

NEIGHBORS

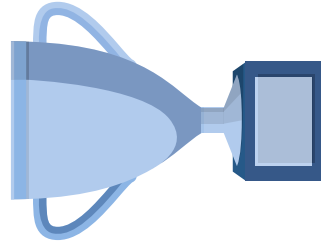
No. 227

April 2024

FREE



This cat, at the age of one, was found in a trash bin with a litter of kittens many years ago. A lady rescued her and the kittens were all adopted. Later, the cat was also traumatized by other pets and spent a year hiding in the basement. Since then, my friend, Barbara, acquired the cat and calls her Mama Kitty. The cat now lives a quiet, safe and affectionate life. I painted Mama Kitty for Barbara. Scott Rhoades, Mama Kitty, acrylic, 8" x 10". Scott Rhoades lives in Storrs. scotterhoadesart.com



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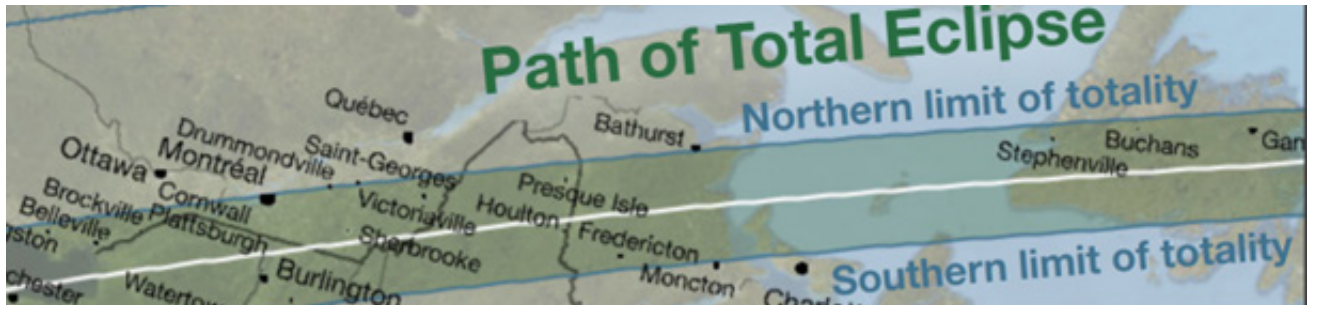
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A Comfortable Space at the Bottom of the Sky

By Bob Grindle

There is a certain beauty to the grey, damp, chill and almost claustrophobic richness of an early spring rainfall in our small New England corner of the planet, and the mesmeric patter of raindrops falling a few thousand feet creates a magical, rhythmic, almost musical backdrop to even the most basic of our human efforts...the sky plays with one's senses and a simple walk becomes an adventure as the shapeshifting landscape droops and sheds and drips and pools, as if the very air around us has been torn open and this spill of atmospheric plasma that brings and sustains life as surely as it brings flooding simply will not be staved...the same sky that just a few days ago treated us to an achingly beautiful, crisp blue canvas filled with towering cumulus proof that water is truly Nature's most gifted architect...the same sky that surrendered its Sun-fueled day-lit clarity to a crescent Moonscape gem of a night with brilliant Jupiter just a whisper away from the Moon, that sky now rains down with a drenching persistence born of seasonal changes that span the epochs of Earth's tortuous relationship with life. A small wet rabbit darts across the path in front and I recall reading that after only three weeks wild bunnies leave the nest to strike out on their own. A rabbit's tortuous relationship with life!

While my comfort with a rainy day unwinds back more than 6 decades to memories of playing around and



exploring the lakes, streams, rivers, woodlands and even the alleyways and empty lots of my youth, I can't recall when I realized that even during the darkest, gloomiest and rainiest of mid-days the Sun, and with it a clear sky, were somewhere up there, just above the clouds. Some years later, as an airborne technician in the US Air Force, after studying the science of meteorology, it seemed obvious and easy to understand. But there are still times when it is easy to get lost in our limited tropospheric world at the bottom of the sky and feel the need to take a walk in the rain and rinse away the complications of, as William Wordsworth noted more than 200 years ago, a world that is too much with us.

In about a week one of the Cosmos' more poetic events will unfold, whether there are clouds overhead or not, but if the sky is clear as the Moon slides slowly, soundlessly between the Earth and the Sun and this mid-day eclipse unfolds in the early afternoon of Monday, April 8th, bunnies will pause, bees will be momentarily stranded, Venus will shine in the early afternoon and many millions of human beings will mind the endless cautionary reminders not to look directly at the Sun. Imagine, for a moment that we were part of an ancient culture with no sense of the scientific explanation for why the Sun slowly disappears,

or perhaps even more alarming on a cloudy afternoon the sky suddenly grows dim then black as night.

Throughout history eclipses have been wrongly accused of being a disruption of the natural order and most ancient societies developed spiritual explanations to help them understand the inexplicable. Chinese records going back more than 4000 years suggest that a celestial dragon devoured the Sun from time to time and only loud and raucous celebrations with lots of drum beating and people yelling would scare away the dragon and save the Sun. Since the loud ruckus always worked and the Sun returned, the legend stood the test of time. Though cultures varied and their geographic locations spanned the globe, the legends all bore resemblance to one another...Indian, Central Asian, West African, Native American, Pacific Islander, Egyptian, Greek, Incan, it made no difference...something was eating or stealing or hiding the Sun and only a society-wide festival effort of noise and music and sometimes sacrifice could save us all. According to Native American Choctaw legend, a mischievous black squirrel gnawing on the Sun is the cause of eclipses. Like the Chinese dragon, the squirrel must be frightened away by the clamor and yells of the event's human witnesses. Ojibwa and Cree peoples have a story that a boy named Tcikabis sought revenge on the Sun for burning him, and despite the protestations of his sister, he caught the Sun in a snare trap, causing an eclipse. Various animals tried to release the Sun from the trap, but only the lowly mouse could chew through the ropes and set the Sun back on its path.

Interestingly, from the Native American Navajo, perspective, eclipses are thought to be a time of renewal and a manifestation of the cyclical relationship between the Sun, the Moon, and the Earth. The old traditional knowledge of the Navajo people recognizes that it is dangerous to look directly at the Sun. Navajo elders strongly instruct their community to go inside the hogan (their traditional dwelling) during an eclipse to ensure people don't look up at the Sun. Traditional Navajo people sit quietly and in reverence, a practice that is grounded on their deeply held respect for the cosmic order. Obviously, this was a culture that felt comfortable in their corner of the world...so much has been lost.

Hopefully, good weather will prevail on April 8th, between 2 pm and about 4 pm and we will all get the chance to enjoy one of our Solar system's more audacious moments. Be well, seek comfort in your surroundings and enjoy the delightful colors and amazing smells that arrive on April's wings.

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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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Mother Nature Bolt

By Loretta Wrobel



It happens every spring. Sometime in March I am outside, and “bam,” the sense that spring is happening overtakes and overwhelms me. I am instantly washed over with a flood of excitement and anticipation. Usually, the sky has some welcoming blue and the sun is out or flickering between clouds. This year it occurred a few weeks ago, while I was outside hanging clothes. (Yes, I hang my clothes outside, as I never got into the habit of using a dryer, because I absolutely love the fresh air smell of outdoor-dried clothes!) I stop and breathe deeply, and my whole being feels the thrill of another spring slowly coming on. Often it is the sound of birds, the feel of the air, and the sense of the impending unfolding as my dear sweet mother earth stretches and begins to wake up.

In Connecticut it is a back-and-forth event. Often the following day, it appears that spring vanished and winter has returned in full force. However, I know this is just a tantalizing trick that nature plays. Spring does not approach rapidly, but with slow forward-looking steps and lots of backsteps into winter chills and snow. Not that I would want to do away with the essence of winter. Without the intensity of winter and the time for resting and rejuvenating for our plants, the magic and power of bursting forth would disappear. Plus, how could the skiers, ice skaters and snowperson builders manage without winter!

As I gaze around my yard, I begin to visualize what will appear first. Where will the first crocus rise up with its exciting vivid color? When will the snow drops display their dazzling white teardrops in my yard? I love the first glimpses of spring, as each day I can run outside to search for what has popped out overnight. As spring progresses, it becomes impossible to keep track of every sprouting green, as the plants swing into full gear and my mere brain can't keep up with the rapid growth that mother nature orchestrates.

My focus switches to a deep appreciation for our precious earth, that she keeps us full of wonder and awe. Such a multitude of growth—green is everywhere, along with flowers, blossoms, buds and leaves that surround us with beauty and gratefulness for the continuing persistence of mother nature. My head shakes in profound honor as nature manages to keep up the grand act of resurgence. Each spring it occurs, regardless of what damage we cause by not staying mindful of the uniqueness of our fragile planet.

As the days lengthen, and the temperatures moderate, it is the perfect time for quiet corner residents to walk around peering at skunk cabbage with its exotic purplish sprouts mysteriously erupting from the marshes. This low-growing plant starts slowly and then rapidly becomes widespread. The name is indicative of the smell emitting from the leaves. However, as my eyes delight in the curious shape, I view the abundant array of waste that has accumulated along our roadways and trails during the winter months. The unsightly mess we humans create is horrifyingly disrespectful of the magnificent display that mother nature is presenting to us. Why are we continuing

to throw trash, litter, and our ubiquitous nips out of our car windows, as we whiz past all this marvelous growth, oblivious to the five-star show all around us?

What allows humans to behave in this manner, as if the environment is there as their special garbage receptacle? I can't believe all of these individuals throw all their waste around their house or in their front yard. The environment is our home, so why are vast amounts of people treating it so poorly? It is painful to walk our roadways in the early spring and see discarded alcohol bottles of all shapes and sizes, beer and soda cans, various articles of clothing, wrappers, empty bags from Cumberland and Dunkin, takeout containers, used diapers, and other used items. Who taught us to dump our waste with no thought to who will collect it? Or why doesn't it matter to our litterers who are obsessed with opening their window and tossing their containers and waste products? How can we shift this careless and irresponsible behavior to one of consideration and desire to keep our roads and trails robust and free of unattractive flotsam and jetsam?

As I welcome another spring, I witness an ongoing escalation of the waste. Each new year there appears to be more of the roadside trash, accumulating faster than our invasive species. I want it to stop in order for the greenery to grab my attention as I sniff the air, scan the sky for birds, and examine the vigorous growth of all the species waking up and spreading their leaves and wings.

I ask all of you to pause and take an inventory of your own history with litter. Have you at some point in your life opened the car window and without a second thought, heaved out whatever container you just finished? Have you been a passenger in a vehicle where the driver felt they could get rid of whatever was in their automobile? If that happened to you tomorrow, would you have the courage to speak up? Honest disclosure: As a young college student, I left many empty cans and bottles in the woods, during my four years at UConn. Now much wiser and enlightened, I spend my remaining years making amends, and picking up litter from others who don't yet comprehend how majestic are our natural resources.

In Ashford, where I live, the Conservation Commission organizes a trash pickup day every spring. We are doing it this year on April 20, just a few days before Earth Day on April 22. Saturday AM we will take to the streets and work to clean up the litter strewn along our town roads. We will meet at Knowlton Hall to pick up supplies between 8:45-9 AM and return them at noon. Please come and help, if you are motivated, or tell any friends you know in Ashford that they need to help restore beauty and vibrancy to the sides of our roads. All are welcome to join our cleanup crew.

We can change this dreadful habit and start thinking before we throw. When we all take some initiative, mother nature will thank us by continuing to shower us with numerous fantastic colors, shapes, and intriguing designs that soothe our hearts, eyes, and souls. We can make a BIG difference when we all work as a team to stamp out litter and beautify our towns. Join me, as we hit the roads and eliminate the trash. Be on the cleaning edge. Spring into action!

Hampton Arbor Day

Submitted by Bruce Spaman

Arbor Day festivities in Hampton will take place on Friday, April 26th at the Fletcher Memorial Library, 257 Main Street, at 9:30 am. For further details, feel free to reach out to the library at 860-455-1086. All are welcome, so mark your calendars and join us for a day filled with tree-planting and celebration. We can't wait to see you there!

Arbor Day is a special day dedicated to celebrating trees and the important role they play in our environment. It is a time for individuals and communities to come together to plant and care for trees, raising awareness about the benefits of trees and the need to protect our natural resources.

Arbor Day is a tradition that dates back to the 1800's when J. Sterling Morton, a nature lover and journalist, proposed the idea of a day

dedicated to tree planting. Since then, Arbor Day has become a global event celebrated in many countries around the world, with each nation adapting the day to suit their unique environmental needs. The day serves as a reminder of the vital role that trees play in maintaining a healthy ecosystem and the importance of preserving our natural environment for future generations.

Positive effects trees provide our environment:

1. Environmental Benefits: Trees are essential for maintaining a healthy environment. They help to purify the air by absorbing carbon dioxide and releasing oxygen, which is vital for human survival. Trees also provide habitat for wildlife, prevent soil erosion, and help to regulate the climate by providing shade and cooling effects in urban areas.
2. Economic Benefits: Trees have

economic value as well. They provide timber for construction, fuel for heating, and various products such as paper and furniture. Trees also increase property values and attract tourists to areas with lush greenery, boosting local economies.

3. Health Benefits: Trees have been shown to have a positive impact on human health. Studies have found that spending time in nature, surrounded by trees, can reduce stress, anxiety, and depression. Trees also help to filter out pollutants in the air, improving air quality and reducing respiratory problems.

Arbor Day is a time to reflect on the importance of trees and the role they play in sustaining life on Earth. By planting and caring for trees, we can make a positive impact on the environment, promote biodiversity, and create a better future for ourselves and generations to come. Let us continue to celebrate Arbor Day and work towards a greener, healthier planet for all.

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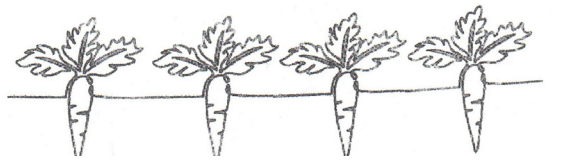
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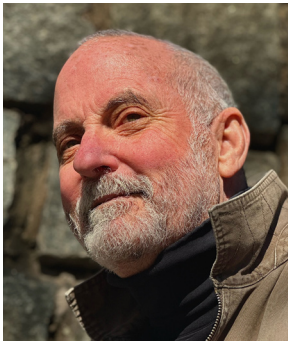
"My green thumb came only as a result of the mistakes I made while learning to see things from the plant's point of view." — H. Fred Dale.

By C. Dennis Pierce

You know what mystifies me each Spring? Daffodils. Prior to purchasing my house in Mansfield Center many years ago, the prior owner had planted many bulbs throughout the yard. It was an added bonus when spring arrived, when I found bright yellow flowers scattered throughout the property. Only later, I realized that in order to maintain them I needed to separate them when they died out. I began to take photos of their locations so when they completed their life cycle, I would be able to dig them up. Interestingly enough, when I finally took on that project I found some of the bulbs were no longer there and to my surprise the next year these yellow harbingers of spring would be popping up in new locations throughout the yard. Maybe it was Mother Nature's way of playing a game of "wack a mole" or just the mischievous ways of the local squirrels digging them up and relocating them to another area. I know the squirrels were not eating them since daffodil bulbs are poisonous to squirrels, voles, mice, and other rodents. Who would have thought the squirrels, besides robbing all of the sunflower seeds from my birdfeeders, these chatty little buggers were also exterior decorators. I can hear them now, "Let's see next spring we need more color in this part of the yard, or maybe over there..."

Willimantic's, *Know Your Farmers Fair*, hosted a wide variety of farms, vendors, and information booths this year, probably the largest yet. I always stop by to collect farm contacts so I may feature the farms in upcoming columns. One of farms that drew my attention was Westview Farm from Woodstock, CT. Woodstock has always intrigued me, tucked into the upper corner of the Quiet Corner with its winding back roads and rural farmlands. From what I could find from the Woodstock Conservation Commission's site from the internet, Woodstock has somewhere between 39 and 46 active farms. This includes 13 operating dairy farms (down from 16 two years ago, but still more than any other town in Connecticut.) Forest-based industries include tree farms, sawmills, and maple sugaring. So, this week, to prepare for this month's column I set off to visit Megan Harmon (in photo at right) from Westview Farm, who I met at the *Know Your Farmer's Fair*. My directional app took me the long way to reach east Woodstock, but it also showed me how beautiful the area is despite it being a windy and gray day. Because of recent rains the brooks and stream were more than gurgling, they overflowed their banks racing to the larger rivers that they eventually poured into. Upon reaching the farm propped on top of a hill I knew I was in the right place with the towering, majestic barn, rows of outbuildings and an amazing scenic view. Originally, Westview Farm was founded in the 1800s by the Wetherell Family as a dairy farm that provided glass bottled milk to the community. In the mid -1970s the Harmon Family purchased Westview Farm and successfully maintained the dairy until 1996. After the dairy herd was dissolved, a small herd of Hereford cattle was added to the farm. This was the start of the current beef herd.

Megan, a graduate of the University of Connecticut, greeted me in the small shop that is attached to the main house. It was filled with an array of products that the farm offers including their well sought after dry aged beef selections. She shared the history of the farm and environmental philosophy that makes this agricultural undertaking a rare and unique entity. The farm is situated on a wind-swept hill and has an amazing view of the farm's pastureland and the farm's 135 acres. Megan's parents moved from Middletown to the farm in 1976. The farm currently has a herd of about 50 to 60 head of cattle. Unique to this farm the herd is grass feed but also is grass finished. That is to say all of the grasses and legumes that are fed to the cattle comes from the farm. The cattle are a mix of Here-



ford, Angus, and Simmental. Their cattle are raised with a heritage diet according to Megan. Through using regenerative methods, they are able to practice carbon sequestration, reducing the amount of CO2 in the atmosphere. Additionally, on the farm they never use herbicides or pesticides on any production on the Farm, thus eliminating any chemical impact and promoting clean farming. Megan felt strongly about her life working on the family farm. "Farming progressively makes an impact on the food that is produced and also an impact on the environment."

In addition to beef the farm offers hay, fresh chicken, chicken / duck eggs and beef tallow skin care products. Also produce and flowers in season. There are many options to purchase from the farm which is located at 209 Prospect street in East Woodstock. The small shop is currently open every Fridays from 2:00pm to 6:00pm. From June to October the roadside stand is open from 10:00 am to 6:00pm offering in season vegetables and other items. The farm offers a variety of CSA options and



a flower subscription plan. I would suggest that you check out their web site at westviewfarmct.com since it is done very well, has options for ordering, and has some great photos. The farm's contact information is: 860.928.7491, email is westview.farm@outlook.com

As my forsythia arrives in full bloom and the daffodils dance at their feet, I know that rhubarb is waiting in the wings. Rhubarb is a plant (vegetable) that is defiantly persistent with a mind of its own. It sort of takes on the role of an embarrassed celery with a green stalk on top, red on the bottom and a big leaf dancing in the sun while it also protects the garden mice from the rain. Rhubarb is unique. You either like it or not. Surprisingly sometimes rhubarb pies will show up at the local church bake sale but if you arrive late, you will never find one since they are the first to go. Oh, for the taste of rhubarb and the childhood memories it provides. I could not resist this month and provided two recipes. I hope you enjoy.

Rhubarb Coffee Cake

Pre- heat oven to 375 degrees. Grease 8" baking pan

Ingredients:

Cake:

½ cup of butter
¾ cup of sugar
1 egg
1/3 cup of milk
2 cups of flour
1 tablespoon of baking powder
½ teaspoon of salt
¼ cup sliced almonds

Filling:

2 cups of sliced (1 inch) rhubarb
½ cup of sugar
4 tablespoons of water – divided
1 ½ tablespoons of cornstarch

Topping:

1/2 cup of brown sugar
1 tablespoon of flour
1 teaspoon of cinnamon
1 tablespoon of butter

Directions:

Prepare filling -

Combine rhubarb, sugar and 2 tablespoons of water and gently cook in a medium saucepan until rhubarb is softened but not mushy.

Combine remaining 2 tablespoons of water and cornstarch. Add to rhubarb and cook until thickened. Set aside.

Prepare cake:

Cream butter and sugar. (mix together)

Blend in egg and milk

Mix flour with baking powder and salt and blend into creamed mixture

Spread half of the batter in a greased 8 inch square baking pan.

Cover with rhubarb filling and top with almonds

Top with remaining batter.

Combine topping ingredients and sprinkle over batter.

Bake 35 to 40 minutes until firm

.....and another recipe....

Rhubarb Relish

Ingredients:

1 quart. of rhubarb, diced

1 qt. of onions finely cut

4 cups of brown sugar

1 tablespoon of salt

1 teaspoon of cinnamon

1 teaspoon of all spice

1 teaspoon of cloves

1 teaspoon of ginger

½ teaspoon pepper

2 cups of white vinegar

Directions:

Combine all ingredients and heat slowly to boiling

Simmer 45 to 50 minutes until thick.

