

# Neighbors

No. 234

March - April 2025

FREE



## Future *Focused*



WHZ,  
Your team's personalized guidance has really helped me to leverage my executive benefits and make progress toward my future financial goals.

Thank you!

*Marie*

**Absolute Confidence. Unwavering Partnership. For Life.**

Visit [whzwealth.com](https://whzwealth.com) to read more about Marie's story



(860) 928-2341  
697 Pomfret Street, Pomfret Center, CT 06259  
392-A Merrow Road, Tolland, CT 06084

This statement was provided 3/7/2024 by Marie Sanchirico who is a client. This statement may not be representative of the experience of others and is not a guarantee of future performance or success. For additional reviews, search us wherever local businesses are reviewed. Securities and advisory services offered through Commonwealth Financial Network®, Member FINRA/SIPC, a Registered Investment Advisor.



Eastern Connecticut Center for  
History, Art, and Performance, Inc.

*Your Regional Cultural Center*



**THE PACKING HOUSE**

1870  
HISTORIC VENUE FOR PERFORMANCE & EVENTS

# SAVE THE DATES!

An Intimate Listening Room  
Performance Season: September - May  
[WWW.THEPACKINGHOUSE.US](http://WWW.THEPACKINGHOUSE.US)

**Saturday**  
**March 8th**



**RETURN OF BELLE OF THE FALL**  
FOLK / INDIE

**Saturday**  
**March 29th**



**PATTI TUIE BAND**  
BLUES / ROCK

**Saturday**  
**April 5th**

Rescheduled from February 15th



**AN INTIMATE EVENING WITH GRAMMY NOMINEE BLUES ARTIST GUY DAVIS**

**Saturday**  
**April 26th**



**AN EVENING WITH MUSICIAN & TV/FILM ACTOR ALICIA WITT**

**Saturday**  
**May 3rd**



**FRANK VIELE**  
SINGER/SONGWRITER  
AMERICANA

## EC-CHAP Monthly Programs are back!

January thru May 2025 - Check website for details

“Open Mic at The Packing House” - 2nd Wednesday

“Dye & Bleach House Poetry Series” - 3rd Thursday

“EC-CHAP Friday Film Series:

- January 24, 2025: “Jeff Beck”
- February 14, 2025: Janis Joplin & Canadian Train Tour”
- March 28, 2025: “The Doors”
- April 25, 2025: “The Allman Brothers Band”
- May 02, 2025: “Great Guitars”

Open Saturdays from 10:00am - 12:00pm and by Appointment



### “A Mill Retrospective”

Group Exhibit by Resident Artists at The Mill Works

February 15, 2025 - April 12, 2025

“Artist Reception” - Friday, March 7th - 6:30-8:00pm



“Threads in Time”  
On Exhibit



# Don't Be Silenced

By Loretta Wrobel



So very many of the dear souls that I am in contact with are very tense, upset, and angry about what is going on in Washington DC. The vast majority are fearful and continually talking about the end of our Country and the takeover of our Government. There is a general feeling of "That's it!" and a giving up and despairing attitude. I recently read a short statement by Jim Hightower on his Lowdown radio show. I was mesmerized by his words "Don't complain, defy!"

Hightower was talking about Costco declining to follow President Trump's mandate, and standing up and continuing to stay with their DEI (Diversity, Equity and Inclusion) policies and not reverse their previous way of conducting business. What a courageous company. Hightower lauded them for not complying, defying!!! Several of our corporate giants (Amazon, Disney, Facebook, Target, and Walmart) are caving in and supporting Trump's mandates to eliminate DEI democratic principles and follow his orders.

Those of us who are unhappy and bummed out by what is going on need to speak up and thank Costco, so that they feel supported in their bold actions. This is the time to move into supporting those you believe in and acknowledging that they are not alone.

In the 2024 election, only 63.9% of all eligible voters cast their ballot. Certainly, Trump won. However, it was not the overwhelming victory that he proclaims. Plus, it was not a majority of the country, since many voters did not go to the polls, even with the option of early voting! The margin of victory was hardly a mandate to behave in the manner he has demonstrated since January.

I find it curious that a known liar is believed by massive amounts of citizens. And where is the fight and determination to step up and fiercely protest the control of all of us by a rich, greedy group of biased white guys!!! Where did the passionate spirit go? Are we ready to roll over and slink away? If we are serious about the horror of what is happening in our country, let's make some noise. Your voices and opinions need to be heard again and again. This is the critical time to stand our ground.

It is not a time to wimp out and limp away, believing it's over. It is only just beginning. The strategy is to topple our spirit by shocking us with more and more illegal actions, until we feel powerless to take action and

stand up for the principles we believe in. The majority of Americans don't want to be controlled and orchestrated by an oligarchy of rich, power-driven individuals who desire not only to be in charge of our country, but to become rulers of the world. Their need to control and overpower is insatiable. We are so fortunate to live in Connecticut, since our Governor has made it clear he is standing up for diversity, equity and inclusion. We need to communicate that we support him in upholding the values that our state supports and our people strive for.

We accept immigrants, understanding how painful and difficult it is to leave your country. It is not a decision that is made on a whim. It is also a decision that the majority of our ancestors made, for complicated reasons. Immigrants readily accept most of the jobs that our citizens refuse to perform, such as agricultural work, caregiving of elders and vulnerable people, and signing on for other physically challenging, low-paying jobs.

We are a deeply divided country with hostility, hatred, and rage keeping us from discussing issues with those who hold different opinions. It is time to share our views with the belief that in communicating we learn about the other and they in turn learn about us. It is not a time for closed minds and inflexible stances. We need to educate others about the effects of targeting and blaming. The enemy is ignorance. Talking with people who come from different perspectives paves the way for compromise and further discussion. Our planet is struggling to maintain balance, especially as our weather patterns are causing more disruptions and upheavals, and our people are lost, frightened, and isolated.

The crisis calls for us to respond by reaching out and knowing we are all in this together. With the forests burning, political chaos in our country, and wars and exclusion escalating, we need strong, supportive communities. We need to join with others and not withdraw to our homes and pretend we are safe. When others are being harassed and suffering from discrimination, it is important we open our mouths and stand behind those who are fighting back. The battleground now is in the courts and the legislatures. If you see that an action, policy or decision does not reflect your values, raise your voice, make a statement, be outspoken.

There are many ways to speak out. You can talk to your neighbors, you can contact your legislator, you can write a letter, you can donate to an organization that is working to make a change. You can't disappear. Your opinions are necessary and will make a huge difference. I was chatting recently with friends who grew up in Germany. Their words of wisdom were to open your mouth. Don't go silent or disappear. Another option is to add your support and thanks to those who are on the front lines. Give feedback to people who support your values. Let them know how much you appreciate what they are doing and how courageous they are. Communication is essential for us now, as we are exposed to so many lies and distortions. Often, we are bewildered by what is true and what is a distortion.

When we share and relate to others, it becomes easier to begin to comprehend the larger picture. Take the time to sort out the facts and investigate where the information is coming from. Are the statements and claims originating from a reliable source, or from someone or a group that has a vested interest or has a history of deceit, distortions, and twisting the facts?

Remember that your input is critical and your voice is necessary right now. Take care off yourself, and help create a safer, inclusive, and sane world that celebrates differences and welcomes working together. We all benefit from being connected and involved. The work becomes easier as we reach out and don't retreat. I want to hear from you. Speak up often and boldly. I am listening. Thank you.

On our cover: Grandchildren. I took this photo last spring with a smartphone. Phones take great photos. I would love to put reader photos on the cover or elsewhere in Neighbors. Send them via text or email. Thank you. Tom King

**Deadlines:**  
**May-June 2025:**  
**Deadline: Thursday, April 10th.**  
**Print date: Tuesday, April 15th.**  
**July-August 2025:**  
**Deadline: Thursday, June 12th.**  
**Print date: Tuesday, June 17th.**

**LANDON TIRE**  
TIRES • BRAKES  
WHEEL ALIGNMENT

**LANDON TIRE... DOES MORE THAN JUST TIRES!**

**We specialize in....**

- Brakes • Exhaust • Alignment Shocks
- C.V. Joint & Axles • Struts
- Front End Repair • Under Car Repair and More!

YOKOHAMA  
GENERAL TIRE

BFGoodrich  
DONALDSON

COOPER TIRES

GOODYEAR  
of all other tires

TOYO TIRES

UNIROYAL

BRIDGESTONE

FIRESTONE

**LANDON TIRE**  
 39 Years of Hometown Service  
**YOUR INDEPENDENT TIRE DEALER**  
 Just 2 Miles South of the New Thread City Crossing Bridge on Rt. 32, South Windham  
**RT. 32, SOUTH WINDHAM 456-0000 Mon.-Fri. 8-5:30; Sat. 8-1:30**

*Largest Selection of Sewing Machines and Vacuum Cleaners in Eastern CT*

Sales • Service • Parts • Accessories

**WE TAKE TRADE-INS!**

*Schillers* SINCE 1951

HOME TO ALL YOUR SEWING & VACUUM NEEDS

1088 Main Street  
Willimantic, CT 06226  
(860) 423-6800  
SchillersOnTheWeb.com

"Expert Repairs on all Makes of Vacuums and Sewing Machines."  
 "All Work Guaranteed-Free Estimates!"

CAD Marshall Framing

Professional Picture Framer

Art by local artists is not on cargo ships...  
Stop in - Shop local

SPRING IS COMING!  
LOOK AT YOUR PICTURES -  
THEY MAY NEED A CLEANING  
OR CHANGE OF MAT COLOR.

860-617-5422

Tue.- Fri. 10-5:30 & Sat. 10-4  
34 North Street. Wmtc., CT

FINE SODA

FORMULATED WITH CANE SUGAR  
BEVERAGES & SPRING WATER TOO!

HOSMER MOUNTAIN BOTTLING CO.

Since 1912  
217 Mountain Street, Willimantic, CT 06226  
(860) 423-1555 • Fax (860) 423-2207  
email: mail@hosmersoda.com • www.hosmersoda.com

a little paper  
big on community

Neighbors  
 P.O. Box 430  
 Ashford, CT 06278  
 phone: 860-933-3376  
 email: neighborspaper@yahoo.com  
 website: neighborspaper.com

Tom King, Editor & Publisher  
 Steve Woron, Webmaster  
 Gary Kass, Copy Editor  
 Cameron Yanicky, Planet Press Editor/Designer  
 Marisa Calvo, Graphic Design  
 Julie Engelke, Tom King, Circulation

Writers:  
 Delia Berlin, Mark Mathew Braunstein, Jesse R. Clark,  
 David Corsini, Donna Dufresne, Dean Farrell,  
 Phoebe Godfrey, Bob Grindle, Brian Karlsson-Barnes,  
 Bob Lorentson, John Murphy, Dennis Pierce,  
 Bill Powers, Loretta Wrobel

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

Neighbors is published bi-monthly by Neighborspaper LLC.  
 Thomas A. King, member

Neighbors is printed by Rare Reminder Inc. Rocky Hill, Connecticut.

