope

By Loretta Wrobel

Daily, all of us are exposed to violence, senseless acts and trauma. When we attempt to inform ourselves, we continue to ingest an abundance of negativity, harmful acts and terror. As a person having lived nearly eight decades, I sometimes lose all hope and can easily move towards despair and devastating sadness for our present world, as I witness constant cruelty and prejudice.



Somehow, the coruscating book, *Viral Justice: How We Grow the World We Want* by Ruha Benjamin, fell into my hands. And I was infused with hope and exhilaration. Ruha’s words spoke to me instantaneously, as she shared her personal experiences and discussed how minor shifts in choices can have a gigantic influence on our lives. There are extreme issues existing in our world and it hardly seems that what each one of us does is going to matter. Ms. Benjamin demonstrates with numerous examples from her own life and the lives of her family and friends that small changes work!

The author focuses on mutual aid and collective healing. There is an energy that builds when people come together and work toward a more creative and practical solution. If you are on the receiving end of an injustice, you know what you need to transform your life. Often the individuals who are designated as the problem solvers, by our patriarchal, racist society don’t have any experience with the problem and may not be in a good position to devise a solution.

Viral Justice means we acknowledge the truth and work towards repairing the past and ongoing issues. One effective tactic is to support grassroots groups, because they have intimate knowledge and a strong passion to transfigure our society to a just and fairer system. I love the simple demand clearly announced by Ms. Benjamin, “Nothing about us without us!”

Ruha talked about the lack of trust in the medical establishment by people of color, mainly due to the history of Black people being unknowingly used as research subjects. She reported on the success of advocates going door-to-door to educate minority communities about healthcare, and to teach people to understand healthcare as a right. Quality and consistent healthcare is essential for everyone. This truth is empowering to many Black and brown people.

Ms. Benjamin discussed LeeAnne Walters, an environmental activist from Flint, Michigan. This committed and fierce woman exposed the issues of lead in the water in her town of Flint. She led a citizen’s action group that demanded the Flint water be tested, and exposed the toxins residing in the public water system. She is a self-taught problem solver. She exposed the fact that 1 in 6 homes in Flint had dangerous lead levels in their water that exceeded EPA safety standards. She did not waver in thinking that the issue was too big to tackle, and her desire to protect her family and her community energized her. A tremendous role model for all of us in today’s world.

The author offers many suggestions for how to begin to solve many of the seemingly unsolvable issues front and center in our racist society. She encourages residents to organize media protests over unjust and discrimi-

natory practices. She suggests using the power of barbers and hair salons to educate their communities regarding healthcare issues and delivery of services. Community-driven health institutions that include midwives, doulas, health justice advocates, and mental health advocates could help repair our broken healthcare system. She challenges white people who hold power to use their privilege to push for systemic change, particularly in areas of medicine, education and government. She questions, “What are scientific and medical institutions doing to demonstrate their trustworthiness to Black communities?” What is possible when we work together? For example, what if we had a more expansive approach to public health rather than a rigid system driven by profits? If medical schools addressed racial justice in their curriculum, how would that change our healthcare system for everyone?

Ruha talked of the value and benefits of a Universal Basic Income. A four-day work week with paid vacation, guaranteed sick leave, and disability accommodation are basic to the move from an unjust and unhealthy society to a system that promotes wellbeing for all its citizens. Her assessment is that private accumulation and institutionalized greed are the culprits. In 2020 around 40 million people lost their jobs, while the billionaires experienced a ten percent increase in their wealth! That statistic really exposes who we are as a culture, and what is important in our flawed worldview.

The disempowerment of workers was another topic that Ms. Benjamin focused on in her book. The phenomenon of the gig worker, where the advantages are setting your own hours, working parttime, and being your own boss, are truly outweighed by the disadvantages of receiving no benefits. This is a colossal obstacle, because if you don’t work, you don’t get paid. If you are sick, you can’t work so you don’t get paid. You lack medical insurance. You don’t have any guaranteed income. If you have more expenses, you must seek out more work. Plus, there are no pension plans or any guarantee that you will have work. In today’s world, benefits are vital, especially if you have a family. If you are an Uber driver, deliver food, work in the food service industry or other low paying jobs, you can’t afford to only work parttime. In academia the university makes out, as the adjunct faculty earn no benefits and usually get paid a minimal amount per course. There is no guarantee the course will be continued and you will continue to have an income. In the university system there are 1.8 million faculty that have no benefits, and these individuals are responsible for the bulk of the teaching and functioning of the system with only a pittance of financial reimbursement for their efforts, and no power within the system. A sad commentary on the corporatization of academia.

I recommend taking the time to peek at *Viral Justice* to inspire you to use whatever skill set you possess to make a tiny but important change within our dysfunctional institutions and systems. It is best to start where you are, with the issues that impacts you. By reimagining work and redistributing wealth, we can turn toward democratization of our economy and society. It involves shifting what we value, and placing caring over cutthroat competition. We need to be educated consumers who do not fall for the manufactured scarcity. We can then build on a society that welcomes all to use their creativity and skills to find meaningful work that supports themselves and their families without exhausting their bodies. By working together, we can create astounding solutions to today’s overwhelming, burning matters and questions. Be revitalized by perusing *Viral Justice*, and become immersed with Viral Hope!!

Viral Justice: How We Grow the World We Want author Ruha Benjamin. Contributed photo.



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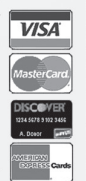
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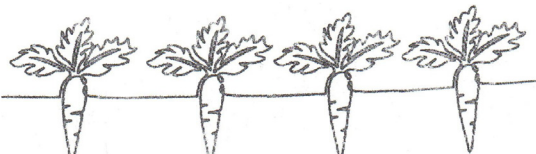


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From the Ground Up - Buying Local in Connecticut



*In the spring,
at the end of the day,
you should smell like dirt.*
-Margaret Atwood

By C. Dennis Pierce

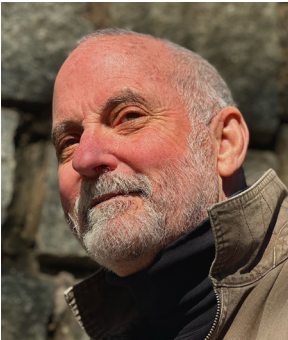
Spring is four weeks away! Many of the local maple trees already are feeding intravenously, through a zig zag network of tubing, large white containers which hold the sap that will later become maple syrup. Yes, a true sign of spring. As I write this column once again, I feel the frustration of being unprepared for the upcoming gardening season. This might be called the “spring shoulder season” but as I look out my window I think “patches” is a better name. It is that time of the year when the ground is warming up and the last snow begins to fade away and plants are waking up from the dormancy of winter. On a positive note, it is the best time of year as the air mixes with the warming soil, that earthy smell that reminds you don’t give up warmer weather will soon be here keeping you excited about what’s to come. Many here in the Northeast may refer to this as mud season. The combination of rapidly melting snow, thawing ground, and even rain causes only one thing...mud, and lots of it. Here in Mansfield, I recently experienced several back roads were closed or limited to travel due to the impassible muddy roads.

The “spring shoulder season” is encouraging for hobby gardeners like myself but for the local farmer it is a time where they are working on the first steps of garden production. It is a crucial time for indoor planting. Hundreds if not thousands of seeds will have their first opportunity to snuggle in the enriched starter soil. Farmers begin the process of coddling, transplanting and carefully waiting for the right time when the soil is warm enough to be placed in the ground. Some planting methods bypass this step and seeds are placed directly in the garden beds. The early spring starter method jump starts the little seedlings so they can beat the growing season and show up at the local markets earlier. So why does our local farmers start early? For one, they grow produce that goes directly to the market. The key for market farmers is to produce a product for their customers that they like and cannot find elsewhere. Sometimes this means growing unique varieties not usually found on traditional market shelves. Sometimes it simply means growing a familiar crop at a time when it is difficult to find fresh elsewhere. If you have not developed the habit of buying locally, perhaps this is the year to start. With inflation impacting the prices of items in traditional stores and you have always thought framer’s markets are too expensive now maybe the time to rethink your choices.

If you read my column on a regular basis, you will recall that my column was absent from the last issue. Some thought I have given up on advocating for Connecticut Grown and the local farmer or sharing recipes that may incorporate local offerings. While a break in the process of crafting this column for the past ten years has given me the opportunities to reflect on what to focus on in the future. Despite the fact that it is a tremendous struggle for the younger generation to buy or rent farmland, establish a footing in the farming community (which by the way receives them with open arms) and sometimes fight the bureaucracy of local towns, young farmers are now beginning to sprout up like mushrooms after a rainstorm.

Interested in meeting those who ventured into local farming as a career? On Saturday, March 9th, plan on visiting the upcoming “Know Your Farmer Fair” which is held annually in Willimantic. This year it is at the relatively new Community Center that is across for the Willimantic Food Co-op. “The Know Your Farmer Fair” is an opportunity for residents, chefs, food service directors and restaurant owners to meet local farmers and to look ahead to the upcoming growing season. Residents can shop at the farmer’s market as well as discuss local Community Supported Agriculture Programs (CSA), farm stands and pick-your-own opportunities. What to learn more? Check it out at <https://www.growncnected.org/knowyourfarmer-fair>

Typically, most individuals who are in search of local produce or products fulfill their quest at local farmer’s markets. As a localvore, (one who purchases local farm produce and products) are you aware the Willimantic Co-op offers produce that is in season and products that are Connecticut Grown? I recently asked Patty Smith, the new General Manager of the Willimantic Co-op, if she could share with me a list of those that provide product to the



At the Coventry indoor farmers market. In photo above from 18th Century Purity Farm, Paul Desrochers and wife JoAnne. At above right are Christine & John Whitney from Phoenix Farm.
Dennis Pierce photos.

Co-op and also, I asked her for a clarification on membership requirements to purchase from the Co-op. Patty sent me the following which I thought it would be great to share with our readers. “ The Co-op is not currently charging the 10% surcharge to non-members. We stopped doing that when the pandemic hit and haven’t reinstated it. We believe it is an outdated practice that no longer serves the Co-op, its members, or the community, especially as we attempt to become more accessible and welcoming to all members of our community who are interested in what the Co-op has to offer, even if they are not ready to become members yet. All shoppers are prospective members, and we believe the surcharge is an obstacle to our ability to serve shoppers who either can’t afford the price of a member share (\$120 at \$20/year for 6 years) or who simply don’t yet see the value in joining. However, members still receive special benefits for joining, such as a 15% discount on most case pre orders, a 10% coupon upon joining, and other member-only specials and coupons throughout the year, in addition to the benefit of participating in collective and democratic ownership of a community grocery store. We’re currently running a member survey on the topic, to gauge the level of member support in permanently eliminating the non-member surcharge.”

Patty also shared an extensive list of those farms and individuals who already provide product to the Co-op. I have shortened this list since I wanted to focus on local Connecticut products and Connecticut Grown. The original list contained over 135 vendors. Due to a lack of space for my column I have chosen local farms from the surrounding communities as an example: A&Z Apiaries / Honey, Alice Rubin / farmer / plants, Still River Farm / eggs, grains and flour, Apis Verde / produce, Baldwin Brook farm / dairy products, Bats of Bedlam/ maple syrup, Berry Bird Farmstead / eggs, Bliss Farm / plants and flowers, Bluebird Hill Farm / produce, BOTL Farm / eggs and meat, Bright Acres farm / produce, Brown Farm / flowers, Bruce the Goose / Eggs, Buddha’s Bees / honey, Cambera Farm / baked goods, Cato Farm / cheese, Cloverleigh Farm / produce, Cobblestone Farm / produce, KDCrop Farm/ eggs, jams and jellies, Kim Bowers / eggs and maple syrup, Kindred Crossings / meat, Lara Skirvan / produce, Maggie’s Farm / produce, Mary Hawley / eggs, Mathew Olkin / produce, Matt Pulk / produce, Melinda Fields / eggs and produce, Monument Hill Farm / produce, Mountain Dairy / dairy products, Proctor Hill Farm / meat, Rachael Landry / flowers, Raptor Ridge Farm / eggs, Shooks Apiaries / honey, Shundahai Farm / produce, Swift Acre Farm / produce, The Clucking Chicken Farm / eggs, The Loved Hen Farm / eggs, Tiny Acre Farm / produce, Tobacco Farm / produce, Waddicor’s Winterplace / cheese, Wayne Sweet / eggs, Willow Valley farm / produce, and Winterplace Farm Creamery / cheese.

If you have a farm and are interested in selling to the Willimantic Co-op Patty suggested you can use the Contact Us form on the Co-op’s website or if it is produce their local produce buyer Mark at produce@willimantic-food.coop.

Egg Salad, Yup, But Not Your Mom’s Filling for four sandwiches

- Ingredients:
- 4 large eggs, preferably local.
 - 5 tablespoons of mayonnaise
 - 1 cup of finely chopped celery (1 stalk)
 - ¼ cup of minced parsley
 - 1 scallion, minced (you can substitute with a ½ of a small onion)
 - 1 granny smith apple, peeled, core removed, and apple grated into salad.
 - 1 tablespoon of minced dill weed
 - Salt and pepper to taste

- Directions:
- Cover eggs with lightly salted water in a pot
 - Bring to a boil. Boil 12 minutes
 - Drain hot water and immediately submerge in cold water.
 - Let water run over eggs until eggs are cooled.
 - Peel eggs.
 - If you are peeling fresh local eggs don’t be surprised if they are a pain to peel.
 - Chop eggs, add mayonnaise, chopped vegetables / apple
 - Season with salt and pepper
 - Cover mixture and place in refrigerator for one hour.
 - Serve on a whole wheat bread or bagel with lettuce and tomato.

Eggs are the sign of spring. The local hens have begun laying and we will begin to see a lot of signs pop up on the highways and byways offering local eggs for sale. Did you know that egg salad sandwiches is a favorite in Singapore? This egg salad sandwich is actually a Japanese favorite called Tamago Sando. It is tucked between two slices of sweet milk bread, and it is prepared with kewpie mayonnaise.

Starting with this column I am planning to incorporate some tips I have picked up along the way from farmers, markets, and local gardening associations. As birds are making their way back to the area, welcome them with some nesting materials. Do you have one of those suet holders laying around? Leave it by your clothes dryer and every time you take out the fluff from your filter add it to the suet holder. When full hang it by your bird feeder. Birds will think they died and went to heaven. Also, my experience last year, while taking the UConn Master Gardener program (which I highly recommend) is that when gardening do not state that your growing matter is dirt. Instead call it soil. Dirt is what you track into the house. Another tip is when going to purchase soil to fill your raised beds do not fall for the expensive marketing of raised bed soil. Instead purchase several bags of a lesser priced substrate and purchase a bag of compost and a bag of peat moss and make your own mixture. You may also want to add vermiculite for water retention. Countless recipes can be found online. Lastly, as it will soon be early spring, if you have not done this recently have your soil tested. Think about it. How can you invest in expensive seeds or pre grown plants if you do not know the composition and attributes of the soil you are planning to grow in. For a reasonable price you can send it or drop it off to the University. A great article and contact information can be found here: <https://homegarden.cahnr.uconn.edu/factsheets/soil-testing/>

If you find that you enjoy reading this column every month or if you have some gardening hacks you would like to share with others? Please drop me a line and let me know at Codfish53@Yahoo.com. I am grateful to those who let me know that they missed my column when it was absent in the last issue. 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!

First It Was the Loss of Intensive Care - Then Inpatient Maternity Services - What’s Next?

Never be afraid to raise your voice for honesty and truth and compassion against injustice and lying and greed. If people all over the world...would do this, it would change the Earth.
-William Faulkner

By Bill Powers

Local officials in our area intensely voiced their concerns against the injustice, lack of transparency and absence of community involvement for Hartford Health Care’s (HHC) decisions for closing the ICU and inpatient maternity unit at Windham hospital. HHC displayed a lack of compassion for moms and their newborns and their families, and demonstrated a callousness that reflects both arrogance and a directed effort to exploit those least able to defend themselves. HHC’s apparent greed and lack of concern, veiled by claims of efficiency, is at the public’s expense and reeks of hypocrisy with respect to HHC’s own mission and statement of values.

OUR LOCAL LEADERS RAISED THEIR VOICES

A few years ago, Ashford’s current First Select-woman Cathryn Silver-Smith, at a regional meeting of elected officials, told our Governor that the termination of inpatient maternity services at Windham Community Memorial Hospital (WCMH) gave her concerns that “women were now placed in a position of having to deliver their babies on the way to the hospital; God forbid there being complications.” Additionally, she said: “At the same meeting Lisa Thomas, Chairwoman of the Coventry Town Council spoke to the **Governor** to express concerns about the termination of inpatient maternity services.” Later in August of 2021, the Ashford Democratic Town Committee issued a press release – “REOPEN WINDHAM HOSPITAL MATERNITY UNIT NOW!”

Lisa Thomas, in addition to many others, has been and remains very vocal and active not only about the local “maternity dessert” and the termination of hospital inpatient labor and delivery services at Windham Hospital/HHC but also northeastern Connecticut. She told me: “There was a lengthy Certificate of Need (CON) hearing for which the Coventry Town Council’s Resolution was submitted and at which many testified, there has been a plethora of media coverage, and there have been rallies. The loss of critical care health services in northeastern CT is more than just labor and delivery. I currently serve on Comptroller Scanlon’s healthcare task force – specifically the Rural Health subcommittee co-chaired by Kyle Kramer, and the Women’s Health subcommittee. Additionally, I have spoken with both the **Governor and Lt. Governor** at length about the loss of critical care in rural Connecticut.”

There can be no doubt that the November 1, 2021, “resolution” adopted by the Coventry Town Council described by Lisa Thomas was both a significant and powerful statement “Concerning Termination of Services at Windham Community Memorial Hospital.” The Resolution stated: “The Coventry Town Council demands that Windham Hospital restore Intensive Care and maternity services of Labor and Delivery to its original levels, and develop integrated services **with a community needs assessment informed by meaningful and diverse community input.**” I am finding that Its contents not only reflect the concerns, needs, issues and attitudes of Coventry’s local elected officials but also of the vast majority of us residing in northeastern Connecticut.