Place mixture into sterilized glass containers such as those use for canning, jelly, or jam.

Serve with meat or with a charcuterie platter.

In my last month's column, I suggested that you save the lint from your dryer trap and place it in a suet feeder so that the birds arriving this spring will have some nesting material. I need to retract that suggestion. While

at the Fair a reader shared that this is harmful to nesting birds. Upon arriving home, I found that in fact it is not a good idea. It appears dryer lint dust can be hazardous to baby bird's lungs, and the concentrated chemicals from perfumed and dyed detergents are toxic to both baby birds as well as brooding adults. Furthermore, lint with a strong odor can attract predators, bringing them right to a vulnerable nest.

As I mentioned last month, I am incorporating some tips I have picked up along the way from farmers, markets, and local gardening associations. One tip is for better success, soak your seeds before planting. In a bowl, cover your seed with warm water and leave to soak for 6 to 24 hours. Smaller seeds and those with thinner coats need the shorter time, and larger seeds with thicker coats need the longer period. Some seeds will naturally float, and some will stay below the surface. The UConn Home Garden Center suggests that if you are working with older seeds check for viability by placing 10 seeds on a damp paper towel and keep moist until germination. Six to 10 germinated seeds are a good sign.

If you are in search of compost for your garden, you might try to see if there is any still available at UConn. The dates for pick up are Friday April 19, 2024 from 1 to 4 and April 20, 2024 from 10 to 3. You must purchase online prior to arriving. However, it may be too late since there is always a rush to purchase and there is a limited supply. I believe this is the link to make your purchase. If it does not work contact Jaren Smith for the correct link – Jaren. Smith@UConn.edu. Purchase link: https://secure.touchnet.com/C21646_ustores/web/product_detail.jsp?PRODUCTID=1702

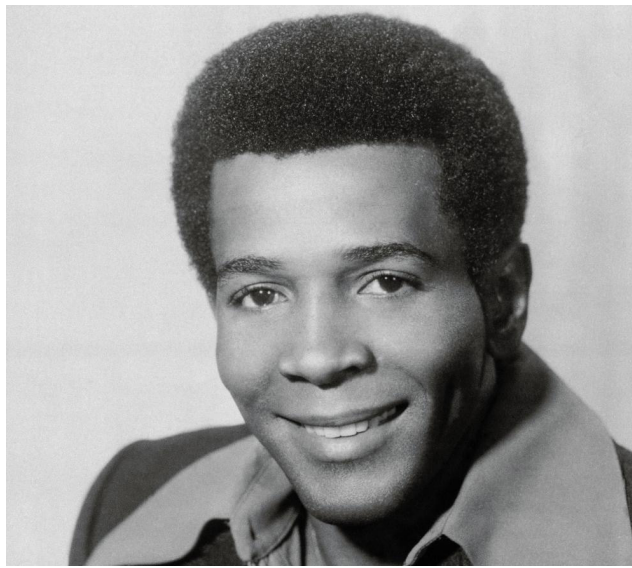
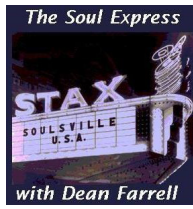
If you find that you enjoy reading this column every month or if you have some gardening hacks you would like to share with others? Please drop me a line and let me know at Codfish53@Yahoo.com. Peas be with you. Come celebrate with me and remember, every day is a holiday, and every meal is a banquet. I'll save you a seat at the table!

Photo by the author.

Unsung Heroes of Soul:

King Floyd

By Dean Farrell



As host of "The Soul Express," I play the biggest names in 1960s and '70s-era soul music. I also mix in the many great soul artists who did not necessarily become household names but were no less talented. This month's column is about King Floyd, whose "Groove Me" propelled him into temporary stardom in the early '70s.

King Floyd III was born in New Orleans on February 13, 1945, and grew up in the suburb of Kenner. At age 12, he started hanging out at the One Stop Record Shop on Rampart Street, where he met local music luminaries like Willie Tee and Earl King. It was one such act, a Mr. Google Eyes, who gave Floyd his first break, letting him sing with the house band at the Sho Bar on Bourbon Street.

After a stint in the Army, Floyd moved to New York City. He hung out with Don Covay ("Mercy, Mercy," 1964) and J.J. Jackson ("But It's Alright," 1966), who encouraged him to write his own material. After a year in the Big Apple, Floyd tried his luck in Los Angeles, where he met several transplanted New Orleanians. Among them was Harold Battiste, who was producing Sonny & Cher at the time. Through Battiste, Floyd met Buddy Keelen and Jimmy Holiday, who arranged his first single on Original Sound Records. "When Did She Leave Me?" made some noise locally and landed Floyd gigs at area record hops.

He also met Mac Rebennack (A/K/A Dr. John), who wrote material for Floyd's debut LP, *A Man in Love*. Produced by Battiste for the Pulsar label, the album was not commercially successful. Floyd became disenchanted with the West Coast and returned to New Orleans in 1969. With a wife and daughter to support, he got a job at the Post Office.

Floyd recalled, "I was in town about a month when I ran into [musical arranger] Wardell Quezergue. He said he couldn't do anything with me at the time, but he'd ask around. Then I talked to Elijah Walker [a New Orleans music promoter], and he was gonna record C.P. Love and Tommy and Sammy Ridgley. C.P. suggested he record me in his place. This impressed Walker, so he asked Wardell if I had any material. Wardell said, 'Yeah, he's got some good tunes.' So one Sunday, we all drove up to Malaco's studio in Jackson [Mississippi]."

Floyd nearly missed the session as his car broke down. By the time he arrived in Jackson, there was minimal studio time left. Floyd recorded "What Our Love Needs" in three takes, and "Groove Me" in just one. Everyone involved agreed that "What Our Love Needs" would be the A side of the single. Malaco attempted to lease it to Stax and Atlantic, but neither label was interested. So Malaco put it out themselves on the Chimneyville subsidiary.

Floyd gave a copy of the record to Hank Sample of Buffalo, New York's powerhouse soul station, WBLK. He rode "What Our Love Needs" for about a month. Then George Vinnet of WYLD in New Orleans bumped into Floyd one day and told him, "King, I got your record in the mail today. I'm going to take it to my niece's party tonight and give it a listen." Vinnet called Floyd the next morning and said, "You got a hit record, baby! I'm going to play it on the air right now." When Floyd turned on his radio, he was dismayed to hear "Groove Me." So he called the station and told Vinnet, "You're playing the wrong side." But Vinnet assured him that "Groove Me" was the only song his niece and her friends wanted to hear at their party the night before.

Soon, radio stations all over New Orleans were playing "Groove Me." Vinnet called Atlantic with the news, which prompted the label to finally offer Malaco a distribution deal. By January 1971, "Groove Me" was spending its first of four weeks at #1 on the *Billboard* Soul chart. It also peaked at #6 in the pop market and was certified gold.

Floyd's follow-up was the similar-sounding "Baby Let Me Kiss You." The public was clearly hungry for more as the song hit #5 R&B and #29 pop in the spring of 1971. That marked the end of King Floyd's pop stardom, but the soul audience stayed receptive for about six more years.

In 1974, Floyd toured Europe, billed as "The Soulful Highness." He also toured the Caribbean, where he met Bob Marley and was introduced to some new rhythms. In 1982, he toured South Africa. Floyd moved back and forth between the West Coast and New Orleans, but was unable to find the big break that would get him back in the studio.

In 1995, Floyd received a credit for "Boombastic," the massive hit by Shaggy. In 1997, the Wu-Tang Clan sampled his 26-year-old recording of "Don't Leave Me Lonely" on their song, "For Heaven's Sake," from *Wu-Tang Forever*. In 2000, Floyd reunited with Malaco for the *Old Skool Funk* album, but it failed to catch on.

King Floyd, 61, died on March 6, 2006, of complications from diabetes and a stroke.

Charted singles:

"Groove Me" (1970-71) R&B #1 (4 weeks), Pop #6

"Baby Let Me Kiss You" (1971) R&B #5, Pop #29

"Got to Have Your Lovin'" (1971) R&B #35, Pop #101

"Woman Don't Go Astray" (1972) R&B #3, Pop #53

"Think About It" (1973) R&B #49

"So Much Confusion" (1974) R&B #95

"I Feel Like Dynamite" (1974) R&B #35

"Don't Cry No More" (1974) R&B #96

"We Can Love" (duet with Dorothy Moore, 1975) R&B #76

"Body English" (1976-77) R&B #25

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

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

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Goodbye Mr. Luft

By Anna Utterback

Paul “Andy” Luft, a history teacher at Edwin O. Smith High School for 21 years, retired in January. Kayla Lin, a sophomore, perfectly describes Mr. Luft’s ability to make teaching history an artform in a piece titled “Artists’ Luft”:

“Don’t make fun of my drawings” was a phrase that Mr. Luft used often, grabbing a blue Expo marker and marching up to the whiteboard. The class would typically sit in silence (and mild confusion) listening to the squeaks of Mr. Luft’s marker as he constructed maps of Connecticut, intricate renditions of waterways through the U.S., or squiggly outlines of railroads during the 1800s. His artistic endeavors, while no match for Renaissance paintings, were cherished masterpieces nonetheless. Unfortunately, there is only so much that one can illustrate with an Expo marker, regardless of the intricate vision of history Mr. Luft may have had. Although his artistic ability was often stifled by the confines of his Expo markers, Mr. Luft’s room became more of a canvas than he may have imagined. From the stack of Zinn textbooks in the closet to the Ritz crackers sitting safely on his desk, to the daily changing water bottle, Mr. Luft has spent countless hours refining his craft of sitting in the central chair—throne, if you will—painting the story of history. His class has become a canvas in which he paints the narratives of history that resonate within each student. He is as much an artist as a teacher. These stories transcend time. Never missing a chance to share a Lego stop-motion movie or a music video, Mr. Luft has a quiet vibrancy to him, transforming each mundane lecture into a little masterpiece.

Not only is Mr. Luft an artist, but he also was an artistic necessity in my own paintings. I once asked him to pose for a reference picture for me. I approached him with my strange request after class, and his response was “Hands? You don’t want my hands. These are stumps!” What Mr. Luft didn’t know, however, was that all I wanted were hands that told a story. And Mr. Luft was certainly a storyteller. He had sat in his chair and told stories: his stories, her stories, the quiet stories, and the buried stories, looking to deviate from the idea of a “single story” history. And year after year, without fail, Mr. Luft has retold millions of them, and crafted his own at the same time, all of them imperfect, but each individual one just as valuable as the others. Mr. Luft often encouraged us to look beyond the compartmentalized perspectives that skewed our perception of history, asking us to search for a hidden lens. In turn, this inspired us to share *our own* stories in connection to history.

So, thank you, to our storyteller, and to our artist, who has painted with the tinted hues of complex history. Most importantly, thank you for the stories.

I remember walking into Mr. Luft’s class for the first time, feeling hollowed out and lightheaded, dreading entering the room. This was my first AP class, not to mention one of the hardest available. But Mr. Luft surprised me; he was able to perfectly balance the seriousness of the class with an understanding of teenagers and our perspective. Class was always entertaining, either because we were watching some of the World Cup in class while we worked, or arguing over silly topics, or spending time debating aspects of a historical time period.

As we say goodbye to Mr. Luft after 21 years at E.O. Smith, we can all fondly remember him not only for

his skill as a teacher but for what he was able to teach us as young people learning to become active and constructive citizens of our country. Mr. Luft has taught a wide variety of social studies courses, though many students will know him as the famous AP U.S. History (APUSH) teacher, as he took on the enormous task of teaching us one of the most dense subjects American high schools have to offer.

Even with our busy schedules, Mr. Luft always found a way to bring some good humor and positivity into the classroom and into our lives, as his colleagues and students express.

Shawn Santasiere, a fellow teacher at E.O., remarked on Mr. Luft’s effort to bring some joy to students and staff during COVID: “During the pandemic when we were all at home and yearning for connection with one another, Mr. Luft decided to get a dog and wanted help naming it. He ran this naming tournament where students and staff could vote on a name. His weekly video updates were a welcome distraction and connected us around something positive and fun. Marley the dog is probably most excited about Lufty’s retirement.”

Makena Hendricks, a current junior and a student of Mr. Luft’s, remembered how his attitude affected the classroom, “One day in APUSH, Mr. Luft came in and he gave us a 20-minute lecture on how girls always have their first-day-of-school outfits picked out two weeks before. He knew how to make the classes fun and interesting. He told the most random stories, and we knew that we would get off topic at least two times each class.”

Mike Koerner, another staff member and close friend of Mr. Luft’s at E.O., also told of his good-natured attitude: “A favorite story that comes to mind about Mr. Luft is when he and I were playing golf together with Mr. Ericson and Mr. Konow. I was up on a tee box while Mr. Luft sat below in his golf cart. As I went to hit my ball, I noticed a wheel roll by me down the hill. I hit my ball and walked down the stairs to get my clubs, but strangely I couldn’t see my clubs or cart. When I asked what that wheel was from, my group had the biggest smiles on their faces, except Mr. Luft, as apparently he had accidentally driven over my cart and clubs and it was my cart tire that had rolled by me. Mr. Luft gladly drove me around for the day and kindly bought me a new cart to replace mine. The replacement was a sweet neon green too. Every time I look at it on the course I think of Andy, my friend, and his excellent golf course driving skills and laugh.”

Mr. Luft’s effort to make the classroom a comfortable and happy place even with the amount of work expected of him and his students was a common and recognizable trait of his as a teacher. Sophia Caneira, another junior and former student of Mr. Luft, expressed his ability to make “APUSH a really fun class—I always looked forward to his lectures!”

These stories represent only a small snippet of Mr. Luft’s time here at E.O., one filled with incredibly fun and wholesome situations as well as instances of some truly incredible teaching. Mr. Luft is highly respected by his colleagues, and has mentored many teachers in his time teaching at Lyman and E.O., and this appreciation was expressed by students and staff alike.

Tim Bowen, a social studies teacher at E.O., wrote:

“Lufty,” when you were my cooperating teacher at Lyman Memorial High School, you understood me quickly as I began my second career and you immediately gave me total freedom and trust to lead our students. I appreciated your willingness to let me thrive, be creative and figure out who I would become as a teacher.

When we talk about the value of using film in class, it is obvious we share a love for film to teach important events in history and the present day. Sometimes in the rare circumstance when we were unsure about how to teach something, inevitably you would say “just press play” for whatever impactful film told the story! Andy,

during our years together you always embraced those meaningful life lessons we taught our students, and the ultimate compliment for me was you teaching those and supporting me fully. We always shared a common understanding of what is important to impart to our students, and I will miss and never forget that.

Always the best to you in retirement, Lufty! Tim.

Enjoy your retirement, my friend.

“Show up and be kind.”—Malcolm Feix [a quote added by Mr. Bowen, which speaks to the ideals Mr. Luft led with in his classroom]

In response to my question, “Is there anything you’d like to say to Mr. Luft before he leaves?” Mr. Santasiere responded, “I have appreciated Lufty’s timely humor and his realistic view of education. His support for young teachers, student teachers, and colleagues has been consistent and integral for anyone who has had the opportunity to work with him. His concern for his students and their success is so much greater than anyone will ever know.”

Teresa Mamunes, a teacher in special services at E.O. who was also student-taught under Mr. Luft, commented, “I did my student teaching under Andy Luft. I used to love sitting in his class, watching him do his thing. Mr. Luft is a storyteller. He engages you in such a way that when you listen to him you yourself travel through time and you can actually imagine yourself in that particular historic time period. I am sad that Andy is retiring as I believe few can match his teaching style, one that I could see the students loved and admired. EOS was extremely fortunate to have Andy all these years. I will miss my friend.”

John Konow, another E.O. teacher and close friend of Luft, also expressed his appreciation, saying, “Mr. Luft, congratulations on the completion of a wonderful career at E.O. Smith. You’ve had a positive impact on countless people during your tenure here at E.O. and before that at Lyman. I’m not sure what I’m going to do at lunch once you leave. Our chats were one of the highlights of my day.”

Personally, I find that Mr. Luft’s teaching style is one of the most engaging I’ve ever come across. Never in class did I question the importance of the work or activities we did; they were all clearly for the purpose of understanding the themes of American historical eras, and this lack of questioning on my part allowed me to engage with the material more.

I also cannot thank Mr. Luft enough for the positive impact he’s had on my life, being probably the only teacher capable of getting me to chill out about grades, encouraging me and my classmates to care and wonder about history, guiding us through AP exam madness, challenging our points of view to train us to have evidence on our side, and, of course, allowing things to get (a bit) off track when we really needed a brain break. Truly, I don’t think I’ll ever have another teacher like Mr. Luft.

I hope Mr. Luft understands that his help guiding us academically was just as significant as how he helped guide us through young adulthood. “Mr. Luft’s Life Lessons,” better known as his commentary on Pixar’s *Soul*, will not soon leave my mind as I navigate the rest of high school and the rest of my life. I promise to enjoy the little and the big things, to keep my hopes up even when things don’t work out, to remember I am always enough and that my “spark” isn’t my purpose, and to never, ever, become a lost soul.

Thank you for everything, Mr. Luft. We all sincerely appreciate what you’ve done for us and we hope you enjoy retirement!

Read Andy Luft’s ‘To All My Students’ on facing page. Anna Utterback is a junior at E.O. Smith High School in Storrs.

This article first appeared in the E.O. Smith online newspaper, *The Panther Press*. Used with permission.

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To all of my students

By Andy Luft

After 28 years of teaching, it is time to retire my book of Zinn and see what the future holds for me. When I first started teaching, I really didn't know what I was in for but I consider it one of the best decisions I've made in my life because of the students that I've had. **YOU** are the reason I teach.

Over the years, I've seen so many of you come into my AP classes as scared sophomores and leave as graduates as confident students ready to take on the world which has been such a joy. I hope you learned that hard work can be rewarding while still being able to laugh along the way. I hope the deep lessons about the worthlessness of throw pillows or the waste of time of using shampoo and conditioner rather than a 2 in 1 bottle, and the endless movies I can't believe you've never seen will stay with you for years to come. You have no idea how meaningful your cards and letters have meant to me and the countless greetings in the hallways always brighten my days.

To my History nerds, never feel like you are one (save that for other departments). You are just critical thinkers that wonder about the world around you. **NEVER** give up that idea. I hope that I've instilled in you the importance of multiple perspectives because we have to as a society bring that way of thinking back, and it can start with you. You are the ray of light in the sunshine of my day. (who wrote

this? I'm sounding like an English teacher.) All kidding aside, you truly have made teaching a pure joy and I want to leave you with a piece of advice. **PUT THE DARN PHONES AWAY!!!** Remember, social media is just a tool; it shouldn't consume you. Enjoy the moment, smell the flowers and have a conversation with one another. You might find you've been missing the wonders of life.



Retired E.O. Smith High School teacher Paul 'Andy' Luft.

Contributed photo.

To the staff

I would just like to thank you all for the wonderful support you've given me at E. O. Smith over the years. **YOU** are what makes this school so great. Your dedication to your craft and more importantly to your students have made teaching here so enjoyable.

I would like to thank specifically my Social Studies department comrades past and present for lesson ideas, intellectual conversations, lunch

times, and just plain caring about how I was doing throughout the years. None of it went unnoticed. To my fellow Yankees fans, thanks for the chats and let's hope number 28 gets here soon. To my golf buddies, Mike Koerner, Kevin Erickson and John Konow, I hope for continued years on the links together. Finally, I would especially like to thank John Konow for being my best friend and being a brother to me. We've done so much throughout the years and I will miss our lunch time together. I can't wait for you to join me in retirement.

For you new teachers, I know you are skilled with all the new bells and whistles and technology but sit back and chat with a veteran once in a while and take in what they have to say. They still have so much to offer. I would finally like to pass the baton of being a thorn in the side to a worthy veteran. Every school needs one to remind people that there will always be something new coming down the pike, which often is a rehash of something of the past.

Remember to take your time to think it through, and always make sure it's good for students. Remember teaching becomes an art by making the material you teach relatable to your students. Good teachers have mastered this in different ways, and those differences should be valued. If there's one thing that I can impart upon you is that teaching is a valuable commodity more so than anytime in history because you get to form bonding relationships with the future of our country.

Exploring Feelings of Going Home

By Carol Wheelock Hall

Everyone has moments to recall, moments to remember. Some are precious, happy thoughts and some are sad recollections. Memories of going home may stir up emotional joy or perhaps the pain which one would like to forget. For some poor souls who were abused, home is not a pleasant place to remember. For others, going home when a life plan did not work out meant to re-group, start over, or go back to one's roots where people cared about them. This may resonate more with those individuals who were fortunate to have a good home.