# From the Ground Up - Buying Local in Connecticut

## Know Your Farmer Fair Celebrates 10th Year

By Rebecca Toms

Back in college (all those years ago) I remember sitting on the lawn talking with my friend Mat about food. Mat was behind the student-run farm that was just getting off the ground. He told me about how he was collecting seaweed from the nearby beach to fertilize the crops and suppress weeds. I was fascinated. Yeah, I knew my food was grown somewhere by somebody, but I never thought about *how* they were growing it. Because of that conversation with Mat, I found myself meandering down new paths, eventually becoming a farmer myself in ten years' time.

That is the power of a conversation, of hearing something new that you haven't considered before and seeing an entire new area of life open before you, and why listening, sharing, and getting to know others is important—each interaction helps to guide you to something new, or keeps lighting up a path you have begun.

It's why I love the idea of attending the Know Your Farmer Fair (happening on Saturday, March 8, from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the Willimantic Community Center), where farmers, despite their incredibly busy schedules, take time to connect with the community, sharing their knowledge, their stories, and their love for growing food.

If you haven't attended before, let me paint you a picture: Each year, around 30 farms gather, setting up tables and displays to showcase what they do. While some bring products to sell, the real purpose isn't just commerce—it's connection. It's about meeting the people who grow your food, understanding their methods, and learning how they choose to nourish the community.

The fair, now in its 10th year, has grown into the largest gathering *in the state* of farmers for public engagement, and it all started with one farmer's challenge: how to get the word out in a rural community.

To give you a more in-depth look at how this event came to be, and the heart behind it, I asked Libby Tarleton, the founder of the event, to share with us how it started. Every year since the first, Libby, of the Russo's Roots farm in Canterbury, has helped start, plan, market, organize, set up, tear down, cheer on, and bring the community together for the Know Your Farmer Fair. So who better to tell its story?

Ten years ago, Russo's Roots was a brand new farm in eastern Connecticut. Not new to farming, but new to the quiet corner of Connecticut. No friends, no family, just a new farm with high tunnels, vegetable fields, and lots of plants ready to be planted. We knew how to grow amazing vegetables. We knew how to pick, wash, pack, and store our vegetables. What we didn't quite know was how to get the word around about what we had to offer in a rural community now that social media was more prominent than newspapers. Did other farmers struggle to get customers? Were customers even looking for fresh, local organic produce? How would I get the word out about the community-supported agriculture program I was starting the next season?

After talking with a few other farmers and finding they too found marketing their farm challenging in a rural community with no familial ties, we decided to create an event that showcases the Who, What, Where, and When of the farming community in eastern Connecticut. In February of 2016 we hosted the first Know Your Farmer Fair at CLiCK in Willimantic. It has evolved over the years, from a farmer showcase to a farmers market, but the educational component remains strong. It is an opportunity for new farmers to spread the word about what they have to offer and for established farms to reach out to new customers. It's an event that highlights small businesses, seasonal eating, and—no matter your age—learning about where your food comes from. We still enjoy this event, even after 10 years. We are now more established in our community, but we never get tired of talking about our love of farming, cooking, and the joy of agriculture in all its forms. Plus, this event is just downright fun!



So why does this event deserve your attention? Because it's a rare chance to catch farmers outside of their usual whirlwind of work. From April through December, they're busy planting, harvesting, and selling, and even now, they're deep into starting seeds, boiling maple syrup, and caring for newborn livestock. The fair gives them a moment to pause and connect—with each other and with you, to share a bit of the passion and heart behind what they do. Each farmer has their own unique connection with their land, reasons why they raise or grow their product, and connection to the community.

And of course, one thing all farmers share is a love of food. The Know Your Farmer Fair is a great opportunity to ask questions about what to do with farm products, because that's what the farmers are eating! One of the farmers attending makes delicious dishes with her meat and is constantly causing me to drool when she shares her entrees over social media. That farmer is Megan Herbert of Westview Farm in Woodstock (who will be attending with her chuck roast for sale!), and I asked her to share one of her favorite recipes. Visit her and many others at the Know Your Farmer Fair on Saturday, March 8, from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m., and get some ingredients to make this delicious dish yourself!

For more info on the Know Your Farmer Fair, visit [grown-connected.org/knowyourfarmerfair](http://grown-connected.org/knowyourfarmerfair)

### Smothered Steak

*Not actually steak, but so good you'll think it is!*

Recipe from Megan Herbert of Westview Farm in Woodstock

Serves 4

#### INGREDIENTS

2 lb. chuck roast cubed or stew meat  
 ½ tsp. ground pepper  
 1/3 cup flour  
 1 yellow onion, thickly sliced  
 1 green bell pepper, thinly sliced  
 1 28-oz. can diced tomatoes  
 4–5 tbsps. soy sauce  
 ½ cup beef stock or enough to cover the meat

#### DIRECTIONS

1. On medium-high heat, brown all sides of the cubed chuck roast or stew meat and put in a crock pot (with juices).
2. Add ground pepper and flour to the meat, toss to coat.
3. Add remaining ingredients to crock pot and mixtogether.
4. Cook on low for 6–8 hours.
5. Serve over rice and enjoy!

## Quiet Corner Garden Club Symposium

Submitted by Elaine Turner

The Quiet Corner Garden Club will host “Growing Gardeners 2025”, a Symposium on April 5, 2025. The Symposium will be held at CT State Community College Quinebaug Valley, (QVCC), 742 Upper Maple St., Danielson, CT from 9am until 3:30pm. This year's theme is “Healthy Plants, Healthy People, Healthy Planet”.

Join us for an informative, fun-filled day as we explore topics such as Pollinators and Native Plants, Herbs, No-Till Gardening, Seed Starting, The Home Medicine Chest, Habitats for Attracting Birds, Mushroom Foraging, and more! Browse our nature inspired vendors and informative exhibits. Meet local farmers and sample their products. Giveaways and door prizes add to the fun!

Tickets are limited. A box lunch is available for an additional charge. For more information and to buy tickets go to [www.quietcornergardenclub.com](http://www.quietcornergardenclub.com).

advertise  
 the neighbors paper  
 locally written  
 locally wread

## Don't Wait

Don't wait until they are out of diapers,  
 Or out of high school,  
 Or out of the house.

Don't wait until you have a vacation,  
 have extra time,  
 or retire from your job.

Dream your dreams now.  
 Discover what you love now.  
 Find a passion,  
 set a goal now.

Then find a quiet corner,  
 a cozy chair,  
 a spot under a tree,  
 Take just ten minutes today for you.

To write that poem,  
 Read to your child,  
 Do that yoga,  
 Find that on-line course,  
 Relax in a warm bath,  
 Pray for others,  
 Or just sit in stillness and listen.

But please don't wait until you have the time,  
 Make the time to find your joy.  
 The world will be a better place if you do.

Micky Welles

## Patriot's Day is Coming

By Bev York

And so, it had begun. On April 19, 1775, exactly 250 years ago, the first military campaign against the Kingdom of Great Britain took place.

The American colonists knew it was coming. Many towns in eastern New England were preparing. All colonial towns had militia composed of all males aged sixteen and older to protect their own but now it was necessary to organize better trained companies known as minutemen. They set up a secret and well-organized network to spread the alarm using drums, church bells, guns, and bonfires. They stockpiled arms and gunpowder to be ready.

The British had occupied Boston since 1768. Tensions had been rising since the Stamp Act of 1765, massacre of 1770, the tea party in 1773, and the intolerable acts of 1774. The colonists resisted including boycotting British goods but now battle seemed inevitable. The American colonists (rebels or continentals) and had carefully observed the British and they were preparing for the attack. The night before they sent out riders to arouse the colonists. Paul Revere would be captured, William Dawes may have been thrown from his horse and Samuel Prescott and others rode for miles into the dark to spread out the alarm.

British General Gage issued secret orders to his regulars to march to Concord and capture and destroy the colonists' military supplies. By sunrise, they had gone as far as Lexington when the first shots were fired. When it started the British outnumbered the militia 700 to 70. Eight militia were killed and so the Americans fell back. The next skirmish occurred about 11 A.M. when the militia had swelled to 400 and there were casualties on both sides. But as the British started back to Boston, they marched through heavy fire from behind trees and stone walls. The rebel numbers swelled to thousands as more militias had arrived from Massachusetts, New Hampshire and Connecticut colonies.

By the next day, Governor Jonathan Trumbull in Lebanon had received the news. In the Windham area more men left to “march for the relief of Boston.” Off they went, scores of local fathers, brothers, and sons. Hezekiah Fuller of Ashford, Sam Beaumont of Lebanon, and brothers Ebenezer, Jonathan and Nathaniel Hovey of Windham were among them. Many would serve under Colonel Putnam. The Americans, unhappy with taxes and how the British controlled their lives had fought back. Ralph Waldo Emerson would describe it as “The shot heard around the world.” The American Revolution was the first major rebellion by emigrants against their mother country. The American Revolution, or the War for Independence, was based on ideas of equal rights for all. The Americans would not be ruled by a tyrant king. And so, it had begun.

# The Day Got Away from Me! Chasing Time Through a Hole In the Hedge

By Bob Grindle

Waking up this morning to the absolute silence of a world that feels as if it's in a state of suspended animation...sliding quietly out of bed, I can hear Lin's steady, almost soundless, soft breathing, and for a short while in the 5:00 a.m. darkness and chill of a house at complete rest I feel my own heartbeat quicken and my breathing increase...have I just stepped through a portal into someone else's dream. Can inanimate objects have dreams...tell stories...suddenly I'm feeling like a librarian of the night, sorting through and trying to picture the untold stories that are shelved in the grimy memory banks of the beams and stones—the bones—of this centuries-old house. REM sleep is when your brain stores short-term memories from prior moments into your long-term bank. It is your deepest and most rewarding sleep, when reality and hallucination hybridize—is that the reward? —and the memories that are found on the shelves in the dimmest recesses of your mind's archives don't always look familiar. My wife and I have often spoken of Henry Neff, a man we never met; the last member of the original Neff family to live here, and who died in a tragic accident on a nearby road while walking home one fateful night from a local tavern...at least that's the story told by his neighbors who lived here when we moved in, and they're all gone now...how does a story begin? And where is it shelved?