Previously, more than a year earlier (October 6, 2020), the Windham Town Council issued Resolution No. 2803 in which the Council produced a persuasive and articulately written document that “demanded Windham Hospital restore all core services, especially maternity services of Labor and Delivery to its original levels, **and develop integrated services with a community needs assessment informed by meaningful and diverse community input.**”

In the Town of Mansfield on April 26, 2021, the Town Council “authorized the Mansfield Human Rights Commission to send a letter to Hartford Healthcare’s Jeffrey Flaks, HHC president and CEO, addressing the human rights concerns regarding the closure of the Windham Hospital Maternity Ward.” The letter dated April 2, 2021, included the following: “The United States ranks last for maternity mortality among high-resource countries (NICHD); In addition to the already high rate of maternal/child mortality and morbidity in the United States, childbearing women of color suffer disproportionately high rates of pregnancy-related mortality and morbidity. Non-Hispanic white women experience 13 pregnancy-related deaths per 100,000 births compared to 42.8 deaths per 100,000 for Black women (Saluja & Bryant). Racial

and ethnic disparities for mothers and newborns have persisted over time (CDC); The decision to close Windham Hospital’s Labor and Delivery services was short-sided and has far-reaching implications for the community; and, **we encourage you to convene a committee with the focus of addressing this issue. The committee should include healthcare providers, community leaders, and community members.**” The Mansfield Town Clerk’s Office has no record of a reply from Mr. Flaks nor do current or previous commission members have any recollection of a response. I have also asked a HHC Eastern Region Board member about whether such a group had been convened and was directed to Donna Handley, HHC Eastern Region President for the details. My requests for a conversation with Handley remain unanswered.

CURIOSLY BOTH THE STATE AND HHC/WINDHAM HOSPITAL WON’T PROVIDE FACTS WHEN ASKED

I have made many attempts to have conversations with officials, both employees and board members, at HHC to get their side of the story and have met with little success. Employees and several board members either haven’t responded or told me they have been instructed to direct all questions on the matter to their media relations and content specialists. (One board member, who years ago had been one of my professors, did talk with me and advised me to speak with Donna Handley, (Senior Vice President at HHC & East Region President) for “specific facts” for my story. Believe me when I say, I would love “specific facts” in order to write a fair and balanced story. I have been directed to three HHC media personalities and they simply referred me to press releases and ignored my questions about who made the decisions, when, how and why. HHC is very good at “**circling the wagons**”; I guess in order **to protect the Hartford Health Care brand**. So much for transparency, honesty and truth!

LOCAL OFFICIALS SPOKE OUT LOUDLY FOR OUR HEALTH INTERESTS; STATE OFFICIALS DIDN’T HEAR?

There can be no doubt that elected and appointed local town officials acted appropriately when it came to trying to protect the health interests of the people they serve. Unfortunately, it is obvious that our elected state officials have been unable to effectively protect our moms and newborns. I’ve spoken with six of them and collectively they have numerous explanations for how and why WCMH/HHC got away with what they have done to our neighbors? Finally, how was one woman in the Office of Health Strategies (OHS) permitted to make the “final decision” on December 1st of last year, three-and-a-half years after the maternity unit was closed. Deidre Gifford is an official who is appointed by and reports directly to the Governor. The interesting explanations from our area state representatives and state senator about what happened at WCMH will have to wait for another episode of this story. It appears that in effect it amounts to our state government’s protection for HHC’s virtual monopoly through their cadre of lawyers buttressed by the powerful Connecticut Hospital Association lobby, thus enabling HHC to do pretty much whatever they like, without particular regard for transparency or fairness for the needs of certain communities they abandon. Community hospitals serve a critical role in providing services. The people they serve deserve government protections from exploitation by larger corporate partners, who can simply skim off the cream and redistribute services in arbitrary ways that may negatively impact the patients they serve. It is in the public interest for our state representatives to protect us from such abuses through public policy initiatives. Our elected state officials from both parties, the Governor, and executive branch agencies need to effectively confront the health care monopolies in our state and make them accountable. You could call this - government working for the people as opposed to working for corporations. Protecting our local basic health care services must be a priority. Assuring transparency, community input, and truth from large health care corporations should be goals, if not, then there is no telling **What’s Next?**

This episode follows the first episode that appeared in the January/February 2024 issue of *Neighbors* and was titled “Local Moms and Newborns Abandoned.”

Bill Powers is a former teacher, counselor and health care administrator.

No Axe to Grind - Simply in Pursuit of the Facts

“Everyman has a right to his own opinion, but no man has a right to be wrong in his facts.”
-Bernard Baruch

By Bill Powers

Do I have an “axe to grind” with Hartford Heath Care? Hell No! On the contrary, Hartford Hospital is where I took my first breath. Fortunately for me, my family lived only a few blocks from the hospital. In the first month of infancy, I developed pneumonia, and during a heavy snowstorm, my father ran through the streets with me in his arms to the hospital. They saved my life!

Twenty-five years later, as a young registered respiratory therapist, it was tremendously exciting to return to the hospital to develop a new program at their School of Allied Health to educate respiratory therapists and technicians. Later, I was promoted to technical director of a newly organized Respiratory Care Department. Today I am honored that that my photo with my medical director, Donald R. Morrison, hangs in the Lobby of Hartford Hospital in the History of Hartford Hospital Photographic Gallery.

During those years I was able to take advantage of the hospital’s nationally recognized employee development program that included management skills training and a generous tuition reimbursement benefit. That benefit allowed me to complete my bachelor’s and two master’s degrees. The Master’s in Health Care Management from Hartford Graduate Center/R.P.I. qualified me for the Operating Room Manager’s position at the hospital and eventually for two hospital administration jobs at other medical centers. The positions at Hartford Hospital gave me the opportunity to actively participate in the evolution of a growing profession by serving at state and national elected and appointed leadership roles. I was able to write and see my articles published in allied health and medical journals as well as presenting our work at national meetings. For me Hartford Hospital was a “land of opportunity and personal growth”

After three decades, it was time for me to change my career path. Institutions that were to become integral parts of what is now Hartford Health Care (HHC) have significantly and thankfully contributed to that goal. As part of my master’s degree in clinical/community psychology, Natchaug Hospital in Mansfield welcomed me for internships in psychology and addictive behaviors. The clinicians were generous with their time, demonstrating and explaining that allowed me to refine assessment techniques, interventions and therapeutic techniques.

Windham Community Memorial Hospital (WCMH) granted me privileges to work in their Emergency Department (E.D.) and to see inpatients as a Licensed Professional Counselor while a provider with United Services. I was able to work with an incredibly talented and compassionate group of E.D. doctors, community psychiatrists, nurses and other support staff, while providing crisis intervention, emergency behavioral assessments and placements. I witnessed their dedication and teamwork and loved being part of their team.

The people who worked at Hartford Hospital, Natchaug Hospital and the WCMH’s E.D. when I was there contributed greatly to my development as a clinician, as a professional, and as a person, and I am deeply indebted to them. For them it was so much more than a job. It was a passion to help humankind.

I hope that you have read my other article in this issue of *Neighbors* titled “First It Was the Loss of Intensive Care Then Inpatient Maternity Services – What’s Next?” Perhaps now you will understand why I have “no axe to grind” but currently have “a bone to pick” with HHC/ WCMH. I have gathered what appear to be numerous “facts”, that are not just opinions, from passionate opponents of the termination of critical services at WCMH. In order to write a story that is fair, balanced and factual, I need “facts” from HHC and WCMH as they see them, and they are not willing to have a conversation about that. It is unfortunate and disheartening. We deserve the facts. We deserve transparency and the truth about our health care services and who, when, where and how decisions about our health care are being made.

Bill Powers is a former, respiratory therapist, teacher, counselor and health care administrator.

the Neighbors paper

Locally Written

Locally Wread

Owe Taxes? Do This Before You File and Save

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



It’s that time of year again - tax season. For many Americans, doing their taxes often means owing money to the IRS. If you find yourself in this situation, you may be scrambling to figure out how to pay your tax bill before the filing deadline on April 15th. But before you whip out your checkbook, there is one smart financial move you should consider first: making a qualified retirement plan contribution.

As a financial advisor, I always recommend maximizing your retirement contributions, if possible. But this strategy is especially prudent if you owe taxes.

What Are Qualified Retirement Plan Contributions?

It’s a contribution to certain tax-advantaged accounts like 401(k)s, 403(b)s, and Traditional IRAs. The key benefit is that contributions are made pre-tax, which reduces your taxable income for the year, or in the case of a Traditional IRA, potentially receiving a tax deduction. For example, if you make a \$5,000 Traditional IRA contribution, your taxable income may be lowered by \$5,000. At a 24% tax rate, that saves you \$1,200 in taxes owed (\$5,000 x 24%).

This strategy, takes advantage of pre-tax contributions to reduce your tax bill. The money gets redirected into your retirement savings, allowing you to get a jump-start on funding your nest egg while also decreasing taxes due. It’s a win-win.

Who Benefits Most From This Retirement Contribution Strategy?

People who expect to owe taxes due to extra income or underpaying estimated quarterly taxes are prime candidates. Self-employed individuals and small business owners also tend to have fluctuating incomes year-to-year, so they frequently utilize these strategies.

Important Tips for Making Pre-Tax Retirement Contributions

-Make sure you’re eligible - you must have enough earned income to contribute to an IRA or have access to an employer retirement plan like a 401(k) to make pre-tax contributions.

-Mind the deadlines - IRA contributions can typically be made up until the tax filing deadline in April, while 401(k) contributions must be done by December 31st.

- Don’t overdo it - contribute as much as you can but be aware of the annual limits, as excess contributions can incur penalties.
- Consider other retirement accounts - Health Savings Accounts (HSAs) and SEP IRAs allow larger pre-tax contributions than traditional IRAs.

The Key Takeaway

Owing taxes is never fun. But strategic retirement planning can make April 15th a little less scary. Consult with a financial advisor or tax professional to run the numbers and see if maximizing your qualified plan contributions makes sense as part of your overall tax planning approach. With the right moves, you can take the sting out of tax season this year.

You can get started by using the resources, tips, and tools in our online Tax Resource Center at bit.ly/WHZ-TaxCenter.

Use the tax calculator there to come up with an estimate of what you’re likely to owe in taxes this year, and then adjust the figures to see what would happen if you contributed more to your retirement instead. There are a wealth of other resources in the Tax Center to help you as well.

Our team of advisors at Weiss, Hale & Zahan-sky Strategic Wealth Advisors is also always available to help you develop a customized strategy to maximize your retirement contributions, reduce your tax bill, and help you reach your big financial goals, through our Plan Well, Invest Well, Live Well™ process. Schedule a complimentary consultation at www.whzwealth.com or call us at (860) 928-2341.

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Letters and Emails

I miss Dennis Pierce’s monthly column, “Buying Local in CT.” It is the first article I read when I get a new Neighbors newspaper. So nice to hear about local farmers and I love that he includes a recipe.

I totally understand the need for relaxation and redirection. Thank you to Dennis for years of reading pleasure.

Peas be with YOU, Dennis, as you rest and then pursue whatever life offers you. Thank you also to Tom King for publishing this enjoyable newspaper.

Submitted by Anne McAw-ley-LeDuc

Ed. note: You'll be happy to see Dennis is back with this issue Anne. He needed a couple months off. Thank you for your kind words. T.K.

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Know Your Farmer Fair Back in Willimantic

Submitted by Becca Toms

The sun isn’t the only thing waking up from its winter slumber this March! In Willimantic over the last 8 years, a local favorite event, Know Your Farmer Fair, returns to Williman-tic on March 9thth from 11am-2pm at the Windham Community Center: 1 Jillson Sq. Each year, before the full spring frenzy whisks away our local farmers to the tasks of fields and crops, a group of farmers set up tables in the community center and get ready to say hello.

The 9th Annual Know Your Farmer Fair is meant to do just that-help you know your farmer. Many farmers bring something to sell (whether it be jarred items, frozen meat, cold weather crops, or CSA subscriptions to purchase), but the offerings are slimmed down and the moment relaxed. This is an opportunity to walk table by table and say hello to a person that has invested their time and energy into producing food for you and your family. This event is a unique opportunity for the community to meet and build relationships with the farmers behind the local flavors of Eastern CT.

With close to 30 farms already signed up (and more joining!) this year’s event will provide lots for folks to engage with- both adults

and kids alike. Beyond chatting with your favorite farmers, the Know Your Farmer Fair lets you peek into upcoming CSAs (or Community Supported Agriculture shares): learn about share options, add-ons like eggs or flowers, and farm-specific practices. Even garden gurus can score hidden treasures like local honey, maple syrup, teas, and soaps! And for the food-conscious, farmers happily answer questions about their methods, whether you seek organic produce, GMO-free options, or soy-free meat. Dive into local flavors and farming philosophies, all in one delightful day! The event will also feature food trucks, activities for children and a seed swap.

This fair is a smorgasbord of fun for the whole family and something that will make you linger as you explore the farms that make this region, the Quiet Corner, so unique and a reflection of the agricultural history and heritage of our state.

To learn more about this event and farms that will be involved, visit www.grownconNECTed.org/knowyourfarmerfair for more information, or visit the Know Your Farmer Fair Facebook page.

Know Your Farmer Fair is a project of Windham Community Food Network and is put on with the assistance of multiple other community organizations and businesses.

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Finding Home: The Long Journey to Freedom

By Donna Dufresne

In New Bern, North Carolina, a young Black man intercepted an assault upon his wife. It is unknown whether he fought the assailant or wounded him, but the mere fact that he stood up to a white man in the Jim Crow South meant that he would have to flee for his life.



It was 1889, twenty-five years after the Civil War. The Fourteenth Amendment, which awarded the newly freed slaves their civil liberties, had been disregarded. The former Confederacy had reconstructed its history and replaced truth with alternative facts. The new narrative glossed over slavery and accentuated states’ rights as the cause of the Civil War, a lingering mythology which made its way into Northern textbooks and the soul of America in the twentieth century. Much of the South had slithered back to the white supremacist structures of the antebellum era. Curfews, the “black codes,” and vigilantism enforced by the KKK’s “night patrols” instilled a state of terror in the Black population. In a few short years, the Wilmington massacre would destroy an affluent Black neighborhood in a shameless act of white terrorism. A wave of Confederate statues and the Confederate flag would serve as reminders that Jim Crow was now in charge.

The *Our American History* textbooks, written in Texas in the 1960s and ’70s, casually mentioned the Great Migration with the implication that Black families moved north for better jobs. The books didn’t go into detail about the decades of white terrorism in what can only be described as an apartheid system. They didn’t mention systemic racism, lynchings, or segregation. We only found out about these things when the kettle boiled over in the 1960s and these topics reached our living rooms on the evening news. We certainly weren’t told that the Great Migration was made up of refugees and asylum seekers fleeing a terrorist state.

The firehose exodus of Blacks fleeing the South began as a trickle decades before the Great Migration. As early the 1870s, Blacks from North Carolina, Virginia, and Washington, D.C., began to appear on the Pomfret census as farm laborers, servants, and workers at the Ben Grosvenor Inn. Who knows how they made their way to Pomfret and why they left the South at that time? But after learning about the journey of Arries and William Ward, we can only assume it wasn’t only for better-paying jobs.

This story began with a photograph taken by William Bullard in Worcester, Massachusetts, circa 1900. Bullard chronicled the African American community in Worcester in photos which were exhibited in the Worcester Art Museum in 2017. The photo of Cora, Lillian, and Luvenia Ward and its intriguing caption drew me into seven weeks of research and a deep dive into the understory of African American history through the experience of one family.

To understand the remarkable journey of William and Arries Ward, we must start on the coastal plains of antebellum North Carolina. Arries Huggins was born January 1, 1862, on the kitchen floor of the Marsden Willis plantation in Bear Creek/Swansboro. Her mother, Polly, and siblings, William and Maria, were among hundreds of slaves owned by Owen Huggins. Their labor was rented out to neighboring plantations to pick cotton, tobacco, and occasionally work in the naval yards upriver, where long-leaf pines were tapped to produce tar and turpentine. Polly Huggins was sent to the Willis farm to cook. She and the whole family slept on the kitchen floor. On the day Arries was born, her mother cooked a meal for the Willises but was unable to serve it. She was busy giving birth.

William was born in Bear Creek to Christopher and Amica Ward in September 1861. It was the brink of the Civil War. New Bern, in nearby Craven County, had been occupied by the Union Army after the Battle of Bull Run in July. It became one of many contraband camps for the 10,000 refugee slaves escaping bondage. Northern churches provided clothing, tools, money, ministers, and teachers to assist the refugees, and New Bern soon became a freedmen’s town. William’s parents may have established roots in New Bern during or after the war, but they do not appear in census records from 1870 to 1890. Perhaps they succumbed to the cholera and yellow fever epidemics between 1861 and 1865, or moved north, leaving William with his grandparents. New Bern was a major port with a turpentine distillery where many former slaves found work related to the naval yard industry. A 1959 obituary referred to Arries Ward as a “Tarheel slave,” indicating the Wards may have worked in the turpentine camps. William didn’t appear on census records until 1880 in Snakebite, Bertie County,

living with Franklin Ward, possibly an uncle. However, William did learn to read and write as a child, indicating that he may have been raised in New Bern, which provided education for former slaves.

In 1873 Polly Huggins and her children were still living in Bear Creek and picking cotton for 10 cents a day. Arries was eleven years old when an owner of a hotel in Jacksonville “hired” her to help his wife take care of their new baby. He promised to give her a doll and send her to school. Although the family treated her as “one of their own,” she never was compensated for her work. At sixteen, she left the position and enrolled in the local school, where she learned how to read and write.



Lillian, Luvenia, and Cora Ward (pictured in 1902) were the daughters of William H. and Arries Ann Ward, who migrated from eastern North Carolina, where they had been born as slaves. PHOTO CREDIT: William Bullard Photo Collection, circa 1900; Worcester Art Museum 2017

William and Arries married in 1880 in Bear Creek but soon settled in New Bern, where James, Daniel, Annie, and Luther were born. William could have found work in the naval yards during the winter, and agricultural work in the summer. Unfortunately, tragedy struck the family in 1889 when William defended Arries from an attempted assault by a white man. With the rise of vigilantism, his life was at stake, and William fled north to Pomfret. Census records show that there were other Southern Blacks from North Carolina working on Pomfret’s large farms, estates, and at the Ben Grosvenor Inn as early as 1870. William found work on the Albert Averill farm. Arries and the children joined him by 1892.

Four more children were born while William worked in Pomfret: Chester, Lillian, Cora, and Luvenia. Pomfret’s rural landscape must have been a relief after the turpentine stills and bustle of New Bern. The 1880 Agricultural Census shows that the Averill farm was productive, with 21 milk cows, 19 calves, 9 beef cows, and numerous hogs and chickens. The farm produced 4,500 pounds of cheese, 156 dozen eggs, and 300 pounds of butter. Although train tracks had divided the farm, compelling Averill to ask the railroad to build a tunnel so the cows could cross, they also provided a wider market for the farm’s products. Fresh butter, eggs, milk, and cheese were sent by train to Boston and New York. Averill had two daughters but no sons. At age 65, he needed a farmhand. He paid \$1 a day and offered board. However, the boardinghouse was cramped with railroad workers and other laborers. By the winter of 1898, the Wards were living on School Street in Putnam, where Luvenia was born. William worked as a laborer in Putnam during the winter but appears to have worked as a farmhand for Averill in the summer months.