Think back to your family of origin's vacations, picnics, visits to relatives, or even shopping trips. No matter where you went and the fun you had, it was always good to go home to your familiar surroundings and belongings. I can remember returning home in late spring and smelling the sweet scent of the blooming lilac bushes as I got out of the car. To this day the fragrance of lilacs reminds me of home. Perhaps others are sometimes reminded of going home when a favorite food is being prepared.

You may recall happily coming home from school to play when you were young. When a little older, you may recall the feelings you had with school homework and assigned chores required to do when you got home. Most of us experienced happiness on weekends and when the school year ended as we looked forward to more free time with siblings or friends. In a few short years perhaps you came home after college with anticipation to get a job to be independent and self-supporting, but then you would probably count down the hours of your workday before heading home to unwind.

For some individuals, those who survive and go home after completing military service, feelings are quite memorable. Depending on the duties and experiences, a person may come home as a changed person mentally, emotionally, and possibly physically. Home is a welcome sight when one has been away from loved ones for a

prolonged period of time. Understandably, they count the days to be going home.

If you have had a pet that crossed the Rainbow Bridge, you can identify with the sadness that came by missing their greeting of welcome as you came home. No more wagging tail or joyful barking. No more "meow" to say "I'm so happy you're home". Losing a beloved person is of course even more devastating and life-changing for those left behind. The memories and love will live on, without the missed "welcome home" feeling.

But on a more cheerful note, coming home with a new healthy baby is certainly a joyful experience for families. Then there are new routines, and so many possibilities ahead. It is a time for all involved to grow as humans in this school of life. What a joy for parents it can be when their grown offspring come home to visit. And it gets even better when they bring their family of creation home to make lasting memories.

Later in life, a family gathering after the death of a parent can bring a flood of thoughts about home, loss, and an emptiness that lingers. Siblings come to the realization that they are now the "old ones" in the family. And although the children's homes may be in various far away places, a part of them will remain in the memories of where they grew up, back in that home where their parents did the best they knew how.

And so the circle of life and the saga of going home will continue with new generations. Our past experiences help to form us into whom we become in life. Those memories of going home will stay with us until the inevitable time when we are called to go to our eternal home.

Carol Wheelock Hall lives in Columbia, CT and is the author of 4 books available on Amazon. One book contains poetry and ponderings (Signs of Light in Life), 2 are children's stories (A Trip to the Carnival; and Photo Safari in Africa), and one is her anthology (Many Spokes in the Wheel).

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T. King, Publisher

Good Health Care is Essential in Our Pursuit of Life, Liberty and Happiness

Stonewall – delay or block (a request, process, or person) by refusing to answer questions or by giving evasive replies, especially in politics.
-Oxford Languages

By Bill Powers

Recent **stonewalling** by employees and officials from Hartford Healthcare (HHC), Windham Hospital (WCMH), the State Office of Health Strategy (OHS), the Governor’s Office, and even Trinity College about the recent decision to **“Terminate Inpatient Obstetric Services”** at WCMH has regrettably been my experience while attempting to research this story. It’s as if they would like to bury the story in hopes it will simply go away and protect their interests.

Access to affordable quality health care is essential for all of us in our pursuit of life, liberty and happiness. However, our current so called health care system is inequitable for far too many. Widespread racial, wealth and income disparities and where you may live - rule the day. What is evident is the growing number of maternity deserts as part of the closure of core healthcare services and entire hospitals in some urban and many rural areas of America. There exists an inability for many people to afford needed pharmaceuticals. There is an ever-increasing inability to provide adequate numbers of doctors, nurses and other health care professionals, as our population ages. These in addition to other critical factors (such as health care monopolies, lack of effective government initiatives and private insurance profiteering) threaten the ability of many Americans to be afforded their inalienable rights of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. The persistent gaps in health care for people of color, women, and the economically disadvantaged often are affected by prejudice and therefore may constitute a violation of civil rights.

Leah Ralls, the President of the local Windham/Willimantic Branch of the Connecticut State Conference of the NAACP, believes “that the actions of Hartford Health Care/ Windham Hospital and Connecticut State Office of Health Strategy’s joint final decision on December 1, 2023 to permanently close our WCMH Maternity Unit violates the civil rights for many of our neighbors who are entitled to adequate health care.” Her organization works to assure equity and justice for all.

STONEWALLED at Trinity College – You might be wondering how Trinity could be involved with the HHC/WCMH closing of an inpatient maternity unit. Trinity College’s President, Dr. Joanne Berger – Sweeney, is also the Chairman of HHC’s Board of Directors. Exactly fifty years ago, I received a Master’s degree at Trinity. Any expectation that it might provide me an opportunity for at least five minutes to speak with the president turned out to be only a pipedream. Answers to a few simple questions is what was being sought: 1) How much information about the concerns of our local elected and appointed officials and residents concerning the very unpopular termination of obstetric services at WCMH was provided to the HHC Board? 2) Were they apprised of the issues and concerns raised by the people’s voices - the voices of our neighbors? 3) Did they consider allowing community input for their decision? 4) Was the HHC board decision approved before or after the abrupt closure of the maternity unit and the earlier closing of the ICU? My attempts by phone last December to schedule an interview with Berger-Sweeney were finally answered by Kristen Cole on January 2nd (who has a long title: Senior Director of Strategic Content and Media Relations). She answered in an email that: “Unfortunately, she (Berger-Sweeney) can’t pursue this opportunity.” So much for helping out a writer doing research for a story who is also an alumnus and the recipient of four national literary awards. Not yet discouraged, I contacted Jason Rojas who works as the President’s Chief of Staff and Associate Director for External Affairs (an even longer title). If his name is familiar to you, it may be because of his PART-TIME job; he is a member of the General Assembly and the Majority Leader. He said he would look into it and get back to me. After several weeks, when I had not heard back, I contacted him again, since my deadline for submission of my story for the March issue of *Neighbors* was approaching. When he asked for more specific information about the purpose for speaking with the president, I told him. Clearly agitated, he replied that “Being the president of Trinity and the Chairman of Hartford Health Care’s Board are not at all connected!” Somewhat insulted, and desperately working to hold back a laugh, I replied: “Do you honestly believe that if she was not Trinity’s president, she would be the chairman of the HHC Board? The connection seems pretty clear to me!” But he would considerate it – **I never heard back!**

WCMH AND BACKUS HOSPITAL HAVE THEIR OWN TIGHT-LIPPED BOARD

The East Region of Hartford Healthcare includes both Backus Hospital in Norwich and WCMH in Willimantic. It has its own board of directors, separate from the HHC board. After being refused an interview with the East Region’s president, I began to contact members of their board of directors. The first person I reached was the board’s chairman, a bank president, whose bank has 12 branches headquartered in Norwich. I told him I was writing a story and would like to interview him. As soon as he learned the story was about the terminated inpatient obstetric service at WCMH, he apologized and said that he was “not supposed to discuss that” and referred me to a HHC public relations contact in Hartford. None of the following members returned my calls. (**I never heard back!**): A wound care surgeon who according to his office works for HHC and only practices at Bachus Hospital; A retired long term human resources director for the City of Norwich; A medical internist, possibly retired; A Hartford attorney; A college professor at Quinnipiac University; and, an HHC physician working at Natchaug Hospital. Eventually, I was able to briefly penetrate the protective shell to have a conversation with a board member who resides in a Connecticut coastal community and previously taught in my graduate clinical/community psychology program. For many years, he had been an administrator with HHC and he is very positive about “the many things HHC had done to improve healthcare provided by WCMH.” He told me that “the board met three or four times a year and generally discussed issues centered around safety.” As far as learning about the “details” for who, what, when, where, and why the decision was made to terminate the inpatient maternity unit at WCMH, he referred me to the HCC East Region president. That is where I started! So, it was back to square one and I had gone full-circle. However, I decided to take still another whack at it, because it seemed as though there definitely could be an interesting “other side” of this story to tell. In my email of January 26, 2024 to Donna Handley, senior vice president of HCC and president of the East Region, I told her that a board member referred me to her and I included 8 questions (which I had also shared with Rebecca Stewart, HHC Vice President of Media Strategy and the East Region Board Chairman). I assured president Handley: “My intention has been to gather factual information to include in my writings for a fair and balanced presentation.” I never heard back! It seems that she has placed the last stone in a barrier to provide facts from the East Region organization. It is striking that the East Region Board of HHC seems to be filled with present and former HHC employees and with others connected to Norwich, while appearing to lack adequate representation from the Windham area.

THE STATE OFFICE OF HEALTH STRATEGY – EITHER NO ANSWERS OR EVASIVE REPLIES

To me, the December 1, 2023, OHS press release about the final decision to terminate obstetric services at WCMH and negotiated by OHS with WCMH/HHC continues to be incomprehensible. It purports to replace a maternity unit with a birthing center, if, after commissioning a study, WCMH/HHC still wants to do it. The unit had suddenly been closed three-and-a-half years earlier. The delays and blocking of attempts to obtain facts about the why, who, when, and where that decision was made can only be characterized as **stonewalling**. Most of my questions addressed to OHS are unanswered. Some have received evasive replies. For instance, “What are the names and titles of the persons who were involved in the negotiations?” - the answer – “Attorneys and staff members.” After consulting with the Connecticut Freedom of Information Commission, an FOI request was made on December 14, 2023 for records of the OHS and WCMH/HHC negotiations. Eventually, I received an answer from OHS on February 26, 2024 stating: “the records requested are exempt from disclosure under FOIA for the following reasons... 1. Preliminary drafts or notes provided the public agency has determined that the public interest in withholding such documents clearly outweighs the public interest in disclosure. 2. ‘Trade secrets’ or ‘Commercial or financial information given in confidence, not required by statute.’ 3. ‘Communications privileged by the attorney-client relationship’.” This has been followed-up by a chain of verbal and written communications with the FOI Commission and Daniel Csuka, OHS staff attorney and hearing officer, about challenging this decision by way of an appeal. (On March 26, 2024, as I was proofing this story for submission to NEIGHBORS, Mr. Csuka agreed to a meeting during the first week of April to discuss in more

detail the reasons OHS denied my complaint.) My questions include: how the interests of our abandoned local moms and newborns were represented in the process; what evidence was presented at hearings in defense of the patients who would suffer limitations and possible irreversible harm from the OSH decision; and, were violations of civil rights considered? Can’t OHS redact “trade secrets” and unrelated “financial information”? Whose attorney-client privileged communications are being addressed – those of HHC or OHS? Were the issues expressed by our local government officials who intensely voiced their concerns against the injustice, lack of transparency and absence of community involvement by HHC taken into consideration as evidence?

The GOVERNOR’S OFFICE

I have previously written in *Neighbors* that local elected officials have discussed their concerns over the termination of obstetrical services at WCMH directly with the governor and lieutenant governor. The **final decision** to do so, after it was abruptly closed years earlier, was made by “OHS Executive Director Deidre S. Gifford. She retained ultimate decision-making authority” (OHS communication). On February 6, 2024, Julia Bergman, Communications Director for the Office of the Governor, wrote me that: “Dr. Gifford in her role as Executive Director of OHS, serves also as the Senior Advisor for Health and Human Services to Governor Lamont. She reports to Governor Lamont. Governor Lamont is strongly supportive of Dr. Gifford’s work to increase health care access and reduce healthcare costs for Connecticut residents.” Bergman was responding to my January 18, 2024, email requesting the organizational relationship between Gifford and Lamont (after OHS failed to respond) **and** who assesses Gifford’s performance, **and** a description of the process. You’ll notice that Bergman only addressed the first part. When I requested the missing information, she replied on February 6th: “I will get you info about the evaluation process. I would not make any assumptions. I am not positive that there is a formal evaluation process for the commissioners but I want to confirm that.” On March 15th I requested the information again and asked for her source when she provides it. **I never heard back!**

BREATHS OF FRESH AIR –THANK GOD!

The stonewalling I have experienced by so many is remarkable. So many have declined to talk about the details of how and why Windham Community Memorial Hospital was allowed to terminate its inpatient obstetric services. It is questionable that such a strange final decision was negotiated by the OHS executive director, Deidre S. Gifford. Fortunately, It has been refreshing to talk with the dedicated members from **Windham United to Save Our Health Care (WUSH)** as well as local elected and appointed officials from our area towns who continue to be advocates for quality health care for all of our neighbors, while thankfully providing useful and factual information.

My interviews with six state representatives and our state senator from this area were informative explanatory and actually revitalizing. I had gone in with a certain mind set – As our representatives, how could they stand by and allow WCMH/HCC to get away with this? They were all aware of the situation at WCMH and all, regardless of political party, voiced concern. It was a relief that they all spoke freely about their perceptions of how it came to be. They spoke of the difficulties related to being only part-time legislators contrasted to the full-time presence of the executive branch and its comparatively more and extensive capacity. Many spoke of the extraordinary clout of the health care lobby in the state, often mentioning the Connecticut Hospital Association. It was stated that Hartford Health Care, in particular, has been able through its cadre of attorneys to purposely complicate and delay action by the state. All but one voiced the opinion that further legislative action will be necessary to neutralize the influence of certain health care organizations in the public’s interest. Some suggested that federal funding will most likely be necessary in order to preserve and continue the operation of smaller rural healthcare providers. All seemed to agree that good and accessible healthcare is essential for everyone.

Bill Powers is a retired teacher, healthcare provider and administrator.

Top 5 Tips to Increase Savings at Any Age

By Leisl L. Langevin, CFP® CDFIA®
Senior Vice President, Financial Advisor



Successfully saving for short-term and long-term goals is an important part of any financial strategy. Since 2007, every April, we have celebrated **America Saves Week**, which is dedicated to helping people save.

In honor of America Saves Week, here are the top 5 tips and tricks to help you save for what matters most.

What is America Saves Week?

America Saves Week is an annual celebration that encourages Americans to take charge of their financial futures by promoting the value of saving. Launched in 2007 by America Saves and the American Savings Education Council, the event is supported by various government agencies, nonprofit organizations, and businesses.¹ This year, America Saves Week will be observed from April 8 to 12.¹

America Saves Week 2024

This year's theme for America Saves Week is "Saving for What Matters Most." Whether it's building an emergency fund, planning for retirement, or achieving short-term financial goals, the act of saving provides a safety net and peace of mind. America Saves Week serves as a reminder that saving is not just a sound financial choice; it's a key to enjoying and protecting what matters most.

Each day of America Saves Week has a focus:

- Monday, April 8, 2024: Saving Automatically
- Tuesday, April 9, 2024: Saving for the Unexpected
- Wednesday, April 10, 2024: Saving for Major Milestones
- Thursday, April 11, 2024: Paying Down Debt is Saving
- Friday, April 12, 2024: Saving at Any Age

Tips and Tricks for Successful Saving

In 2020, the Federal Reserve reported that only 64% of Americans had enough money on hand to cover a \$400 emergency.² In conjunction with the theme of saving for what matters most, we wanted to share some tips to help more Americans build their savings.

Tip #1: Set Clear Goals

Before you start saving, it's crucial to define your financial goals. Whether it's buying a home, paying off debt, or taking a dream vacation, establishing clear goals provides a roadmap for your savings journey to Live Well.

Tip #2: Create a Budget

A well-constructed budget is the foundation of successful saving. Track your income, categorize your expenses, and identify areas where you can cut back. Allocating a specific portion of your income to savings ensures

consistency in your savings habits.

Tip #3: Automate Your Savings

Take advantage of technology by setting up automatic transfers to your savings account. This ensures that a portion of your income is consistently earmarked for savings before you have a chance to spend it.

Tip #4: Build An Emergency Fund

Establishing an emergency fund is a critical savings goal. Aim to save the equivalent of three to six months of living expenses to safeguard against unexpected financial shocks.

Tip #5: Take Advantage of Employer Benefits

If your employer offers a retirement savings plan, such as a 401(k), make the most of it. Contribute enough to maximize any employer match, which is essentially free money that can significantly boost your long-term savings.

America Saves Week is an important reminder that saving should be the cornerstone of any robust financial strategy. Developing successful saving and investing habits is crucial for achieving your financial goals.

If you're looking to learn more strategies for building a secure retirement, don't miss our "Learning In Retirement" presentation at Connecticut State Community College Quinebaug Valley on April 29th. Our team of advisors will share valuable insights on saving, investing, and creating a comprehensive plan to enjoy a comfortable retirement. Must preregister at <https://qvcc.edu/programs/lir/>.

To learn more about our strategic **Plan Well, Invest Well, Live Well™** process and how you can build your savings, request a **complimentary consultation** on our website or call us at (860) 928-2341.

Authored by Senior Vice President, Financial Advisor Leisl L. Langevin, CFP® CDFIA®. Securities and advisory services offered through Commonwealth Financial Network®, Member FINRA/SIPC, a Registered Investment Adviser. 697 Pomfret Street, Pomfret Center, CT 06259 and 392-A Merrow Road, Tolland, CT 06084, 860.928.2341. <http://www.whzwealth.com> These materials are general in nature and do not address your specific situation. For your specific investment needs, please discuss your individual circumstances with your financial advisor. Weiss, Hale & Zahansky Strategic Wealth Advisors does not provide tax or legal advice, and nothing in the accompanying pages should be construed as specific tax or legal advice.

1. <https://americasavesweek.org/>
2. <https://www.federalreserve.gov/publications/2021-economic-well-being-of-us-households-in-2020-dealing-with-unexpected-expenses.htm>

Organic Roots Farm



at Popover Hill

147 East Old Route 6, Hampton, 860.336.8823
NOW OPEN YEAR ROUND
Monday – Friday 11-5,
Saturday 9-5, closed Sunday

**MEAT SALE 25% off our own select
grass fed pork products!
While supplies last!!**

Continued offerings include:

- * Organic root vegetables
- * Non-GMO eggs from our happy hens
- * Artisan cheeses
- * Freshly made bread & cinnamon buns on Friday & Saturday
- * Raw milk & More!

Freezer selections:
Delicious chicken pot pies & apple dumplings, freshly frozen cinnamon buns & breads, farm raised meats



**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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We are a non-profit vocational program training and employing adults with intellectual disabilities.

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ANNUALS - PERENNIALS
HERBS - VEGETABLES - NATIVES
1000's of Varieties - Many Unique!
All Grown by Us on Premises
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290 Middle Turnpike (Rt. 44) Mansfield Depot
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**To all our contributors-
Thank You!**

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

Tai Chi Home

Let Go of the Ground

By Joe Pandolfo

This time of year Spring wind is quite a thing. One afternoon you notice it feels different...it's got a lively warm touch.



In the Chinese lunar calendar it's the month of the Dragon, when a fantastic stir of change is weaving through the air; even more, in this year of the Dragon.

In the moment, here at the edge of the marsh, the air is awake with the focus of a hawk, ready to swoop.

This is the season of vision and shifting, a time to take flight... riding the spirit of the striking hawk, the spiraling dragon. To take flight, you've got to let go of the ground. Feel the wind lift your wings, sweeping heaven and earth.

alice's greenhouse

vegetable, flower and herb seedlings

heirloom and unusual varieties

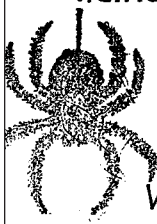
NEW HOURS

May 1 – 31

Wednesday – Sunday

9 – 6

167 bender road lebanon



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

From Ideas to Art: An Exploration

Like art, revolutions come from combining what exists into what has never existed before.

-Gloria Steinem

By Phoebe C. Godfrey



Writing for Neighbor's paper, I often meet people who read my work and appreciate what I have to say (I just met a reader at Ledgecrest Greenhouse). To those people I would like to extend an invitation to my upcoming art show at the Kerri Gallery in Willimantic. Many may not know that I also paint / create art and that I see my art as a way of exploring similar ideas that I do in writing but doing so from a more 'right brained' approach. A fascinating TED Talk that I share with many of my classes is called My Stroke of Insight by Jill Bolt Taylor (she also went onto to write a book of the same title), wherein Taylor describes her experience having a stroke on the left side of her brain. She lost the ability to speak (temporarily) but instead found herself feeling like the "life force of the universe" by having her right side of her brain dominate (the sides / hemispheres are not separate but are linked by the corpus coliseum, but they do have different areas of specialization). At the end of her talk (and I assume, also her book) she proposes that as a culture we need to spend more time experiencing life from our right hemisphere and less time organizing, separating and compartmentalizing everything as we do use our left hemisphere. I agree and in fact this was what led me to learning to paint over 20 years ago.