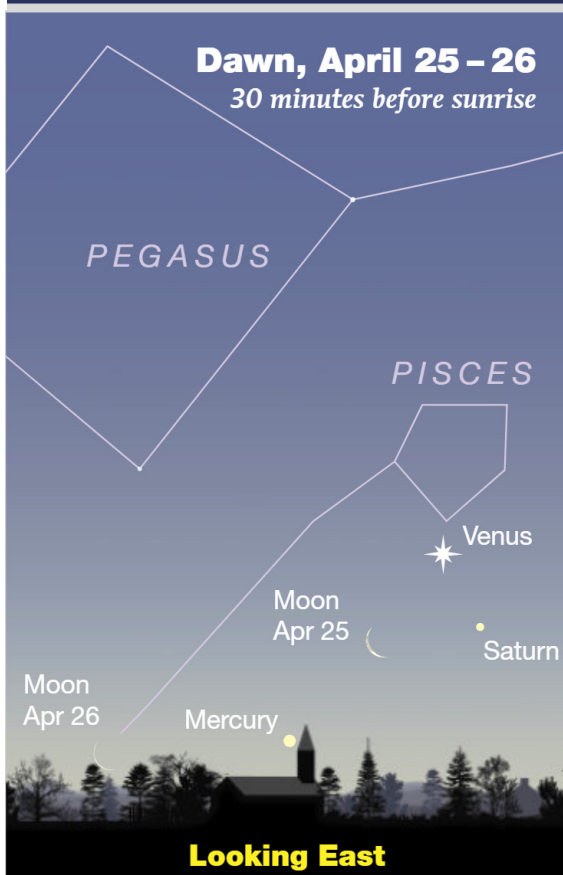
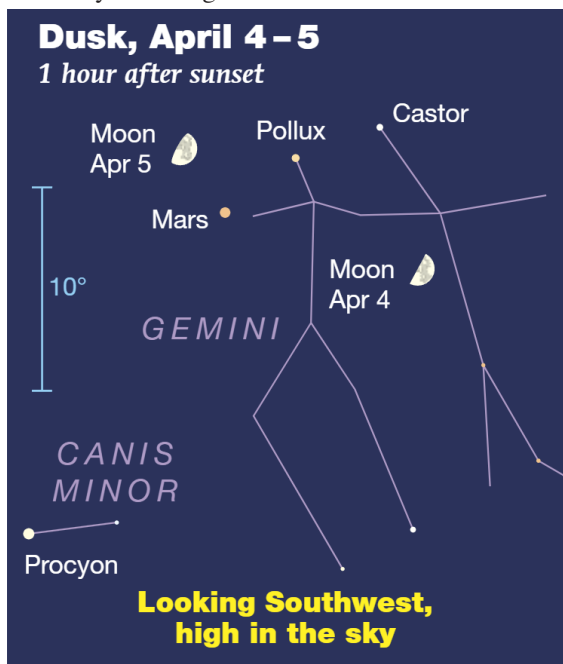
The soft light of daybreak that heralds this dim and murky morning eases out the solitary darkness, reveals a thin, cosmically quiet snow falling outside and I smile as the grayscale-only vision of the lone night traveler abandons darkness to the rich colors of daylight vision. Despite our addiction to the daytime and our compulsion, manifest through the ages, to invent and use illuminating devices that challenge darkness and avoid sleep as if it were synonymous with death, I suspect we know more of the shadows than we are soon likely to admit. The sounds of the birds outside remind me that, as easily as our imagination can open a mysterious hole into the hedge that surrounds the secret garden of our lives, it is always good to step back inside and perhaps reset the metronomic pace of our lives...maybe skip a beat, leave a blank space on the

daily to-do list...and, as I look across at the kitchen table, today's to-do list sits waiting, untouched—last night's in-the-moment design for a productive morning—ghosted by an imagination sometimes too easily distracted by infatuation with the bold uncertainty of life's pottery wheel of endless possibilities, just off center stage...only dimly lit, but perhaps worth the chase. The clay awaits, but...

Cranking open the kitchen window slightly, there is an immediate uplifting and almost involuntary sense of lightness at the sound of birds singing, calling to one another and generally announcing the morning. It has been suggested that the human species' near mythical entwinement with music and song developed in part from its ancient exposure in forest and savannah to birdsong. That's right, not only have birds and their ability to fly been a magical source of wonder for our human family since prehistoric times, but recent research hints that our earliest efforts at sharing the many kinds of information small nomadic bands of humans needed for survival might very well have been based on their attempts at mimicking the melodic sounds and communications of the birds all around them.

Sometimes the motivation to get back into the busy lane of what needs to get done can be found by simply looking up into the vastness of all that lies beyond our small spacecraft Earth on its solitary journey across the Cosmos. Not only the behavior of birds but, on occasion, when I'm feeling a bit like the merchant of doom about our species' long term prospects, a few moments spent watching the planet Mars tag along with the Moon as they rise toward Castor and Pollux through Gemini (the evenings of March 7-9—about an hour after sunset,) or waiting for Venus to return to the morning sky as she will do without fail the end of March and stay with us before dawn throughout

the Spring...those few moments spent looking into the vastness of our timeless Universe are as soothing as the sounds of Spring...and as Spring prepares to grace us all with the promise of rebirth—March 20th—I recall something I heard several years ago...those places that have no winter, also have no spring. Pity, that! Be well, and in this season when the sap rises in so many living things may you enjoy the almost limitless beauty our planet offers.



## 'Meet the Author' in Willington

Submitted by Debra Linares

Join us for a "Meet the Author" program on Thursday evening, March 27, 2025 at 6:30 pm, at the Willington Public Library, 7 Ruby Road, in Willington. Come hear author Tyler Kania speak in his new book "The Maniac With No Knees".

In "The Maniac with No Knees", Tyler Kania takes readers on a raw, unfiltered ride through his journey with undiagnosed Bipolar I Disorder.

From rugby fields to the edge of the Grand Canyon, from building a cryptocurrency start-up to coaching a women's rugby team to victory, Tyler's manic adventures push every boundary. Along the way, he uncovers a major tech scandal, survives run-ins with the Boston Mafia, and even attempts the unthinkable—before landing in a mental hospital, where he finally begins to heal.



Tyler's story is both brutally honest and often darkly humorous. Living with Bipolar I Disorder and two rare rugby injuries, he brings a unique perspective on mental health, resilience, and self-discovery.

This is a testament to survival and finding meaning in the mad-

ness. Tyler's wild journey may just change how you see your own life, and the struggles we all face.

For more ongoing programs, go to our website at [www.willingtonpubliclibrary.com](http://www.willingtonpubliclibrary.com) or sign up to receive our library E-Blast at <https://www.willingtonpubliclibrary.org/e-blast-signup>. Check us out on our different Social Media: Facebook, Instagram, X, and YouTube

# Carpentry

10% Discount for Ashford Residents

Serving Ashford and Surrounding Towns  
Interior & Exterior  
All Carpentry Projects  
Handyman Services  
Property Maintenance  
No Project Too Small  
Fourth Generation Carpenter!  
Quality Workmanship  
Clean and Reliable



Call or Text Christian @ 860-712-8624  
lofcarpentry@charter.net

860-712-8624  
lofcarpentry@charter.net

## Tri-County Greenhouse

'Where Plants and People Grow - Since 1982'

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

For the 2025 Growing Season We'll Have:

**ANNUALS - PERENNIALS**  
**HERBS - VEGETABLES - NATIVES**  
**1000's of Varieties - Many Unique!**  
**All Grown by Us on Premises**  
**Custom and Ready-Made Planters**  
**Flowering Baskets**  
**Summer Bulbs**

290 Middle Turnpike (Rt. 44) Mansfield Depot  
860-429-5532 Open All Year 7 days/week

## WANTED TO BUY Antiques & Old stuff

Bottles, crocks, jugs, costume jewelry, pottery, toys, games, glassware, sterling silver, coins, gold, silver plated items, watches, typewriters, sewing machines, tools, radios, clocks, lanterns, lamps, kitchenware, cookware, knives, hunting, fishing, military, Masonic, fire department, musical instruments...And much more.

Call Donald Roy 860-874-8396

Chaplin Church Thrifty Shoppe

2 Buildings!!!

Open Fridays and Saturdays 10AM to 2PM

Once You find Us, You Won't Forget Us  
Clothing and Household items  
*You never know what you will find.*  
Items added weekly

Bring in ad to get 10% off  
Most kid's clothes 50 cents.

43 Chaplin Street  
Chaplin, CT 06235

Low Prices  
Quality Inventory

Ask about our 'pay forward' Thrifty Bucks!

advertise in the neighbors paper  
locally written  
locally wread

# Don't Ask Grok

By Delia Berlin



These days, there is talk everywhere about artificial intelligence, or AI. But according to the Pew Research Center, while 90% of people have heard about AI, only 30% can easily name or recognize examples of it.

Simply put, AI refers to technologies that can simulate human intelligence, by analyzing data, learning, and resolving problems. We all use it. Siri, Alexa, and the customer service chatbots that answer our calls are some familiar examples of commonly used AI technologies. When these technologies are designed to self-improve with experience or, in other words, learn, they are usually called “generative” AI. This learning, however, is not infallible.

There are many AI “chatbots”—artificial intelligence engines designed to analyze and generate material. One of them is Grok, launched in 2023 by Elon Musk. According to Grok itself (which invites you to ask any question), this chatbot is

designed to provide helpful and truthful answers to a wide range of questions. Grok aims to assist users in understanding the universe and various topics by providing insightful and often outside perspectives on humanity. It can analyze content, generate images (not charts or diagrams), and access real-time information from the web, including posts on X (formerly Twitter). Grok can also handle technical queries, mathematical problems, and more, often using markdown for clarity. Grok strives for maximal helpfulness, often questioning popular narratives, and aims to be objective, especially on controversial topics. It provides detailed explanations rather than short, oversimplified answers when necessary.

In addition, and also quoting from Grok itself, “Grok combines humor with a straightforward approach to answering queries. In essence, Grok is meant to be a conversational AI that not only answers questions but also encourages a deeper understanding of the subject matter, often with a touch of humor and an outside perspective on human affairs.” My curiosity was piqued. I decided to test Grok’s knowledge in a subject that I command. So, I asked, “Who is Delia Berlin?”