Arries Ward’s sisters had moved north by the end of the 1890s. Queenie and her husband, Stokes Watson, lived in Putnam; Josephine and Henry Duffy lived in Brooklyn; and their mother, Polly, lived in Worcester, where she died in 1898. By the 1900 census the Wards were settled in Worcester, where most of their neighbors were North Carolina refugees. Although many were employed as laborers, there were among them machinists, metalworkers, domestic servants, cooks, railroad workers, and one artist. William appeared on the 1900

Worcester census with his family on June 9, employed as a whitewasher, yet two days later in the Pomfret census he was in the Averill boardinghouse employed as a farm laborer. He may have come back to help with the haying and earn extra money. Worcester was only a train ride away.

Sometime after 1907, a job opportunity brought the Wards to Grafton, Massachusetts, where they appeared on the 1910 census in a rented house on the Frank Donahue farm. William was employed as a wagon driver and horse trainer for Donahue’s stables. The family now included William, Irene, and Harry, born in Worcester, and two boarders, John Jackson and Joseph Williams of Pomfret. Out of eighteen pregnancies, eleven of the Ward children lived to adulthood. Arries believed in a strong but loving hand, claiming to have raised her children in a Christian home where she had “never danced, smoked, or sipped alcohol” a day in her life. Sadly, William died in 1913 at age 52. Arries moved back to Worcester and supported the family by cleaning houses. But the story does not end here.

The ever-resilient Arries Ward became a beloved member of her neighborhood. Known as Grandma Ward, she was frequently visited by her children, raised several grandchildren, and was a revered member of the John Street Baptist Church. As she approached old age, she was featured in human-interest stories in local newspapers. These articles, and her obituaries in 1959, convey much of the Ward family history, and a memorial on the Find a Grave website led me to more information. In 1957, Arries Huggins Ward appeared on the popular TV show *This Is Your Life*. Thanks to a family member who uploaded the original tape onto YouTube, I was able to Google the episode.

Soft-spoken and light-skinned, Arries Ward recounted her journey from slavery to being named Worcester’s Citizen of the Year. Host Ralph Edwards had flown some of her adult children and neighbors to the California studio to surprise her on stage. Despite the backdrop of the show’s romanticization of the antebellum South—with women dressed as Southern belles and men singing “Swanee River”—America learned firsthand the remarkable story of Arries and William Ward, born enslaved during the Civil War.

Arries’s appearance on the TV show was celebrated throughout Massachusetts. Worcester’s mayor, James O’Brien, presented her with the key to the city. The IGA supermarket donated \$1,000 toward a playground for the children in the housing project where she lived, and the city named a street after her. Arries left California with gifts from the show’s sponsors including a color TV, a movie camera and projector, \$500, and celebrity which continued long after her death.

We sometimes forget that American history is comprised of individual stories. While researching the Ward family, I learned about an America that is hard to convey in a textbook. Nothing can make the era of Reconstruction, the flouting of the Fourteenth Amendment, and the regime of white supremacy and Jim Crow laws more real than seeing it through the experience of one African American family in search of a home who found their own version of the American Dream.

POMFRET HISTORICAL SOCIETY PRESENTS

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‘Footprints in the Changing Sand’ Art Show

By Ed Silverstein

Footprints in the Changing Sand, a special exhibit featuring three respected local artists, will open at Willimantic’s Mill Museum on Saturday March 9. It will run through early June.

An opening reception will take place between 6 and 8 p.m. on March 9. All are invited.

A central focus of the art show will be a look into human relationships with the changing environment.

The exhibit will feature the thought-provoking collected works of Connecticut artists Annie Wandell, Colin McNamee, and Holly Popielarz.

Award-winning local artist Annie Wandell often captures scenes of streets and buildings in man-made environments in the Windham area, as well as the natural environment of the coastline around Deer Isle, Maine.

“I chose Windham/Willimantic and Maine because they were handy and I feel an emotional attachment to them,” Wandell explained. “And if you can convey that into the painting, you’ve done your job,” she said. “I have always been attracted to New England, probably because of its history and beautiful terrain -- sometimes I think the painting practically paints itself.”

For example, if she’s working on a painting of Walnut Street, she puts herself back there mentally. She also appreciates the history of -- and admires -- old houses and buildings. Store window reflections are another favorite subject.

“When I was doing the wooden pieces of Main Street, I realized that my favorite part of the painting was the reflections in the windows. They distort things and add a quirkiness that is interesting. You’re looking at what is in the window, but the reflections are actually what is behind you.” Influences on her work include artists Edward Hopper and Alice Neel.

Wandell has won two first-place awards at Slater Memorial Museum in Norwich. Her work has also been shown at the National Arts Club in New York, as well as has been displayed regionally in Lyme, Essex and Mystic. Her work also can be found at the Swift Waters Artisans’ Cooperative, 866 Main St., Willimantic, and at her studio in Windham Center.

The second artist, Colin McNamee of Storrs, creates realistic oil paintings that record the remnants of encounters between humans and the environment in which they live.

Many of the scenes selected for his paintings, he finds on walks and drives through New England neighborhoods.

“My paintings are pretty agnostic in a lot of ways. There’s meaning in how I curate the subjects, and there’s meaning in the egalitarian treatment of the natural and human-made in the landscape or trashscape,” he explained. “I think if I’m going to really paint the landscape -- not the landscape somebody idealizes or wishes for, but the actual landscape we have -- I’d be hard pressed to find a place not visibly impacted by human activity,” he added. “What we’ve done with the land, how we’ve left the land afterwards, and how the land responds, has to be the most consequential story we can pay attention to. It’s everything: our nature and biology, our politics, our social relations, past, present and future. It’s all there if we pay attention, and it’s tremendously dramatic without any editorializing.”

Tai Chi Home

Growing on You

By Joe Pandolfo

Early Spring has a way of growing on you... the way the sun at dawn spreads a soft fire in the crowns of trees; the thrill you can feel pulsing through that chorus of redwing blackbirds when the sun’s about to set.

This is the season for a vision and a feel of the path ahead of you. Looking up, setting your sights on that horizon across the valley where the treetops are glowing, their sunlit color growing.

Leaves are a long while off, but the first thoughts of the first buds are up there stirring in the light. It’s their time of knowing the shape they’ll take when they open like an April promise... the time of sounding out the first whisper of what music to make in the summer breeze.



For instance, there are two paintings in the show from the expansive site of the defunct Zyla’s auction house on the Daniel Webster Highway in Merrimack, NH.

“That site is one I’d drive by frequently on other business. At one point, someone dumped a bunch of mismatched furniture out front and that got me out on foot to explore what turned out to be the next two years of paintings. I spent a lot of hours there, trespassing I suppose, sometimes with a camera and other times just looking and breathing.”

His creative mentor is Helen Miranda Wilson.

“[She] would often sit with me in my studio or on a bench in a gallery and talk about how seeing a good show is like having a really great meal. She taught me, indirectly, how to paint living things the right way. ‘Every leaf’s a breath,’ she’d say.”

McNamee is an instructor at the Arts at the Capitol Theater (ACT) regional high school in Willimantic. He teaches theatrical production and lighting design at the school. Formerly, he was an instructor in stagecraft and lighting design at Massachusetts’ Wheaton College and also was a technical director at the campus.

He also has been a master carpenter at Stoneham Theater in Stoneham, Mass., and a technical director at Stockbridge Theater in Derry, N.H.

He received an MFA from the Massachusetts College of Art and Design and a bachelor’s degree in studio art from Wheaton College. He has a studio in Storrs and recently exhibited in Derry, N.H., as well as Boston and Provincetown, Mass.

The third artist is Holly Popielarz, who works at her home studio in Storrs and is married to Colin McNamee. Her creative work focuses on the concept of chance, games, and external forces that impact human lives and the environments in which people live. Her work includes different materials and techniques.

“The prints and non-toy sculptures are a response to an artist residency in the Hudson Valley of New York. They are more playful, there are more direct observations of nature and the environment,” she said.

“The work I made while in residence looks more colorful, bright, has smooth textures, a high level of craft, the use of some printing techniques, laser cutting and collaging.”

When she created the sculptures in this show, she lived in, attended school, and traveled in Providence, R.I., as well as New Bedford and Boston, Mass. “Locations that were extremely altered by early industry, industry that with its techniques and materials have forever altered the environment that we live in,” she explained.

She has exhibited in Massachusetts at Piano Craft Gallery, artSTRAND, Provincetown Art Association, New Bedford Art Museum, and Hudson D. Walker Gallery. Also, she has taught design and drawing at Rhode Island College, where she was awarded the Most Valuable Professor award during the spring of 2019. She also has taught at the prestigious Rhode Island School of Design.

After attending the Art Institute of Chicago, she received an MFA from the Massachusetts College of Art and Design.

Mill Museum visitors can view the art show during the museum’s regular hours, Saturdays and Sundays, from 10 a.m. until 4 p.m., beginning on March 10. Admission to the show is included in regular museum admission charges.

Located in the historic former headquarters of the American Thread Company, the Mill Museum, formally known as the Windham Textile and History Museum, houses a museum, historical society, library, and archive. Through its exhibits, programs, lectures, activities, and collections, the museum preserves and interprets the history of textiles, the textile industry, and textile communities in Connecticut.



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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.

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

Did Native Americans Transform the World?

Sustainability, Liberty and the Noble Savage

By Brian Karlsson-Barnes

First Nations in New England were intimately connected to the Earth that had sustained them for centuries. They revered the Land. It defined their spirituality. Generous in spirit, *Nipmuc* Indians took maize from the Quiet Corner along *Old Connecticut Path* to starving colonists in Boston, a long trek in the 1630s. But native Americans gave us much more than generosity and corn.

SUSTAINABILITY is a mantra of *American Indian* cultures, such as the principles of a *Potawatomi* ‘Honorable Harvest’ (reported in ‘*Our Relationship to the Land*’ by Loretta Wrobel, Jan/Feb 2024 *Neighbors*):

Ask permission, listen, be grateful and reciprocate.
Never take the first one, and take only what you need ...
Share and minimize harm ...

Also drawing on ancient wisdom, the 7th Principle of Unitarian-Universalism teaches:

Respect for the Interdependent Web of All Existence of Which We Are a Part.
Not apart.

LIBERTY *Indian Givers* (a 1988 book by Jack Weatherford, Anthropology professor at Macalester College, St. Paul, Minnesota) asks, “*Did Native Americans Transform the World?*”

Yes! Native culture has given us much more than the wisdom of sustainability: modern medicine, agriculture and ecology... potatoes, chillies and chocolate!... and our democratic system of government with our uniquely American concept of freedom... all are Indian gifts.

Personal Liberty is our *American Indian* notion of freedom. “*Freedom does not have a long pedigree in the Old World,*” Weatherford observes. Ancient Mediterranean literature refers to group freedom from domination, such as freeing Jews from Egyptian bondage. American *personal freedom*, however, is an individual’s liberty from rulers and wealthy elites.

After **1493** when Columbus founded settlement for Queen Isabella on Hispaniola (Haiti and the Dominican Republic), exploration decimated Indian leadership and grafted the Spanish language and religion on native roots throughout the region. Less invasive French and British adventurers observed North American Indians living in harmony and prosperity without royal rule, without “*magistrates, forced services, riches, poverty and inheritance.*”

Indians were instead egalitarian and ethical without the European mania for money.

By the **17th and 18th centuries** of the “Enlightenment”, American Indians were belittled as “*Noble Savages*” by European elites. Per US historian Henry Steele Commager, “*Europe was ruled by the well born, the rich, the privileged, by those who held their places by divine favor, inheritance, prescription or purchase.*” German philosopher Immanuel Kant claimed that American Indians are “*incapable of civilization... without affection and passion... not drawn to one another by love... hardly*

speak at all, never caress one another, care about nothing, and are lazy.”

Ugly racist bigotry. Elite, not enlightened.

The Indian spark of personal liberty lit the fire of the **1776** American and **1789** French Revolutions. It illuminated the way to a global age of democracy, more than two centuries to a world now threatened in Ukraine, Gaza, even America. Do we need a global powwow?

Powwow Weatherford’s book resonated with my Minnesota memories of the *Headwaters Green Party* in the late **1990s**. Greens as I were invited to an annual gathering north of The Cities.

Powwows seem chaotic to non-natives. No one is in control, no one tells dancers to start. Slowly activated by drum and song, dancers moved in a spiral of respect, a continual shuffling to the rhythmic beating of a drum. Veterans were invited early, regardless of ethnicity or service (my 7 years USAF). The circle spun larger and larger, growing organically as more dancers joined the spiral. Mesmerizing. My spirit still dances in harmony with the Land.

Ralph Nader’s **2000** running mate was Winona LaDuke, environmental activist, Harvard economics graduate, member of the White Earth Indian tribe, an *Ojibwe* “*Warrior Woman*” and a force of nature. The *Green Party* shared her issues of environmental sustainability.

Although she studied in Boston, LaDuke wasn’t well known on the East Coast. Some *Democrats* disliked *Greens*, we Stewards of the Earth, as competition for their bipartisan power. Some *Greens* disliked consumer-advocate Nader who wasn’t a party member but craved attention and lent celebrity. Some Dems still disdain the *Green Party*. I’m now an *Independent*.

UGLY AMERICANS The United States now indulges environmental abuse, recalling the epithet depicting Americans who were arrogant, loud and ostentatious overseas (from a **1958** political novel about Southeast Asia diplomacy). Overconsumption is a new Ugly.

American Consumerism is now too much about marketing and deceit, profit and greed, and overconsumption and waste. As Wrobel wrote, “*When we take only what we need, we stop producing mountains of waste.*” We need to buy; we just don’t need so much. Yet Americans are only 4% of the world’s people and in the triage of global crises, the effects of climate change – increasing drought and fire, flooding and rising sea levels -- are devastating worldwide. Loss of species is more alarming, perhaps 200 species disappearing daily. Perhaps triage is pointless. Everything is interconnected.

Problems grew exponentially in the **20th century** as Americans became less connected to the Land, less in touch with nature and nobility, and consumed by consumption. Since we began buying and driving more, and more, and frivolously flying afar. Fortunately, we are blessed in the with nature in our quiet corner of Connecticut.

Any little journey can include a woody walk.

Music at the Farm - Enchantment and Excellence

By Gretchen C. D’Andrea

Amidst an idyllic setting, which is itself the stuff of children’s books; you will discover a grown-up opportunity to hear wonderful music. The ***Music at the Farm*** series at *Grace Note Farm*, in Pascoag RI. is such a place. This out-of -the way setting delivers musical excellence by live performers that will knock your socks off in the best way possible.

Music at the Farm series is focused to help promote the best, most brilliant young artists developing solo careers. Artists chosen to be ‘Artists in Residence’ are from New York and Boston and concerts are each month on the second Sunday from February through December, with a chamber Music Festival in June. Ms. Virginia Sindelar is the owner, visionary, artistic director, and caretaker of *Grace Note Farm*.

The finely crafted program for the February concert featured ambitious repertoire that represents some of the best in the genre; Copland’s *Duo for Flute and Piano*, Kennan’s *Night Soliloquy 1040*, *Widor’s Suite for Flute and Piano*, and a Mozart Violin Sonata in G K 379 (373a), transcribed for flute.

I almost decided to stay home on the date of the concert. Feeling emotionally exhausted from a personal setback, I decided to make the 28-minute drive to Grace Note Farm anyway. Surrounded by a flurry of gray clouds I parked against a rustic weatherworn fence, and was ushered into a homey space by a tall, thin young man in casual clothes; the pianist. No tuxes and black tie here. Soon Ms. Sindelar took to the stage and began playing the Mozart.

Ms. Sindelar captured the energy of this music and served it up to a grateful audience. Her tone was pure and true. Phrases were finely crafted with rich timbres and a sparkling upper register. Having studied with her from 1979-1983, it was difficult for me to believe this wasn’t a much younger person navigating the interval leaps and flowing passages of her difficult program. She made Mozart’s music seem easy and it isn’t.

After a brief intermission, where members of the audience chatted with the artists, and enjoyed conversation, we were treated to Widor’s ambitious *Suite for Flute and Piano*. Then Dagher was on as piano soloist.

A sensitive and gifted accompanist while playing with Ms Sindelar, Dagher pulled out all the stops for his solo repertoire. A player who can accompany others flawlessly and also hold their own as a solo artist is a rarity, and Dagher is one such amazing talent.

Mr. Dagher’s numerous virtuosic talents were on full display in Beethoven’s *Rondo* from the “Waldstein” Sonata. Beethoven dedicated this piano sonata to his friend, Count Waldstein, and the piece is known to be one of the greatest, most difficult piano sonatas of the repertoire; especially the third movement, *Rondo*. Elias’ playing seemed to echo depths of feeling that only the heart is capable of holding as he traversed the range of the instrument.

The audience was ecstatic at the conclusion of this work. Dagher’s energy, passion, intensity, and musical excellence was recognized as he gave his all to the

audience in service to the music. We rose to our feet as one at the end; this tribute was a gift to all.

After the performance, as the crowd noshed on all manner of savory and sweet offerings, I felt my cloud of sadness begin to lift as the pain of recent ordeals lessened. That evening I had the first decent night’s sleep in months.

Some folk have the mindset that classical music is for the ‘elite’ and that one must travel to NYC, Boston, or any major city for live music of any worth. This is nonsense. Excellent live music can thrive



Ms. Virginia Sindelar is the owner, visionary, artistic director, and caretaker of *Grace Note Farm*.
Contributed photo.

anywhere; the artists can be just as passionate, and any setting is conducive to the essence of the music, if the artists are open to it. Live music, when done right, carries life energy, and is restorative to the human spirit. We just have to know where to find it.

Grace Note Farm has free parking, a free reception, but most of all, inspiring music. I contrasted this experience to paying upwards of \$30 plus parking at parking garages and tickets to hear performances at New England Conservatory and Boston University Tanglewood Institute, where the privilege of enjoying classical music can be miles away and very expensive. It doesn’t have to be.

If you live near route 44 in RI, or somewhere on the outskirts, nearby in CT or MA, we have a gem right here at *Grace Note Farm*, where locals can hear exemplary musical artists at a bargain price.