I began painting in graduate school while studying sociology as I found the emphasis at the time on my 'left brain', endless reading writing and critical analysis, called for a way to balance myself by using my 'right brain'. I was at the time inspired by something Gloria Steinem said in her book *Revolution from Within: A Book of Self-Esteem* (1992) and so I began painting (I was also dating a painter at the time who also encouraged me). In her book, as with her quote linking art to being like a revolution, she further recognizes the role that art can play in advancing our self-esteem. In my own case, I had always wanted to paint but felt if I did it would change me in ways I was not ready to experience. But eventually I picked up a brush, signed up for classes at the Art Students League (ASL) in New York City and have continued ever since. Consequently, the 'revolution from within' did happen, which in my case involved leaving my then male artist boyfriend for my first female girlfriend--something else that I have also continued pursuing ever since (as in having women partners).

After 5 years at the ASL and a completed Ph.D., I left New York for my first tenure track job in Laredo, Texas. Since I no longer had access to models, I started making copies of paintings from past masters, while taking liberties to reinterpret the paintings in order to say something about me as well as the artists that was both original and provocative. As a sociologist and an artist, I have sought to weave together the past and the present, inviting viewers to see their own lives through a more temporally expansive lens and to contemplate how their lives might be interpreted by others in the future. My recent series on revisioning the Book of Genesis comes out of my teaching on climate change and environmental destruction and aims to invite viewers to question in deep ways how our cultural stories are contributing to our self-destructive behavior. I think the arts are essential to helping cultures reexamine their values and to do so in ways that invite people to explore new ideas--their inner revolutions--in ways that can be more transformative than with merely left brain rational 'facts'.

The title of this show *From Ideas to Art: An Exploration* comes from my process that, as a sociologist, begins with an insight into or a question about (and usually both) our society that I then seek to translate into an artistic image or creation.

My show will be on display from April 2nd to May 31st, with the opening reception on April 4th from 5-7p.m. I will be there then and welcome talking to viewers, as well as hearing any kind feedback via email.

Finally, we will be giving out buttons at the reception that say: "Turn Ideas Into ART" -- may it be so!

Celebrating the Bipedal Revolution

By Marie Cantino. Photo by Michelle Poudrette

"Do we have to walk" is a question I hear from my grandson from time to time. My answer, increasingly, is "Yes, as much as we can." Growing up I'm sure I asked the same question, but with age I've come to appreciate the importance of walking to my physical and emotional well-being.

The need to walk makes sense to me. Recent studies suggest that nature's experiment with bipedalism (walking on two feet) goes back as far as seven million years. The ability to stand upright and travel that way for long distances is likely to have been critical to the success of early hominids. It's a risky design, given the forces exerted on our skeletons, but new studies emerge daily suggesting that walking itself can help maintain bone integrity, cardiovascular fitness, and brain acuity.

We at Joshua's Trust invite you to celebrate bipedalism during the month of April with any of the activities listed below. You can aim high with our Spring Challenge or try a modest stroll at Preston Nature Sanctuary. Just be aware that weather may cancel the walks, and **visit <https://joshuustrust.org/events/> for details, changes and cancellations.**

30 Trails in 30 Days Spring Challenge

Visit 30 Joshua's Trust properties over the course of the month and send an email to michelle.poudrette@joshuustrust.org, listing where you've been and when. Prizes to be announced. Participation in JT sponsored events (below) count towards your total. , listing where you've been and when. Prizes to be announced.

You can also join Joshua's Trust on any of the following April walks and events.

Wednesday Walk at H.E. Preston Nature Sanctuary

4/3/24 9:00-10:00 AM
H.E. Preston Sanctuary, 843 CT-97, Hampton, CT
Join us for a slow saunter through field and forest. This one mile loop will take us through a large field, into the woods and down into the valley towards Little River before it heads back up and over the field again.

Spring Mysteries in Bradley-Buchanan Woods

4/6/24 9:00-10:30 AM
Bradley Buchanan Woods, 54 Warrenville Road, Mansfield Center, CT
Join Master Naturalist, Deb Field for a guided walk in search of early spring blooms and vernal pool surprises. Note that we will meet at the parking lot just south of Mansfield Public Library and take the yellow trail from this point.



Joshua's Trust Annual Meeting

4/13/24 4:00 - 6:00 PM
Knowlton Hall, 25 Pompey Hollow Rd, Ashford, CT
Join Joshua's Trust staff, Board of Trustees, and friends to celebrate another great year of accomplishments in conservation. Our featured speaker is Landis Hudson, Executive Director of Maine Rivers, who will talk about their successful effort to bring Alewives back to China Lake.

Wednesday Walk at Pigeon Swamp Preserve

4/17/24 9:00 -10:30 AM
Pigeon Swamp Preserve, Pigeon Swamp Rd, Lebanon, CT
Join us for a 2.25 mile hike through multiple habitats including pasture, wetlands and forested areas.

Water in Earthly Processes at the Gurleyville Grist Mill

4/21/24 1:00 PM -2:30 PM
Gurleyville Grist Mill, Stone Mill Road, Mansfield, CT
For this Fourth Annual Earth Day Walk, Robert Thorson (<https://robertthorson.clas.uconn.edu/>) will combine a stream-side view of the Gurleyville Gristmill with a northerly hike along the crest of a glacial esker to help bring the power of flowing water in your head and heart.

Mosses and Lichens of Northeast CT

4/27/24 10:00-12:00 PM
Tobiassen Forest, 198 Noah Lane, Tolland, CT
Join UConn professor, Bernard Goffinet, as he explores the mosses and lichens that inhabit Tolland's Tobiassen Forest.

(Re)Learning Piano

By Cathy Cementina

Years ago, I stopped playing the piano when I moved across the country. Recently I decided to take it up again, using only a rented Yamaha keyboard on top of an ironing board. I found a teacher who is especially experienced in teaching older students. (I am approaching 70.)

What a difference it is to (re) learn piano as an older adult versus as a child into one's teens. And all for the better. As a youth, I simply thought of it as reading the notes and playing the songs. Now, I see it as a whole world opening up. It is a world of symbols, each with its own very precise meaning. That *mf* means loud, but not too loud. That 4/4 means four counts to the measure, and each quarter note gets 1 count. If the stem goes up, the note is played in the treble clef; if it goes down, it is played in the base clef. And those clefs are defined

on the piano by the middle C. And then there are the rests: A half rest sits above the line; a whole rest sits below the line. And two dots at the end of a piece mean you go back to the beginning and play again.

I may have learned these cues as I child, but I never quite realized that together they comprise a world. It is an esoteric world only available to those who learn the language. But the fascinating thing is that this esoteric world produces a meta-world that everyone has access to, a democratic world, the world of music. Knowledge of discreet symbols is not necessary to gain entrance into *that* world. But collectively, when played and obeyed, all those distinct symbols with their very precise meanings produce this magnificent thing we call music.

This may be obvious to others. It was not obvious to me as a young girl dreading her Monday night

piano lessons -- and avoiding practice. Now I look forward to the lessons and the practice. What next is there to learn in this territory of special notations with special meanings? And what implications will it have for the music that is produced?

I also have to give a shout out to Ruth at Song-a-Day music in Coventry. She was my first step into revisiting the piano, and she bent over backwards to welcome me into that adventure and facilitate my entry however she could. It was Ruth who had the ingenious idea of jerry-rigging a keyboard onto an ironing board and using a coat hanger as a music stand.

I may soon graduate to a real piano.

There is something to be said for growing old.

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

The Hawk of Peace

By Jesse R. Clark

Springtime is a peculiar time.
There is a familiar feel in the air,
as a familiar feeling comes over me,
calling us to run, jump, dance, live.
The transition from winter into spring
thrust me forward as
The comfort of home gives way
to the excitement of the world,
possibilities.
I walk down the sidewalk,
my mind racing with these thoughts.
I want to experience it all!
Yet, the weather is still cold.
The transition of winter to spring,
one part of my life to the next,
isn't complete.
Frustration fills me.
Suddenly I stop as I look up and see a hawk
gliding across the sky,
riding on the warmth of the breeze.
He feels no stress,
no anxiety.
He has flown for ages,
one with nature.
Oh, how I long to be like him
and glide across this world
on the peace I feel.
A warm breeze surrounds me
as I close my eyes.
My prayer is answered.
I continue on my way,
gliding on God's peace,
grateful for taking the time to see that hawk.
"Somewhere Over the Rainbow"
is here,
with us,
now,
wherever we may be.
Thank You, God.

Spring Notes

By Carol Wheelock Hall

Good riddance to winter, before summer or fall,
It was a special spring day that I now recall.

A robin, perched on maple limb, sang her happy song.
I gladly heard her music on that bright, sunny morn.

Her notes were sweet and clear to an audience of one,
Producing a glad smile, then her melody was done.

Still in my nightclothes, sitting on the back deck,
Feeling no worries with her gift and the effect.

I resumed morning coffee as she flew away,
And was thankful that she had blessed my day.

IF...

By Judy Davis

My heroes have been the men
and women who raised the green
flag because they love Ireland so.
Can you imagine walking in St.
Stephen's Green with Con Booth,
Joseph Plunkett, Thomas MacDonagh,
as well as Connolly, Collins, and
Pearse?

If I could go back in time,
I would stand shoulder to shoulder,
with those cheering for the
freedom of their proud country.

But it is 2024, and there
is still no united Ireland. But, I
would have been proud to be
with them on St. Stephen's Green –
if I'd also been a rebel in 1916.

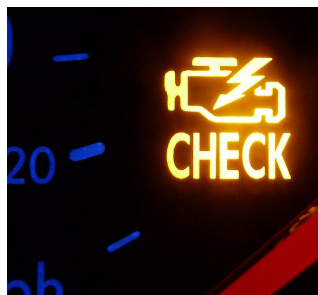
"All you need is love."
-John Lennon

Common Sense Car Care

By Rick Ostien

This month's article is about the notorious check engine light (ECM). The parts store that offers free scanning of the check engine light is hoping to sell the consumer a part to remedy the problem. However, this may or may not cure the issue. Let us look at the way the ECM light comes on to start with.

The ECM computer is programmed to monitor the different sensors; engine, transmission, and emissions. The sensors are designed with a voltage range that is input to the ECM. If a sensor does not stay in its programmed voltage range or stays in one voltage reading too long then the ECM light comes on. The early 1980's theory was if there was an oxygen sensor code (O2) then the sensor must need replacing. The Oxygen sensor monitors exhaust flow and changes voltage input as quick as you can click your fingers. The idea is to keep the engine from running too rich (excessive fuel) or too lean (not enough fuel). Mice love to build a nest in the air filter box. This can cause an air flow restriction which causes a rich run condition. A broken vacuum hose can cause an engine to run too lean. Both things can cause an O2 sensor to go out of range. So, you see the ECM light tells you what sensor input is having a problem, but it may not necessarily need to be replaced.



The ECM light that comes on because of an emission problem is usually the EVAP system. The system was designed to return fuel vapors from the fuel tank. The system is checked by the ECM to make sure there are no leaks in the system. A loose gas cap, missing gas cap, or the new capless filler neck can cause an EVAP system not to seal. Rusted parts, fuel tank, filler neck, sending unit, just about any related component under the hood can cause an EVAP problem.

The ECM light can stay on because of a problem that has not gone away (hard code). The ECM light that goes out after so many key starts is an intermittent code. The ECM will store in its memory either problem if it does not lose voltage under 9 volts or if someone clears the code. So, you can see that fixing a check engine light takes a knowledgeable technician and the equipment to do the repair correctly. We have had some customers complain about diagnostic charges. The changing of parts without correctly diagnosing the problem can cost you money and time. Many people start the conversation with we scanned the check engine light or we googled the problem and this is what I want done. This makes me recall a customer that owned a Mercedes. This vehicle had multiple codes and they wanted each part replaced that the computer coded out. I explained that we were talking about \$2000 plus dollars to do this repair the way they wanted it done. We got signed permission to diagnose the problem to double check the codes that the other repair shop found. The codes we found all related to a lean running engine. Inspecting the engine showed no obvious problem. A lean running engine means that one or more cylinder is getting less fuel than the others. The most common problem causing this is a vacuum leak. We have a diagnostic tool that induces smoke into the intake manifold to look for this leak. We found a crack in the intake manifold. The diagnosis took a little more than 2 hours. The diagnostic price per hour depends on the repair facility. The average price of \$100 to \$180 is well spent though. In this case the total repair was around \$1200. The customer saved a lot of money on parts that did not need to be replaced. It is important to note that google is a wonderful tool, but it is not the end all and it can end up costing you money if taken as gospel.

I hope this gives you a little insight into the ECM light. It really is important to have a trained technician diagnose and repair your vehicle. It can save you time and money. Most customers are happier saving money and having their car or truck run properly. Today's vehicles are more complicated than ever and they really require an expert to fix them. Until next month...

Rick Ostien is the owner of Franc Motors in Willington.

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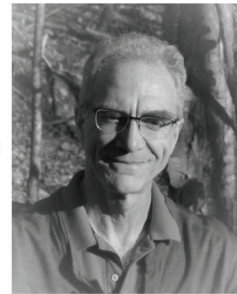
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Traditional Music in Connecticut's Last Green Valley

Spring Tutorial

By Brian Karlsson-Barnes

Garden planning is well done in winter, time to reflect, re-evaluate...

Perhaps reevaluate an embedded attitude. Winter dormancy and rejuvenation drew me to a landscape career forty years ago, mostly working with clients' well-manicured desires. Five years in Chaplin has evolved my appreciation of weeds. They feed the Web of Life, and I *like* ornamental aspects of **Pokeberry** / **Phytolacca** and many clump grasses.

Weeding is an expression of human ego which can be morally justified, excused because many do it, but no excuse. Coexistence is an expression of landscape ethics, the right thing, and less work. Part of the Web of Life, not apart.

Winter in the Northeast is horticulturally dormant. Some go south for the winter, but the coldest season makes spring so sweet. I love our wee woods, thickets and gardens all year long. Winter is time to observe the quiet landscape of buds and birds on bare branches. To recognize the ornamental grace of dead herbaceous growth above ground like **Chinese Silver Grass** / **Miscanthus 'Morning Light'** and many weeds. Seeking signs of health and rebirth, dormant buds swelling in late winter that is finally early spring.

SPRING! Leaves and flowers appear, and we want to plant! If *ad hoc*, plant a native **Serviceberry** / **Amelanchier** tree here, birds love 'em, a fragrant **Roseshell Azalea** / **Rhododendron** there, and herbaceous flowers wherever easily seen.

Plant **Daffodils** (blooming now in stores) where you have full sun; a tree canopy may shade later, but daffs go dormant. They'll likely come back next year. In fall, bury bulbs nearby, and you have a large drift of **Narcissus** next spring.

Style is yours and yours alone. My naturalistic style has ornamental edges blending to wild, whimsical and whatever Betsey wants. *Coexistence* requires an appreciation or at least a tolerance of some weeds. Whatever the style, all agree on the importance of plant health. Observe plants *All Year Long*. Writing mid-March, red buds are swelling on my towering **Red Maple** / **Acer**, common in climax woodlands of New England, and part of the diverse Eastern Deciduous Forest extending west to the Mississippi River.

Not so common is **Bull Bay**. Buds are healthy and some leaves are still a lustrous green on my **Southern Magnolia**



Yellow daffodils herald spring.

/ **Magnolia grandiflora** from a Connecticut College plant sale two years ago, Planted as a small whip, it's still only 24" high, but surviving winter. Native north to USDA cold-hardiness zone 6, Virginia and Maryland. The internet says Chaplin's zone is 6b (minus 5°F to 0°F) in 2023, but it hasn't been that cold recently in this crease between coastal lowland and highland Connecticut. Flowers are heavenly.

TUTORIAL After five years, clients and friends were invited to my first spring tutorial at *Chapel of the Birch* near the Natchaug River in Chaplin, Connecticut. I am the Chaplain, *coo coo ka choo*. "I am he as you are he as you are me. And we are all together." – John Lennon, *I Am the Walrus*

All is Good, gardening in Coexistence.

On Sunday, March 17th, we pruned dead wood and crossing branches to improve air circulation because climate change has increased humidity, thus pests and disease. We staked multi-stems of clump trees. Restored compost saucers plus a kelp tonic. Used wood debris in *Hügelkultur* and leaves in garden beds with a topdressing of compost. I showed some container gardening with **Lily** / **Lilium** bulbs and bareroot **Strawberry** / **Fragaria**. We had fun!



Tower pot with barely emerging tast strawberries.

The chilly weather was biblical, early rain and the clouds parted. Amy and Carl Love came from Wayland, Mass. Sulo Salmela from Northbridge MA, Corleen Law of Putnam, and Liz Zimmer of Woodstock (great sister RE team who sold the house) pruned the **Redtwig Dogwood** (**Benthamidia** formerly **Cornus**) shrubs; removing 3 to 5 oldest canes promotes new red branching.



Coreen (right), Liz and Sulo in The Redwigs.

We celebrated with a **Saint Patrick's Day Bonfire**, marshmallows and a food run to Willimantic for gourmet pizza from *Trigo* which was closed on the holiday! *C'mon*. Tony's Pizza (117 Main Street) was great off the bench as were the Celtics beating the Wizards 130-104 without starters. Maybe a **Summer Solstice Bonfire** with a tutorial on herbaceous perennials?

CLEAN UP Some manicure their landscapes, some don't. Your choice. I enjoy mowing my flowing pattern of lawn, leaving some unmown as a *mini-meadow*. I leave ground-hugging old growth of herbaceous perennials past the danger of a hard freeze. Old shelters new. If exposed, fresh growth emerges too early, vulnerable to frost. New England springs are unpredictable with climate change. Last year, a hard freeze in the middle of May killed buds on my native **Redbud** / **Cercis** and **Japanese Maple** / **Acer**; **Japanese Painted Fern** / **Athyrium** died to the ground.

All recovered.

I fertilize with compost saucers and granular *Bio-Tone*. My first tonic offered customers as a landscape designer for Weston Nurseries (Hopkinton MA) was a topdressing of compost; forming a "saucer" to hold water is better. But first is the example of our woods: the value of leaves. Compost leaves for nutrient-rich leaf mulch. Next is the value of wood debris.

HÜGELKULTUR (pronounced *hyoo-gul-kul-ture*) German word for mound or hill culture in which a planting bed is filled with wood and organic materials, topped with soil, better with compost. German gardeners and other Europeans have practiced it for centuries.

This horticultural technique mounds decaying wood debris and other compostable biomass materials as a raised bed. Small logs can be stacked below grade; above grade, cutting debris into small pieces increases wood surface and hastens decomposition. Decomposing wood ties up nitrogen that fuels plant growth; compensate with high-nitrogen materials like grass clippings or manure. As with composting, alternate layers of green and brown material.

Embraced by Permaculture for growing harvest plants, hügelkulturing is not for most trees because the mound sinks with decomposition. (My white-bark birch are planted in an 18" mound of compost, no wood debris.) Use for some woody shrubs, herbaceous perennials and annuals.

MANTRA When nursery plants are available, **Suit the Site's** cold hardiness and sun exposure. Soil nutrient and moisture is often amended; *Water Makes Things Grow!* Then **Fit the Space** using mature size to guide location. (Mind you, the nursery industry wants you to update and replace more than necessary.) Third, **Seek Beauty**.

Photos by the author.
Brian Karlsson-Barnes, Master gardener / designer, Boston, Massachusetts & Chaplin, Connecticut

Email: briankarlssonbarnes@gmail.com Text: 617.957.6611 (preferred)

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Empty Bowls in Willimantic

By Delia Berlin

According to emptybowls.com, “Empty Bowls is a grassroots movement by artists and crafts people in cities and towns around the world to raise money for food-related charities to care for and feed the hungry in their communities. Empty Bowls supports food-related charitable organizations around the world, and has raised millions of dollars to help end hunger.”



Willimantic’s first Empty Bowls event will be held at the Windham Senior Center on Wednesday, April 24, from 5 to 7 p.m. Guests will be able to purchase locally made ceramic bowls, priced between \$5 and \$20, and use them to enjoy unlimited soup and bread donated by local restaurants. There will also be raffles and a silent auction. At the end of the event, 100% of the proceeds will go to benefit the Covenant Soup Kitchen.

But there is much more than fundraising to an Empty Bowls project. The first such event in Willimantic is the brainchild of Daniela de Sousa, owner of Spiral Arts. This ceramics studio and gallery offers classes, workshops, membership, and locally hand-crafted ceramics. In addition to operating Spiral Arts and being a prolific artist, Daniela is also the kiln master, main teacher, and mentor at the studio.

If I could use only one word to describe Daniela, “synergetic” would work best. In everything she does, she applies her whole person, interconnecting her creativity, interests, resources, and skills to improve outcomes, maximize opportunities, and build community.

Take, for example, the many hundreds of bowls that Daniela has set out to make for this event. She started planning production a year ahead. To fund the supplies to make the bowls, the studio held fundraising sales last summer, during 3rd Thursday Street Fests. By that time, Daniela had also started collaborating with local restaurants and other organizations to secure a venue and all the resources needed to hold a successful event.