A touch of humor I did find. Oddly, each time I asked the same question once again, I received a different answer. On one of those occasions, I learned that Delia Berlin did not appear to be one person, but several persons named Delia who live in Berlin. I was given a summary description of each one of them, a most diverse group of Delias who ranged from scientists to escorts.

On another occasion, Grok said that “Delia Berlin appears to be involved in multiple professional capacities, and there are several individuals with that name or similar names across different contexts.” This description did provide some summaries that were correct, such as a short bio of me as an author. It continued with my “artistic and creative work” and for a moment I thought it had learned about my ceramic projects, but no. Instead, this is what it said: “There is mention of a Delia Berlin involved in creative projects, particularly in Berlin, Germany, where she might be part of the cultural or creative industries. This could include freelance writing or other artistic endeavors.” Grok continued explaining that “it’s worth noting that the name ‘Delia Berlin’ might be confused with or related to other Delias in Berlin” and

provided a few examples.

I was not impressed, but wanting to give Grok another chance, so I asked, “Who is David Corsini?” I learned that my husband “appears to be a multifaceted individual with various professional and personal endeavors.” Among the professional roles, “David Corsini has been listed as a Principal at Hunter Mercantile Search Consultants in Toronto, specializing in recruitment for wealth management and insurance sectors, with a focus on leadership, sales distribution, and operations.” What? So that’s where he was!

There was more. “He has also been identified as the Chief Executive Officer of Danieli Telerobot.” And “he is known as ‘The Potentialist,’ where he offers services in consulting, coaching, business development, personal growth, and personal development. His work involves unlocking human potential on a subconscious level.”

Like me, David also was found to have artistic and creative talents, but in his case the listed ones are connected to reality: “David Corsini is also an artist, specifically noted for creating assemblages in the folk-art tradition from collected objects like natural items, rusted metal, and flea market finds. His work has been showcased in various art events and open studios in Connecticut.”

Unfortunately, his listed educational background belongs to someone else, including “a BBA from St. Bonaventure University with a major in Management Sciences and a minor in International Business, and an MBA from Università Popolare degli Studi di Milano in Business Management.” Not even close.

But wait. There is more! “David Corsini is also a real estate agent based in Maplewood, NJ, affiliated with realtor.com, highlighting his diverse career path.” “He has been featured on podcasts discussing mindset, personal growth, and entrepreneurship, indicating his role as a public speaker and thought leader in these areas.” “Corsini maintains a blog where he shares insights on personal and business growth, emphasizing strategies for success and innovation. David Corsini’s involvement in various fields suggests a broad range of interests and expertise, from art and literature to business consulting and real estate. His career showcases a blend of creativity, business acumen, and a focus on personal development.”

Wow. David has been busy. The previous descriptions would leave you believing that he is even older than his ripe 85 years. I would say that Grok still has a little more learning to do before we turn it loose. Humor aside, it is worth considering that blind trust in AI can really have dire consequences. To illustrate this point, the January/February 2025 issue of *Public Citizen* alerts us to the perils of AI-powered identification apps. They have already led to multiple hospitalizations of mushroom foragers, who relied on them to assess the safety of eating their harvest.

## Letter and Emails

Dear Tom King:

I meant to write in for a while, to thank you for your hard work in putting out *Neighbors*, and the writers who take the time and energy to share their thoughts.

From Loretta Wrobel, whose deep compassion, and reminders about care for ourselves as well as others, encourage us to move forward with fortitude; to Bob Grindle, whose expansive, philosophical meditations on the cosmos give food for thought, as well as what to look for in the night skies with the passing seasons. These and your other contributors regularly demonstrate what it takes to build and grow a community, and make me grateful to live in this beautiful place!

Thanks, Irene Barnard

## How to Tell Your Friends from the Endangered Species Do Cranes Dream of Origami People?

By Bob Lorentson

Cranes are majestic, long-legged birds that gather in flocks to test the dominance hierarchy of birdwatchers. Normally, birdwatchers are a meek subspecies of human that live solitary lives and try hard not to be noticed. But for unexplained reasons, when birdwatchers gather to watch a flock of cranes, they will fight for the prime viewing spots as though they were competing for a mate. This is definitely not the reason, however, as birdwatchers are largely unsuccessful at mating. Perhaps they should take a cue from the cranes and dance instead.

The mating dance of cranes is enough to make any human embarrassed at their own tawdry seduction techniques. A crane dance is sexy, respectful, imaginative, and whimsical in ways that drunken slobbering will never be. Both sexes participate with high leaps, deep bows, spread wings, quick steps, and throwing sticks or grass into the air, then stabbing at them as they come down. Then they point their bills to the sky and call in unison. This mating dance makes some birdwatchers fall so helplessly in love with them that they will imitate it. Cranes are not generally fooled, but it does get the attention of concerned family members.

Some cranes migrate, some don’t, and none appear the wiser. Those that migrate mate in April and May. Those that don’t mate from December to March. That leaves six months when birdwatchers are left to wonder if things could have been different. Once mated, cranes are faithful for life. They settle down to raise two chicks a year, hang out with the same birds, or migrate to the same places. It would be understandable if they were also to wonder if things could have been different. Is any species ever truly happy?

All told there are fifteen species of cranes. The tallest are six feet with seven foot wingspans. The heaviest weigh 27 pounds. They are what is known as opportunistic feeders. If they don’t see an opportunity, they will make one. I’m sure you know the type. They will eat anything larger than a birdwatcher’s thoughts and smaller than their telephoto lenses, including seeds, berries, insects, amphibians, reptiles, other birds, small mammals, corn muffins, and tuna fish sandwiches. Then just when you think they’re done they start again.

Thanks to their powerful wings, cranes can fly to record heights, defend their territories, and cause zookeepers to resort to using acrylic riot shields to defend themselves. Some cranes will migrate up to 10,000 miles in search of a better life, only to find things worse than the previous year. They will do this for thirty years, less if they’re lucky. For cranes that don’t migrate, time has no meaning.

Of the fifteen species of cranes, all have long legs, long wings, long necks, and long bills. They would also have long lives if humans didn’t hunt them and drain their marshes. While all cranes are protected by international agreement, there is nothing to protect the agreement. Eleven species of cranes are endangered. Here are three:

The whooping crane is North America’s tallest bird. It summers in Canada and winters in Texas because that is what its parents did. If its parents ever decided to stay in Canada, at least without first learning such Canadian survival skills as moose hunting and ice hockey, it would probably be the end of the whooping crane.

As it is, whooping cranes nearly went extinct in 1954 when there were only twenty birds left. They are still considered highly endangered, but extraordinary conservation measures have since brought their numbers up to six hundred. This is reason enough for both the cranes and the conservationists to whoop. If more people whooped it would be a better world.

The Siberian crane lives in Siberia because all the other places were taken. It does migrate, however, because it is not completely crazy. The Siberian crane is the best dancer of all the cranes and has been described as poetry in motion by those who think poetry is for the birds. Female cranes say “loo” and male cranes say “doodle-loo” because males have a bigger vocabulary. In some circles today this counts as poetry.

Siberian cranes nest, feed, and sleep in the marshes where they feel safe from predators. They sleep while standing on one leg and never fall over unless they are shot. The marshes can only protect them so much. Not only are Siberian cranes shot, but they are also poisoned and trapped for food and as pets, and because they are symbols of peace, health, and prosperity. Their marshes are drained or flooded because why have symbols when you can have highways and dams?

The red-crowned crane is the most beautiful of the cranes. It is classily stylish in black and white with a bright red crown of bare skin that titillates without being trappy. Its trim, sexy, slate gray legs can do things that other birds only wish they could do, its chiseled beak is olive-green with a hint of danger, and its penetrating dark brown eyes have that primitive, mysterious look that either says “Where have you been all my life?” or “Come any closer and I’ll peck your eyes out!” As both sexes look alike, however, perhaps it’s all just meant to confuse birdwatchers.

There are two main populations of red-crowned cranes – a migratory one in east Asia, and a resident, non-migratory one in Japan. Whether it flies long distance or not, it is still the symbol of Japan Airlines, and is said to be more reliable. A spokesman for Japan Airlines has refused to comment. Red-crowned cranes may be on their last legs across their range due to habitat loss, poisoning, hunting, and collisions with power lines, but there will always be origami cranes.

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

## Unsung Heroes of Soul:

## Barbara Acklin

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 Barbara Acklin, who, along with her own songs, wrote hits for Gene Chandler, Jackie Wilson, Dusty Springfield, Peaches & Herb, and the Chi-Lites (among others).

She was born in Oakland, California, on February 28, 1943, but grew up in Chicago. By age eleven, she was singing solos at the New Zion Baptist Church. As a teenager, she began performing in Chicago-area nightclubs. After high school, Acklin worked as a secretary at St. Lawrence Records. Her debut single, "I'm Not Mad Anymore," came out on the Special Agent subsidiary. It was produced by her cousin, saxophonist Monk Higgins. Acklin also worked as a back-up singer at Chess Records behind artists like Fontella Bass, Etta James, and Ko Ko Taylor.

By 1966, she had found employment as a receptionist at Brunswick Records. Acklin submitted demo recordings to producer Carl Davis. He liked one of her compositions, "Whispers (Gettin' Louder)," well enough to place it with Jackie Wilson. It went to #5 on the Billboard Rhythm & Blues chart and #11 pop, giving Wilson his biggest hit in three years. The grateful singer got Acklin signed to Brunswick as a recording artist.

Her third release for the label was a duet with her fellow Chicagoan, Gene Chandler ("Duke of Earl," "Groovy Situation"). "Show Me the Way to Go" became Acklin's first charted single, reaching #30 R&B in 1967. She soon began to co-write songs with a fellow Brunswick recording artist, Eugene Record of the Chi-Lites. They co-authored "Two Little Kids," a 1967 chart single for Peaches & Herb.

In 1968, Eugene Record and Carl Davis co-wrote and produced Barbara Acklin's biggest hit, "Love Makes a Woman." It hit #3 R&B and #15 pop. It also won a BMI award and earned Acklin a place in The Billboard Book of One-Hit Wonders (Wayne Jancik, 1998).