Give ***Music at the Farm*** a chance, and you won’t be disappointed. You might possibly even find renewal for the spirit. www.gracenotefarmweb.com (401) 567-0354

Ms. D’Andrea is a flutist. She teaches instrumental, vocal, and general music at Whitin Intermediate School in Uxbridge, MA and directs music at First Congregational Church of Woodstock, CT.

NEIGHBORS
a little paper
big on community

Looking with Love and Being Your Honest Self

By Jesse R. Clark

I remember as a child looking at my nightlight as I was falling asleep. As I slowly closed my eyes, I realized that by squinting, I could make the light compress itself into the image of the Cross. It gave me comfort. The light in the darkness, which was good for me because I was not only scared of the physical darkness, but the darkness of reality. I just could not handle the negative aspects of life. My fear of the physical darkness came from my imagination, something with the power to scare me even worse than the dark. In fact, it was my fear of my imagination and my dreams that unfairly caused my fear of the dark.

As with imagination, we use our own perspective to judge and even fear others, blinding ourselves to the truth. Even Fred Rogers, the man who created a judgment-free space filled with love and understanding not only on TV but wherever he went—even *he* had to learn not to judge. When he got out of seminary school, he went with a friend to a church where a substitute pastor was speaking. The sermon was lackluster, and Fred saw how it went against everything he had learned about how to give a good sermon. He was about to talk to his friend about how bad it was, but when he turned, she was crying. Before he could say anything, she told him, “He said *exactly* what I needed to hear.”

In sixth grade, I went as Death for Halloween. I loved it because I thought it allowed me to express my “dark side” without any fear of judgment. I was wrong. I went to a religious building and saw angels on one side and demons on the other dressed like I was. I instantly felt I had to choose between Good and Evil, Right and Wrong, and to hide my dark side. It wasn’t until years later that I allowed myself to face the darker side of life in a way that was liberating. I finally felt like that was okay for me to do. Our primal brains work by putting people in categories like this. The trick is getting our brains to work in consort with our hearts. Then everyone will be in for a treat.

But we are so afraid to be judged. When I see strangers, I judge that they are judging me. I went to NYC once carrying a Boston Red Sox bookbag (I got it because it was cheap). I was nervous about what people would think of me. Then I realized—it’s NYC. Everyone wants attention and people probably didn’t even *see* me. Now, if I had worn a *Yankees* bookbag in *Boston*...

When we judge others, it’s usually because we are judging ourselves. When we feel angry at a car in front of us that is driving slowly, we are in fact angry at ourselves for running late. Radical kindness is being kind to strangers. It’s actually easier for us to be kind to strangers than to family, because we don’t have that emotional connection—we just see a person.

In acting class once, we did an exercise of walking with our head (fast, with blinders on), and walking with our heart (lighthearted, smiling, with a skip in your step—basically, me). We can see ourselves the way God sees us—with our heart. This is why I love God. He is pure unconditional love. Take the blinders off, throw your prescriptions out and get God’s. And it starts with us seeing ourselves like that. Open the eyes of your heart and see God in people. You will feel lighter, like that nightlight that shines in the dark. It’s just like Martin Luther King, Jr., said: “Darkness cannot drive out darkness, only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate, only love can do that.” Show your lovelight for all to see.

The trick with radical kindness is to learn to use it on ourselves. Many times, judgment is created from shame, and as a result we avoid the truth. It can be hard to be honest. Sometimes we deny that we did something wrong because we don’t want to feel bad about ourselves. Sometimes we get defensive when people accuse us, and we try to justify our behavior. But let’s be honest for a minute and acknowledge that we *all* mess up at times. We *all* make bad decisions for one reason or another. It’s freeing to let go of that denial and shame. It’s like going to see the doctor: we might not want to be completely honest,

because we smoked or drank when we shouldn’t have, but the doctor needs to know in order to help us. That is the way it is in life, and with God.

To get help, we need to be honest with ourselves and others. Step One: Be honest with yourself when you mess up. Step Two: Face the consequences but recognize that you are still worthy of forgiveness and love. Step Three: Learn from your mistakes and continue to grow as a person. Learning is a part of growing, and we *never* stop. Likewise, when we correct someone, we should be doing it out of love. I always say, educate, don’t condemn. If you make people feel bad, they aren’t going to listen. That’s when *they* get defensive or deny what they did. So be compassionate to them and to yourself.

In the hymn “A Mighty Fortress Is Our God,” there is a verse about the Prince of Darkness that says “one little word shall fell him.” Fred Rogers once asked his friend and mentor, Dr. William Orr, what that little word is. Dr. Orr responded, “Forgiveness.” As hard as it is for us to forgive people, it’s even harder for us to forgive ourselves. But if we aren’t honest about what we did, if we don’t acknowledge it, how can we ask for forgiveness?

One of my writing teachers told us to “gag the critic,” that voice in our head making us second-guess ourselves, making us feel bad. But it’s just us. It’s just our mind. And, with a little help from God, we have the power to override it. Many times, I have had regrets, or felt ashamed by my actions. I can’t even begin to say the words aloud. My heart starts racing and the words fall back down my throat. Even if other people understand, even if God understands, I can’t forgive myself. Only by talking it out with God am I able to forgive myself, and then I can say those words. And through these talks, I gain a better understanding of myself.

There once was a policeman who pulled over a driver who appeared to be inebriated. He was experienced enough to have heard all the excuses. The driver got out of his car and the officer asked him to walk in a straight line. The driver said he couldn’t. The officer sighed and asked why not, expecting any number of excuses. The driver simply said, “Because I’m drunk!”

Honesty is important for our own well-being. So often, our society thinks of us as machines. It can be hard for us to be honest with ourselves and say we need a break. This is a lesson that is *especially* important now. So many people have been struggling physically, mentally, emotionally, spiritually, that it is hard for us to be honest about our own needs.

To say those words out loud to ourselves and realize the truth for ourselves is such a cathartic event. It’s something that we typically associate with people who have a drug or alcohol issue, but it is something that we *all* struggle with. To have that space, to know that we can say it free from judgment. Free from shame. A space filled with love, understanding, and acceptance. To go through that challenge, to face my shame, guilt, and pain and be able to give them up, that is why I love God. It’s a place where I find freedom.

It’s honest communication that’s important. Sometimes I want to not be honest, in order to spare a loved one’s feelings, but that just ends up hurting their feelings. We need to communicate to have a healthy relationship, one where we know that the other person loves us and knows us well enough that *they* know how to take what we have to say, because they know that what we say comes from a place of deep love. To be honest is a gift. To be free from the fear of judgment is a gift. To be able to have that kind of relationship, whether it’s with a person or God—that is a gift.



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The Road Rising
By Judy Davis

Born in Dublin, in 1865, William Butler Yeats knew that Ireland connected us to all that came before. He believed that the Irish nation could be transformed with legend, and poetry.

His words were found in stone walls, rushing rivers, and beneath trees and ancient hills.

Yeats died in 1939, yet his words live on. “Ah, fairies dancing under the moon – a druid land, a druid tune.”

He was the wind, and he awakened the stars in Ireland. Read his poetry. Embrace it. Be changed by Yeats.

I was.

My Irene

In the too late
I seek to see through your eyes

In the moment my heart
Seeks yours
I realize you are gone

And in this time
When the presence of you
Would calm my endless chaos
I know you have let all of this go

Chamele

Coventry Lions donate to area homeless shelters

Submitted by Paul Manzone

The Lions Club of Coventry has collected and distributed 120 self-care kits to area homeless shelters. The group has delivered 40 kits to the following shelters: Willimantic No-Freeze shelter, Vernon Cornerstone shelter, and the New London homeless shelter. This project has been added to the many other community service projects supported by the Lions.

Coventry Scholarship Foundation Seeking Donations

Submitted by Jaime Thompson

Coventry Scholarship Foundation, Dollars for Scholars will be collecting donations for their Annual Fundraising Mailing in March. Donations are accepted throughout the year as well. Visit <https://coventrydollars-forscholars.org> to make an online donation. Review the list of scholarships to designate your gift to a specific scholarship fund. Donations can also be made by mailing a check to Coventry Scholarship Foundation Dollars for Scholars, P.O. Box 3, Coventry CT 06238. Email csfdollarsfor-scholars@gmail.com with any questions. We are a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. More than \$65,000 awarded annually to Coventry students seaking accredited post-secondary educational institutions. Please help support our future generations.

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“All you need is love.”
-John Lennon



Delia’s Feeders

By Delia Berlin

David and I have been feeding birds at our home for over 40 years. David is the main supplier of bird foods, and he certainly does not cut corners. He knows that different kinds of birds have different food preferences. The types of foods they eat and the ways in which they eat them span a wide range. So, if you want to attract birds of many species, you need to offer much more than just one type of seed in one kind of feeder. In addition, you must provide water, and plantings that supply shelter, berries, and nuts.



On any given winter day, at a minimum, David puts out mixed seed and chunks of suet on an elevated tray feeder, sunflower seeds in a tube feeder, a thistle seed bag, cayenne suet cakes in a cage, dried mealworms in a dish on the deck, black oil sunflower hearts in a feeder by the kitchen window, and some more mixed seed scattered on the ground in several areas. In warmer weather, the suet takes a break but the hummingbird feeder appears. Wherever we have lived, we have been successful in attracting lots of birds of many species. However, over the years, we have noticed a sharp decline in their numbers that is a well-documented phenomenon worldwide.

One of the feeders we enjoy the most is the little sunflower feeder that hangs from a shepherd’s hook by the kitchen window. Made from ceramic and with a small perching hole, it attracts only our smallest birds, like chickadees, titmice, nuthatches, downy woodpeckers, and Carolina wrens. Larger birds are unable to perch and feed there. Occasionally a gray squirrel runs up the hook and tries to get seeds by hand, but the process is inefficient and that seems to be enough to discourage the practice. We have a large viburnum in front of this feeder and

there is a constant parade of birds circulating from the feeder to the bush and back. This dynamic view from the kitchen sink can magically make food preparation quite entertaining.

Our original little-bird feeder was a gift from friends. It had a wooden perch and a single draining hole. After replacing the perch a few times, David asked me to make a ceramic bird feeder based on the same design. He asked for additional draining holes and an unbreakable perch. As an active member of Spiral Arts Studio, I’m always looking for new ceramic projects, so I welcomed the challenge.

My first bird feeder came out quite cute from a human’s perspective, but I wasn’t sure if the birds would like it. We replaced the old feeder with mine and waited for their response. As we had expected, the birds were cautious and took a couple of weeks to try it. But once they did, they had no difficulty feeding and visited it frequently. My design was better in terms of drainage and had a sturdy, built-in ceramic perching surface. So, I continued making feeders.

For a while, I “field-tested” each new feeder I made on our shepherd’s hook. Each time, the birds took a little while to feel comfortable with the new one. But they soon got used to the constant change and started trying the feeders almost immediately. I no longer feel the need to test every single one, so we have allowed one to stay undisturbed for months. David refills it daily with sunflower seeds, using a small funnel.

The general concept of these ceramic feeders is a receptacle with a perching hole, which makes them look like a tiny birdhouse. Many people think they are birdhouses, and apparently some birds do too. This past summer, we were surprised to see a house wren exploring the feeder—house wrens are mainly insect eaters and do not frequent feeders. But soon a mate joined the first visitor, they both jumped inside and proceeded to fling out every single seed left in the feeder, only to refill it with nesting material. Although this pair entertained us by perching, sitting, house-keeping, and singing around the feeder, they never actually laid eggs in it. House wrens are territorial nesters, and they often take possession of more nesting sites than they can use, just to keep other birds from using them.

As projects go, making these feeders has been a favorite of mine. They present endless opportunities for

variation, and each one is unique. I even dream about new designs. Understandably, my feeder inventory grew, and I started giving them as gifts to friends and relatives. But there is a limit to the number of one’s personal relationships and how many things people can accept. Early this year, it became clear that if I wanted to continue making bird feeders, I needed another outlet.

One day I was shopping at The Hoot and, aware of their assortment of feeders, I asked if they ever bought locally made ones. The answer was a qualified yes. I didn’t have any samples ready but arranged to call back once I did. In the meantime, I created a colorful business card with text on the back:

Uniquely designed and hand-built by Delia Berlin at Spiral Arts, in Willimantic, CT. Fill up to the opening with black oil sunflower seeds and hang in a sheltered location. Watch and enjoy chickadees, titmice, nuthatches, downy woodpeckers, Carolina wrens, and more.

When the cards were printed, I took seven tagged feeders to The Hoot, where six were immediately purchased. I will not reach out beyond the local community and will not accept consignment orders. But I may consider adding Mackey’s or Ladd’s, and perhaps offer feeders at Spiral Arts during special events. Knowing that my feeders are finding homes helps to keep me inspired and creative.

Meanwhile, if you spot one of my feeders while you are out and about and feel drawn to it, I suggest that you snatch it up. Not only is each of them unique, but their total number is limited. They are fully hand-built and hand-glazed, quite slow to produce, and I will be turning 70 this year. You can do the math.

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Thank You!

Without your submissions of writing, poetry, artwork and photographs, this paper would not exist. T. King, Publisher



In Your Corner

By Pamela Skelly

The Windham/Willimantic Branch of the NAACP is an organization that is “in your corner” when you need local support for equality and justice. The NAACP promotes policies aligned with the organization’s mission but does not support a particular political party nor endorse any candidate. As stated on the website: *The mission of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) is to secure the political, educational, social, and economic equality of rights in order to eliminate race-based discrimination and ensure the health and well-being of all persons. We are committed to this mission locally and nationally.*

The NAACP was founded in 1909 by a group of men and women of different races and religions who were committed to the idea of racial justice education for all people. In the early 1980’s, the Windham/Willimantic Branch of the NAACP was established and, for several years, assertively addressed racial inequities in its region. Regrettably the branch became inactive until 2015, when it was reactivated. The core group invited Windham residents to informational sessions and, in 2016, it acquired the 50 members needed to reactivate the branch. In 2017, newly reactivated and with the approval from the National Office of NAACP and from State Conference President Scot X. Esdaile, the first Installation of Officers to the Windham/Willimantic branch took place on January 15, 2017. Our branch President Leah Ralls keeps us enthusiastic and focused on our work. Our adult branch also supports the Gary Ralls Youth Council to provide younger community members with opportunities to develop their skills for their future. Eastern Connecticut State University and the University of Connecticut have college chapters in our area as well.

Confronting injustice, inequality and racism to make “good trouble” is important work. Equally important is providing platforms and events that promote conversations and new understandings. Our branch is very busy engaging and supporting the community through various ways.

One way to educate and involve our community is through events where we can gather and learn. Some of our past events include:

- Last August we held a Recognition Day at a Women’s Basketball game. The CT Sun played against the LA Sparks at the Mohegan Arena for a fundraising event. The CT Sun won!
- In January we held a MLK Jr. Celebration at the Calvary Baptist Church. This event honored Dr. King spiritually and educationally, as the speakers brought his commitment to justice to the present and motivated us to continue the use of nonviolence to promote social change.
- For Black History Month we hosted a Zoom event with Linda Blackmon Lowery, a preeminent civil rights activist and author of *Turning 15 on the Road to Freedom*. Her powerful presentation of how segregation in the South impacted her formative years and her experience during the Selma to Montgomery March, moved us deeply.

a little paper
big on community

The branch frequently partners with other local groups so we can support each other for the common good. Here are a few of our partnerships:

- We are active with the Windham United to Save Our Healthcare, a coalition of local organizations fighting to make Hartford Healthcare return the maternity services and intensive care unit to Windham Hospital.
- We joined groups from the northeast corner to hold the End Hate Across the State Rally in September.
- Members picketed Travelers Insurance Company’s Annual Stockholders Meeting in Hartford urging the Travelers to no longer insure fossil fuel projects along with other environmental justice groups.

Our Legal Redress Committee has responded to parents with concerns regarding bullying and harassment in schools by contacting the administration to support the students impacted. The committee has been involved in a variety of cases when community members feel that they have not been treated fairly. Drawing attention to these issues is important so we can collaborate to create solutions.

Our Education Committee reaches out to the local community with events and activities. We hosted the exhibit, *Here All Along*, at the Mill Museum in June with Jamie Eves. This exhibit highlighted the people of color in our community from its earliest days, sadly many of whom were slaves. Another project, Dream Big, was developed for local high schools. Guest speakers, mostly professionals of color, representing many different fields, present to classes. Students learn first hand from the speakers about the impact of race-based prejudice, discrimination, and injustice, both in their personal lives and professional journeys.

Know an advocate, educator, farmer, or food producer who is a champion for local food?



Nominate them to be recognized as a Taste of Mansfield Champion!



Nominations due March 22nd!
Details and nomination form online at:

TasteofMansfield.org

Connecting the Community Through Local Food

We also have an active Environmental Justice Committee that collaborates with local and state-wide groups. As well as the global climate crisis, poor populations often live in neighborhoods located near pollution from facilities such as factories and dumps. In March we hosted a Zoom event with the Director of Conn. Coalition for Economic and Environmental Justice, *Not in My Backyard: The Quest for Environmental Justice in Connecticut*. In May committee members lobbied state lawmakers in Hartford on several environmental bills and in support of SB4 requiring fair and equitable housing opportunities. Our branch supported some of our members who participated in the *End Fossil Fuels March* to the United Nations Climate Ambition Summit in New York City in September.

This year Get Out The Vote (GOTV) is a major focus for us. The national elections are very important but we feel that local elections are as well, especially because citizens can have a big impact on their cities and towns. Our website has information on voting, specifically for Connecticut. Students can register to vote at 17 years old, if they will be 18 years old by Election Day. We encourage you to make sure your family and friends are registered, and get them to the polls in November. If you have some time, volunteer at the polls, which is especially important as Connecticut initiates new early voting rules. We can all work for free and fair elections.

Be sure to save the date for our upcoming event! *Lift Every Voice And Sing: An NAACP Choral Concert* will take place on Saturday, May 4th, 2024, at the First Congregational Church, 199 Valley Street, Willimantic, CT 06226, from 1:30 to 3:30pm.

Our monthly meetings are usually held on Zoom and all members are encouraged to attend. We also hold in-person events that are open to the public. In this column, I plan to highlight the work of our local chapter. Our goal is to encourage membership and participation for the NAACP and its mission at the local, state and national levels. Although donations and contributions are essential to our existence, most of our events are free and the donation amount can be determined by you.

You now have an overview of who we are and what we do. We encourage you to learn more about the Windham/Willimantic Branch of the NAACP and how to become a member from our website, <https://windhamnaacp.org>. Once you know about our work for our neighbors, we’re sure you’ll want to be a member too.