Soon, local potters started converging on the studio, hand-building and throwing bowls of all sizes and styles. After their first firing, many bowls were taken to Windham High School and Eastern Connecticut State University for glazing, becoming welcome teaching materials for local students, who also benefited from the opportunity to contribute to the project.

At the time of this writing, there is still a growing list of participating restaurants and organizations ready to make Willimantic Empty Bowls a resounding success. All that is clear is that on April 24, from 5:00 to 7:00 p.m., at the Windham Senior Center, there will be ceramic bowls for every taste, to be filled with delicious soups and bread provided by local eateries. Please join in celebration of all that is good in Willimantic.

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Searching for Neptune: One Man's Journey to Freedom

By Donna Dufresne

In 1799, the ship *Neptune* returned to New Haven Harbor after a three-year circumnavigation of the globe to China and back. Her cargo was worth millions of dollars and created great wealth for her owners and investors. The story of the *Neptune* and her lucrative voyage spread across the globe. Among mariners, *Neptune* became a symbol of good fortune.

Not long before the *Neptune* arrived in New Haven, a young man from Abington, Connecticut, embarked upon his own voyage, seeking fortune and a foothold in trade. Oliver Ingalls was the son of Zebadiah Ingalls. Although his father captained the Abington Militia and the 11th Regiment in the Lexington call, Oliver, born in 1770, would have been too young to earn his stripes in the military.

Items on his probate inventory in 1815 indicate that Oliver had been a sea captain: "1 spyglass, old sea charts and gauging rod, sea writing desk, and a marine case with bottles." The study included "2 practical navigators, table of the poles, *American Clerks Magazine*, 1 French Grammar, Franklin's *Life*, Dwight's *Geography*, and a book of Spanish Grammar," further indicating a life at sea. The grammar books imply that Captain Ingalls was engaged in the West Indies trade.

My investigation into Oliver Ingalls began with the discovery of Neptune Ingalls in Pomfret Vital Records. Neptune Ingalls was born in Africa in 1790 and died in Pomfret in 1868. I hypothesized that he must have been brought to Pomfret by one of the local Ingallses. It did not take long to discover a sea captain among the Abington clan. Fortunately, both men left a trail of documents which helped to guide the construction of Neptune's story.

So, how did Neptune end up in Pomfret? He was likely picked up in the West Indies as a young child. According to an exhibit in the John Brown House in Providence, it was widespread practice to reward the captains of a voyage with up to five enslaved captives to sell or keep. For example, according to Brown University's Slavery and Justice report (2004), Captain Esek Hopkins "was promised 50 pounds per month, plus a 'privilege'—a commission—of ten barrels of rum and ten enslaved Africans to sell on his own account."¹

Neptune may have been captured as a young boy and brought to the West Indies with his mother. He may have been orphaned by the time the slave ship arrived in the Caribbean, or deliberately separated from his mother when she was auctioned. The sugar plantations were brutal, and enslaved people were literally worked to death. Underfed, overworked, and medically untreated, the life expectancy for adults was only five years after captivity. It was cheaper to buy new African captives than to ensure the health and well-being of the labor force. There was no use for children and elders on the islands. They became part of the return cargo, collateral perks to be sold in Charleston, South Carolina, and in Rhode Island.

The mystery of Neptune's trauma-laden journey to Connecticut may never be solved unless I unearth some of Captain Ingalls's account books and diaries. Census records list only heads of household until 1850; everyone else is represented by a hashmark indicating age, sex, and race. From his birth in Africa in 1790, we next encounter Neptune on the 1810 census as the "other than white free person" living with Ingalls, his wife, and four children. By disaggregating the census data and investigating land records, I was able to determine that in 1810 Ingalls owned what we know as the Brayton Grist Mill on Mashamoquet Brook in Pomfret. Neptune remained whitewashed out of history until he shows up in church and land records, and later data indicates that he was working in the carding shop and fulling mill owned by Ingalls and later in the Pomfret Fulling Mill. Ingalls's story may help to fill in the gaps.

*

In 1803 Oliver Ingalls married Betsy Abbott, whose father was a merchant and owned a store in North Providence. Apparently Oliver gave up his stint as a sea captain and settled back in Pomfret with Betsy, where their first son, Gerard, was born in 1804. In the Ingalls genealogy, Oliver is listed as a farmer in Pomfret with 30 acres, about the same amount of acreage he bought in 1810 from Jonathan and Rufus Brayton. The land included Mashamoquet Brook, the grist mill, a linseed-oil mill (fulling mill), and a carding mill. Three more children, Esther, William, and Zebadiah, were born before 1815.

An analysis of Oliver's probate inventory in 1815 shows that he was more than a farmer. His contacts with merchants in North Providence and his property on the busy Providence Turnpike enabled him to build a thriving business. His personal inventory included more than 40 articles of clothing, including expensive suits and imported fabric. His blacksmith shop was producing more than horseshoes; it imported steel from England and Russia, and numerous shovels, grub hoes, scythes, and plow irons were in mass production—the kind of tools that were exported to the West Indies.

While business boomed, tragedy struck the family in

1812 when eight-year-old Gerard drowned in the millpond. Still, Oliver continued to build the Pomfret Woolen factory, designed to include carding, spinning, and weaving under one roof, downstream from the grist mill on his 30 acres of land. By 1815 he had established a board of directors, and the factory was running with several seasonal laborers, including Neptune.

Unfortunately, Oliver drowned in the millpond in 1815, after returning late at night from Dresser's Store at Abington Four Corners. He missed the road and fell into the millpond. His Newfoundland dog, another remnant from a life at sea, barked, but Betsy saw nothing amiss from the window. They found Captain Oliver in the morning. He is buried with his son, Gerard, in the Old Abington Burial Ground with a stone carved by Nathaniel Hodgkins. His older brother, Lemuel Ingalls, Esq., became executor of the estate and legal guardian of Oliver's children. It took several years to settle debts, sell property, and sort out investments in the mills. The blacksmith shop and mills were sold to Orin Marcy, whose family owned the mill complex for several generations. Betsy and the children moved to Providence, while Lemuel managed their inheritance. His sons, William and Zebadiah, became renowned merchants in New York City.

*

Meanwhile, Neptune continued to live and work in the mills. He met his first wife, Lucinda Malbone (descendant of the Malbone slaves), in the Pomfret Fulling Mill, where they worked seasonally for 26 years. They married in 1816 in the Abington Congregational Church and continued to live in Abington, working in the Ingallses' wool factory until it was destroyed in a flood in 1819. They attended the Abington Congregational Church, where records show their marriage and the deaths of their three children.

In 1832, Neptune bought 12 acres of land, including buildings, from Joel Baker in Baker Hollow. He was listed on the 1850 census as a farm laborer living with Joel and Joseph Baker. There were mortgages and a road dispute, but in the end, Neptune Ingalls appears to have led a decent and industrious life as a farm laborer and skilled millworker. After Lucinda died in 1859, he married Roseanna Robinson, age 65. On the 1860 census, her daughter, Nancy Hinckley, and grandson, George, age six, were living with them. By then, a little neighborhood of Black farm laborers and their families had grown in nearby Jericho. Edward Malbone, Ichabod Fagan, George Malbone, Evan Malbone, and Henry Jackson all lived nearby with their families. There was work to be had. The large farm of Horace Sharpe on Sharpe Hill needed farm workers; the Fay/Elliott saw and shingle mills were booming, and the Red Top Quarry on Carter Road continued to be active during the building of the railroad.

Neptune Ingalls's life was snuffed out just before the first puff of a steam engine rolled into Elliot Station. The railroad changed everything. It disrupted the landscape and the community. The Pomfret Fulling Mill on Abington Brook was dismantled and replaced by the Abington Mail Drop and Big Y Grain Station. Farms began to use steam engines and required less labor. Foundries and blacksmiths switched to anthracite coal from Pennsylvania rather than the locally burned charcoal. Work in the quarries would soon be replaced by steam shovels. The community of Blacks that surrounded Neptune began to move on. The Civil War pensioners who fought in the 29th Connecticut Colored Infantry Regiment, the descendants of the enslaved Malbones, and Nipmuc stoneworkers in Jericho migrated toward the cities, where they found work on the railroad as brakemen, porters, and track maintenance workers. No one was left to visit the grave of Neptune Ingalls or to stop the steamroller of progress that paved over his remains. Only a few hints in the town archives remain to tell the story of Neptune Ingalls and his incredible journey from Africa to Pomfret.

In the book *Full Circle: A Directory of Native and African Americans, Windham County, Connecticut, 1650–1900* (2002), Marcella Houle Pasay notes that Neptune Ingalls is buried beneath the road at the Four Corners in Abington. His probate estate provided for a casket, the digging of the grave, and a small house on 13 acres of land for his widow. I am not sure why Neptune is buried beneath the road, and it makes me wonder if there are others by his side. Perhaps it was more cost-effective to build the road on top of Neptune Ingalls than to move him to a different site. As at many African-American burial grounds, the people who were dispensable in life were dispensable in death. In the 1940s when the road was reconfigured, there were no advocates for preserving an uncomfortable past. Instead, Neptune's bones rattle beneath the rumble of semi rigs and the roar of motorcycles on a busy road.

¹James T. Campbell, "Slavery and Justice at Brown—A Personal Reflection," Brown University's Slavery and Justice Report. <https://slaveryandjusticereport.brown.edu/sections/slavery-the-slave-trade-and-brown/>



Commemorating the 1974 Black Student Sit-In at UConn

Submitted by Graham Stinnett

Please Respond Personally: Commemorating the 1974 Black Student Sit-In March 11th – July 19th, 2024, Schimmelpfeng Gallery Dodd Center for Human Rights, University of Connecticut Exhibit

Opening to the public Monday, March 11th, 2024, the UConn Library's Archives & Special Collections will mount a 50th Anniversary Exhibition commemorating the direct action taken by Black and Brown students on the Storrs campus to challenge structural racism in higher education by sitting in at the Wilbur Cross Library on April 22nd 1974. This historic event of activism, where roughly 370 students occupied the library at varying times across 3 days, was the culminating event during a semester long campaign of student organizing to demand representation and resources for students of color at the University of Connecticut.

Through curated documents this exhibition will feature the perspectives of the student organizers, the Afro-American Cultural Center, the University and its administration to portray this campuswide call to action which resonates to our present day. This 50th anniversary is also an opportunity to highlight approaches to student activism and the centrality of the library as an institutional setting both for democracy and also one vulnerable to upholding systems of oppression.

For further information contact Graham Stinnett (graham.stinnett@uconn.edu)

Windham Tolland 4-H News

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. April 3 Shelters, April 10 Outdoor Cooking, April 17 Low Ropes, April 24 Spring Fed Ponds May 1 Soil May 8 Fishing (at 10 AM or 4:30 PM.) \$20 per session. Call 860-974-1122 to register.

April 17 through May 1 We will be accepting **donations** of antiques and **gently used** household goods, furniture, toys, electronics, tools, books, decorative items, etc. from 9 AM – 1 PM and 5 PM – 7 PM Mon through Fri and 9AM – 1 PM on Saturdays for the **70th annual Windham County 4-H Auction & Tag Sale on May 3 & 4, 2024** at the lower level back entrance of the lodge, 326 Taft Pond Rd, Pomfret. On May 1 donations will close at 1 PM. We do not accept donations of clothing, textbooks, magazines or encyclopedias. For further donation assistance, call the office at 860-974-3379.

April 20, 2024 - Windham-Tolland 4-H Camp Camper Scamper 5K Race/Walk and One Mile Kid Run. 326 Taft Pond Rd., Pomfret, CT. Kids Race at 9:30, Adult Race starts at 10 AM, walkers start immediately after runners. Professionally timed by Last Mile Race Management. Adults \$30/Kids \$10. Go to www.4hcampct.org for more details and registration forms or call 860-974-1122. Can register as late as that morning starting at 8 AM. Proceed benefits the Jim Logee Campership Fund. .

Sunday, April 20 from 12-4 PM. Visit the Windham-Tolland 4-H Camp Open House 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.

In Your Corner

By Pam Skelly

This month's "In Your Corner" from the Windham/Willimantic Branch of the NAACP is highlighting our first ever choral concert, *Lift Every Voice and Sing!* On May 4 from 1:30-3:30pm at the First Congregational Church in Willimantic. The concert will include performances from congregations across northeastern Connecticut as well as community choral groups. An integral partner in our production is the Windham Area Interfaith Ministries (WAIM) which represents and connects about 50 religious congregations. Funds will help us support voter registration and getting voters to the polls in this very important election year. Please note that although voting has been part of the NAACP bylaws since its founding in 1909, the organization does not support candidates. They do support causes, the same kind of causes that WAIM has been supporting since its founding.

The spark for this idea was lit when our member Christine Pattee attended our MLK Jr. event at the Calvary Baptist Church in February. She felt that the power of the gospel music – so uplifting and celebratory – was a perfect link to build a greater community. Music is a common connection that unites humanity. Music can move our hearts spiritually and our bodies physically. Singing is an emotional expression of our feelings that brings us together.

Christine had been a producer of women's musical shows since the 1980s. She felt that a great connection was to work with the choirs of many congregations for a choral event and pursued WAIM's support. She's also reached out to community choruses not affiliated with congregations. Joining Chris as co-producers of the event are Reverend Dr. Debra Pallatto of the Second Congregational Church in Coventry and Jevana Porter of the Calvary Baptist Church in Willimantic.

Christine outlined the goals of this Choral Concert extravaganza:

- To bring together urban and suburban religious congregations for an upbeat afternoon.
- To expand membership in Windham/Willimantic NAACP.
- To raise funds for the Windham/Willimantic NAACP Get Out The Vote Fund.

Although the event is free, we are encouraging donations. The event brings together community building and fundraising to GOTV (Get Out The Vote). You can expect a variety of musical styles and songs to celebrate our humanity. Each group's performance will bring a unique experience for us to enjoy.

Following the performance, there will be an opportunity for the audience together in the hospitality hall for conversations, coffee and cookies.

We will have a Souvenir Program Book that lists the performing groups as well as descriptive and contact information for every WAIM congregation that puts out publicity. We are reaching out to the whole Quiet Corner, from Coventry to Killingly and we want every member of the audience to have information on congregations that they might choose to join if they're not already affiliated.

From a personal perspective, works of art, including music, can move me emotionally and I know that by the physical sensation I experience in my heart. In writing this article, I became curious about the power of music so I did a little web searching and found a fascinating article entitled, "Music as a blend of spirituality, culture, and mind mollifying drug" by Shefali Arora and Abhinav Tyagi for *Applied Acoustics*. (article link: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0003682X2100709X>) The abstract states: "Science inspires music more often than human imagination. Music is an integral part of all societies, including animal ones. It is behaving like an instrument for digesting information. It has been proven to help in healing the body, mind, and culture. Music can maintain and regulate emotion. It is a common thread among large social groups and is used as a tool to navigate through life. Real science and real music require a steady thinking process. It is a way of finding compatibility within a society as well as developing a link with other societies. Music plays a developmental role in a person's identity, cultural worldview and permeates through life. In nutshell 'Science explains Music and Music makes us The Human.'"

If you are like me, you have some favorite musical artists and songs that define your timeline, especially childhood. My father would sing "Molly Malone" to me

and my mother would play Harry Belafonte. I fell in love with Sam Cooke's vocals, then Beatles' harmonies, and later Joni Mitchell's pure voice. Like me, I'm sure you have a long song memory list. Hearing the songs brings not just the love of the music, but often the memory of where you were and who you were with when you heard the song. Listening to the music you grew up with is a wonderful trip into your past. It can also be pretty therapeutic.

Music has typically been a part of social justice movements. Protest songs and chants have been part of societies throughout time. The song, "We Shall Not Be Moved," exemplifies the civil rights movement to me. Originally "I Shall Not Be Moved," is an African-American slave spiritual, hymn, and protest song which dates to the early 1800s in the American south. It was likely originally sung at revivalist camp-meetings as a slave jubilee.

"Turn, Turn, Turn!" (To Everything There is a Season), a protest song with its roots in folk music, took the words directly from the King James version of Ecclesiastes 3:1-8. This song was originally recorded in 1959 by the legendary Pete Seeger who wrote the music and added just six words to the biblical verse. Religious and secular themes often intersect around concerns for justice, equality and freedom.

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 from 1:30 to 3:30pm at the First Congregational Church, 199 Valley Street, Willimantic, CT 06226. The parking lot of the First Congregational Church in Willimantic is small and reserved for disability access and performers but that won't be a problem for visitors. Nearby you will find plenty of free parking on the street, in parking lots and in the parking garage. All these are within an easy walk to the church.

For further information contact:

Producer Christine Pattee
Home 860-742-6511 landline NO text
c2pattee@aol.com

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>. Please consider joining our organization.

a cappella benefit

CONCERT

to support

Partners in Development project work in Guatemala



Sunday, April 21, 2024
3:00 p.m.

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Saturday, April 13, 2024

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All-you-can-eat, homemade soup & salad buffet brought to you by Believers Mennonite Church

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A one-woman show performed by Jennifer Emerson

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Sunday, April 14, 1pm matinee

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"All you need is love."
-John Lennon

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).

Plans for offshore wind power blow back into New England

CT Mirror. "Offshore wind is making its return to New England...A three-state solicitation by Connecticut, Massachusetts and Rhode Island received project proposals from four different developers by the Wednesday deadline, two of which essentially rebid the projects they'd pulled out of. The total power submitted is about 5,570 megawatts, a good bit shy of the 6,800 megawatt limit set by the states. By way of comparison, 6,800 megawatts would be equivalent to more than three Millstones, the nuclear power plant that is the largest power generator in New England. Charles Rothenberger, clean energy attorney with Save the Sound, an environmental advocacy group, called the nearly 5,600 megawatts "a substantial down payment on what we'll need. It's within striking distance of what the total solicitation was, so I would call that a robust solicitation," he said. "Obviously, the devil will be in the details. I'm sure people will be looking very closely at the bid price for these projects."



CT legislators take another swing at a big climate bill

CT Mirror. "The mystery climate bill of the 2024 legislative session is finally public. "An act concerning the implementation of certain climate change measures" — the benign title for HB 5004 — is a densely packed omnibus bill with 17 multi-part initiatives designed to address the causes and impacts of climate change across multiple sectors...Weeks before the bill's release, it was already a target for the conservative Yankee Institute, which dubbed it the "green monster...[It's a] "a bill that is far more full of carrot than stick, far more full of incentives than mandates, punishments, fines, et cetera."...The scope of the bill makes it a tall order in a short legislative session. [But] "There's never a good time for anything if you don't want to do it."

UI Warns of 'Financial Death Spiral,' Infrastructure Cuts Absent \$14M Rate Hike

CT Examiner. "Three months after regulators rejected a rate hike for United Illuminating, the utility company says it needs \$14 million more by February to avoid cutting infrastructure projects in 2024. The company, which serves about 341,000 customers across 17 municipalities in Fairfield and New Haven counties, has been locked in a dispute with the Public Utilities Regulatory Authority since the regulator rejected a \$131 million rate hike that would have raised customer bills by about 11 percent. UI said it now faces a "financial death spiral" unless it cuts about half of the \$140 million of infrastructure projects it planned for 2024...Under Chair Marissa Gillett, PURA has set a high bar for utilities looking to increase their rates. The regulator's decision to reject rate hike requests by UI and Eversource subsidiary Aquarion Water have frustrated the utilities, who say PURA's new tact makes it harder to draw outside investments for the grid. Regulators at PURA said the company didn't do enough to prove it needed the rate hike. But UI quickly appealed the decision to the courts, saying the decision would cut its profits in half and force it to put off infrastructure projects."

CT towns tell legislative committee they want local control over the building of solar facilities

CT Insider. "People from rural towns across the state with concerns that the Connecticut Siting Council has legal jurisdiction over the location of solar power facilities, rather than the municipalities, are hoping new legislation could give them more control of their land. About 70 residents and officials testified to that hope on Thursday during a Connecticut General Assembly's Energy and Technology Committee public hearing on eight proposed bills pertaining to renewable energy sources. Of particular interest to many who testified is HB 5361, which would give municipalities the opportunity for local control if that town was within a five-mile radius of a project greater than

100 megawatts...The Siting Council has a very important task to do and, to some degree, needs autonomy to do that work," said Sen. Tony Hwang, R-Fairfield. "Nevertheless, the composition and expertise of the council is important to provide more accountability, transparency, and a better decision-making process with checks and balances."