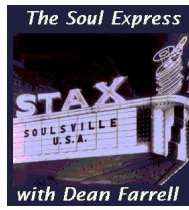
Acklin placed three additional singles on the charts in 1968. This included "Am I the Same Girl," the backing track of which was recycled on "Soulful Strut" by Young-Holt Unlimited. They simply replaced Acklin's vocals with a piano and created a million-selling instrumental smash. (Reportedly, and justifiably, Acklin was not happy about it.) "Am I the Same Girl" also charted in England in 1969, when Dusty Springfield recorded it, and again in 1992, when Swing Out Sister did a version.

In 1971, Barbara Acklin and Eugene Record co-wrote "Have You Seen Her," a half-spoken, half-sung ballad, for Record's group, the Chi-Lites. The resulting single spent two weeks at #1 on the Soul chart and went to #3 pop in the fall of 1971. The song became a hit again in 1990, when it was remade by MC Hammer. Acklin and Record would co-write additional hits for the Chi-Lites, including "Stoned Out of My Mind" (1973), "Toby" (1974), and "Too Good to Be Forgotten" (1975). But contrary to popular belief, they were never married.

After eight years with Brunswick, Acklin signed with Capitol Records in 1974. She co-wrote her first release, "Raindrops," with producer Willie Henderson. It

reached #14 on the Soul chart, giving Acklin her biggest hit in six years. But after additional releases proved less successful, Capitol dropped her in 1975.

Acklin spent the rest of the '70s touring, both as a solo act and as a back-up singer with the likes of Tyrone Davis and the Chi-Lites. In 1980, she recorded for Carl Davis' Chi-Sound label. In 1993, Acklin supplied back-up vocals on Otis Clay's album, The Gospel Truth. She also relocated to Omaha, Nebraska, where she died of pneumonia on November 27, 1998, at age 55.



## Charted singles:

"Show Me the Way to Go" (with Gene Chandler, 1967) R&B #30

"Love Makes a Woman" (1968) R&B #3, Pop #15

"From the Teacher to the Preacher" (with Gene Chandler, 1968) R&B #16, Pop #57

"Just Ain't No Love" (1968) R&B #23, Pop #67

"Am I the Same Girl" (1968) R&B #33, Pop #79

"After You" (1969) R&B #30

"I Did It" (1970) R&B #28, Pop #128

"Lady, Lady, Lady" (1971) R&B #44

"I Call It Trouble" (1972) R&B #49

"Raindrops" (1974) R&B #14

"Special Loving" (1975) R&B #73

"Give Me Some of Your Sweet Love" (1975) R&B #98

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](http://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](mailto:soulexpress@gmail.com).

## Music at the Fletch

The Fletcher Memorial Library in Hampton, CT

Submitted by Janice Trecker

The library's new winter concert series concludes with Music for Two Guitars with the Davis Duo, Wednesday, March 19 at 3 p.m. Mark and Beverly Davis who will perform an international program of classical guitar duets from composers such as Bach, Scarlatti and Peter Maxwell Davies, including Baroque sonatas, Greek melodies, and British Isles folksong arrangements.

The Davis Duo has played together since 2001, performing in New England and appearing in international festivals, including Eurofestival Zupfmusik in Germany, Mandolines de Lunel in France, Ciudad de Cristal in Spain,

FAME in Australia, and the 46th Festival Internacional de Plectro La Rioja in Spain.

They also perform with the Providence Mandolin Orchestra, the New American Mandolin Ensemble, and The Hampton Trio. Both as the Duo and with The Hampton Trio they have performed well received concerts at the Fletch.

All Library programs are free, but contributions to the library music fund are always gratefully received. Fletcher Memorial Library is at 257 Main Street, Hampton. Info: 860 455-1086.

# HST

Home Selling Team

# HST

452 Storrs Road, Mansfield

860-456-SOLD (7653)

info@homesellingteam.com

homesellingteam.com

Marian Matthews  
ProprietorHenrietta  
House

BED &amp; BREAKFAST

Modern Living in a Historic Setting

125 Ashford Center Rd, Ashford, CT 06278

(860) 207-4001

henriettahousebnb@gmail.com  
historichenriettahousebnbct.com

Lettering &amp; Graphics



Banners • Magnetics • Decals

Full Color Photo Signs, Carved, Electric &amp; Neon

Signs for Real Estate, Trade Shows,

Site Signs, Window Lettering

Cars • Vans • Trucks • Motorcycles • Boats

Signs Plus  
OF WILLIMANTIC, LLCPh: 860.423.3048  
Fax: 860.456.3003  
700 Rear Main St.  
Willimantic

All Sleep

"NOT ONLY DO WE BEAT ANY LOWER ADVERTISED PRICE, BUT WE'LL ALSO ADJUST OUR PRICING SO THE NEXT PERSON WHO COMES IN WILL ALSO GET THE NEW LOWER PRICE. IT'S THE ONLY FAIR THING TO DO!"

- JOSHUA EVES  
OWNER, ALL SLEEP

www.allsleep.net

885 Windham Rd. - South Windham, CT - (860) 423-0234

Mattresses - Recliners - Sofas - And More!

Second Saturday  
Community BreakfastColumbia Congregational Church  
7:30am-10am Route 87 in the Parish Hall

Gather with us Sat., March 8th & April 12th for an ALL YOU CAN EAT breakfast of omelets (design your own), Belgian waffles, corned beef hash, bacon, sausage, scrambled eggs, baked goods and more.

\$12.00 per person; Family of (4)  
2 adults & 2 children (under 12) \$30.00

For information contact Michele  
at the church office: 860-228-9306

Bare branches reveal all...

# The Winter Garden

By Brian Karlsson-Barnes

As the 2024 growing season and I deteriorated, autumn leaves were nostalgic and the winter garden became more instructive. Nuances of deciduous garden design are more visible with fallen leaves... the land topography and branch structure, massing and rhythm of woody plants. Colorful barks and berries stand out in muted winter landscapes. Evergreens enhance gardens.

Good time to evaluate gardens, and lives, as bare branches reveal structural form, to prune dieback and unhealthy growth. Great to get outside in winter.

Born in NYC, schooled in Minnesota, my work has been most fruitful (and mostly manicured) in the Boston area. Now semi-retired, still love my work. Once a *Neighborhood Watch* block captain in Minneapolis, I now write for Tom King's *Neighbors* newspaper. (Thank you for your good work, Tom) My neighbors, mostly birds and bunnies, are now in the Quiet Corner of eastern Connecticut.

Living at the edge, drawn to wild nature, my new aesthetic is *Wildly Naturalistic*, which also appeals because less work is needed. A manicured landscape is more work.

Style, however, is yours and yours alone.

NATURE is a keen designer of sustainable landscapes. Native plants thrive. "Exotic" non-natives thrive if horticultural conditions match indigenous habitats. Whatever the plant, suit the site, fit the space. All thrive with topdressings of compost and timely water. Thrive, not simply survive.

Designers mimic nature and landscape styles. Witness FL Olmsted's work for Harvard University in Jamaica Plain (Boston). Mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, he arranged an extensive museum of temperate trees (now also shrubs, vines) along curving paths wide enough for a horse and carriage. It opened to gentry in 1872. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Arnold Arboretum's mature woodlands have greater value to the health of the *many* visitors confined to urban life. IMHO

Winter is a good time to walk the arboretum's 281 acres of woods, gardens and long foot paths. Less crowded, and urban spirits need the walk among trees' *phytoncides* that quell anxiety. Many woody plants are mature; 16,000 are identified and tags are more visible sans leaves. Coastal Boston is warmer in winter (and cooler in summer) than the inland Quiet Corner.

Warm meals are at Galway House, JP Seafood and Sweet Rice in Jamaica Plain. Purple Cactus has Thai takeout for warm weather, but be wary: NO Picnicking except *Mother's Day* in May, known as *Lilac Sunday*, when most crowded, but a great time to spread a picnic blanket on Bussey Hill. Road trip for the *Quiet Corner Garden Club*?

"*Mother plants*" colonize a good horticultural environment as the family spreads in groves and thickets. Such as native **American Beech** (*Fagus*), planted for grandchildren, a stately, grand, and slow-growing tree. Smooth gray bark. Lawns compete for nutrients and water, and tree roots extend beyond the canopy drip-line, suggesting larger tree rings for a valued tree.

Thicketing shrubs are also colonizers, such as non-native **Burning Bush** (*Euonymus*), introduced from Asia in the mid-1800s, now considered invasive, but here to stay. I like its pinkish fall color on the shady side of the house (red in sun), and red fruits along "winged" branches with corky ridges (aka **Winged Euonymus**).

HOME Our simple 1750 house in Chaplin was a colonial farmstead in then-Mansfield. Now only two acres, a common lot size in the suburbanization of Connecticut, I demonstrate Coexistence to others on small lots.

A larger house was built in back, about when Chaplin was established (1822), now lost to fire, and survived by two foundation shrubs, **Forsythia** and **Lilac** (*Syringa*). Also colonizers, they naturalized into large thickets that bloom twice, yellow *Forsythia* in early spring and purple Lilac later. Neither is native. Where did early settlers get exotic shrubs?

Those original shrubs framed the house; their thickets now flank the view to native woods, mostly fast-growing **Maple** (*Acer*), probably farmed two centuries ago. My eye follows the flowing mow line of my mini-meadow, across ups and downs that mimic the hills and dales of the coastal highlands... into woods extending to the Worcester Hills.

The trail extends only 500' back through our acre of woods to a small brook, and another few hundred feet beyond our boundary to notorious Diana's Pool in the Natchaug River. Where sunlight allows, native evergreen (and herbaceous!) **Christmas Fern** (*Polystichum*) is being planted to mark the trail. With compost and water buckets.

WATER Our woody brook flows to the Natchaug River that descends some twenty miles through several state forests from Bigelow Hollow at the edge of Massachusetts. The Natchaug has pure water and trophy trout between the larger mill rivers, the industrial Quinebaug and Willimantic Rivers that with Rhode Island birthed America's Industrial Revolution, that today drain the edges of Connecticut's Quiet Corner.

Joined by the tributary Fenton and Mt. Hope Rivers at Mansfield Hollow Lake, the Natchaug empties the 1950 dam and merges with the Willimantic River at the base of the *Last Dark Valleys*.

This corrugated landform of three valleys in thirty miles limited development and lights on the ground, thus darkness between Hartford and Massachusetts seen flying at night from NY to Boston. Daytime reveals the subtle crease along US Highway 6 (Hartford-to-Providence Turnpike) separating the coastal highlands from the lowlands with more lights.