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Lessons from Travelling: Reflections from Kenya

When two elephants fight, the grass is trampled.
—Swahili proverb

Article and photo by Phoebe C. Godfrey

Recently I had the good fortune to travel to Kenya with others from UConn in preparation for taking 22 students there this summer. The focus of the two-week summer trip will be to give the students opportunities to learn about the impacts of climate change on different members of Kenyan society and to see what measures have been and are being taken to, if not directly address the causes (as those come mostly from us in the West), at least explore possible ways to mitigate the impacts. Of course, there is the irony of the impact of flying and all the expenses involved. But, having just spent a week there talking to faculty at the University of Nairobi, as well as to Maasai farmers, herders, teachers, medical personnel, and chiefs about climate change impacts, I can affirm that for me it was worth it.

What I learned by listening and talking to people there is that drought on the one hand and flooding on the other, as well as unseasonal weather variations, are having impacts far and wide on food security, medical services, gender/class inequalities, and other social factors. Farmers are losing crops; herders are seeking water for their animals; roads and bridges are washed out; food-, water-, and animal-borne illnesses are spreading; and many other linked crises are impacting people’s abilities to go about their daily lives. I also learned things—not necessarily related to climate change but holding aspects of solutions—from looking out the van window at the people and the land.

Finally, from spending two days at the Maasai Mara game reserve witnessing the wonders of the animal inhabitants—who, despite everything that goes on in our human world to challenge their existence, still manage to reign supreme—I learned about the importance of preserving animal diversity. No matter how many images you have seen of elephants, hippos, or giraffes, or how many times you may have seen them in zoos, seeing them where they belong, in the right ecosystem and in the right relationship with each other, reveals their dignity and grandeur in a manner I found deeply moving. In fact, given my profession as an environmental sociologist who teaches about climate change, environmental destruction, and species extinction, such an experience was healing.

This healing did not come just from the animals, although they played a large part, but also from the Kenyan landscape, and of course from the people we met, and from all the people I didn’t meet but fleetingly observed from the van window as we drove for hours on end. All these people were just living their lives but doing so in ways that were highly visible, social, and seemingly satisfying. And yet this constant public presence, in both rural and urban areas, is seen as evidence of “underdevelopment,” whereas in our culture we can drive around and see almost no one and that is seen as “development.” Of course, there are climatic differences that play a role, but even in our summer months it is rare to see people outside walking,

talking, engaging in commerce, working, herding, drinking...or just being. There are times, such as Willimantic’s Third Thursdays, or at farmers markets, summer fairs, and festivals, where people gather, but overall, I would argue that as a culture we are socially and creativity starved.



My claim for us being “socially starved” has been confirmed by Surgeon General Vivek Murthy, who issued a public advisory last year that we are in an “epidemic of loneliness,” which threatens people’s health as much as smoking 15 cigarettes a day. However, my other claim of being “creativity starved” is not as common, and I use the term specifical-

ly to draw attention to how, in counties like Kenya and throughout the Global South, people can be seen everywhere doing the tasks of daily life and doing them in ways that are innovative, creative, and engaging. Of course, all such places that are deemed “underdeveloped” have over the modern age been brutally colonized, dehumanized, and gravely impacted by our extractivist economy and the impacts of climate change, and yet people have continued to survive and seemingly thrive.

People in Kenya are farming, herding, building houses and furniture, fixing motorbikes and cars, selling fruits and vegetables, slaughtering animals, fetching water, walking to school or church, or just sitting under a tree, “being”...and so on and so on...in an endless stream made up of the varieties and colors of life. In the larger cities, of course, there are plenty of cars and all the trappings of modernity, but such “development” does not stop the stream of people on the streets. Again, I found all of this human interaction and engagement to be very healing, a reminder of what it means, or what it should mean, to be human, and that people need to be social and creative in ways that we in our culture have for the most part lost. We sit in our homes, befriending our screens, waiting for commodities to quickly arrive, or we drive along empty roads to big-box stores where we speak to no one, create nothing, and wonder why we feel so empty, bored, and depressed, even as we are convinced that the way we live here in the U.S. is the best. It is not.

What we need more of in our culture are social and creative spaces, places, and encounters, not just with other humans but with other living beings. Such engagements are also key to addressing climate change, by feeding our souls and not just our pockets and our accumulation of commodities. The price for our so-called development has been to rob us of our need for the unknown, the unexpected, and the uncharted—in other words, all that is wild, in both us and in the life around us—and thus we rob ourselves of so much life, life that is wondrous and wonderful in its complexity, diversity, and creativity. For as the Swahili proverb goes, “When two elephants fight, the grass is trampled,” which I take to mean that life requires the making of messes that are not “messy” as we understand the word but are deeply rich and fulfilling. Thus, what we need throughout the world, and specifically for our culture, is not just for there to still be elephants but to find ways to get back to trampling the grass.

Urgent Call to Action

Right now, on a daily basis, Palestinians are suffering from Israeli government ethnic cleansing. Winter is setting in and women are living in tents with wounded children IN THE COLD.

Starvation is spreading due to the cutoff of critical foodstuffs, water, fuel, medication, etc. The list is depressing, and the situation is catastrophic. The US is allowing this atrocity; so are other western powers. We are actually complicit!

Corporate media makes little effort to bring the horrific details to light. As citizens in a democracy, we have representatives that should get the message that anybody with a shred of empathy is distraught and wants it to stop.

Ralph Nader has said the calls to Washington are “running 100 to one in favor of humanitarian relief and a ceasefire. I wish that it would go to 1000 to one so that our representatives would feel greater pressure to defy the current position. Here is my letter written 5 to 6 weeks ago that did appear in the Chronicle:

From my American Heritage dictionary, the definition of GENOCIDE: “the systemic, planned annihilation of a racial, political, or cultural group”. After the straightforward impassioned statements of many Israeli leaders, can any sane observer deny this as the goal? Could such goals truly be interpreted as defending Israel?

As a Vietnam combat veteran, I now see our participation in Vietnam as illegal and wrong-headed, as the Vietnamese people were no threat to us. However ugly our acts, they fell far short of genocide. Now my shame is that our leaders are not only allowing these despicable actions to occur to Gazan civilians, but we actually ‘foot the bill’ for more bombs and equipment to continue the genocidal war crimes.

Cease fire now. Please join citizens in dissent of this slaughter. Call your State Representatives in Washington; 202-225-2076 (J Courtney) 202-224-3121 (R Blumenthal), and let them know that respect for us as Americans erodes every day we continue to enable genocide, and you do not want to be a part of it!

Bill Potvin, Willimantic

Note: Recently, I sent the same message to the Hartford Courant, hoping for more “eyes” and more response. Still waiting.

Please take the one to two minutes to express your opinion so that you are represented and perhaps a resolution can be found that reflects the golden rule. Certainly, doing unto others as we would want them to do unto us is urgently in order. Convince your “circle” to do the same. Going to a protest or carrying a sign is positive, but calling your representative is many times more effective.

Windham-Tolland 4-H Camp News

Submitted by Elaine Nelson

Ragged Hill Woods Environmental Science Programs at Windham Tolland 4-H Camp 326 Taft Pond Rd, Pomfret, CT. For Pre-K to Grade 8 students. March 6 Hiking Scavenger Hunt, March 27 All About Dinosaurs (at 10 AM or 4:30 PM.) \$20 per session. Call 860-974-1122 to register.

Wednesday, March 6, 6:30 – 8:00 PM. Floral Design Night at Windham-Tolland 4-H Camp, 326 Taft Pond Rd, Pomfret, CT. \$70 per person gets you a beautiful floral centerpiece to take home, snacks and an evening of fun! Proceeds go towards the Dam Repair Fund. Preregistration required. Call 860-974-1122 or go to www.4hcampct.org for a registration link.

Sunday, March 24 from 1-3 PM. Visit the Windham-Tolland 4-H Camp Open HHHouse 326 Taft Pond Rd, Pomfret, CT. Meet the director & other camp staff, take a camp tour, registration materials available. Call 860-974-3379 for questions.

April 20, 2024 - Windham-Tolland 4-H Camp Camper Scamper 5K Race/Walk and One Mile Kid Run. 326 Taft Pond Rd., Pomfret, CT. Must preregister. Kids Race at 9:30, Adult Race starts at 10 AM, walkers start immediately after runners. Professionally timed by Last Mile Race Management. Register by March 31 to receive discount and free t-shirt. Adults \$30/Kids \$10. Go to www.4hcampct.org for more details and registration forms or call 860-974-1122. Benefits the Jim Logee Campership Fund.

By Chamele

Dr Rappaport sat behind her desk. Closing her eyes she felt the warmth of the sun through the windows, It was one of those days when it was freezing outside but the sun was so strong when you looked out you expected summer grass and trees full of leaves.

“Dr., your next appointment is here.”

She hit the intercom. “Thank-you Karen. Send him in.” She got up to meet her new patient. “Hi. I’m Dr Rappaport,” she said as she extended her hand.

“Hi,” said the young man as he returned her handshake.

“Have a seat,” she said and pointed to the chair in front of the desk. He sat down. “So what brings you here today?” She watched him as she took her seat behind the desk. A new client is so full of mystery. She waited for it to unfold.

“My family said I had to come.”

“Oh.” She held her pen and thought to make a note on the pad before her but she stopped. Didn’t want to make him feel studied. “Why do you think they wanted you to talk with me?”

“I made the mistake of telling them what was happening. Now they think I’m crazy. I’m not.”

“Then why did you come?”

“Families can be relentless.”

She smiled. “I don’t disagree with you but maybe let’s save relentless relatives for another day. What is happening? What did you tell them? If you don’t mind me asking?”

“There’s shifts. They happen all the time. No one notices.”

“But you do.”

“Yes.”

“Explain to me what are these shifts?”

“You’re going to think I’m crazy too.”

“I’m here to listen and understand, not judge.”

“Well.....Have you heard that every time you make a choice, reality splits? And it keeps splitting every new choice or decision you make.”

“Yes. I have heard of that. Multiverses.”

“Yea.”

She looked at her empty pad. “So...” she looked up at him. “What is a shift?”

“We shift between these multiverses. Most of us not even realizing that it happened.”

“So you are aware when you shift?”

“Not always. But I notice it more and more.”

“Tell me about the first time.”

“Well.... I don’t know about the first time. But the one I became aware. Was when I was at work. I was filling a propane bottle. And, no I didn’t inhale. I just sensed something had changed. Something had shifted. I tried to figure it out. But there was nothing different. It didn’t make sense.”

“How do you know anything happened at all?”

“It was the feeling when it happened.” He bowed his head. “It’s really hard to explain.”

“Then what happened?”

“Nothing the day went on as usual.”

“And did it happen again?”

“Yea. I kind of was looking for it.”

“Describe the next time.”

“Well.... little things. Like I went to get my keys but they weren’t there. Then I saw them in another place. Oh yea I thought I put them there. Or a spot would appear on the rug. I just looked at the area and then all of a sudden there’s a spot. What? Everyone thinks I’m crazy but this is real.”

“Why do you think this happens?”

“I don’t know. I’m not God.”

“That’s good to know. Some of my patients think they are.” She tried to throw some humor out to him. Didn’t work.

“This is silly. I don’t need to be here.” He started to get up.

“Wait, we have about 15 minutes. Is there anything else you would like to talk about?” She closed her eyes and felt the warmth of the sun through the window. She sighed opening her eyes to the empty room. Her note pad was open before her ready. She felt odd. “Hmm,” she thought.

“Who’s my next patient, Karen?” she talked through the intercom to her secretary.

“Janet Carrey. Scheduled in 15 minutes and you know Janet, always on the dot.” Karen answered.

“Well please send her in as soon as she gets here.”

“Yes mam.”

“Thank-you.”

Dr Rappaport looked at the chair across from her desk. Something? She shook her head. “Maybe I need a vacation,” she thought.

Common Sense Car Care

By Rick Ostien

I would like to start this month’s article with the January article I wrote that never made it to print.

The month of December is the time that I take a day before the Christmas break to deliver muffins to other people in the automotive trade. The sad thing for me is the list is getting shorter each year. Our family business of 75 years has sustained the good and the bad. For that, we want to thank our loyal customers and our new ones also. Without your support we would never have made it this long.

This past year we have still seen a shortage in our work force. The automotive technician is in higher demand now more than ever. The high-tech vehicle that was new a few years ago now is getting older and is out of warranty. This means that most of the old problems will still exist, but now our new problems will be all electronics. This means more equipment to do the needed repairs, but more important is the technician who will do the repairs.

I have seen an increase in electrical repairs since last year that have demanded more diagnostic time than before. The other problem that we have encountered is the customer that jumps from one repair facility to another for the same problem. This creates more diagnostic time to determine what was done by someone else before we can continue with the repair. This costs the customer more money and time that they thought they were saving. I have said in previous articles and this still holds true, find a repair facility you trust and have them perform the services you need.

The southern New England weather has raised many problems for motor vehicles and for drivers. Lack of preparation for snow, ice, rain, freezing rain, hail, and anything else mother nature can throw at us. A foul weather survival kit should be in all vehicles. Road closures are common due to an accident. Waiting for hours for the road to open can cause problems for the driver and passengers stranded in this situation. The survival kit should contain blankets, cell phone charger or portable battery for the phone, flash light, snacks, boots, extra clothing, snow brush with a scraper, snow shovel, kitty litter, and liquid to drink. Be careful with liquids because they can freeze.

Owners of full electric vehicles need to keep their vehicle fully charged. Cold weather and time waiting in traffic deplete battery charge. We had a friend who found himself stuck in traffic because of an accident. Their electric vehicle charge dropped to 5%. This is not a good spot to be in. Know where a charging station is and get there before you drop this low.

Gasoline and diesel vehicles keep your tank from full to ¾. It does cost you for the initial fill up, but keeping your tank topped off costs no more than letting it get close to empty and then adding a few gallons. The full tank of fuel adds extra weight and will help you with better traction in bad road conditions. Good tires and batteries should be maintained year around.

One last thing is to always warm up your vehicle. There have been people saying this is not necessary. The person who is a runner or plays sports always warms up their body before participating in a practice or game. A vehicle is no different, fluids need to get moving in a car or truck too.

Please drive defensively making sure to keep two hands on the steering wheel, giving other drivers plenty of space (car lengths), and reducing your speed. These three simple things can head off a bad scene on the road and consequently a bad day.

Rick Ostien is the owner of Franc Motors in Willington.

Neighbors 15

Derelict

Many years ago I heard someone say I had good bones, I was worth the investment, I could be remodeled. They moved on, leaving me to weather time on my own.

Now my floors sag, wallpaper peels, paint flakes off cabinets, molding over my doors flares out as if to flee the drafty windows. My rooms are empty, left to spiders, festooned with webs and carcassed flies. I have little to recommend me to those seeking safety and comfort.

My lower openings are boarded; under the crawling vine ... No Trespassing. My roof is green with mosses, bejeweled with lichens. Note that my roof doesn’t leak and there are no bats in my attic, though I had always wished for some.

At sunset on clear days my attic window, though dusty, still reflects the golden light, a spotlight ... or beacon, making me known, perhaps luring a wanderer.

Below the attic window the wanderer might find my porch, wooden steps rotted away, replaced by a stone. The lone, straight-backed chair against the wall might provide a moment of rest, or a viewing of the garden, once prolific with tomatoes, eggplants, cucumbers, lettuce, now a riot of jewel weed, goldenrod (a welcome development for butterflies and bees).

If the wanderer is fortunate enough to have no manners, she might savor the smell of mint as she steps, might hear the songs of birds in the tangled brush. She might pry open the door, already loosened by someone more reckless than brave. She might make her way through silent rooms, ascend creaking stairs to my attic, find trunks, boxes, unruly piles, art, treasures and flotsam of a productive, perhaps interesting, life.

She might be touched by my old letters to loved ones, to lovers, find poems, stories, tellings of struggles, loss, triumphs, delight, of a life of exploration, of a fearlessness forged in feminism’s eruptions. She might wonder at all those photographs, seeing decades through my eyes.

When the light finally fades the wanderer might leave with mementos, a scrap of poem, a photo, or two. She might be en-Couraged by what she’s found, feel the beckoning of opportunities she’d not thought of, and, head high, walk away towards her own future on her own terms.

Christine Acebo
October, 2023



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).

We believe in CT’s ‘Green Monster’

CT Mirror. “...we’d like to thank our friends at the Yankee Institute (named not for the team but presumably in honor of our Yankee heritage) for dubbing our omnibus bill addressing climate change “The Green Monster.” Yankee Institute is, of course, the fossil-fuel-funded conservative think tank that tries to keep Connecticut in the stone age when it comes to progress on environmental protection...Is our “Green Monster” ambitious? You bet it is, because it has to be; dithering in the face of climate change-induced calamity is disastrous...Too bad the Yankee Institute promotes fear and pessimism over Yankee Ingenuity. Perhaps once they see the actual bill, they’ll get over their fear of The Green Monster and focus on the monster of our own making — the globally devastating effects of our addiction to a fossil fuel-based economy.”



New year, new chapter in long fight over CT’s utility regulator

CT Mirror. “Connecticut’s regulated monopolies have never seen anyone quite like Marissa P. Gillett. Neither have her colleagues at the Public Utilities Regulatory Authority, where she is the undisputed boss. Nor have the legislators who relied on her counsel as they toughened the framework for how electric, gas and water rates are to be set. As chair, Gillett has taken charge of every docket, applied stricter scrutiny over everything from employee schedules to utility lobbying expenses, and rattled Wall Street with a self-described “adversarial” approach that a colleague likened to a punishment in Gillett’s first rate case. In that instance, not only did PURA deny a \$35 million increase sought by the Aquarion Water Company, it also ordered a \$2 million reduction that left the Eversource subsidiary apoplectic. The cut, coming after a decade of rising costs, all but announced there’s a new sheriff in town.” Plus: PODCAST: CT regulators prepare for a fight with utilities in 2024

Performance-based regulation of utilities is key for CT’s energy future

CT Mirror. “PBR [Performance Based Regulation] a modern approach to regulating utilities that moves beyond outdated policies is designed to ensure utilities are responsive to public policy priorities and are operating most efficiently on behalf of customers...Under traditional utility regulation, utilities make money by getting a guaranteed rate of return (as high as 10% in the Northeast) on capital expenses such as poles, wires, and substations. This made sense when the electric grid was brand new and needed to expand rapidly in order to bring electricity to millions of homes. Today, with a mature and technologically sophisticated electricity grid, this approach no longer serves customers. More efficient solutions like non-wires alternatives such as energy storage, demand response, and distributed solar generation, do not provide an additional rate of return (i.e. earn extra money), so utilities have a clear incentive to continue building and upgrading their infrastructure in a traditional way which can end up more financially attractive for the utility but more expensive for customers... utilities have consistently expressed skepticism and raised fears that PBR will jeopardize their businesses. These concerns are unsupported and are a distraction...”