How Challenging Is The Federal Used EV Incentive

EV Club of CT. "For EVs to displace internal combustion vehicles at scale, anyone who can afford to own a car needs to be able to afford an EV. The majority of vehicle sales in any given year are used vehicles...These are the basic rules for the federal used EV incentive: Purchase price cap of \$25,000; Only purchases through new or used car dealers are eligible; The incentive is 30% of the purchase price, capped at \$4000; Purchaser income limit of \$150,000 modified adjusted gross income for joint filers, \$112,500 for head of household filer, and \$75,000 for single filers; [and more]...In order for a consumer to receive the incentive (new or used), the dealer that sells the vehicle must be registered with the Department of the Treasury (IRS). Not every dealership is registered....This article mainly focuses on the IRA, but there is also a CT CHEAPR incentive for used EVs. It is part of the Rebate+ incentives that are available for households with income of no more than 3 times the federal poverty level. This is a true point of sale rebate, not a tax credit, and it gets deducted from the invoice price. It is \$3,000 for a battery electric vehicle and \$1125 for a plug-in hybrid."

Connecticut wants to penalize insurers for backing fossil fuel projects

CT Mirror & The Grist. "The nation's insurance industry has gone haywire in recent years amid a succession of floods, fires, and other climate-fueled disasters...But many of these companies also provide coverage for fossil fuel projects, like pipelines and natural gas power plants, that would never be built without their backing...Legislation in Connecticut, the capital of the American insurance industry and home to several of its largest carriers, could make insurers pay for that contradiction... "It's important to begin to hold [insurers] accountable for how they've played it both ways in terms of climate change, said Tom Swan, the executive director of Connecticut Citizen Action Group"... passing [the legislation] in the home of the country's insurance industry would send a message to big companies that are still underwriting oil and gas projects. "I think it's a good policy, but from a narrative-setting perspective, it's really important," said Swan."

#7 Proposed hydropower bill would allow operators to sell clean energy at lower rates, while generating more revenue

Hartford Business Journal. The state legislature is considering a bill that would allow electric distribution companies to enter into power purchase agreements with hydropower facilities for periods of up to 30 years, which would lower the cost of hydropower as the state works toward its clean energy goals. Senate Bill 382 would also extend the 30-year limit to other Class I renewable energy projects, such as wind power. Under current law, Connecticut limits the maximum term for such contracts to 20 years. By increasing the length to 30 years, energy suppliers could produce a \$15/MWh discount compared to a 20-year contract, according to the advocacy group RENEW Northeast, which supports the bill.

New England could see resource adequacy troubles even with billions in investments: ISO-NE

Utility Dive. "The future grid faces energy adequacy challenges on two fronts," the ISO said. "Electrification of the transportation and heating sectors will drive demand higher and higher in the years ahead. Meanwhile, extreme weather caused by climate change will increasingly affect the productivity of energy resources..."There are almost 40 GW of resources in the ISO's interconnection queue, 46% of which are battery storage...The ISO warned, however, that its research has found "strong seasonal patterns for battery charging cycles" and under some scenarios in a potential 2040 power system "the battery fleet may be depleted quickly and then struggle to recharge during the winter months."...The ISO has proposed changes to its capacity market that it says would better reflect changing demand and available resources. The grid operator wants to shift from an annual auction that procures energy resource commitments three years in advance to a "prompt/seasonal" model it says would help ensure power system reliability and cost-efficiency. The ISO recommended the new approach begin with the 2028-2029 capacity commitment period."

Connecticut will tap clean energy technology to find emission-cutting efficiencies on grid

Energy News Network. "Connecticut regulators have approved the first round of pilot projects in a new program aimed at accelerating innovation across the electric grid. Seven tech companies have received the go-ahead to partner with utilities Eversource or United Illuminating to test the potential of their hardware or software to help decarbonize the state's electric grid...Based in London, England, Piclo will work with United Illuminating to launch a grid flexibility market. They will recruit owners, operators and managers of any type of distributed energy resource — battery storage, electric vehicles, and other types of dispatchable power sources commonly known as DERs — to operate in an independent marketplace in return for compensation...Another British company, Kraken, which operates a cryptocurrency exchange, will also work with United Illuminating to help them better manage DERs."

Opinion: The big picture view on the offshore wind industry in CT's backyard

CT Insider. "Grab your folding camp chair and bring it to the Thames River waterfront in downtown New London. On the shores of this deep-water natural harbor you'll find plenty of front-row seats on the unfolding energy drama of the 21st century. It's a sequel to the story told in the 19th and early 20th centuries, all thanks to the harbor's special relationship to wind and water...Watch the parade up the Thames River of crane-laden barges and ships that might be mistaken for a new kind of giant hydroplane, as they carry racks of turbine blades out to sea. Pause and take in the sights at State Pier. Think what all this means for the future, not just of New London and our region, but of our planet."



The Jillson Family: Celebrating 200 Years in Willimantic

By Bev York

2024 marks the 200th anniversary of the Jillson family arriving in Willimantic and building one of the early cotton manufactories on the river. They came in 1824 during the 'cotton boom,' and invested their hard work and assets in several different textile concerns over five generations. An Anniversary celebration will be held on Saturday, April 6 at 3 p.m. The public is cordially invited to attend.

In the 19th century, the industrial age that made America great, was created by hard working family businesses. Many of these factory owners, like the Jillsons, hired a workforce to manufacture threads and fabric to clothe the country. The owners built schools, libraries, parks and they were community leaders.

The Jillson family story, is vital to our knowledge of America. We must understand the accomplishments and the failures of what happened here. What was the role of rivers, railroads, mills, bridges and cities? What changes brought about the post-industrial America? Textiles, the largest product in the world, are now made by children in southeast Asia. Discussions about connecting our past with today is paramount in understanding our global society.

On Jillson Square stands the distinctive granite home built for William Jillson and his family, wife Elizabeth, and two surviving children, Eliza (age 16) and William Everett (age 7). Mr. Jillson came from Rhode Island to join forces with his father, Luke, and brothers, Asa and Seth. Their first factory was erected on the site where the Frog Bridge now stands.

Asa's son, William Lawrence; and grandson, William Curtis; and great grandson, William Huntington managed the many textile concerns that the family operated in Willimantic and Columbia. The family held many prominent positions in the community. The Jillson Museum has a prodigious and rich collection of Jillson archives and artifacts which tell the story of the success of the longest lived manufacturing family in "Thread City." A 2024 exhibit will highlight the brilliant minds of sixteen Willimantic inventors in the 19th c. The exhibit will present their lives and accomplishments. Some of their ingenious patented ideas created machines that made paper, open cotton bales, mixed cracker dough, and made corset improvements.

The Jillson House Museum, 627 Main Street, Willimantic, is operated by the Windham Historical Society. The group was organized to save the building from demolition during the urban renewal in the 1970s. The Museum is open on the first Saturday of each month from 1 to 4 p.m. and the fourth Wednesday evening for Tavern night programs. The museum offers self-guided, guided, QR and video tours. For more information contact Windhamhistoricalsocietyct@gmail.com.

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.



Spring is here again; a gentle reminder to please leave the leaves and your grass too.

Please wait as long as you can to do your spring lawn clean up. Ideally, you should wait until the daytime temperatures are **consistently above 50 degrees F for at least 7 consecutive days**.

This way most of the little critters that use the leaves and overgrown grass for protection can start their families and then fully come out of hiding to work their magic in our gardens and on our lands. The Earth along with critters small and large, all benefit greatly from this simple act of patience. To those of us who do wait... **THANK YOU!**

I get a lot of questions about the time frame and process of going solar.

If you read last month's article, you would see that I wrote about the plethora of misinformation from a sales and advertising perspective. That same perspective comes into play when an uneducated or a not so honest sales presentation is made when they tell you about the timeframe and installation process.

So this month I'm going to cover: **The timeframe and process of going solar.**

Timeframe: The general timeframe from signing a contract to having solar installed is roughly 90 – 120 days, give or take 30! Yes, it's a wide spread because of the amount of variables involved including engineering, utility and town permitting applications. There's more obstacles and I won't get into the nitty gritty of that here. After installation and final town inspections, there's the sit and wait for the utility company to change out your meter (more on that later). This alone can take 2 days to 1.5 months! What a surprise... right?

Here are the "typical" Steps to the Solar Process

1. Credit Check **If applying for a Loan or Lease/PPA**
1a. *Cash purchases require a small deposit*

2. Documents to sign:

- a. Loan Application / Lease Agreement (if applicable)
- b. Solar Agreement / Cash, Loan or Lease
- c. Utility Applications Authorization
- d. Town Permitting Authorization
- e. Authorization for the Solar company to file appropriate permits and utility applications on your behalf.

3. Document review to match deed and the name on the Utility bill

4. Site Survey scheduling

5. Site survey – onsite survey that usually has a drone survey of the roof and surrounding obstructions. In home pictures of your main electrical panel and outside utility line connection and meter box.

6. Pre-engineering where a lead designer and master electrician go over the site survey findings and prepares final production guarantee. At this point, they will also find out of any electrical upgrades or pre-roof work needs to be done before the solar installation.

7. **Customer Final design and year one production guarantee approval. ** IMPORTANT > If a company you choose to work with does not walk you through the final findings and moves forward without your written approval. Proceed with great caution!!! I cannot stress this enough!!**

8. *After your written approval to move forward > Engineering Stamps are submitted for -structure & electrical work. ** Again a little caution.* Some companies only get electrical stamps and not engineering stamps. Make sure the company gets engineering stamps! *This protects you and your home structure.*

8a. **CT only- Home Energy Audit Scheduling** (This is needed before we can submit for utility applications)

8b. Home energy audit - this does not hold up the process as long as the audit is scheduled.

After the Engineering stamps are received, we can proceed with the following:

9. Utility Applications for utility connection and net metering approval

10. Town Permitting

11. After utility applications and town permits are received back, we are all go to Set an Installation date **** Another warning ->>** I've seen too any install dates set before ALL of the above boxes are checked. Make sure ALL approvals have been received back in house before a date is set. The utility and towns are anomalies on how fast these turn around times are. Sometimes the same days, sometimes it takes weeks! It is illegal to start installation without these properly in place.

12 Installation of the solar system

Installation typically takes ½ day to 3 days depending on the weather, complexity of the installation site or a surprise snafu!

After the actual solar installation -

13. Town Final Inspection, after installation, the town inspector is notified. We set a date to meet back on site and get the final sign off on the project. At this point in CT, it is up to the town inspector to notify Eversource that all systems are go and they can come out and change out the standard electric meter to the needed Netting meter to track and credit over production. THIS is why we don't need batteries in CT. The net meter acts like a free storage for you. *This may be a good topic for next months article??*

14. Utility company changes out the meter to a solar netting meter

- **We are currently seeing Eversource taking a little longer than "normal" to come and change out the meter. It's the Solar Coaster so it ebbs and flows. I've seen it take 2 days to 1.5 months. Why? great question!*

15. Finally, the day you've been waiting for >> Permission to operate the solar system

This is when we are able to go into the software and activate the system. You are notified and you are now capturing the sun to produce energy for your home... congratulations!

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

At the Ashford Senior Center

Tai Chi - Tuesday & Friday 9:30-10:30am
\$15 per month for one day/wk; \$25 for two
Drop-in \$5

Programs not limited to Ashford residents.
Contact the Center at 860-487-5122
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Saturday, April 27th, 2024
10:00 AM to 3:00 PM

with tents ready for any weather!
Colchester Town Green, Colchester, CT
Join us for this day-long event. At 10:00 am, we take part in the annual "Worldwide Wave" of healing movement, followed by a day of free class sessions, demonstrations, information on Tai Chi & Qigong. For beginners and enthusiasts alike... No experience necessary!
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questions? call/text Joe Pandolfo, (959) 444-3979

April Events in the Neighborhood

Submitted by Bev York

April 5 Paint Party Night (First Friday 6:30 p.m.)
Paints and canvas supplied, BYO refreshments, \$25 pp sponsored by Windham Arts, Veterans Community Center, 47 Crescent Street, Willimantic. Registration by Thursday info@windhamarts.org

April 3 through 29 Windham Youth Art Exhibit in the Coffee Break Gallery. On display is work by youth and children in public school and home schoolers. Meet some of the Artists on Tuesday April 9 from 5 to 7. Gallery open Tuesday through Thursday from 9 to 5. Exhibit ends April 29. The Windham Arts Coffee Break Gallery at Eastern CT Veteran Community Center, 47 Crescent Street, Willimantic.

April 11 Liber TEA Bundling, Brides and Babies: Courtship and Marriage in early New England. 5:30 p.m. Veteran Center, 47 Crescent Street, Willimantic. Refreshments served. Sponsored by the America Museum. Donations appreciated.

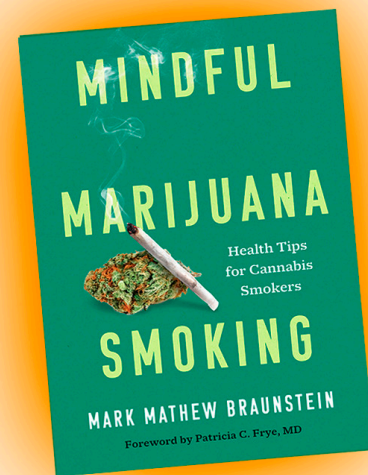
April 25 Woodburning Class 6 to 8 p.m. for age 16 and over. \$45. Includes all materials. Class will be held in Veteran Community Center, 47 Crescent Street, Willimantic. To register contact Madcrafterz106@gmail.com.

Jillson House

APRIL 6 200th Anniversary of the Jillson Family in Willimantic. Open house at 3 – 4 p.m. The public is invited to meet some of the Jillson Family and enjoy birthday cake. The Jillson Museum is located at 627 Main Street, Willimantic.

April 24 Tavern Night at Jillson House. Learn about Paul Revere and his minutemen. What did they eat and drink. 5:30 Suggested donation is \$10. The Jillson Museum is located at 627 Main Street, Willimantic.

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Neighbors
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The Start of Windham, the Great Windham-Mansfield Dispute, and a Well-off Minister

By Martin Moebus

First Settlers

By 1691, the Quiet Corner was becoming not so quiet. Mr. Ginne, an enslaved person and first settler, along with his master Mr. Cates, were getting neighbors. Windham County, not yet named, was starting to become something. People were moving in, including the Bachus brothers (William and Joseph), sons of one of the original sixteen who received land from Mohegan Joshua, son of Uncas. They moved to the “nameless town springing up in the wilderness ten miles northwest of Norwich.”

Jonathan Crane was one of the first townsmen and fancied he could set up the town all by himself. He set up the first sawmill, the first grist mill, and a blacksmith shop and even joined the local military company. Many more were coming. A town was forming. There were townsmen, and these townsmen needed organizing!

The first public meeting date is unclear—sometime in 1691 or 1692, depending on the source. Whenever it was, Politics was born. Joshua Ripley—believe it or not—became the town clerk. Some were chosen to lay out the highways. Ripley, along with the Backus brothers, was selected to put down the survey lines. As Jonathan Crane had some time off from building sawmills, grist mills, blacksmithing, and soldiering, he was added to the team. The origins of Third Thursdays can be traced to these original meetings, but in true political fashion the decision to hold a street festival was put off to a future meeting. With Third Thursdays being put off, they decided they still needed a reason to get together and what they needed was a church.

Religious Beginnings

The settlers had two choices for religious service. The first was to attend services held by Reverend Fitch from Norwich, who held one of the original land grants from Sachem Uncas. While he didn't want to live in Windham, he would often visit. Settlers and native inhabitants assembled under a tree to “listen to the preaching and engage in the other exercises of the hour.” This might have been nice in good weather, but when it rained or snowed it was not so fun. Besides the settlers didn't like standing or exercising. The settlers had some health issues, as will become clear below. The second choice was going to the Norwich church, taking the old Nipmuck Path ten miles to Norwich and back again every Sunday. Walking to church would start the great controversy that split the townsmen apart.

Buying a New Minister

The townsmen needed a minister for their new church. As Reverend Fitch smartly did not want the job and no one in town knew anything about ministering, Thomas Huntington was sent to Milford to see if Mr. Samuel Whiting was available. Apparently, Sam was the only accessible minister of the day. Sam Whiting was taught by his father, John, a Harvard graduate who probably went to school on a football scholarship and majored in business. What Windham didn't know was that Mr. Whiting, like his father, was a scheming entrepreneur. Armed with his superior business acumen, he wanted a deal. Windhamites then as now were not very good at negotiating and would soon get fleeced. They offered £20 for six months of ministering along with £4 in silver, to which Mr. Whiting agreed.

Once he was in Milford, the wheeling-dealing began in earnest. Whiting was keenly aware that the settlers were over a barrel, as they needed a minister and he was the only prospect. He was soon offered £50 and a house to stay. That wasn't enough, so the settlers threw in six acres and a hundred apple trees to be planted by the settlers themselves. The scheming Whiting was starting to budge. What sealed the deal, as far as I know, was the first use of cost-of-living adjustments (COLAs) in Windham. Mr. Whiting would get £50 for the first three years, £60 the next three, then £70 and then £80—a 5% COLA per year! The cagey businessman pretended that he would only stay two years—probably looking for additional pay raises and benefits, which he got. No wonder Milford was glad to get rid of him.

Whiting's first sermon, given on January 1, 1693, was from the first verse of Genesis. His second was about planning for retirement. The threadbare settlers now needed to pay for their minister. As usual, Jonathan Crane, the superman of Windham, was enlisted and put on a team of tax collectors.

Troubles in Paradise

Unbeknownst at the time, this began the great Windham-Mansfield feud. Before then, Mansfield and Windham residents lived in love, peace, and harmony, sharing in the common good and paying together for things like ministers and churches. As everyone wanted to live near the new minister, they lovingly split the difference and built his house between Hither Place (Windham) and Ponde Place (Mansfield) but away from most everyone. The minister was located in the crotch of the Natchaug (as it was called) near the Bricktop Laundromat along with his to-be-built church.

Windhamites, or Hitherites as they were then known, disdained this decision. They unreasonably wanted the church built nearer to them. It should be pointed out that it is only a little over two miles from Windham Center to the laundromat. The hardy settlers of Mansfield had to walk four miles to the laundromat or six miles to Windham Center. Whiting apparently didn't like to walk either, but until the church was built he had to do half of the services in Windham and half in Mansfield. To stop his incessant complaining, the residents gave him not a pair of sturdy shoes but 80 cords of wood. Due to the Windhamites' reluctance to walk, I conclude that the residents of Mansfield were from more sturdy stock, while those of Windham must have had very sensitive and delicate feet. The loathsome disposition and reluctance to walking of the Windhamites resulted from rampant plantar fasciitis, low arches, bunions, and hammertoes.

Arguments between the Windham and Mansfield residents grew heated—especially when it came to where the church would be located. As Facebook and X, formerly Twitter, were not available, they had to meet face to face. A farmer in Windham desiring to berate a farmer of Mansfield had to leave his field, put his horses away, walk through Willimantic past Reverend Whiting's house, find the field that the farmer of Mansfield was in, berate him and then walk home. After contemplating a witty response, the farmer of Mansfield would have to do the same in reverse—all under the disdainful watchful eye of Reverend Whiting. The impact on the community was great. Fields were abandoned, cows were left un milked, and pandemonium arose as the residents gave each other a piece of their mind. Podiatrists made a killing in foot plaster, needed by the Windham residents. Taxes increased to pay for both Whiting and the new church as the Windham negotiators got bamboozled over and over again.

In 1697, Mr. Cates died. To the church he gave a set of communion plates. To Reverend Whiting he gave Mr. Ginne. In that same year, a committee was formed to decide whether to split and have two churches or remain as one. This dysfunctional committee could not decide on an equitable split, so one church it would remain, halfway between Windham and Mansfield—or so it was thought.

The Windhamites were determined to fulfill their desire for a closer church. They patiently waited in “soleful” suffering till 1699, when they brought the issue of moving the church up again at a town meeting. As they were more numerous than the Mansfield folk, they had the votes to stuff the ballot box. And so it was decided that Windham would separate from Mansfield. The church would be built on the Windham Center Green. Reverend Whiting would get one thousand acres for “his faithful labors.” Mansfield was on its own.

But the residents of Mansfield had the last laugh, as Windham residents were soon awakened early every Sunday to Reverend Whiting's incessant drumming announcing services. Once they were trapped inside the church, Whiting would drone on and on for two, sometimes three hours. Additional prayers meant more hours sitting on hard wooden benches. If Windham had offered the minister to Mansfield, they could have stayed home or gone to the local tavern on Sundays. They would have also saved a lot of money that went to Reverend Whiting and had a quieter town. What Mr. Whiting's opinion would have been is unknown. He died in 1725, leaving his wife and thirteen children very well off.

Historians gloss over this part of Windham's history. On the Windham Green no mention is made of the historic conflict between the towns which resulted in separation. Windham's *Memorial Volume of the Bicentennial Celebration* in 1892 mentions in passing that the townspeople had no time to go over the specifics that caused the division. (Quoted material is from *History of Windham* by Ellen Larned, the only person who seems to report on this event in any detail.)



Azul String Quartet at the Loos Center for the Art.