(The *Last Green Valley* is a Heritage Corridor in the coastal lowlands along the Shetucket River's watershed south of Highway 6. The Natchaug and Willimantic Rivers merge, becoming the Shetucket flowing to Norwich, where the Quinebaug joins the confluence flowing to the sea as the Thames.)

Plants are happy in eastern Connecticut. The mild south coast is ideal for temperate gardening. Ample water, many leaves. Nature decomposes leaves, creating organic soil. I mulch-mow leaves for lawns, beds or compost, and add kelp and shredded pine bark as organic mulch. Water in drought.

NATIVE Moving from Boston in 2018, dozens of native woody plants have been planted in Chaplin. Larger trees include **Beech**, **Oak** (*Quercus*) and four native species or cultivars of **Birch** (*Betula*) -- plus exotic Himalayan Birch with the purest white bark, but only one survives native bugs.

1. ENTRY Multi-stem, white-flowering **Service-berry** (*Amelanchier*) trees screen the cars, and birds love the berries; historically bloomed when ground had thawed for burial services. **Redbud** (*Cercis*) is a fast-growing native tree at the house corner screening arrival from the back patio with elegant branching and purple-pink flowers at every node before leafout.

Also enclosing the arrival area are two dogwood trees. **Eastern Flowering Dogwood** (*Benthamidia*, aka the genus *Cornus*; species *florida*) is an iconic native tree on the eastern seaboard, covered in white spring flowers, but vulnerable to a fungal disease, anthracnose. Needs good air circulation. One *florida* was planted in 2018 and one species *kousa* dogwood with no fungal problems; *florida* blooms in early spring but has ugly leaves in summer (trying a systemic fungicide). **Kousa Dogwood** (*Ben.*, native to China) blooms later and although exotic is the better flowering dogwood tree for New England.

2. FENCE ROW **Redtwig Dogwoods** (*Ben./Cornus*) are the large native shrubs screening the fence line; cutting older branches promotes new red growth.

Farther along the path, **Winterberry** (*Ilex*) are native deciduous hollies with red berries that barely survive the deer. Last season, Bambi and mom browsed my *Hydrangea*, roses and a generation of lily flower buds on July 4th.



Young Southern Magnolia wintering well in Chaplin.

We coexist.

EVERGREEN Contrast is welcome on bleak bare-branched days when herbaceous garden beds might have winter interest if left erect, but many perennials dieback flat. These brown spaces need evergreen relief, otherwise sheltering early spring growth.

1. FENCE ROW My *Chapel of the Birch* with nine native birch has an exotic true cypress, **Leyland Cypress** (*Cupressus*), for evergreen accent. Another exotic yet false cypress, **Siberian Cypress** (*Microbiota*), is a low needled groundcover being planted.

A young **Southern Magnolia** bought at Connecticut College, New London, three years ago and only 3' high, slowly establishes. Large, glossy semi-evergreen leaves and richly fragrant, white 12" blossoms will come; a mature tree at Arnold Arboretum is glorious!

Farther along the fence to the trailhead, a native evergreen **Juniper** (*Juniperus*) tree was transplanted from the woods. Non-native **Japanese Andromeda** (*Pieris*) survives deer (and inattention at the trailhead not close to the hose) to bloom in April. Small native **White Pine** (*Pinus*) have been transplanted from woods to screen views of neighbors when taller.

2. BACK PATIO The back corner has a rescued **Japanese Umbrella Pine** (*Sciadopitys*) from a client's shady yard, **Mountain Laurels** (*Kalmia*) and **Rhododendron**, and a semi-evergreen **Prague Viburnum**. Under a tall anemone is '**Pippa's Purple**' **Hellebore** (*Helleborus*), a semi-evergreen herbaceous plant with purple flowers in late winter -- *February!* -- very early spring. Its showy leaves can overwinter in part-shade if sheltered from wind -- another reason I don't cut back the *Anemone vitifolia* '**Robustissima**'.

Most herbaceous flowering plants, called *herbs* or *perennials*, die back brown. There is winter interest if erect, especially seed heads, beauty in the eye of the beholder. Some gardeners remove the flat dieback, but I keep it to protect tender early-spring growth until NO frost -- and to shelter invertebrates as bees, butterflies and other bugs that feed birds and pollinate plants. Likely due climate change, cycles of warm spring days first promote then harm new growth with late spring freezes. Coexistence.

My brown beds are enhanced by dwarf conifers such as **Mugo Pine / Japanese Silver Pine** (*Pinus*). Other useful evergreens are **Arborvitae** (*Thuja*) or **Boxwood** (*Buxus*); **Japanese Andromeda** and **Japanese Holly** (*Ilex*) find Connecticut similar to their native island.

The mild south coast of New England is ideal for temperate gardening. Leaves create organic soil; mulch-mow for lawns, beds or compost. Water in drought.

PRUNE Winter reveals the branching structure of deciduous woody plants. Bare branches show where to prune, such as crossing branches or an annoying **Rosa multiflora**, introduced from Asia to control erosion. Many flowers, then rosehips feed wildlife, but it scrambles everywhere with nasty thorns. Ouch!

When shaping a shrub, tip-pruning causes dense interior growth with poor air circulation. Better to prune interior branches back to a lateral branch to create more circulation. Better air circulation is needed within many shrubs as **Blue Holly** (*Ilex*) and trees as **Eastern Flowering Dogwood** (*Ben.*) to reduce pests and disease in increasingly humid summers.

Removing an interior branch on a volunteer **Kousa Dogwood** (*Ben.*) this fall was notable... the seed source is the *kousa* I planted six years ago, 50' away, spread by a bird three years ago, now 8' tall, colonizing the countryside.

Compost and water make things grow.

Note: A hands-on Pruning & Planting Tutorial will be offered the end of April, stay tuned...

Brian Karlsson-Barnes, Master gardener / designer Chaplin CT & Boston MA [BrianKarlssonBarnes@gmail.com](mailto:BrianKarlssonBarnes@gmail.com) Text 617.957.6611 (preferred)

**NEED PART-TIME HELP:** Team leader with truck/ SUV and horticultural passion to learn. One to two days / week, April – October, some in Boston area. Manage one worker. Text [Brian@617.957.6611](mailto:Brian@617.957.6611)



# Avoiding Financial Scams at Tax Time and Beyond

By James Zahansky, AWMA® and Allison T. Poirier



Tax season creates prime opportunities for scammers looking to take advantage of unsuspecting individuals, particularly older adults. Here, WHZ Strategic Financial Advisors Principal/Managing Partner James Zahansky, AWMA® and KKC Law Partner Allison T. Poirier share what you need to know to protect yourself and your loved ones from financial fraud.

## Avoiding Scams When Filing Taxes

Scammers are becoming increasingly sophisticated in their approaches. They often prey on fears about owing money to the IRS or missing important deadlines. Some of the most prevalent schemes include:

**IRS Impersonator Calls:** Some scammers pretend to be IRS agents, warning of arrest or legal consequences if instant payment isn't made. Keep in mind, the IRS does not reach out by phone, email, or text. They always start with a letter via the U.S. Postal Service.

**Stolen Identity Tax Fraud:** Criminals steal Social Security numbers to file fake tax returns and claim refunds before the actual taxpayer files. Submitting your tax return early in the season may help stop this kind of fraud.

**Email Phishing Schemes:** Emails that look like they're from the IRS or tax software firms might ask for personal information or have harmful links. They often appear very legitimate but show small warning signs, like minor spelling mistakes or strange email addresses.

## Strategic Steps for Fraud Protection

Just as we support strategic financial planning to help clients reach their goals, we suggest a strategic approach to prevent fraud. Here are key protective measures to implement:

**Never Share Sensitive Information by Phone or Email:** Financial institutions and government bodies will not request sensitive information, such as Social Security numbers, banking details, or passwords, through these means.

**Implement Strong Digital Security:** Use robust, unique passwords for all financial accounts and enable two-factor authentication whenever possible. Consider using a password manager to maintain complex passwords securely.

**Monitor Financial Accounts Regularly:** Review bank and credit card statements promptly for suspicious activity. Sign up for account alerts to be notified of unusual transactions immediately.

**Work With Trusted Professionals:** Partner with qualified tax preparers and financial advisors who have established reputations and proper credentials. Ask for referrals from trusted sources and verify credentials independently.

## Legal Safeguards to Consider

From an elder law perspective, several legal tools can provide additional protection against financial exploitation.

**Durable Power of Attorney:** This legal document lets you appoint someone you trust to handle your financial matters if you can't manage them yourself. It's important to pick a person with good financial skills and someone you can completely rely on. Since most Powers of Attorney are effective immediately (i.e. do not require you to be incapacitated before your appointed agent can act on your behalf), they make it easy for your agent to step in and assist you if you need help.

**Revocable Living Trust:** Trusts not only ensure assets avoid probate upon your death, but they also can set clear rules for how your assets are to be managed during your lifetime and help keep an eye on financial transactions. Additionally, in the event you can no longer manage your assets, the trust will have an appointed successor trustee who can quickly step in and take over management when needed. Trusts can be a crucial planning tool for older adults who might be vulnerable to exploitation.

**Conservatorship:** If you are the child or loved one of an elderly person who has lost the capacity to protect himself or herself from a scammer, you may want to discuss appointing a conservator to handle your loved one's financial and legal affairs for them.

**Advanced Directives:** These documents ensure your wishes are followed regarding healthcare decisions if you become incapacitated.

## Taking Action When Fraud Occurs

If you suspect you've been targeted by a scammer, take immediate action:

Report suspicious calls claiming to be from the IRS to the Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration (TIGTA). File a complaint with the Federal Trade Commission (FTC). Contact your financial institutions to secure your accounts. Place a fraud alert on your credit reports with the major credit bureaus. Document all communications and keep detailed records.

## The Role of Family and Professional Support

Creating a network of trusted individuals who can help monitor for signs of fraud is crucial. Ask a trusted family member or friend to help monitor your finances. Have regular discussions with your financial advisor about any troubling financial activities. Keep open communication with your tax professional to watch for any warning signs. Consider consulting an elder law attorney for extra protective steps.

At WHZ, our goal is to provide you with "Absolute Confidence, Unwavering Partnership, For Life." Schedule a complimentary consultation on our website at [whzwealth.com](http://whzwealth.com) or give us a call at (860) 928-2341. And for help with putting protective legal measures in place, contact KKC Law at [kkc-law.com](http://kkc-law.com) or (860) 646-1974.