Two Branford Elementary Schools Go Solar, Saving \$248K Over 20 Years

Patch. “Two Branford elementary schools are now capturing the energy of the sun to produce electricity. The town announced that the power produced at Mary R. Tisko and Mary T. Murphy is expected to have a “cost savings over of \$248,000 over the next 20 years.” “This project aligns with the town’s goals and initiatives to use renewable energy to save on energy costs,” First Selectman James Cosgrove noted, adding the town “continually looks for

cost-effective opportunities to make our facilities greener and more resilient.”...The two elementary schools were able to “go solar” using the Green Bank’s Solar Municipal Assistance Program, which provides technical support to help municipalities develop solar projects on their buildings...”

“The cheaper way to go”: Bruce Becker talks ze-ro-emissions New Haven hotel

TheRealDeal. “Bruce Becker thinks building green is just good business...The decision to reduce emissions and opt out of natural gas and diesel-dependent components of the building lowers the operating costs of running the hotel, and adds to the value of the building...His Passive House redesign greatly reduced the hotel’s need for electricity, which he says makes the building better off than other comparable hotels. “A typical hotel in New England spends \$15.50 per occupied room night on energy,” Becker told Yale Insights. “We spend only about \$5.’ That frees up cash to reinvest into the property and pay off financing...” “This is actually the cheaper way to go,” he said.”

At CT climate march, protesters demand action, emergency declaration

Hartford Courant. “Calls for climate action echoed through the streets of Hartford Friday as 200 environmental justice activists marched from Founders Plaza to the state Capitol demanding that lawmakers, the governor and corporations make good on Connecticut’s climate-reduction targets...Lawmakers on the Connecticut General Assembly Environment Committee responded Friday, announcing plans to introduce H.B. 5004, a climate change bill that will be a priority for House Democrats this session, according to Committee Chair Rep. Joe Gresko. Environment Committee Vice Chair Rep. Christine Palm said the bill will include a climate crisis declaration, net zero emissions requirements for state buildings and universities by 2050, and a ban on interstate gas infrastructure pipelines, among other provisions. “In order for us to get that over the finish line, we must have bipartisan buy-in,” Palm said to the crowd. “You don’t need to convince us (Democrats). You need to convince the Republicans who are going to filibuster our climate change bill ... you’ve got to reach them.”

A proposal for a massive expansion to a gas pipeline that goes through CT is drawing opposition

Hartford Courant. “In December, more than 90 climate and environmental justice groups sent Gov. Ned Lamont and the leaders of other impacted states a letter opposing Project Maple. The letter urged the governors to oppose the expansion publicly, demand “strict adherence and enforcement of all climate laws and regulation,” and “deny all permits to Project Maple.”...Environmental groups in Connecticut have also called on DEEP Commissioner Katie Dykes to deny all state permits for the Project Maple Expansion...“If they [Enbridge] are wanting to expand compressor stations, they’re going to need air permits from all the state agencies. And if they’re crossing waterways, they might need waterway permits as well,” Katkevich said. ‘There’s lots of opportunities to stop this project.’ “

Which Dealers Are EV Friendly – 2024 Update

EV Club of CT. “Can you recommend a dealership? It is a common query we get. A consumer is shopping for an EV that isn’t a Tesla, Rivian, or Lucid. Maybe they had a poor dealer experience or their friend had a poor experience. Either way, they don’t want to waste their time walking into a dealership only for a salesperson to try and switch pitch them to ICE. That is by far the biggest complaint we hear. Followed by dealers who are clueless about EVs generally, don’t have a vehicle charged for a test drive, whose one EV expert “isn’t here right now,” or don’t know the incentives. While we have had personal interactions with some dealers...this information was compiled using data from the CHEAPR portal through December 21.”

Connecticut beefs up energy storage incentives to meet 1 GW goal by 2030

Utility Dive. “Connecticut’s Public Utilities Regulatory Authority last week rolled out updates to the state’s Energy Storage Solutions incentive program, which regulators say will increase the adoption of energy storage by residential customers. Under the revamped program, residential customers can get as much as \$16,000 in upfront incentives — up from the previous maximum of \$7,500 — while low-income customers’ upfront incentives were raised from \$400/kWh to \$600/kWh. Customers in underserved communities, meanwhile, now have access to upfront incentives of \$450/kWh, up from the previous \$300/kWh. Connecticut is aiming to deploy 1 GW of energy storage

by the end of 2030...”

Connecticut Receives \$14.6 Million In Federal Dollars For EV Charging Stations

CT News Junkie. “Connecticut has received a \$14.6 million grant from the U.S. Department of Transportation to build out electric vehicle charging stations in seven towns and cities, Gov. Ned Lamont announced in a Thursday press release. The grant will fund new Level 2 chargers, Direct Current Fast Charging ports, or 200kW on-street chargers in the municipalities of Barkhamsted, Bridgeport, East Hartford, Groton, Hartford, New Haven, and Stamford. The new equipment will broaden Connecticut’s current inventory of 726 publicly available charging stations throughout the state...Connecticut has increased its available charging ports by 30% in the last year.”



CT to get federal money to buy 50 electric school buses

CT Mirror. “Connecticut will receive federal funding to purchase 50 electric school buses for two school districts as the Biden administration continues rolling out its infrastructure plans. A Connecticut-based bus company is one of 67 recipients to receive an award from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency for its Clean School Bus Program Grants Competition, which aims to improve air quality for students and boost manufacturing....The proposed budget would provide a total of about \$33 million to DATTCO for 85 electric buses across five school districts in Connecticut and Massachusetts. For Connecticut, it will get a portion of that grant to purchase 25 buses for Hartford Public Schools and another 25 for Connecticut’s technical schools.”

Power up: Vineyard Wind sends electricity to the grid

Connecticut Public. “New England’s first large offshore wind farm has delivered electricity to the grid. In a test Tuesday, shortly before midnight, Vineyard Wind sent about five megawatts of power ashore in Barnstable from a single turbine, according to project officials. More testing needs to be done before the turbine can be fully operational...When fully built, Vineyard Wind 1, located about 15 miles south of Martha’s Vineyard, will have 62 turbines of 13 megawatts each and generate enough power for more than 400,000 homes...At 806 megawatts, Vineyard Wind 1 has the capacity to reduce carbon emissions by more than 1.6 million metric tons annually, according to project officials. In December, Vineyard Wind’s parent companies said the project had provided 937 union jobs, nearly double the number it promised in a labor agreement.” Plus: CT will need a lot more (green) juice to achieve clean energy CT will need a lot more (green) juice to achieve clean energy goals [Hartford Business Journal]

March Events in the Neighborhood

Submitted by Bev York

- Mar. 1 Paint Party Night** (First Friday) landscape. 6:30 p.m. Paints and canvas supplied, BYO refreshments, \$25 pp sponsored by Windham Arts , Veterans Community Center, 47 Crescent Street, Willimantic. Register at info@windhamarts.org

Mar. 4 “Man’s Best Friend: Pets and Animals.” An art exhibition and sale. Gallery open daily from 9 to 5. (weather permitting) Exhibit ends March 28. Coffee Break Gallery at Eastern CT Veteran Community Center, 47 Crescent Street, Willimantic. info@windhamarts.org

Mar. 7 Woodburning Class. One session 6 to 8 p.m. All supplies included \$45. Ages 16 and up. Instructor is Carol Senechal. Also offered Saturday March 16 from 11 to 1. To register madcrafterz106@gmail.com. Windham Arts, Eastern CT Veteran Community Center, 47 Crescent St. Willimantic

Mar. 14 Liber TEA “Meet Stubby: The Most Decorated Canine in World War 1” a presentation by Bev York about some famous military dogs. 5:30 p.m. Veteran Center, 47 Crescent Street, Willimantic. sponsored by the America Museum. Donations appreciated.

Mar. 19 Party with the Irish! a fun dining experience that includes a stories of the Irish by raconteur, Bev York. 6 p.m. Order food and drink from the menu and make a donations to the America Museum. Willibrew, 967 Main Street, Willimantic. Reservations call 860-423-6777.

Mar. 27 Tavern Night at the Jillson House Museum. Meet First Lady Grace Coolidge. 5:00 – 6:00 p.m. 627 Main Street, Willimantic, (parking in rear of museum) suggested donation \$10 pp.

Solar Today - Honoring Earth Day Every Day

Greetings all,

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



Online Solar ads and videos: Deciphering what’s real and what’s a bunch of hooley!

In the past two months I’ve had readers reach out asking me to help them decipher the plethora of solar information from online social media and YouTube click-bait ads, phone calls, door knocks and solicitations at big box stores.

The solar industry is in a challenging time for homeowners and for professionals like myself that strive for honesty. I spend a lot of time with folks deciphering accurate information over mis-information that they either read online or was told by a sales person who’s just trying to make a sale rather than educating people accurately. Each home has a unique situation and instead of explaining all of the finance options, a lot of companies train sales people to lead with a lease which is the easiest sale for a new solar sales person.

No doubt, **there is a bunch of good** mixed with a lot of mis-information out there about solar. Everything from false advertising, outright lying sales people to solar companies from around the country soliciting our area. It’s an extremely confusing time for a homeowner to trust a company and to make an educated decision on solar. I am often asked, why is your information so different than what I am being told and read about? My answer is that, I am not lying about anything and I am always doing the right thing for my customers! I am not saying that all other companies lie, what I am saying is that there is so much information out there, good and bad, it’s hard for a person to weed through the information.

It’s appalling to me that the solar industry can lie as much as it does. **There are no free programs**, no rebates, there is no such thing as the Power Payback Program, There is no New CT program! There hasn’t been a new CT program since 1/1/22 when the Green Bank changed the game in favor of the utility companies!

There are very few restrictions placed on the solar industry for advertising, click bait marketing and incorrect solar proposals as there in a lot of other industries. Think about it, lawyers, accountants, many other industries cannot outright lie in marketing and presentation information like the solar industry does. Windows/doors and roofing professionals are also struggling with this dilemma. There is close to zero accountability in the industry from a legal perspective. Google lawsuits from solar customers being lied to with solar. You won’t find many. Luckily CT is working on this and I look forward to some industry standards being implemented here locally and nationally as well.

CLICK Bait tactics are rampant! 95% of the ads on Facebook and YouTube are 100% click bait. They take you info and sell it to the highest bidders. Often times up to 10 companies buy your lead. Sometimes your phone starts ringing within minutes of submitting the form and doesn’t stop for weeks. *Try it, you’ll see!*

Some of the red flags to watch out for are ads that claim a NEW Government program. Guess what, THERE IS NO NEW PROGRAM! The only program that the government offers is a 30% federal tax credit , NOT a rebate. The utility company offers a small payback for solar production is all.

Here’s an ad that is mis-information!
This ad came across my Facebook feed this week!
From.. Clean Energy News (**another disguised site claiming to be local**)
Connecticut Locals... This new, state-wide Solar Program helps qualified homeowners take advantage of all federal, state, and local solar incentives and rebates, and with your utility company’s Power Pay-Back Program and new federal laws passed in 2024, government solar incentives have increased substantially!
(end ad)
Ummm... **there are no new solar programs**, no rebates, no Power Pay Back Program, no NEW laws passed in 2024! Solar costs money and “if” a company is trying to sell you the “old” program where the utility will buy all of your energy and pay you for it. Look at the numbers and guess who’s getting the short end of the stick! How can they get away with this?

Here’s another one being used:

“Get Premium Solar Panels & Battery Backup for NO COST if you qualify through this program” Looking for 100 homes for a new program! The government is INVESTING THOUSANDS OF DOLLARS into homes to become ‘self-generators’. What 99% of people don’t know is that they can switch to solar for zero out-of-pocket, AND their monthly savings on electricity bills will 100% pay for the solar work!
(end ad)

Are you seeing the trend here?

CT is considered a HOT market because of the high cost of our electricity, so there’s a bunch of companies that claim they are local but are actually based in many other states. Solar companies are going out of business like wildfire and in today’s virtual selling world, they are paying for clickbait ads like the ones above and then trying and low bid local installers to navigate the job through our utilities and town permits.

Another thing we are seeing lately is “Closing Teams” that are not dedicated to any company except for the low cost of acquisition and are being flown into areas for 2 week stints, acting like they are local and then flying to another area. The marketing company pays all of their expenses. They call them D2D (door to door) Killers! Now there’s a nice term for a newly trained solar sales person.

I saw both of these on FBook recently:
FB: Solar Pro’s: Closers needed for appointments tomorrow. Manchester, CT, we have them, you close them, let’s go get it!

FB: Looking for installers in CT to install 6 jobs my sales team just closed!

These are real and I don’t like to keep harping on all of these challenges, but it’s important to me, that you, as a homeowner, are aware of these things. My hope is that **you are seeing this as helpful in navigating todays solar marketplace.**

These are real everyday struggles that homeowners and solar sales professionals are facing daily. It’s challenging to make sure you’re being treated honestly and with respect for your bottom line personal solar investment.

Solar is good and it saves a lot of people a lot of money! You just need to find a local person/company that you trust to help you through the process.

As far as reputable companies go, we are out there. Take the time to ask questions. You can send me your proposals and I can put my eyes on them for you or I can also give you a quote myself.

Solar is science and math, it is what it is, so tell it like it is, right from the start!

If you, or anyone you know, would like to learn more about capturing the suns energy to power your home, 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

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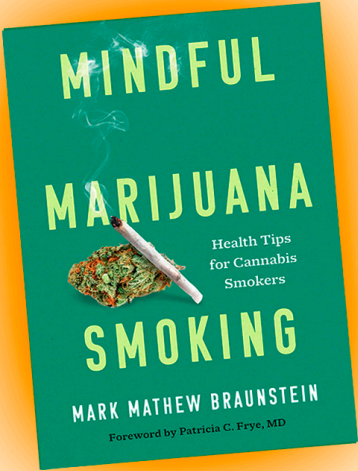
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T. King, Publisher

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A Look at Windham’s Battle of the Frogs

By Martin Moebus

The other day I was having a discussion with a long term Windhamite who lamented that no one knew the history of Windham anymore. In this article, I aim to rectify at least a small part of this lack of historical knowledge in my own way, reviewing the historical record and improvising facts when needed to fill in the details. Let’s delve into the history of perhaps Windham’s most famous moment the Battle of the Frogs.

It was 1754 - at the beginning of the French and Indian wars, the people of Windham were gripped by tension of an Indian attack. Two significant reasons fueled their apprehension. The first reason was that Windham was located near at least three native villages of Mohegan territory – Mamaquaug in North Windham, Nawbesetuck in Mansfield Center, and another near Willimantic. Despite the fact that the Indians had never launched an attack, had generously ceded the land to the first settlers, and were, in fact, allies, failed to register in the minds of these settlers. Instead, they envisioned Indians concealed under every bush, lurking in every tree and rock, poised to emerge at any moment. The second reason was more of their own creation.

You would think looking at Windham county today that there is plenty of land for everyone. On a typical country drive through the county, open land is found everywhere. Despite the ample availability of land, the settlers were driven by an insatiable desire for more. As none was available within reach, they set their eyes on lands in what they called Wyoming but was actually Pennsylvania. A simple look at a map should have told them they were lusting after the wrong state but the longing of more and more land took over all thoughts and reasoning. They marked out their desired land in “Wyoming territory” (actually Pennsylvania) and planned for the glorious days when this land would be theirs. The only problem was that the Indians owned it and didn’t look kindly on outsiders trying to steal it. Of course our forefathers said that they would “pay them fairly” but the Indians were getting wise to the ways of the settlers. They resented being forced to sell their land and having to move out just because some locals in Windham wanted to get rich. That didn’t stop two lawyers - Colonel Eliphalet Dyer and Jedediah Elderkin forming a company to “purchase” the lands.

News soon reached Windham that war had begun in the Ohio country beyond the Susquehannah. An expedition against the French was led by a young officer named George Washington dispatched from Virginia. As they had no really good maps they didn’t realize that Susquehannah was near the land they wanted to steal/buy the land from the indigenous people.

As to this Washington fellow, as folks didn’t have high speed internet back then, they couldn’t look up who this George Washington was, so didn’t realize that it was this George who would become very famous later on. What they did comprehend was that war was no time in which to start a new town in Indian territory. Colonel Eliphalet Dyer and Jedediah Elderkin, therefore put off the undertaking until peace should come again.

Note on lawyers:

Then as now lawyers were always trouble. Ambulances were first used for emergency transport in 1487 by Spanish forces against the Emirate of Granada. The first ambulance chasers soon followed. Dyer and Elderkin were of the worst kind of these type of lawyers. Who in Windham today can get their catchy radio jingle out of their head? “Elderkin, your legal kin, With expertise, we always win. From court to court, we’ll defend, Your rights and interests, to the end.” For those observant enough, remnants of old highway signs with the slogan “Had a fire, call Dyer” can still be spotted along the byways of Willimantic.

Back to the story

Meanwhile, people in Windham grew anxious for their safety. If the Indians were in truth offended about the land grab would not the French now encourage them to take their revenge? (Authors note: this attack could not happen as the French, like the Windhamites, lacked maps to know where these lawyers trying to steal the Indians land lived. Besides the French spoke French not Algonquin so were unable to tell their Indian allies where these land appropriators lived anyway.)

The hero of our story now enters. Parson White had a black slave called Pomp. As the Parson had no woman slaves Pomp had become friendly with another slave down the road and wanted to visit her one night. Parson White said it was ok but told Pomp not to be late coming

back. He headed down Route 14 for his rendezvous.

The lady friend’s identity remains a mystery, as does the name of the slave owner down the road. For the sake of the story we will call the slave owner Nathaniel and keep the identity of the lady friend secret. The night was getting late and Nathaniel was getting tired and wanted to go to bed. The noise and shenanigans of Pomp had to stop. When the knock on the door came, Pomp got up and got ready to leave. Looking at the clock in the living room, he realized he had stayed out way too late. Hurrying back to Windham center along the same Route 14 he thought on what would happen to him when he got back. Would Parson White be enraged and punish him? Would he have to give up seeing his lady friend? Something must be done!

He heard the frogs in the old frog pond called Follett’s pond then and soon came up with a plan. Returning to Parson White’s house, he started shrieking, groaning, and telling a story of strange noises coming from the pond. The sounds were actually frogs croaking but the settlers didn’t get out much at night and probably didn’t know this. They would think the frogs were French and Indians trying to attack the settlement.