Hayley De Angeles photo.

Azul Quartet Performs for Students

Submitted by Cris Cadiz

Woodstock, CT, March 28, 2024 ... On March 28th, local students enjoyed a chamber music performance by the Azul String Quartet at the Loos Center for the Arts. This concert experience followed a school visit by the Quartet the prior week. Sponsored by Performing Arts of Northeast Connecticut, this musical experience was free to student groups. Teachers, administrators and parents can learn about future educational shows by signing up for email updates at www.theeloos.org/daytime-edu-shows.

“It has been a joy to share our love of chamber music with students in the area,” says Azul Quartet Violinist Janet Jacobson. “We had six fantastic school visits, during which we introduced ourselves, our instruments and the basics of chamber music.” They then performed familiar classical standards plus some pop favorites. Students from Canterbury, Killingly, Union, Eastford, Brooklyn and Thompson elementary schools enjoyed meeting the Quartet at their schools and the follow-up performance at the Loos Center.

“The theme for our performance at the Loos Center is ‘Conversations with Friends,’” says Jacobson. “Building on the basics that we introduced in the school visit, we explore how string quartet music allows the players to take turns sharing stories and emotions.” The Loos Center performance included works by Haydn, Mozart, and Dvorak, as well as contemporary composers Jessie Montgomery, Daniel Bernard Roumain, and Jerod Impichchaachaaha' Tate.

The Azul Quartet formed in 2021. Its members—Eugenio Figueroa, Pablo Issa, Janet Jacobson, and Sarah Washburn—are all professional musicians and teachers at the Hartt School of Music in Hartford. “We have played together for many years with various ensembles in the area,” says Jacobson. “Our repertoire includes works from the genre's 350-year history, but we pride ourselves in focusing on works by living composers, especially underrepresented composers.” Learn more at azulstringquartet.com.

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Engage, Enrich, Inspire! Celebrating its 50th season, Performing Arts of Northeast Connecticut is a non-profit, volunteer-run organization that brings high quality, accessible and affordable professional performing arts to Northeast Connecticut and surrounding towns. See www.performingartsnect.org for more information. Follow us! www.facebook.com/performingartsnect



Autism, Hypermobility, & Chronic Pain: If You Can't Connect the Issues, Think Connective Tissue

Submitted by Michelle M. Baughman



Ehlers-Danlos Syndromes (EDS) are a group of heritable connective tissue disorders that affect the structure, production, or function of collagen throughout the body. Collagen is the main structural protein that makes up our cartilage, bones, tendons, ligaments, joints, blood vessels, and skin. It comprises 25% to 35% of the whole-body protein content. The word comes from the Greek word for "glue," so essentially collagen is "the glue that holds the body together."

The collagen in individuals with Ehlers-Danlos Syndromes is stretchier than expected, so it is more like silly putty than glue. This results in things like joint hypermobility (joints that stretch further than is usual). It can also result in joint instability, meaning that joints can dislocate or cause subluxations without the individual having experienced a major trauma. It can also result in skin hyperextensibility. This is skin that can be stretched farther than usual, or skin that bruises easily, or that is scarred (particularly below the upper dermis), or skin that does not heal well from wounds. But the most concerning feature seen across all forms of Ehlers-Danlos Syndromes is tissue fragility. This means that organs and body structures are more fragile than expected, and this can pose some very serious and life-threatening health issues, particularly with the heart, digestive tract, vascular system, and blood pressure.

Because the symptoms vary from individual to individual, and these syndromes are incredibly diverse and can present in any area of the body, there is no one "typical" clinical presentation. This makes them difficult to diagnose. So, individuals with EDS are often undiagnosed, or even misdiagnosed. Dr. Glen Cooke, neurologist for the US Navy who practices at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center cites several reasons for this:

"This is largely because the medical curriculum that doctors are taught gives a very cursory understanding of [them]. Another big factor that contributes to the lesser focus...is the interdisciplinary nature in western Medicine; to a great extent we exist in silos-you are some type of 'ologist.' We need to break down those silos because [these issues] span the entire body...span all of the 'ologists' in medicine."

Our current medical insurance system also contributes to EDS diagnosis being missed because of how it limits the amount of time doctors are allowed to spend with each patient. As Dr. Glen Cooke, says, "Our number one diagnostic tool in medicine is the patient history. We have to take an appropriate history, and that can't be done in fifteen minutes. Doing good work takes time. And especially in a patient with a chronic medical condition, you can't take an appropriate medical history in fifteen minutes. You can't teach a patient and their family appropriately in fifteen minutes."

The historic gender bias in the fields of medicine and medical research may also contribute to the lack of EDS awareness, diagnosis, and treatment. EDS tend to affect women disproportionately more than men. There seems to be a hormonal component related to EDS. And historically, medical research excluded women because hormones were considered to cause unpredictable results, making the research "unreliable."

Additionally, doctors are trained to accept the most common or obvious explanation of symptoms, rather than entertaining considerations of more rare diagnoses, which is characterized by a common saying in medicine: "When you hear hoofbeats, think horses, not zebras." Since many of the symptoms of Ehlers Danlos Syndromes could be attributed to several other diagnoses, doctors often misdiagnose EDS as one or more of these other diagnoses. However, given these current problems with properly diagnosing EDS, it raises the questions: Is it really rare? Or is it just rarely diagnosed?

It is because of this saying within the medical profession about hoofbeats and zebras (which has historically led to the lack of proper diagnosis of EDS) that The Ehlers-Danlos Society has adopted the zebra for its logo. The Ehlers-Danlos Society is an international non-profit organization dedicated to patient support, scientific research, advocacy, and increasing awareness for the Ehlers-Danlos Syndromes (EDS) and Hypermobility Spectrum Disorder (HSD).

Hypermobility Spectrum Disorder (HSD) is the name given for individuals who do not meet the full diagnostic criteria for Hypermobility Ehlers-Danlos (h-EDS), but their hypermobility still causes problems or pain that disrupts an individual's normal functioning. These problems can include symptoms such as fatigue, headaches, dizziness, light-headedness, constipation, other gastrointestinal issues, anxiety, dysautonomia, joint instability, and mild or severe joint pain. An individual may have HSD in addition to other conditions. The term "comorbid" refers to medical conditions that tend to occur together. For example, autonomic nervous system dysfunction (Dysautonomia) is common among individuals with EDS. Additionally, Postural Orthostatic Tachycardia Syndrome (POTS), which is a blood circulation disorder that is a form of dysautonomia, seems to be comorbid with HSD and h-EDS.

Other conditions that can be comorbid with all types of EDS include Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS), Small Intestinal Bacterial Overgrowth (SIBO), Celiac Disease, Temporal Mandibular Joint problems (TMJ), Chiari malformation (which is when brain tissue sinks into the spinal canal), sleep apnea, scoliosis, mitral valve prolapse, aneurysms, hypertension or hypotension, organ ruptures, uterine prolapse, preterm labor, gastral paresis, changes in sensory processing (affecting one's senses of touch, taste, proprioception, and increased sensitivity to light and sound) and autoimmune diseases like Mast Cell Activation Syndrome (MCAS).

There are also some less obvious conditions that could be indicative of EDS which include: fatigue, headaches/migraines, brain fog, vertigo, depression, fainting spells, anxiety, eyesight issues, flat feet, pronated ankles, varicose veins, cold hands and/or feet, being easily injured, sprains, strains, arthralgia (joint pain), myalgia (muscle pain), fibromyalgia (facial pain generalized all over the body), bladder issues, gastritis (irritation of the stomach lining), acid reflux, constipation, skin tearing, stretch marks, atrophic scarring, eczema, easy bruising, stretchy skin, soft velvety skin, Swan Neck Deformity (which actually has nothing to do with the neck, it is a bend in the fingers), arthritis, osteoporosis, and surgical complications. There are thirteen* different types of EDS, with the Hypermobility Ehlers-Danlos (h-EDS) subtype being the least severe and most common. It is particularly common among the neurodivergent population (folks with ADHD, Autism, Dyspraxia, Dyslexia, Dyscalculia, Tourette Syndrome, etc.). According to a study conducted by the Brighton and Sussex Medical School (UK), neurodivergent individuals are two times more likely than the general population to have hypermobile joints, and they are far more likely to experience pain on a regular basis. To put this in context, about 20% of the general population is hypermobile, but they do not experience pain from their hypermobility. One controversial statistic cites that about 8% of the autistic population also has an EDS. The autistic community disputes this, saying that the percentage is much higher, around 50%, because that statistic doesn't include autistic individuals who do not have a formal diagnosis. (*There are logistical problems to getting an autism diagnosis in many parts of the world, particularly for females in countries where the autism research is not up to date. So, for this reason statistics on the autistic population will always be understated. Given that EDS disproportionately affect women, this is a significant number of subjects excluded from the study that came up with the 8% figure!*) Autistic individuals tend to have low muscle tone and issues with their sense of proprioception. Proprioception is feedback from the muscles, joints, and tendons. It is involved in coordination, refining one's movement, and being able to feel anchored and present in one's body. If a person is not getting this proprioceptive feedback because their muscles, joints, and tendons are too loose, they will seek it by looking for strong feedback from their joints and tendons by applying pressure, force, and changing body positions.

Common behaviors of seeking proprioceptive feedback that autistic individuals engage in include: hyperextending one's fingers, wringing one's hands, cracking one's knuckles, toe-walking or bouncing up on one's toes as part of their walking gait, standing with hyper flexed and locked the knees while arching the lower back, over stretching shoulder joints, or sitting in unusual positions, (such as pressing one foot upon the bent ankle of the other foot while sitting), or sleeping with one hip jutting out sideways. All these proprioception seeking behaviors in an individual with undiagnosed EDS can cause overuse

damage to joints, ligaments and tendons which could lead to things like premature osteoarthritis, premature bursitis, periarticular soft tissue strain (which is the muscles around the joint tightening in order to stabilize the loose joint), premature degenerative disk conditions, pronated ankles, or hip dysplasia. So being undiagnosed for EDS, thus unaware of the dangers of engaging in these poor body mechanics poses an undue risk, and is a disservice to this population.

Being misdiagnosed can be just as harmful as being undiagnosed. For example, many small children and individuals on the autism spectrum experience gastrointestinal issues like severe constipation. But if they also have undiagnosed EDS, the constipation could be due to gastral paresis. If the doctor prescribes laxatives to treat constipation, it could make the condition worse because laxatives are contraindicated for gastral paresis. So, more awareness about EDS is needed in both the medical profession and in the general population to prevent patient harm.

*The other types of EDS include: Classical EDS (cEDS), Vascular Ehlers-Danlos Syndrome (vEDS), Kyphoscoliotic EDS (kEDS), Brittle Cornea Syndrome (BCS), Spondylyodysplastic EDS (spEDS), Musculocontractural EDS (mcEDS), Myopathic EDS (mEDS), Cardiac-valvular EDS (cvEDS), Arthrochalasia EDS (aEDS), Dermatosparaxis EDS (dEDS), Classical-like EDS (clEDS), and Periodontal EDS (pEDS). To learn more about these individual types, go to Ehlers-Danlos Society website: <http://ehlers-danlos.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

**TEXT AND
WHATEVER
JUST
DON'T
TEXT
AND** 

STOPTEXTSSTOPWRECKS.ORG



Regional Community Media & Arts News

By John Murphy

Hi everyone, I hope the Equinox treated you well—get your glasses for the solar eclipse on April 8 and enjoy!

For April, I want to share good news from the Office of the Arts, a preview of a new series about local government, citizen engagement and local democracy, and a review of local talk radio shows.



However well intended local journalism is, and it does its best in the face of serious economic limits, it is simply inadequate now as a citizen watchdog to protect democracy. People must find new ways to do this for themselves. Conscious attention to our present and future circumstances is essential to creating a new form of media in service to people and communities: Live Radio + YouTube + Social Media.

This media series is based on that vision and principle and for the past three years we have been making it real and fine tuning it at WILI in Willimantic. Managing change with government and citizens working together with local media is a latent and powerful tool that can work well at the grass roots level where we live.

1. A new website launches in April for the Connecticut Office of the Arts (COA)
2. Local government and the limits of local democracy in Mansfield and Putnam/a new media mix
3. A review of local talk radio on WILI—making community connections all year long

A New Website for the Connecticut Office of the Arts (COA) has launched!
Resources for Artists and Arts Organizations
 Website = ct.gov/arts

Follow the links on this page to learn how to:

- Apply for a grant
- Find local artists and performers
- Access our programs and resources
- Find out where you can enjoy the arts across Connecticut

What to expect from the new website?

Improved User Experience - grants, programs, services, and resources for:

- Artists and Individuals
- Arts Organizations
- Municipalities
- Schools and Educators

Improved Accessibility - working with a team dedicated to plain language text and site construction that is optimized for screen reader technology.

Artist Directory – they have been working with the New England Foundation for the Arts (NEFA) and their CreativeGround Directory to improve the experience of finding artists in Connecticut. CreativeGround will become a more prominent feature in our work and will help us to better connect arts and culture organizations, artists, cultural districts, and more.

Our new Artist Directory will pull live data from CreativeGround. Therefore, to be featured on Connecticut's Artist Directory, you will need to create a profile on CreativeGround. It is easy! If you already have a CreativeGround profile, please consider taking a moment to update it on an annual basis.

Communication Disruptions – note that there may be some occasional disruptions during the break-in period in April. If you are unable to access a section of the website during the break-in period and need assistance, please contact COA staff by email or phone at 860-500-2300. Program and contact information is on the website: ct.gov/arts.

This is just a heads up for radio programs coming in April and May that will explore the limits of our local democracy and the use of local power in two towns in our region, Mansfield, and Putnam. What they are going through is happening across our state in different ways, and their challenges provide wonderful opportunities for change that unites more than divides.



Very different issues are involved in both towns—housing and control of development in Mansfield, and lead pollution and toxic housing in Putnam with people being poisoned and ignored until the feds finally stepped in.

Both situations test the people serving in office and their honesty and courage, and the limits of the rules they are empowered or required to enforce. What is really on paper and what is not? What divides opinion from fact in the real world of development and accountability? Why do developers sue towns in the first place? Why are towns afraid of being sued by developers? What is the true failure that produces wasteful litigation?

Mansfield has struggled with development challenges for many decades regarding the local environment, local economy, housing, and community relations with UConn. The Mansfield Planning and Zoning Commission is currently recommending changes to existing rules and many people are curious about why these changes are being suggested now and what they will really do that current rules do not cover. I understand some of the rules involve signage and lighting, but there are other aspects, and there is a connection to be made between these rules' changes and the interests of developers trying to build large apartment complexes in the area.

Depending on the outcome of the P&Z decision process, the road may be opened wider for new development in town, and possibly at a faster rate. Growth itself is not the issue, I believe, it is where it happens and the local scale of impact. I understand P&Z meetings are planned for April and a town meeting in some form is being discussed, which would be wonderful. No need to rush when good outcomes are still possible that balance the equations. I will feature conversations with people from town government and local citizen groups.

In Putnam there has been a spectacular failure of local government and health authorities to protect people and families from devastating lead-infested contamination through property development. I am sure many of you have read the multiple press accounts of the rent strike underway since January by the Cargill Mills Tenants Union. Their website tells the story very well at www.cargilltenantsunion.org.

I covered their challenge since last summer and it was great to hear last week that Federal EPA authorities have intervened and demanded local action to remedy the situation and protect residents, and especially children, whose apartments and bodies have tested positive for high lead levels.

Beginning last year, residents tried for months to get help from the building management and owner, local government and health officials, and there was little or no action or meaningful response to help them deal with their daily living issues. So in January the members of the Cargill Tenants Union went on strike and put their payments in escrow to show good faith until the problems are solved. Eviction threats have been made.

This is one of a growing number of tenant unions that are popping up across Connecticut, in response to our local housing crisis and how the social, economic, and legal foundations have cracked. I covered this movement from my first knowledge of it and will continue to do so. See www.cttenantsunion.org for more.



I want to close this section by thanking the Town of Windham for creating its own Fair Rent Commission. Bravo! The population level is just below the level that requires a Commission, but town leadership felt it was important and needed now and the majority took action to make it happen. Another reason I love WILI!

MONDAY:

5-5:30 PM/Ravings & Cravings – Ruth Hartunian Alumbaugh takes a look at the eastern CT food scene.

5:30-6PM/Connecticut East – Brian Scott Smith puts the focus on eastern CT entertainment, town celebrations, and other public events.

TUESDAY:

5-5:30 PM/Hometown Threads – Keith C. Rice puts the radio spotlight on local entrepreneurs with an in-person interview with historic family businesses.

5:30 – 6pm/The Neighborhood – Former Windham Mayor Ernie Eldridge and Anita Sebestyan discuss Windham History and how it relates to current projects and events with local guests.

Wednesday 5-6 PM/On the Homefront – John Murphy with weekly community conversations about the arts economy, regional culture, nonprofit news and events, local government issues, health care, and tenant unions.

Thursday 5-6 PM/Your Body, Your Mind on this Journey called Life – Host Steven Acevedo on Nutrition & Health topics.

Friday 5-6 PM/Let's Talk About it: Susan Johnson & Dennis O'Brien on politics and government.

WILI YouTube Channel for all Monday-Friday local talk shows—all programs below are available here: <https://www.youtube.com/@wiliradio7000>. Subscribe and you get all the new shows! Stay in touch with us!

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 in their networks! 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!

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/>

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

Local Governments and Local Democracy in Mansfield and Putnam
A New Media Mix: Live Radio + YouTube+ Social Media Groups

WILI Local Talk Programming
 Monday thru Friday
 AM 1400 and 95.3 Digital FM
 WILI Radio YouTube Channel

Programs at the Connecticut Audubon Center in Pomfret

CONN. AUDUBON SOCIETY CENTER AT POMFRET
 218 Day Road, P.O. Box 11
 Pomfret Center, CT 06259
 Call 860-928-4948
ctaudubon.org/pomfret

APRIL:

Early Morning Bird Walks Tuesdays in April at 8 a.m.

Join Andy as he points out various species of birds. Wear drab colored clothing. Bring binoculars. Meet at the Center, 218 Day Rd in Pomfret. **No registration required. Fee: \$5 CAS members; \$20 non-members.**

BECOME A BACKYARD NATURALIST

Sunday, April 7 at 1:00 p.m. at the Center, 218 Day Rd in Pomfret.

Learn from Steve Lewis, chair of the Greater Hartford Sierra Club, how you can transform your property by planting native plants, focusing on biodiversity, and removing invasive species. Steve will discuss habitat certifications; mobile apps to help with bird, insect, and plant identification. He also will cover The Pollinator Pathway Initiative, No-Mow May, lawns to meadows, and water features. No registration required. Free

Bats: Winged Wonders

Saturday, April 20 at 2 p.m. at the Center, 218 Day Rd in Pomfret

Celebrate International Bat Appreciation Day with a presentation by Maureen Heidtmann, one of only three licensed wildlife rehabilitators in Connecticut specializing in caring for bats. Maureen will begin with an overview of bats of the world, with an emphasis on our local species. She will cover myths and misconceptions, roles they play in ensuring a healthy planet, perils they face as they struggle to survive and their amazing resilience. Maureen has USDA permits to keep non-releasable bats and she'll bring an "ambassador" bat with her.

No registration required. Fee: \$5 CAS members; \$10 non-members.

Long Pond Bird Walk

Saturday, April 27 at 8 a.m.

This Wyndham Land Trust preserve in Thompson has varied habitats. We will hope to find some interesting duck species, as well as some early arriving spring migrants. **Register by emailing arzeznikiewicz@ctaudubon.org or calling 860-928-4948. Fee: \$10 CAS members; \$20 non-members.**

MAY:

Early Morning Bird Walks

Tuesdays in May at 8 a.m.

Join Andy as he points out various species of birds. Wear drab colored clothing. Bring binoculars. Meet at the Center, 218 Day Rd in Pomfret. **No registration required. Fee: \$5 CAS members; \$20 non-members.**

Virginia Rail Bird Walk

Friday, May 3 at 6 p.m.

Our goal is to hear and observe Virginia Rail. We also will keep our eyes open for other species, such as Common Snipe and Vesper Sparrow. Meet at the Center, 218 Day Rd in Pomfret. **Register by emailing arzeznikiewicz@ctaudubon.org or calling 860-928-4948. Fee: \$10 CAS members; \$20 non-members.**

Beginners Bird Walk

Saturday, May 4 at 8 a.m.

Some of the colorful spring birds are back and the leaves aren't out yet, so they are easier to spot. Expect to see Yellow, Blue-winged, and Black & White Warblers. Meet at the Center, 218 Day Rd in Pomfret. **Register by emailing arzeznikiewicz@ctaudubon.org or calling 860-928-4948. Fee: \$10 CAS members; \$20 non-members.**

Freidman Forest Bird Walk

Friday, May 10 at 8 a.m.