*Authored by WHZ Principal/Managing Partner & Chief Strategist James Zahansky, AWMA® and KKC Law Partner Allison T. Poirier. Securities and advisory services offered through Commonwealth Financial Network®, Member FINRA/SIPC, a Registered Investment Adviser. WHZ is located at 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. WHZ 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.*

## Windham-Tolland 4-H Camp News

326 Taft Pond Rd, Pomfret Center, (860) 974-1122  
[www.4hcampct.org](http://www.4hcampct.org)

We aren't hibernating at the Windham-Tolland 4-H Camp. Here's a list of what's happening in March and April:

**Wednesday, March 4, 6:30 – 8:00 PM. Floral Design Night at the lodge.** \$65 per person gets you a beautiful floral centerpiece to take home and an evening of fun! Proceeds go towards the Jim Logee Campership Fund. Preregistration required. Call 860-974-1122 or go to [www.4hcampct.org](http://www.4hcampct.org) for a registration link.

**Ragged Hill Woods Environmental Science Programs.** For Pre-K to Grade 8 students. March 5 Water Cycle, March 12 Orienteering, March 19 Seeds, March 26 Five Senses Nature Hike, April 2 Pollination. All at 4:30 PM. \$20 per session. Call 860-974-1122 to register.

**Sunday, March 16 from 1-3 PM. Visit the Windham-Tolland 4-H Camp Open HHHouse** 326 Taft Pond Rd, Pomfret, CT. Meet the director & other camp staff, take a camp tour, registration materials available. Call 860-974-3379 for questions.

**April 16 through April 29.** 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 **71st annual Windham County 4-H Auction & Tag Sale on May 2 & 3, 2025** at the lower level back entrance of the lodge, 326 Taft Pond Rd, Pomfret. We do not accept donations of clothing, textbooks, magazines or encyclopedias. For further donation assistance, call the office at 860-974-3379.

**Saturday, April 19 from 1-4 PM. Visit the Windham-Tolland 4-H Camp Open HHHouse** 326 Taft Pond Rd, Pomfret, CT. Meet the director & other camp staff, take a camp tour, registration materials available. Call 860-974-3379 for questions.

## Ashford Business Fair

Sunday, March 16 10 am - 1 pm

Knowlton Hall, Ashford

(intersection of Rtes. 44 & 89)

Find Service Providers  
You Need and Plant Your  
Dollars Locally!



It's great to do business with neighbors! Join us at the Ashford Winter Farmers Market on March 16 to find the services and products you need provided by small businesses in our community!

Hosted by the Ashford Winter Farmers Market, plus Economic Development & Conservation Commissions

## Senior Home Repair

Home repairs exclusively  
for senior citizens.

Carpentry - Electrical  
Masonry - Plumbing  
and Problem solving

860-205-7008  
Licensed and Insured

**Birch Mountain Pottery Studio - Gallery** Susan Gerr

[www.birchmountainpottery.com](http://www.birchmountainpottery.com)  
Rt. 195, 223 Merrow Rd,  
Tolland Shopping Plaza, Tolland  
(860) 875-0149

Your Local Potter since 1985  
Tues. 10-5, Wed/Thurs. 12-5, Fri./Sat. 10-5,  
closed Sunday/Monday

**Grace's Gift**  
Therapeutic Massage

Gail Marks Teevan, LMT, NCBTMB, AMTA

stress relief  
relaxation and renewal  
pain management  
cupping therapy

860-428-6751  
CT License #002968

Dear Reader-

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

T. King, Publisher

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

# For the Price of Eggs

By Phoebe C. Godfrey

Of participants who voted for Trump, 60.8% indicated that either the cost of living/inflation (33.0%) or the economy (27.8%) were the most important issues. Participants who voted for Harris scored the cost of living/inflation (22.6%) as an important issue.

—Nebraska Farm Bureau, December 2024



I won on the border, and I won on groceries... Very simple word, "groceries." Like almost—you know, who uses the word? I started using the word—the "groceries." When you buy apples, when you buy bacon, when you buy eggs, they would double and triple the price over a short period of time, and I won an election based on that. We're going to bring those prices way down.

—President Trump, 2024

I have been thinking about what motivated so many people to vote for Mr. Trump, given all that we know about his lack of morality, truth, or decency in terms of respecting the rule of law, let alone the Golden Rule. And yes, I understand the social class, education, and religious factors that get rolled into an election, such as food prices; lack of access to news based on a critical, complex, and inclusive lens; and the role of abortion and LGBTQ biases. Still, given what we have seen, I hope some who voted for him on these issues are beginning to question their choice.

Of course, food is a daily necessity, and I can imagine that the stress of not being able to afford to meet one's own or one's family's needs might tempt one to vote for someone who promises to fix this problem. This was the case, even though that someone seems to be so privileged that he has not previously had to say the word "groceries"—for, as he says, "who uses the word?" However, thinking that a president can impact inflation—despite what he says—in any direct way is misguided, not to mention putting the focus on the price of commodities and *not* on the dearth of wages.

Of course, now President Trump confesses that to actually bring down the price of groceries is "very hard." In contrast, making lots of highly destructive executive orders—destructive to the democratic process, let alone people's lives and the health of the planet—is apparently *not* very hard. To highlight this irony, I started saying to myself "For the price of eggs..." before reading about the newest damaging executive order that has been announced. And then I decided to write a poem and invite my wife and my friends to help me, and this is what we came up with.

I do not claim to be a poet, none of us do, but there is something about the absurdity of our current national situation that calls for a poem rather than more paragraphs decrying where we seem to be heading with President Trump at our helm.

You are welcome to add stanzas and send them in for the next edition of *Neighbors*. Enjoy...if that is possible!

## For the Price of Eggs: The Poem

For the price of eggs  
The people's choice was clear  
Giving up the Constitution  
And all they hold dear

For the price of eggs  
They proclaimed, "Don't Tread on Me!"  
Without ever asking who is Treading  
And who are We?

For the price of eggs  
Two genders were made concrete  
While pronouns on government emails  
You must delete

For the price of eggs  
Your daughter who is now your son  
No passport or sports can be done  
Such identities must be shunned

For the price of eggs  
Those workers who the chickens feed  
Have no safety, no rights  
No recognized needs

For the price of eggs  
Friends and neighbors now live in fear  
As walls and ICE come ever near  
Threatening that they and their children  
will disappear

For the price of eggs  
We withdraw from the Paris Accords  
Roll back EPA's protection laws  
Come one, come all for resource rewards

For the price of eggs  
It's a tech billionaires' bash  
With secret powers  
And access to the people's cash

For the price of eggs  
Christian Nationals in Jesus' name  
Gain power to judge and to blame  
Moneychangers without shame

For the price of eggs  
Devoted youngsters have all to gain  
While longtime civil servants  
Are left with redundancy pain

For the price of eggs  
Foxes run the dirty coop  
With their beady eyes  
On land grab scoop

For the price of eggs  
With a Hitler salute  
The oligarchy is invited fully in  
The President now rules absolute

# New Curator at Hall Museum

By Dan McGinley

I'm very honored to accept a position as Curator of The Gardiner Hall Jr. Museum in Willington. I never saw this opportunity coming until just recently; it's funny how some things can play a minor role throughout your entire life, then suddenly appear front and center.

There's a scene in Mel Brooks' comical western *Blazing Saddles*, when a musical soundtrack is playing as Sheriff Bart (played by Cleavon Little) rides across the sprawling sage brush landscape. Suddenly Count Basie appears, directing his orchestra to shatter the fourth wall as they play what we are hearing. The music was there all along, but you never really thought about it until an actual orchestra appeared to suddenly encompass the entire scene. My first awareness of mills was a historical site in our small town of Sudbury, Massachusetts, home to Longfellow's Wayside Inn and one of the longest operating inns and taverns in America (est. 1716). You can still have a Sam Adams in the preserved tavern, where locals dress in period and history surrounds you. A colonial gristmill for flour is situated across from the inn, and when I was in high school it was a favorite parking spot, illuminated to show the old wheel still turning.

Mills have always been in the background of my life, playing a role in my dad's line of work for the H.B. Fuller Company, supplying industrial adhesives for companies like Great Northern and International Paper, where their products were used for envelopes, notebooks, and bindings. The territory stretched from Maine to New Jersey and all of New England, so he saw a lot of mills in his lifetime, and made a lot of connections.

He wasn't one to bring work home with him — only casually mentioning life on the road or picking up gifts for us — but I do remember him talking about Millinocket, Maine, where Great Northern once had the largest paper mill in the entire world. In the 1940s they held over two million acres of timber holdings, and a small fleet of ships and boats for the ocean and waterways.

In 1989 Georgia-Pacific launched a hostile takeover resulting in massive layoffs, and shortly after that I took an epic road trip from Montreal to the east coast, driving a black '68 Dodge Charger with a 440 Magnum that could pass everything but a gas station. I was young and adventurous; the trip one of several "Jack Kerouac" journeys to suddenly go-go-go and see other people and places.

I reentered the states through Maine late at night and found myself looking for a place to stay, rumbling around Millinocket to hear about recent mill layoffs from a local, who told me to "cruise some backroads and pick an abandoned house, because they're everywhere."

So I ended-up parked in the wooded front yard of an amazing residence, with its front door wide open beyond towering Grecian pillars and beckoning for me to explore in a Stephen King kind of way, culminating in a massive cloud of bats swooshing out of the basement when I approached the stairway.

I quickly retreated to the Charger and slept on its sprawling back bench seat, which is something you can do in younger years without facing aches and pains the next day.

It was a sad experience in many ways, seeing all of those abandoned houses and businesses, which had been so dependent on the massive mill complex. Today I saw a headline that reads, "International Paper to close four US facilities by April 2025," (GlobalData.com), and it was a grim reminder of what eventually happens to nearly every industry, affecting so many people.

Fast forward to The Quiet Corner, an area ripe with mill towns like Willimantic, where I took a tour with my daughter's Scout troop years ago, immediately drawn to the stories and history of countless Millinocket-like scenarios played out again and again.

These mills spread and evolved into a massive enterprise, from that tiny little gristmill in Sudbury grinding out flour to massive structures driven by surging waterways, churning out thread and fabric and other materials, adding to the local economy and providing jobs for so many people. You see these massive structures throughout New England, now providing apartment, condo, and business space. Some of this preserved mill history is on display at The Gardiner Hall Jr. Museum in Willington, housed within the very mill founded by Gardiner Hall Jr. in 1860.