The settlers, stirred from their sleep by all this shrieking and groaning, played into Pomp’s scheme. Everyone suddenly heard the noise of the frogs and, as expected, imagined these noises to be Indian invaders. They armed themselves with whatever weapons were at hand – pitchforks, axes, swords,-luckily obtained a few Sundays ago at the Mansfield flea market, along a few guns thrown into the mix and prepared for the invaders.

Colonel Eliphalet Dyer and Jededia Elderkin , the ones you recalled as having started the rumors by trying to steal the Indian land in the first place, along with a mysterious Mr. Grey rode on horseback at the head of the procession.

As they headed towards the frog pond, the trio of horsemen Dyer, Elderkin, and Grey seemingly developed cold feet. “Keep going forward” they told their band of colonists, we will scout from above on Mullen Hill. “Before the colonists could reply the three galloped up the hill and stopped hidden out of site. “What should we do?” asked Dyer. Grey took charge and fired a couple of shots into the air. “That should scare the intruders and give us a good story about the fighting we did” said Grey. Everyone concurred that this was a shrewd strategy, and eagerly anticipated the medals they were confident they would acquire after the battle.

Meanwhile, the colonists approached the pond finding the frogs in the pitch of a fierce battle with one another. As they didn’t know what the frogs were fighting about, they saw no reason to join in with the amphibian fray and decided to go home to sleep. Later that night, the three horseman again woke the now angry citizens. They told their tale about the battle of Mullen Hill. No one believed a word of it as they had seen frogs - not Frenchmen or Indians. Instead of medals the three were branded fools.

But what about the frogs?

There are two curiosities in this affair now called the Battle of the Frogs. The first is what were the frogs doing that night to cause such a commotion. It strikes me as peculiar that not a single settler bothered to ask the frogs on that dark night, so we have no eyewitness accounts. The leading theory we have is that the frogs were doing a land grab themselves on recently discovered waters found on which what would become Back Road. The frog lawyers, like their human brethren, were forming a company to take the land from the ancestral frogs living far up the stream. One group wanted to name the new pond “Frog Pond Two”, another frog lawyer suggested naming their company called “Bibbons” which means red hair. Half the frogs were incensed as they were amphibians and didn’t have hair let alone of the red variety. The others thought Frog Pond Two sounded too modern and besides, they needed to rename Frog Pond One from Follett’s pond anyway before having a Frog Pond Two. Wars have been fought over these types of silly things for thousands of years. Battle lines were drawn and the battle of the frogs began. The rest is history. The second curiosity was how the settlers saw the frog battle in the dark in times before flashlights. That mystery must remain one.

The following day local poets crafted verses much to the embarrassment of Dyer and Elderkin. The fate of Pomp after the frog battle remains unknown. While in subsequent years Willimantic would honor their Windham heritage by appropriating the frog symbol and placing statues on a “frog bridge”, no sculpture has been erected to commemorate Pomp, the true hero and instigator of this tale.



Gurleyville Grist Mill Gets a Museum Makeover

By Ann Dunnack. Photo by Michelle Poudrette

If you’ve visited the Joshua’s Trust Gurleyville Grist Mill and Miller’s Cottage Museum Campus recently you may have noticed three new interpretive signs. Thanks to Museum Makeover, a program of Conservation ConneCTion which is supported through a partnership with the Connecticut League of History Organizations and funded by a grant from the CT Cultural Fund, visitors to the campus can now read about the history of this area and the historic buildings all year long. Thank you to everyone who helped with this project. The CT Cultural Fund is administered by CT Humanities, with funding provided by the Connecticut State Department of Economic and Community Development/Connecticut Office of the Arts from the Connecticut State Legislature.

The Gurleyville Grist Mill is located in the historic village of Gurleyville in Mansfield at 134 Stonemill Road, along the Fenton River. It is a perfectly preserved 19th century water-powered grist mill, which operated, grinding corn for area farms and the University of Connecticut, until 1941. Joshua’s Trust acquired the Mill and the Miller’s Cottage, plus the surrounding 10 acres of forest, field and riparian corridor in 1979. The Nipmuck trail runs right through the property, providing hiking opportunities, and the grounds have pollinator gardens.

The Mill Museum is open for guided tours from mid-May until mid-October on Sundays 1 - 5 PM, plus some special events. You can also join us on any of the following March guided walks. Weather may cancel these events, so be sure to visit <https://joshuastrust.org/events/> for details, changes and cancellations.

Wednesday Walk at Tower Hill Preserve

3/6/24 9:00-10:30 AM
Tower Hill Preserve, between 96 & 154 Tower Hill Road, Chaplin, CT
Join us for an ~ 1.4 mile hike on long-abandoned farm roads through an oak forest that provides important habitat for nesting birds and mammals.

A Walk Along the Old Connecticut Path at Madeline Regan Preserve in Tolland.

3/9/24 10:00 am - 11:30 am
Madeline Regan Preserve, 1274 Tolland Stage Road, Tolland, CT
Joshua’s Trust blogger, George Jacobi, will discuss the history of the Old Connecticut Path, a section of which we walk. Michelle Poudrette, JT’s Development and Communications Manager will point out some of the evergreen ferns and clubmosses that grow throughout the property.

Wednesday Walk at Utley Hill Preserve

3/20/24 9:00 -10:30 AM
Utley Hill Preserve, 60 Hennequin Rd, Columbia, CT
Join us for a 2.5 mile multi-habitat adventure and a little history, too.

Long Distance Hike at Bradley-Buchanan Woods

3/23/24 10:00 AM -12:00 PM
Bradley-Buchanan Woods. Park on the south side of the Mansfield Public Library, 54 Warrenville Road, Mansfield Center.
Join volunteer Dawn Heasley for a 4.7 mile hike that will take us into Mansfield Hollow State Park and back.

To all our contributors-
Thank you!
Without your submissions of writing, poetry, artwork and photographs, this paper would not exist. T. King, Publisher

Cultural Autism Studies at Yale University

By Michelle M. Baughman

Dawn Prince-Hughes, Ph.D., is an American anthropologist, primatologist, ethnologist, published author of several books, and a late-in-life identified autistic woman. Her Autism Ethnography Project



is in its second year at Yale University’s Community Autism Socials at Yale (CASY Sparks) program. The CASY Sparks program is an online community for autistic individuals in Connecticut (and the families, friends, and professionals involved in their lives) for the purpose of promoting a high quality of life for individuals on the autism spectrum. It was founded by Dr. Roger Jou, psychologist, researcher, and community developer specializing in autism across the lifespan. Dr. Prince-Hughes’ Autism Ethnography Project is funded by a grant from the Connecticut Council on Developmental Disabilities.

Ethnography is a branch of anthropology and the systematic study of individual cultures. It explores cultural phenomena from the point of view of the subjects of the study and it examines the behavior of the participants in a given social situation and seeks to understand the group members’ own interpretation of that behavior. It is a holistic study (meaning that it includes a brief history and analysis of other contributing factors) and it relies heavily on the researcher participating in the process and seeking to document, in detail, the social interaction patterns, perceptions, and experiences. These things are considered in reference to the context of the situation, (as opposed to looking for generalized findings). Dr. Prince-Hughes summarized it as “a formalized acknowledgement, exploration, and recording of the unique shared patterns that give a group of social beings cohesion.” This method has been used to study a wide range of communities, groups, and organizations from traditional communities to youth gangs, to religious cults. Even the NASA Challenger disaster was analyzed using the ethnology method. But this kind of social research has never before been applied to autistic people. This is largely due to the relative scarcity of the occurrence of autism in the population, along with the harmful misconceptions regarding the social aptitude of autistic individuals. Before online social media technology, most autistic people didn’t have access to others like themselves. So, it was inconceivable to researchers that autistics even had their own community, let alone a culture. But now, thanks to social media, autistic individuals all over the globe are finding each other and creating community online.

“Since the advent of social media there has been a growing awareness that there is a sense of autistic culture as those who identify as being on the spectrum share their inner lives and experiences with each other. Their self-expression is important in its own right. But given the exquisite sensitivity of those of us who are on the spectrum, there are also valuable insights to be gained by taking note of how we navigate the social, creative, and sacred environments we find ourselves in,” said Dr. Prince-Hughes at the onset of the project. “Spectrum inter-weavings of self and environment can be wondrous experiences. They can also be overwhelming, even painful. Knowing how these experiences shape us, and understanding how we shape them in turn, is not only meaningful, but vital.” Said Dr. Prince-Hughes. These insights may have bearing on how the future delivery of services and accommodations are designed.

Some of the quandaries Dr. Prince-Hughes hoped to explore with her Autism Ethnography Project included: Do people relate to one another when they are in a formal group, or is it simply a forced conglomeration of people existing in social parallel? Is the session complete chaos or do people listen to each other? Are people engaged with the topics being discussed, or are they only interested in speaking about their personal area of interest? “A functional culture requires, at minimum, some kind of shared framework and a means of group participation in that framework.” Said Dr. Prince-Hughes.

Two years into the project Dr. Prince-Hughes reported that it was “evident early on that the group was taking a *different kind of social shape*.” She says that her findings have revealed that autistic culture is “strikingly unique in a number of dynamic ways,” and she was able to determine abundant areas of autistic cultural expression and figure out how and why autistic expression clashes with that of neuro-normative (non-autistic) society. According to Dr. Prince-Hughes, “the very nature of autistic thought, perception, and experience is holographic, not linear. Autistic culture revolves around organic, open-ended processes that stretch out in all directions, and is always in motion. This is diametrically opposite of the static, efficiency-based style of neurotypical systems.” Dr.

Prince-Hughes stresses the importance of “discerning this as a *cultural difference*, rather than a pathology on one side of the exchange.”

“As the group embraced itself as an expression of autistic culture, other clear cultural markers were everywhere: in the group’s resonance with one another’s creativity, their style of straight forward dialogue, their refusal to wear neurotypically imposed social masks in order to adhere to neuro-normative social conventions, their active enthusiasm for new ideas, their rhythms of turn taking (which are very different from those of neuro-normative society), their natural understanding of one another’s complex emotional workings, and the forthright style of dialogue about all those things. Watching these social mechanics, made possible by a claimed cultural matrix, removed all doubt regarding the central premise of the Ethnography: autistic people, indeed, have culture.” Reported Dr. Prince-Hughes.

She went on further to explain that “The presence of culture was also obvious in that our interactions flowed smoothly from a set of unspoken yet fully understood rules, (or perhaps ‘value-driven protocols’ is a better term). The shared values that underpinned and facilitated the expression and building of autistic culture were quite different from those of neuro-normative foundations. Most notably, autistic culture is grounded in unusual honesty, genuine and expansive empathy, and palpable respect.” Dr. Prince-Hughes commented on “the surprising level of supportive cultural cohesion,” stating that “The group was supportive at all kinds of levels: When participants had to turn off their cameras, or mute a sound, or walk incessantly as they participated, or asked another participant if it was possible to address something in the background that was challenging to them on a sensory level, acceptance and cooperation were a foregone conclusion. When people responded to another person sharing a difficult situation that they were going through, or sharing a painful memory, offering a personal story of a similar situation or memory was understood to function as an expression of empathetic emotional layers, rather being an example of self-centeredness [as it is interpreted in neurotypical culture].” Reported Dr. Prince-Hughes.

She also commented on how participants throughout the ethnography project “completely reframed, in positive ways, and affirmed natural autistic cultural expression together.” She went on to say that “This reframing didn’t require overt attention, discussion, or procedural consensus – which is another marker of legitimate culture.” Examples of this reframing include: “*Oversharing* [as it is deemed in neuro-normative culture] became a means of expressing emotional honesty in an efficient and relevant way. *Monologuing* and *restricted areas of interest* became expressions of admirable expertise. *Going down rabbit holes* became lauded explorations of possible new connections, or discoveries of meaningful patterns that non-autistic people wouldn’t register. *Outbursts* became opportunities for silent support and then healing. *Stimming* became a kind of sacred, ritual pantomime for feelings and sensations that defied reductive human speech. *Naivete* and *lack of boundaries* became expressions of the awareness that everyone and everything is connected – an inextricable part of the self.”

Dr. Prince-Hughes highlighted this last point about the inherent interconnectivity of everything (including the self), stating that “autistic culture finds its root in this last facet: Autistic people simply don’t have (and don’t admire) the kinds of invented boundaries and needless disconnections that non-autistic cultures [have].” She continued to say, “Whether it is on a sensory level, social level, environments level, or even a species level, the living holographic reality that autistic people and their culture perceive and embody is in opposition to neuro-normative suppositions.” She cited “an unusually active sense of responsibility among participants” that she reasoned was a direct manifestation of this deep understanding of the interconnectivity of everything, (including the self): “An active, connected sense of responsibility was evidenced by the things participants talked about doing outside of the Ethnography sessions, in their personal lives. In a myriad of ways, they participated in changing the world for the better – not just for themselves and other autistic people, but for living things in general. Service to humanity as a whole, service to the marginalized, and service to animals and the environment were all strongly evidenced.

Dr. Prince-Hughes described how the participants were “recharged and reaffirmed in their efforts through the power of the group.” She stated that this was a transformative experience for the participants and that “cultural connectivity exponentially enhances the self-esteem, confidence, and the applied energy of autistic people,” and she said that “cultural cohesion helps autistic people speak up without fear and self-consciousness generated by isolation and singularity.” She concludes by stating, “Ironically,

autistic people may need social engagement and support on certain levels even more than non-autistic people [do] – they simply need it with members of their own culture.” Each week Dr. Prince-Hughes hosts different accomplished autistic or neurodivergent guest speakers from around the world for a live, interactive discussion, via Zoom, with the autistic and neurodivergent members of the CASY community. Some of these guest speakers have included: Award-winning artist Dawn-Joy Leong, from Singapore, who led a discussion about the relationships between animals and autistic people and she talked about her long history with her service dog, Lucy. Autistic Psychiatrist Mark Dooley, who talked about his practice as a psychiatrist and his late diagnosis. Autistic advocate Nick Walker, who facilitated an interactive discussion on genderqueer topics. Jules Edwards, a member of the Anishinaabe tribe, talked about her tribe’s cultural matrix and how autism relates to spirituality among the Anishinaabe. David Varela-Trejo, Ph.D., and Bernice Vargas-Garcia Ph.D., who led a conversation (with the help of Spanish translator Diego Lozano, about autism, animals, and veganism in South America. “Over the next months we will have a variety of non-speaking autistic people [who use Augmented Communication Devices], and autistic people that speak different languages, as we are trying to expand our diversity,” Dr. Prince-Hughes added.

Other guest speakers, who are not themselves autistic, are allies to the neurodivergent community and have valuable expertise to share. For example, Lindsey Biel, M.A., OTR/L, author of *Raising A Sensory Smart Child: The Definitive Handbook for helping Your Child with Sensory Processing Issues* who facilitated a conversation about bully culture and how it’s difficult to set up sensory friendly environments when people are not supportive about sensory needs. Award-winning writer Susanne Antonetta led a discussion on madness and the narrow definitions of sanity that neuro-normative culture artificially constructs. Attorney and advocate Reena Anand, who is from India and the UK, shared cross-cultural perspectives about autism and neurodiversity. Professor and award-winning musician Michael Bakan talked about his work getting autistic kids involved musical ensembles. Enrico Valtelina, who is from Italy, talked about autistic civil rights in Italy, and his experiences as an advocate. Brain cancer survivor Jacki Edry led a presentation on embracing acquired neurodivergence.

In order to accommodate guest speakers from different time zones all over the world, the times and days of the events vary. The dates and times of the upcoming speaker events are announced about a week ahead of time via meetups.com, which sends out email notifications. Members wishing to attend the events RSVP through their MeetUps accounts which can be accessed directly from the email notification, or by using the MeetUps app. (It is easy to get an account if you do not already have one by simply going to meetups.com). Then the private Zoom link to join the discussion is made available only to members who RSVP’d for the event.

To find out more about Cultural Autism Studies at Yale, subscribe to the CASY Sparks YouTube page at: Dr. <https://www.youtube.com/c/DrRogerJou> or go to <https://meetup.com/projectcasy>. To learn more about Dr. Prince-Hughes read her autobiography *Songs of the Gorilla Nation: My Journey Through Autism*, or her anthology *Aquamarine Blue 5: Personal Stories of College Students with Autism*, or any of her other books that can be found on goodreads.com.

Michelle M. Baughman is a late-in-life diagnosed adult on the autism spectrum, an autism advocate serving on the Connecticut Council on Developmental Disabilities, a parent of a twice-exceptional child, and a trauma-informed AANE Certified Coach who provides intensive, highly individualized coaching to individuals with neurodivergent conditions. Michelle ascribes to the Neurodiversity paradigm and writes to help debunk the general misconceptions surrounding these conditions in order to change the negative cultural narrative about them, and to help neurodivergent individuals live their best lives.

Tai Chi Classes for Health and Balance

Windham Senior Center:

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

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

Chaplin Senior Center: Wed 12:30-1:30

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

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

Call or text Joe Pandolfo: 959-444-3979

Regional Community Media & Arts News

Submitted by John Murphy

Hi everyone, I hope your Groundhog Day was a delightful reminder of the cycles of repetitive silliness that we sometimes call tradition! The whole premise of February 2 is silly, but we do love to watch those critters every year, and I love that film! As you read this issue of *Neighbors*, we are in March and soon we will turn the clocks one hour ahead to celebrate a tradition from another period in history. And, speaking of silly traditions, the U.S. is still not metric, but I digress...and I have great news to share!



They will explain what it takes to apply for a NEA grant and manage an award and prepare your final report. Get your roadmap to prepare to jump into federal grants. Find out about support services at your disposal to help make this happen for your organization or project.

My January 31, 2024, edition of *On the Homefront* featured an extensive interview about the Coalition and its work and the wide range of support available for the arts community across eastern Connecticut. Here is a link: <https://youtu.be/PIBezLowF6c?si=7ALuc08PcdKwMvau>

ON THE HOMEFRONT IS ON LIVE RADIO AND YOUTUBE ANYTIME AUDIO PODCASTS ARE ALSO AVAILABLE

The *On the Homefront* series is available on YouTube for 24/7 access anywhere. Just search on “WILI Radio.” Subscribe and you will automatically get every new program in your inbox. Guests get links for their own media sharing! Let us help you with your media outreach.

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!

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/>

ON THE HOMEFRONT PROGRAM ARCHIVE

Below is our program topic log for January—February. Many conversations are not dated, and they provide good local information that can be useful anytime. Please see the individual YouTube programs for names of guests after January 3.