We'll explore this fantastic Joshua's Trust preserve, looking for Cerulean and Worm-eating Warblers. **Register by emailing arzeznikiewicz@ctaudubon.org or calling 860-928-4948. Fee: \$20 CAS members; \$30 non-members.**

Gellert Preserve Bird Walk

Saturday, May 11 at 8 a.m.

This Wyndham Land Trust preserve features a variety of habitats – open field, shrubland, and woodland. **Register by**

emailing arzeznikiewicz@ctaudubon.org or calling 860-928-4948. Fee: \$10 CAS members; \$20 non-members.

Mother's Day Bird Walk

Sunday, May 12 at 8 a.m.

Bring your mother or grandmother out to see the colorful birds of spring with Andy. Many species should be found. Meet at the Center, 218 Day Rd in Pomfret. **Register by emailing arzeznikiewicz@ctaudubon.org or calling 860-928-4948. Fee: \$10 CAS members; \$20 non-members; Moms free!**

20 Warbler Day

Wed., May 15 from 6 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Traveling to numerous locations at the peak of warbler migration, we will try to find 20 species of warbler in one day. Join the search. Meet at the Center, 218 Day Rd in Pomfret and we'll carpool from there. **Register by emailing arzeznikiewicz@ctaudubon.org or calling 860-928-4948. Fee: \$25 CAS members; \$50 non-members.**

Cabbage Hill Bird Walk

Thursday, May 16 at 8 a.m.

This beautiful new preserve has a variety of habitats, including a large hayfield with breeding Bobolink. We'll visit an old family graveyard. **Register by emailing arzeznikiewicz@ctaudubon.org or calling 860-928-4948. Fee: \$10 CAS members; \$20 non-members.**

IN CONCERT: Cindy Kallet, Grey Larsen & Will Brown

Friday, May 17 at 7:30 p.m. at the Center, 218 Day Rd in Pomfret.

Harmony Singing, Original & Contemporary Songs, Traditional Irish Tunes, Old-Time Fiddle, Scandinavian Fiddle Duets. Visit kalletlarsen.com for more! **\$20 Advance Reservations; \$25 at the Door. Call 860-928-4948 to reserve a spot.**

90 Bird Day

Sunday, May 19 from 6 a.m. to 4 p.m.

We have ten hours to hear or see at least 90 species of birds. We will visit various locations. Bring lunch, drinks, and snacks. Meet at the Center, 218 Day Rd in Pomfret and we'll carpool from there. **Register by emailing arzeznikiewicz@ctaudubon.org or calling 860-928-4948. Fee: \$25 CAS members; \$50 non-members.**

Pumpkin Hill Bird Walk

Thursday, May 23 at 8 a.m.

We'll explore this fantastic birding location, expecting to find warblers and both Cuckoo species. **Register by emailing arzeznikiewicz@ctaudubon.org or calling 860-928-4948. Fee: \$10 CAS members; \$20 non-members.**

BIRD BANDING DEMONSTRATION

Saturday, May 25 at 9 a.m.

Watch Andy and fellow banders catch birds, record data about them, band and safely release them. You may have an opportunity to release a bird yourself. Meet at the Center, 218 Day Rd in Pomfret.

Register by email to arzeznikiewicz@ctaudubon.org or call 860-928-4948. Fee: \$10 CAS members; \$20 non-members.

Boston Hollow Bird Watch

Sunday, May 26 at 8 a.m.

Join us at beautiful Boston Hollow in Ashford, with its northern forest feel. We will stay on the road to bird. **Register by emailing arzeznikiewicz@ctaudubon.org or calling 860-928-4948. Fee: \$20 CAS members; \$30 non-members.**

Chaney Preserve Bird Walk

Thursday, May 30 at 8 a.m.

Nesting Hooded, Prairie, and Worm-eating Warblers are a few of the expected birds at this Connecticut Audubon Society preserve in Montville. **Register by emailing arzeznikiewicz@ctaudubon.org or calling 860-928-4948. Fee: \$20 CAS members; \$30 non-members.**

Nightingale Forest Preserve (North)

Friday, May 31 at 8 a.m.

Walk this Wyndham Land Trust preserve. Expect to see Black-throated Blue and Canada Warblers, and Broad-winged Hawk. **Register by emailing arzeznikiewicz@ctaudubon.org or calling 860-928-4948. Fee: \$10 CAS members; \$20 non-members.**

TRAIL WOOD

93 Kenyon Road
 Hampton, CT 06247
 860-928-4948
ctaudubon.org/trail-wood

APRIL:

Trail Wood Troubadours

Wed., April 3 from 6 - 9 p.m. at Trail Wood, 93 Kenyon Rd in Hampton

Join our casual group to play music that was written during the period that the Teales lived at Trail Wood, 1959-1993. Songs can be viewed in advance. Chords and words will be projected on screen. **Register by email to trailwood@ctaudubon.org. Free - donations appreciated!**

Nature Sketchbook Journaling

Saturday, April 13 from 1 to 4 p.m. at Trail Wood, 93 Kenyon Rd in Hampton

Roxanne Steed will teach you the 10-minute-sketch-walk out on the Teale Sanctuary and then you'll finish your pages with paint and details. Learn how to make your images into larger paintings. Bring a watercolor sketchbook, permanent markers, a portable watercolor kit, a small cup to hold water, and paper towels. **Please call 860-928-4948 to register. Fee: \$15 CAS members; \$25 non-members.**

Earth Day Clean-up

Saturday, April 20 from 9 a.m. - 2 p.m. at Trail Wood, 93 Kenyon Rd in Hampton

Help to get Trail Wood ready for Spring. Please bring work gloves and some gardening/pruning tools. Any time you can give is appreciated. **Please let us know if you plan to join us by emailing trailwood@ctaudubon.org.**

Earth Day Walk

Sunday, April 21 at 2 p.m. at Trail Wood, 93 Kenyon Rd in Hampton

Observe the changes Spring brings to Trail Wood. Join caretakers Laura & Paul Tedeschi on a walk featuring readings from Edwin Way Teale's "A Walk Through the Year" and "North with the Spring". **Register by email to trailwood@ctaudubon.org. Free to CAS members; \$5 non-members.**

MAY:

Trail Wood Troubadours

Wed., May 1 from 6 - 9 p.m. at Trail Wood, 93 Kenyon Rd in Hampton

Join our casual group to play music that was written during the period that the Teales lived at Trail Wood, 1959-1993. Songs can be viewed in advance. Chords and words will be projected on screen. **Register by email to trailwood@ctaudubon.org. Free - donations appreciated!**

Trail Wood Bird Walks

Thursday, May 9 at 8 a.m.

Monday, May 20 at 8 a.m.

Walk the paths of the Teale Sanctuary at Trail Wood, 93 Kenyon Rd in Hampton, with Andy as your guide looking for Scarlet Tanager, Indigo Bunting and more. **Register by emailing arzeznikiewicz@ctaudubon.org or calling 860-928-4948. Fee: \$10 CAS members; \$20 non-members.**

iPhone Instagram Images

Saturday, May 11 from 9 - 11 a.m. at Trail Wood, 93 Kenyon Rd in Hampton

Bring your smart phone for a workshop and walk with @[trailwoodjournal](https://www.instagram.com/trailwoodjournal)'s Laura Tedeschi. We will discuss image settings and how to get the best image compositions or details. Nellie Teale said it best, "Walk slow, you'll see more". **Register by email to trailwood@ctaudubon.org. Fee: \$5 CAS members; \$10 non-members.**

Nature Sketchbook Journaling

Saturday, May 11 from 1 - 4 p.m. at Trail Wood, 93 Kenyon Rd in Hampton

Roxanne Steed will teach you the 10-minute-sketch-walk out on the Teale Sanctuary and then you'll finish your pages with paint and details. Learn how to make your images into larger paintings. Bring a watercolor sketchbook, permanent markers, a portable watercolor kit, a small cup to hold water, and paper towels. **Please call 860-928-4948 to register. Fee: \$15 CAS members; \$25 non-members.**

Mother's Day Walk

Sunday, May 12 from 2 - 4 p.m. at Trail Wood, 93 Kenyon Rd in Hampton

Treat Mom to an enjoyable afternoon outdoors! **Register by email to trailwood@ctaudubon.org. Free to CAS members; \$5 non-members; Moms free!**

The Planet Press

News, Articles, and Opinions Impacting Our Planet

Issue
3

April / 2024

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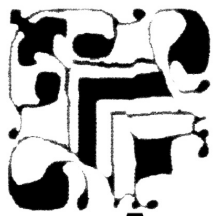


The Planet Press Mission

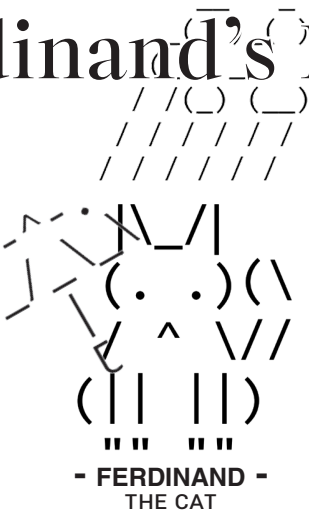
We are dedicated to fostering a resilient and informed community by delivering timely, accurate, and engaging environmental news. Driven by the belief that a well-informed community is a powerful force for positive change, our mission is to illuminate the environmental news and issues that impact Northeastern 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.



Ferdinand's Flower Patch



Flower
of the
Month
April



Star Magnolia

The star magnolia (*Magnolia stellata*) is a deciduous shrub indigenous to Japan. In early spring, it showcases striking white or pink flowers preceding the emergence of its leaves.

In Chinese culture, it symbolizes purity and nobility, while in Japan, according to the Hanakotoba system, it embodies a love for nature and dignity.



Frogs & Snakes See Early Sunlight

The premature serenade of the frogs signals a year that has begun with hot temperatures. Despite occasional record-breaking snowfalls, the winter weather has been sufficiently mild to leave us with bare, muddy landscapes for a significant portion of the season.

Due to their cold-blooded nature, reptiles and amphibians are especially susceptible to these shifts. They hibernate in burrows during the winter months as the ground temperature rises, and they venture nearer to the surface, anticipating the arrival of spring.

Many around the state note this is the second early awakening and migration they have seen this year among amphibians and reptiles. The first one was in late February. Reptiles and amphibians have emerged from dormancy earlier and earlier over the past decade.

A lack of snow cover could exacerbate the trend. If snow is hard-packed over them in the woods, I've never witnessed them break through it. Besides acting as a physical barrier, snow also prolongs ground chill, postponing the onset of spring awakenings. The National Oceanic and At-

mospheric Administration recently declared the country had encountered its warmest winter on record. February 2024 ranked as the third warmest February in recorded history.

Scientists emphasize that it's not merely unusual animal behavior; rather, as the climate warms, it triggers ecosystem-wide changes. These changes impact various sectors, including agriculture, and dictate the timing of phenomena like the wood frogs' serenades.

Frogs surface when they do to synchronize their breeding season with the spring surge in insect numbers. Insects appear when plants leaf out and blossom, providing them with food and opportunities for pollination. It's a complex web of interconnectedness.

While many may overlook frogs, they represent a significant data point.



The Green Frog
Rana clamitans

Happy Spring!

Tips To Revitalize a Garden in Spring

Gardening is a rewarding hobby that pays a host of significant dividends.

Many people love gardening because it allows them to spend time outdoors, and that simple pleasure is a notable benefit of working in a garden. However, the National Initiative for Consumer Horticulture notes that gardening provides additional benefits, including helping people get sufficient exercise, reduce stress, and improve mood.

With so much to gain from gardening, it is no wonder people look forward to getting their hands dirty in the garden each spring. As the weather warms up, consider these tips to help bring a garden back to life.

- Discard the dead weight. Winter can take its toll on a garden, even in regions where the weather between December and early spring is not especially harsh. Discard dead plants that have lingered into spring and prune any

perennials that need it. Branches that fell during winter storms also should be removed at this point if they have not previously been discarded.

- Test the soil. Soil testing kits can be purchased at local garden centers and home improvement retailers. These inexpensive tests can reveal whether the soil needs to be amended to help plants thrive in the coming months.

- Mulch garden beds. Mulching benefits a garden by helping soil retain moisture and preventing the growth of weeds. Various garden experts note that mulching in spring can prevent weed seeds from germinating throughout spring and summer. That means plants won't have to fight with weeds for water when the temperature warms up, and gardeners won't have to spend time pulling weeds this summer.

- Inspect your irrigation system. Homeowners with in-ground irrigation or above-ground sys-

tems that utilize a drip or soaker function can inspect the systems before plants bloom. Damaged sprinkler heads or torn lines can deprive plants of the water they need to bloom and ultimately thrive once the weather warms up.

- Tune up your tools. Gardening tools have likely been sitting around gathering dust since fall. Serious gardeners know that tools can be expensive, so it pays to protect that investment by maintaining them. Sharpened pruners help make plants less vulnerable to infestation and infection. Well-maintained tools like shovels and hoes make more demanding gardening jobs easier, so don't forget to tune up your tools before the weather warms up.

It is almost the gardening season, so gardeners can start on the necessary prep work to ensure their gardens grow strong and beautiful this spring.

This Seasons Fire Prep

Department of Energy and Environmental Protection plans to carry out controlled burns in five vegetated regions this spring. The objective is to sustain habitats, promote plant diversity, and provide crucial support for endangered animal and plant species.

The controlled fires will be set at Matianuck Natural Area Preserve in Windsor, Suffield Wildlife Management Area, Machimoo-

dus State Park in East Haddam, Goodwin State Forest in Hampton, and Pachaug State Forest in Voluntown.

The controlled burn at Matianuck Natural Area Preserve will target a 2.5-acre portion of the grassy sand dune. DEEP notes that the dunes within the preserve represent some of the few remaining sandplain habitats in Connecticut.

Recycle Right!

Did you know that plastic bags – even trash bags holding recyclables – have no place in the recycle cart? Plastic bags get caught in the sorting equipment at the recycling plant, causing frequent and costly shut-downs. That is why plastic bags and other types of plastic film, such as air pillow packaging, are considered a contaminant at Wilimantic Waste Paper. Please refrain from including any kind of plastic bags in recycling.

By Virginia Walton
Mansfield Recycling Coordinator

Bears

When spring arrives, bears emerge from hibernation, and the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection monitors their population's growth. Bears begin their food search while mothers venture out of their dens with their newborn cubs.

Early last month, biologists discovered three bear cubs inside a den in Simsbury. The den posi-

tioned just 10 feet from the roadside, has raised concerns among the biologists.

Each year, vehicles collide with approximately 50 to 70 bears. Additionally, there has been a surge in bears entering homes, reaching record levels.



Eagles

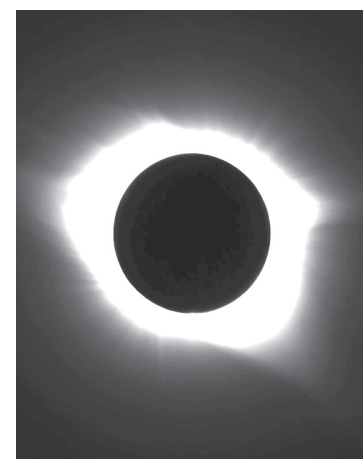
Connecticut residents can soon observe eagles as they prepare for the hatching of their eaglets. Bald Eagles begin building their nests from the middle of January through the middle of March. The laying of eggs occurs from mid-February to mid-March, with incubation from mid-February to mid-April. The eggs hatch in March and April.



A total solar eclipse will be visible from Texas to Maine on April 8, 2024. NASA notes that this phenomenal, awe-inspiring event occurs when the moon passes between the sun and Earth, completely blocking the face of the sun. The National History Museum notes that solar eclipses occur two to five times yearly, but a total solar eclipse occurs less frequently. A total eclipse occurs every 18 months, but that does

April 8th Eclipse

not mean everyone can view the eclipse. Whether or not a total solar eclipse is visible depends on where a person happens to be at the time it occurs. The NHM reports that total solar eclipses are generally visible every 400 years from any one place. Americans interested in a total solar eclipse should make a concerted effort to do so in 2024. NASA indicates the next total solar eclipse visible from the contiguous United States will occur in August 2044.



DEEP Receives Proposals for Multistate Offshore Wind RFP

The Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) has received submissions from four project developers in response to its multistate Request For Proposals (RFP) shared with Massachusetts and Rhode Island.

Recently, the Biden administration unveiled fresh regulations to

simplify the process for offshore wind developers to qualify for a tax credit, mainly if they locate their facilities in regions traditionally dependent on fossil fuel industries for employment.

Unfortunately for Connecticut, only one of the proposals specifies the port of New London for project construction and staging.

The remaining proposals intend to utilize ports located in Massachusetts and Rhode Island.



UConn's Carbon Footprint Continues to Shrink, Even as The Campus Grows

Thanks to long-term investments and its power plant, the University of Connecticut has reduced its carbon footprint compared to 20 years ago. Now, the university is actively seeking additional methods to minimize its environmental impact further.

Over the past two decades, peak power consumption has significantly decreased despite adding approximately one million square feet of buildings to the University's Storrs campus. From a high of 45MW in 2005, it dropped to just 27.4MW during last year's September heatwave, a testament to the efficiency measures imple-

mented by the University over the past 18 years.

However, with the campus expanding, electric demand is rising. Consequently, the University is exploring sustainable methods to fulfill its requirements for heat and power. It reviews several proposals from Facilities Operations and a student competition facilitated by the Eversource Energy Center.

Facilities have put forward two distinct proposals. The first involves the addition of two hydrogen-capable turbines to UConn's cogeneration system, which generates electricity and steam heat on the Storrs campus, thereby

increasing the total capacity to 50MW. The current three turbines are undergoing retrofitting to accommodate up to 30% hydrogen. Although the original cogeneration plant, built in 2006, is quite efficient—far more so than conventional grid power—its expansion would entail continued reliance on natural gas, eventually incorporating hydrogen blends. The second proposal from Facilities entails establishing a connection to the grid through Eversource's East-West line, primarily powered by the Killingly natural gas plant and supplemented by the Millstone nuclear plant.

A Brief History of Earth Day

Earth Day is celebrated each April and draws attention to a range of issues affecting the environment. It aims to raise awareness and inspire change.

Earth Day is observed on April 22. According to National Geographic, the first Earth Day was celebrated in 1970. Wisconsin senator Gaylord Nelson was inspired to begin a national celebration uniting the environmental movement after witnessing ecological activism in the 1960s. With the help of Denis Hayes, a graduate student at Harvard University, Nelson organized the first Earth Day. Twenty million people participated in events across the United States and strengthened support for environmental legislation like the Clean Air Act and

the Endangered Species Act.

Earth Day was expanded to a global initiative in 1990 under guidance from Hayes. Nearly 200 million participants in more than 140 countries now join together to protect the planet. Awareness continues to be raised each year regarding renewable energy and climate change.

One of the hallmarks of Earth Day celebrations is the planting of trees. Researchers estimate roughly 15 billion trees are cut down annually across the globe. By planting a tree every Earth Day, people can make a difference. Trees absorb carbon dioxide, release oxygen, and bolster ecosystems for wildlife. Shade trees can reduce reliance on fans and air conditioning systems.

EarthDay.org's main message for Earth Day 2024 is the need to commit to ending reliance on plastics. The goal is a 60 percent reduction in the production of all plastics by 2040. Plastics are bad for the environment, and a growing body of research indicates they harm the major systems of the body, including the immune, respiratory, digestive, and hormonal systems.

Everyone can do their part to promote the ideals behind Earth Day. For 54 years, millions have advocated for change to benefit the planet and human and animal health, and that fight is ongoing.



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APRIL
6
SATURDAY

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2:00PM and 3:00PM

Visit two Mansfield homes to see home battery back-up systems that are paired with rooftop solar. Just have time to visit one home? That's fine too. Learn about clean, quiet reliable power created by the sun, and stored for discretionary use!

To register, contact the Mansfield Recycling Coordinator at waltonvd@mansfieldct.org or call 860-429-3333. At the time of registration, you will receive the addresses for the two homes. **The registration deadline is April 4, 2024 at 4:30 pm.**

The Mansfield Sustainability Committee encourages you to visit <https://PowerSmartMansfield.wee.green> to learn more details about a home battery system. "Energy Storage Solutions" program participants can get great incentives, rebates, federal tax credits, and tips on buying solar and/or battery back-up systems.



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'Sunrise Dunes' at left and 'Brook Trout' by Ashford artist Charles McCaughtry. Charles will open his 'Spring Studio Open House' on the following dates:
 Sat. April 27th 10am - 6pm; Sun., April 28th 10am - 6pm
 Sat. May 4th 10am - 6pm; Sun., May 5th 10am - 6pm

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