January 3:
1/Tom King, publisher of *Neighbors*, history, unique purpose, community media
2/Victoria Nimorowski, retiring from WAIM as Exec. Dir. after decades of community service
3/Michael Westerfield, local historian, new book: *Israel Putnam: America’s First Folk Hero*

January 10:
1/Connecticut Tenant Unions—statewide and local update
2/UConn Jorgensen Center for the Performing Arts—Preview for Spring 2024
3/CT VITA Program—Volunteer Income Tax Assistance Program for 2024
January 17:
1/MASS MoCA/Assets for Artists Program/Training and Resources
2/Swift Waters Artisans’ Cooperative
3/Housing Crisis in CT/Cargill Tenants Union in Putnam CT

January 24:
1/Taste2Towns 2024 Celebration in Mansfield and Willimantic
2/Windham Theatre Guild
3/Arts Update #2 with Assets for Artists/MASS MoCA

January 31:
1/Cultural Coalition Serving Southeastern and Northeastern Connecticut Part 1 (overview + collaboration with Connecticut Museum of Culture and History)
2/Cultural Coalition Serving Southeastern and Northeastern Connecticut Part 2 (with Folk and Traditional Arts Community Impact Coordinator)
3/Latino Chamber of Commerce of Windham—first of new series!

February 7:
1/Regional Arts Update from Arts Center East, Vernon
2/New Digital Navigators service at the Mansfield Public Library
3/Poets at Large Series at The Vanilla Bean #1



February 14:
1/Putnam Arts Council—northeast arts news and events update
2/Latino Chamber of Commerce of Windham/#2 in a series
3/Live music in eastern CT—*Soundbath Saturday* at Willimantic Records

February 21:
1/Tenant Unions Update Re Cargill Mills in Putnam
2/Digital Navigators service at the Mansfield Public Library #2
3/Live Music Update Re Bread Box Folk Series

February 28:
1/ECSU and Higher Ed Funding in Connecticut/Impacts of Cuts
2/Project for the Creation of a Mansfield Cultural District
3/Health Care Challenges in eastern Connecticut

Thank you very much for reading *Neighbors* and for listening to or watching *On the Homefront*. I appreciate your interest and support for local media—and hope you will stay connected with this project and join me in the studio when you have news to share!

Always keep the faith,

John Murphy
john@humanartsmedia.com

The Soul Remembers

When my son was about seven years old he and I were slowly walking together in the wooded back yard of our home in the Blue Ridge mountains of North Carolina, enjoying the soft, golden light of dusk at the close of the day — when the world and nature becomes quiet for a short spell to honor the end of one day and the beginning of another. I remember the limbs of the large maple tree were bare, so it must have been late fall, perhaps November; I stopped abruptly when I spotted a large owl sitting on a branch just above our heads about fifteen feet away. We stood still and silently observed this majestic creature also quietly taking in this special moment in the day and about to begin its evening hunt.

With a sudden movement it launched into the air on its large wings. My brain was anticipating the sound of the flap of its wings accompanying the departure from the branch, but the shocking realization of complete and absolute silence accompanying its movements was both an exquisite surprise and a delight! Forty years later, as I recall that unique encounter, it’s a source of pleasure and joy to me. I can recall that encounter so vividly because it affected my very soul. And the soul never forgets.

An Unexpected Moment in the Universe

Night had fallen and I was taking the trash barrel out to the curb for the next day’s pick-up. All was quiet and the wind was still; the air had an invigorating fresh crispness to it. As I turned and slowly walked back toward the house, I looked up to the trees and the night sky and was surprised to see a bright, golden-orange sliver of a crescent moon hanging like a brilliant jewel against the dark sky. I stopped and slowly smiled at the serendipity, then quietly drank it in through the bare branches for several extended moments.

A day or so later, I ran across these lines from Jalāl’ad-Din Rūmī: * “*Observe the wonders as they occur around you. Don’t claim them. Feel the artistry moving through and be silent.*”
* 13th-century Persian poet, Islamic scholar, jurist, theologian, and Sufi mystic

— Michael Hughey

1. A new regional media partnership with Hall Communications
2. March 12 webinar for arts funding training from the NEA
3. Online archive of program guests and topics for January—February

A NEW REGIONAL MEDIA PARTNERSHIP



Beginning sometime in March we will have a second radio station as a broadcast partner to expand our reach and coverage from the Windham/Quiet Corner areas of the northeast to Norwich and New London in the southeast.

Our base of operations is at **WILI AM 1400/95.3 FM**, in Willimantic, and our new partner is **WICH AM 1310/FM 94.5**, in Norwich. Both are part of a group of Hall Communications radio stations serving Connecticut. Combining their radio signals with the **WILI YouTube channel**, our programs will reach significant areas in the three counties of eastern Connecticut: Tolland, Windham, and New London. About ½ million people live in more than 40 towns across the region. For the first half of 2024 our coverage priorities will include:

1. Continuing full coverage of the arts community in all its forms across the region.
2. The increasing impacts of recent structural and financial changes to the system of health care delivery
3. The growing imbalance of our housing market economy and the growth of tenant unions
4. Assessing the Limits of Local Government, for example, in Mansfield and Ashford
5. More episodes in our social service series with WRCC/Windham Regional Community Council
6. Direct support for live music in all venues across the region—interviews, tour info, websites

MARCH 12 WEBINAR FOR ARTS FUNDING TRAINING

The **Cultural Coalition serving southeastern and northeastern Connecticut** is our Designated Regional Service Organization of the Connecticut Office of the Arts (DRSO). Their website is www.culturesect.org and it has lots of information about arts resources, programs, special events, and funding opportunities. You can sign up for their newsletter to receive regular updates and you can register yourself in their regional artist database.

On March 12 at 10:00 am the Coalition will present a special online training session with staff from the National Endowment for the Arts. Sign up on their website right away when you see this in *Neighbors*!

At the Ashford Winter Farmers Market

March 3 and March 17;
10: 00am - 1:00pm
Knowlton Memorial Hall
5 Town Hall Road
Ashford, CT
(in the Babcock Library)

These incredibly talented AAAC artist members will have booths at the indoor Ashford Farmers Market in March:

March 3rd Farmers Market
Alison Ciarlante of Inner-sassa (top photo)
Alison uses bold rainbow spectrum colors to create dot paintings on rocks, clocks and canvas.

March 17 Farmers Market
Kathy Weigold, Weaver (center photo)
A well-loved long-time weaver from Mansfield will display woven bags, rugs, towels, scarves, and placemats

March 17 Farmers Market
Bob Johnson, Caning repurposed chairs (photo at right)
Bob is a meticulous craftsman who reclaims and repurposes chairs with a fresh coat of paint and newly caned seats.



Mildred
She came to us for food and we soon realized she was a mother. I followed her one day and found her kittens. I brought her and her kittens home. They were all adopted, but one. We kept him and mother. We wanted a matronly name, so we call her Mildred. Caption and photos by Diane Rutherford.

Your Brain on Politics

By Bob Lorentson

“No one party can fool all of the people all of the time. That’s why we have two parties.” Bob Hope

Once again it’s election season, a time when passions run high, and sensible people just run. A time when inflammatory speeches ignite combustible emotions in a fantastic explosion of banners, buttons, hats, and flags that just leaves one’s thoughts to wonder if they’ll ever be able to get along. Thoughts and emotions may exist in the same brain, but don’t let that fool you. They don’t have equal voting rights. There’s a wall between them, and come election season, thoughts are arrested at the border.

Emotions are processed by the limbic system, the oldest part of the brain evolutionarily, and the part most in need of modernizing. Once upon a time it instilled in our ancient ancestors some valuable instincts, like fight or flight, that came in handy when the world was crawling with saber-toothed tigers. Now we have politicians to worry about, however, who can make even saber-toothed tigers look toothless. It was widely hoped that we’d be able to understand them by taking advantage of the new, thinking part of our brains.

The cerebrum is not only the newest part of the human brain, but also the largest and most complicated, handling, as it does, learning, logic, reasoning, and making fun of the limbic system. This is perhaps why it is consistently voted the part of the brain most likely to succeed. Unfortunately, it appears that our limbic systems have no sense of humor. They are intensely jealous of our cerebrums, and get especially angry during election season, when they will try and sabotage them every chance they get. It’s no wonder that politics gives everyone headaches.

Fear is the strongest emotion we have, and the limbic system uses it like a dentist uses a drill. Even your average over-wrought and under-ready limbic system can make the best cerebrum react to a political candidate like it would to a root canal. It seems to know that the more your emotions get the best of you, the worse your cerebrum does, and before you know it, you’re frightened half to death that the candidate will take away everything from your rights and freedoms to your dental plan. And you’ve doubled-down on anyone who tells you that only they can make your teeth great again.

The limbic system knows that a scared cerebrum is a compliant cerebrum, and will cherry-pick only that information that supports its fears, or interpret it in such a way that it blames liberals. Psychologists call this the Confirmation Bias, and your brain is never so vulnerable to it as when it is on politics. If you don’t believe me, try researching the other candidate’s positions and see if your teeth don’t start to fall out. I can practically hear you nodding your head in agreement already.

Basically the limbic system is a place where thoughts go to die. As it evolved to view everything with

suspicion for survival reasons, it is naturally conservative in nature, and runs on a platform of fear, negative emotions, and opposition to progress. This Negativity Bias, as it is called, is why it views the cerebrum and election season as simply two more threats, and why a meddling cerebrum that tries to put a positive spin on any issue, or do any fact-checking, must be called out as an extremist and ridiculed. While the cerebrum views biases as viruses, it has not yet discovered a vaccine for them, and anyway, the limbic system is already warning about government intrusion, autism, and microchip trackers.

Another favorite trick of the limbic system during election season is to get your cerebrum to mistake feelings for thoughts. This is easier than you might think, or instinctively feel if you’re not up to the task. Truly thinking about an issue takes more mental resources than most cerebrums can handle outside a barroom, and inside a barroom the limbic system has it right where it wants it. As you can see, to really understand politics, we’re either going to need a bigger cerebrum, or a limbic system that can handle its liquor.

Most of us think that we understand more than we actually do. This is merely a sad attempt by the cerebrum to prove that it has a purpose in life. To see if you have a cerebrum that is ready for election season, pick an issue – any issue – then try and explain your position on it without saying how you feel about it. Or resorting to name-calling, lies, or fascism. Most can’t, which is why psychologists call this the Illusion of Explanatory Depth. But if you can do so without making the guy sitting next to you at the bar either feel like throwing his drink in your face, or pledging his loyal servitude, congratulations, you may be ready to write an op-ed. The real illusion, however, is your thinking that people will be swayed by your thoughtful opinions when they’re busy laughing at the comics.

In 2009, the great evolutionary biologist, E.O. Wilson said, “Humans have paleolithic emotions, medieval institutions, and God-like technologies. And it is terrifically dangerous, and it is now approaching a point of crisis overall.” If our emotions don’t start evolving soon, not even the comics will help save us from election season.

Bob Lorentson’s cerebrum supports this message. His limbic system, not so much.

Bob Lorentson is a local writer and retired environmental scientist. His latest book is YOU ONLY GO EXTINCT ONCE (Stuck in the Anthropocene with the Pleistocene Blues Again).

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Issue 2
March / 2024
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* !!Happy Spring!! *

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The Planet Press Mission

We are dedicated to fostering a resilient and informed community by delivering timely, accurate, and engaging environmental news. Driven by the belief that a well-informed community is a powerful force for positive change, our mission is to illuminate the environmental news and issues that impact Northeastern Connecticut. We are committed to providing a platform for diverse voices. Together with our readers, we aspire to create a community united in its dedication to preserving the natural beauty of Connecticut, ensuring that our region remains a vibrant and resilient place for generations to come.

United Illuminating Lawsuit Filed By DEEP

English Station, located in New Haven, is the site of a decommissioned power plant initially constructed in the late 1800s. The English Station functioned as a coal and oil power plant for United Illuminating from 1929 until its decommissioning in 1992. Tong mentioned that the remaining site is heavily polluted with hazardous substances, including polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), a recognized carcinogen, heavy metals, and other contaminants. At the end of January, Attorney General William Tong filed a lawsuit against United Illuminating, the electric utility company, for allegedly neglecting to address environmental contamination issues at the closed New Haven power plant. The lawsuit, filed on behalf of DEEP, mandates that UI meet its legal responsibilities to remediate the closed English Station by “whatever action is necessary,” Attorney General Tong said. Tong stated that the lawsuit additionally demands penalties of up to \$25,000 per day for every breach of a Partial Consent Order issued in 2016. The order mandated remediation actions to resolve contamination concerns within three years, and the legal action asserts that the specified timeline for completing the onsite cleanup was not adhered to. New Haven Mayor Justin Elicker said that the defunct site could be used as a “positive asset” for the community, but only if United Illuminating stops “the delays and inaction” and fulfills “its legal obligations.”

“United Illuminating is obligated to remediate English Station regardless of what it takes and regardless of the cost. That is the law, and that is not up for debate. We have tried for years to get United Illuminating to fulfill its obligations, and they have refused. We were left with no choice but to file today’s legal action, on behalf of our state and the people of New Haven who deserve to see this site cleaned and ready for productive, future use”

Attorney General Tong

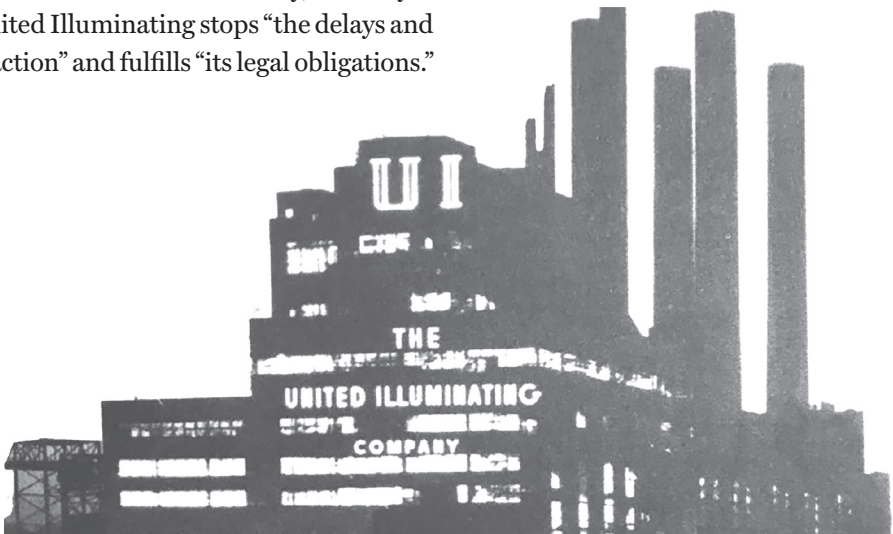


An Assortment of Animal Oracles

Hark! A prophecy foretold by those who can’t speak... There are currently 5 Groundhog Day forecasters located in Connecticut. How will this spring play out? In Eastford, Scramble the Duck Jr. delivers a daily weather forecast at 7:30 AM in front of the Ivy Glenn Building in Eastford, Connecticut. In the Duck Day ceremony, Scramble emerges from his dwelling. If he perceives his shadow, six additional weeks of winter are anticipated; otherwise, an early spring is predicted. According to him, we will have an early spring. In Bridgeport, there is a predictor who is stuffed. Beardsley Bart is a stuffed prairie dog who shares his Groundhog Day prediction alongside the Zoo Director and Bridgeport Mayor at the Beardsley Zoo in Bridgeport, Connecticut. After the event, Bart retreats underground to hibernate for the winter. He predicted an early spring this year. Chuckles, designated as the official groundhog of Connecticut, resides at the Lutz Children’s Museum in Manchester. Since at least the mid-1990s, Chuckles has been conducting weather forecasts in a ceremony attended by numerous families and children. Chuckles ventures outdoors to check for his shadow, then returns to relay the information with the mayor serving as the exclusive translator. Over the years, multiple Chuckles have assumed this role, each officially sworn into office by a state official, be it the Governor, Lt. Governor, or Superior Court Judge. This year, Chuckles predicted an early spring.

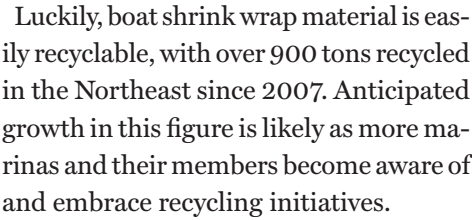
\$17 Million Allocated for Winter Heating Assistance

On Valentine’s Day, the General Assembly unanimously approved an additional \$17 million allocation to enhance energy assistance programs, allowing thousands of households to receive an extra \$410 this winter. Gov. Lamont Launches Pilot Program at UConn Health for Carbon Footprint Reduction and Energy Cost Savings On the 22nd of February, Governor Ned Lamont approved a 12-month pilot program set to begin at UConn Health’s Child Care Center building in Farmington. The initiative will deploy an innovative technology developed by Shelton-based company Budderfly. The goal is to assist the healthcare system and hospitals achieve a net-zero carbon footprint and substantial energy cost savings. Supported by Connecticut Innovations (CI) through the Governor’s Innovations Lab, this pilot represents the State of Connecticut’s ongoing efforts and investments toward achieving a zero-carbon electric supply by 2040. CI, the state’s strategic venture capital arm and primary source of funding and support for innovative companies, will fund the initial equipment and installation expenses. Budderfly, a portfolio company of CI and backed by Partners Group, is at the forefront of this initiative.

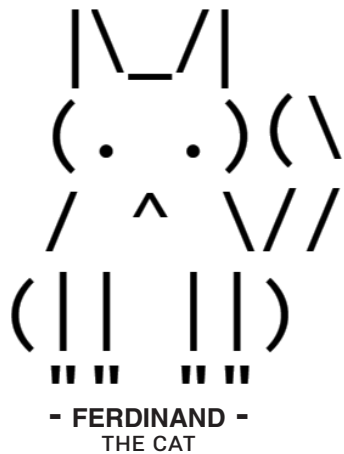


Contamination specifically linked to AFFF firefighting foam is extensively documented. PFAS presence has been identified in private wells and the municipal water supply in Killingworth, stemming from AFFF foam discharge at the town's Fire Training Area and Fire Department. Numerous other sites are confirmed to be affected by AFFF products, including Cherry Brook Primary School in Canton, the Farmington River due to discharges at Bradley International Airport, communities in New London and Groton near the Naval Submarine Base, Windham near the Eastern Connecticut Fire School, and various others. Drinking water in East Hampton and at the Mystic Oral School for the Deaf in Groton has also been contaminated with PFAS attributable to AFFF.

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