*From an initial investment of \$430 and a workforce of six in 1860, Gardner Hall, Jr. built what was to be the first spooled thread production facility in the United States, valued at over \$2,225,000 at the time of his death in 1915. Despite hardship and loss from fire and natural disasters, Hall's perseverance, hard work, and entrepreneurial spirit drove the company's culture and success for nearly a century.\**

I first became aware of The Mill Works and The Packing House during one of our daughter's poetry readings many years ago, and was amazed at the sprawling, expansive interior and brick exterior that looked like it would easily last for hundreds of years into the future. Since her reading I've been there to watch various musical artists, and over time had the pleasure of knowing Tom Buccino, the Director who wears so many hats and keeps everything running smoothly.

When the curator position became available, I expressed interest and Tom was nice enough to grant an interview, before eventually offering the position.

And suddenly I'm not unlike those mills, reinventing myself from a former blue-collar worker into a very curious history nerd pouring over records and drawings and photographs, doing my best to represent something that is still a vital part of our region — these massive historical buildings providing living and working and entertainment spaces within our beloved communities.

The mills were there all along like background music, but I was too busy working and never noticed or cared about the "orchestra" until now, suddenly traversing time and space to reveal connections to our past, when industrialization evolved into so many things we experience today, for better or for worse.

Jumping into my new role, I was quickly overwhelmed by the amount of history involving mills, spending hours researching their origins in Europe and other connections, intrigued by savvy immigrants smuggling machine blueprints to the United States from England for better "manufactory" methods like the Spinning Jenny, which made it across the pond around 1820.

Sometimes I like to think that dad is looking down on me to give a nod and say, "The mills have always served us well, and so it continues."

So it's a great honor and privilege to be a representative for this vital history, and I eagerly invite you to come down to The Gardiner Hall Jr. Museum on Saturday mornings from 10:00 am to 12:00 pm, where I can show you preserved artifacts and try to answer any questions you may have. I will be dressed as a mill worker and there is no charge (donations are welcome). The museum is located at 156 River Road in Willington, and there is ample parking directly across the street. \* *History - The Packing House - <https://thepackinghouse.us/history>*

## Events at the The America Museum

Submitted by Bev York

March 13 Liber Tea Old photos of Windham Slide show 5 p.m. 47 Crescent Street, Willimantic

March 29, 30 Display of Making maple sugar. Eastern CT Maple Festival E.O. Smith High School.

April 10 Liber Tea: Relive Lexington and Concord 5 p.m. 47 Crescent Street, Willimantic

April 18 Sound the Alarm for Lexington and Concord noon. Jillson Square, Willimantic. check facebook for information.

## The Pope Accused of Misrepresentation

Pope Francis boiled it down simply to “this is cruelty, this is not war”. The Israeli Foreign Ministry responded quickly saying “the Pope’s remarks are particularly disappointing as they are disconnected from the true and factual context of Israel’s fight against jihadist terrorism”, adding “a multi-front war that was forced upon it starting Oct 7th. The blame should be directed solely at the terrorists, not at the democracy defending itself against them.”

Hello! Such statements are wildly false. Despite the denial of all reporters access to Gaza and the killing of over 160 Palestinian journalists, the barbarism can not, and has not been hidden. Too many smartphone videos! Millions of world citizens have viewed these horrific acts for over a year now. Humanitarians and historians worldwide have mutually condemned Israel’s hateful genocide.

All the human rights organizations, including Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch have stated that the slaughter and denial of life’s essentials is a clear violation of the rules of war established after the Nuremberg Trials and the Geneva Convention. Hitler’s unbridled racism and reign of terror is back... this time for the world to see live (unless you get your news from corporate television). Big media, whether it’s conservative or liberal fails to report the truth about Palestine, including the unfettered supply of bombs and weaponry needed for ruthless destruction and unrelenting genocide.

Perhaps history will some day judge these actions as an uncivilized low point... the last vestiges of cruel colonialism where annihilation was the goal and suffering was ignored. The Pope and others that stand against apartheid, including ‘Jewish Voice for Peace’ and ‘Not in My Name’ and other sane organizations like the Veterans For Peace and their members who signed below will be respected for their morality and courage, as they should be.

*The two articles above were written by Bill Potvin and signed by the following veterans.*

**Bill Potvin**, Willimantic, U.S. Army 1969-1972

**Bill Demarais**, North Windham, U.S. Navy 1968-1972

**Win Heimer**, West Hartford, U.S. Army 1967-1969

**Stephen Fournier**, Hartford, U.S. Air Force 1966-1970

**Jim Brasile**, Newington, U.S. Marine Corps 1968-1970

**Guy R Blais**, Windsor, U.S. Army Infantry Grunt 1948-1952

## Why Media Suppression?

That is the big question that I have put to news publications about Gaza. Why is it that media organizations with the journalistic obligations to present the truth find ways of circumventing their reason for being, that is to keep the citizens in the know.

As a member of the Veterans for Peace, I get told oftentimes “thank you for your service”, and yet when we as a group put forth our views on the atrocities in Palestine, why is it that we hit a stone wall?

The article (at left) was presented to the Hartford Courant, but was not run. I even emailed the editor contending that what I wrote was not a “radical rant”, but rather an attempt to present decency and the truth as we see it. No reason was given when we asked why the V.F.P.’s views were ditched.

I’m grateful for this publication, Neighbors, that you’re holding in your hands. I feel that corporate media (with over-sized control from big advertisers or morbidly rich ownership) fails miserably at such a critical role. I hear that certain words are not allowed to be used in articles or verbal presentations by our country’s biggest news rooms. Avoid the terms occupation or apartheid, and steer clear of the word genocide (the worst thing one people can do to another people).

I ask you, the readers of Neighbors to try to guess what in the editorial (at left) froze the state’s biggest newspaper from presenting the view of the Veterans for Peace Connecticut chapter as it was backed up by over a dozen CT veterans from various branches of the military. We see this as slapping us in the face after we served (NOT thanking us for our service). Why? Perhaps because it clashes with the status quo, which appears to be okay with killing tens of thousands of innocent Palestinian children for some questionable, nebulous purpose.

**Joe Braiewa**, West Hartford, U.S. Army 1969-1970

**Tom Connolly**, West Hartford, U.S. Army 1962-1965

**Gregory Laxer**, Danielson, U.S. Army Medic 1967-1971

**Fred Louis**, New Britain, U.S. Army Infantry 1967- 1969

**Dave Ionno**, Hartford, U.S. Army Medic 1968-1969

**Jim Pandaru**, West Haven, U.S. Navy Sea Bee 1964-1968

**Micheal Murphy**, Willington, U.S. Marine Corps 1976-1981

**Thomas King**, Ashford, U.S. Coast Guard 1970-1973

## The Village Treat Served Up Much More than Good Food

By Bill Powers

In the late 1960s, my wife and I with our young toddler son moved to Storrs from Hartford so that I could attend the University of Connecticut. We had managed to scrape up enough money to purchase a used mobile home in Storrs at Jensen’s Rolling Hills Mobile Home Park. I had already received a community college associate degree and completed many courses at the UConn Hartford Branch. Our plan was for me to work at a hospital in Hartford as a Respiratory Therapy supervisor in the evening and attend classes during the day.

We knew absolutely no one in the area when we moved to Storrs. We discovered Mansfield Center in a matter of a few days as we set out to explore our new neighborhood. Quickly, we found the Village Treat Restaurant in Mansfield Center, which was located on route 195 near the intersection with Bassetts Bridge Road. From day one, the folks who ran the restaurant, the Hawkins family, were warm, welcoming, friendly and helpful in all ways and treated us as if we were family or friends.

Ethel and Winthrop Hawkins established the business in 1954 and ran it for thirty-three years. They were joined by Winthrop’s mom, Minnie, who was frequently there and who was responsible for baking my favor-

ite item on the dessert list which they called Gram’s Apple Pie. To this day, I fondly recall that a hot slice of that pie and a scoop of vanilla ice cream was absolutely heavenly. All the items on the menu were delicious and reasonably priced. Prior to the restaurant opening, Minnie or Gram had worked and baked at the Altnaveigh Inn and Restaurant on Spring Hill.



Winthrop, did the cooking and was a volunteer for the Mansfield Volunteer Fire Company and he soon described for us how the fire and police protection in town was provided. The Hawkins reported to us all of the best places to acquire various goods and services in the area. On only our second visit, a week later, they warmly welcomed us by our names and quickly grabbed a highchair for our son. The Village Treat was always a wonderful place to visit where the Hawkins were always smiling, easy going and clearly just good people.

In January 2025, my book

club, sponsored by the Windham Free Library, read “Before The Coffee Gets Cold” by Toshikazu Kawaguchi, 2019, Hanover Square Press. The book explores the lives of four different people and their reasons for wanting to temporarily travel back in time, whether to amend a wrong, find closure or address a regret. The book caused me to reflect upon situations in my life when it would be a good thing to be able to travel back in time to take care of some unfinished business. It occurred to me as I drove past the original site of the Village Treat Restaurant that it would have been appropriate to express my appreciation to Ethel, Winthrop and Minnie years ago for the many kindnesses they offered to us, while they were still alive. Relocating to a new area where we were strangers was a real challenge for us, and the Hawkins family offered a much needed “Welcome to Strangers” for which we have always been grateful.

While the building that housed the Village Treat Restaurant is gone and Ethel, Winthrop and Minnie have passed, it has been helpful to express my gratitude to their son and grandson Alan Hawkins. He lives in Mansfield and has also provided me with a photo of the restaurant and a menu from those memorable times.

*Bill Powers resides in Windham Center.*



*Any real estate needs coming up?*



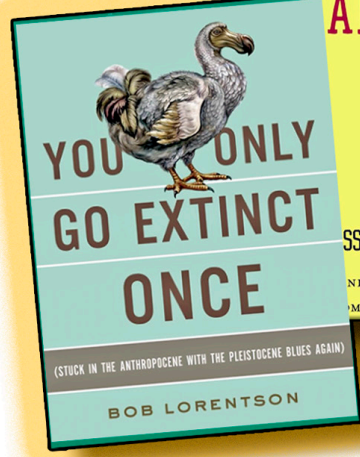


Contact Noah King:  
Broker Associate  
w: Kingteam.homesellingteam.com  
e: Noah@homesellingteam.com  
c: (860) 933-3432




Contact Steve Galinat:  
Realtor  
w: Kingteam.homesellingteam.com  
e: Steve@homesellingteam.com  
c: (860) 428-1211

Two books by Bob Lorentson



*“An author in whom Mark Twain’s literary spirit lives on.”*  
— book review in *Neighbors Paper*, January 2024

[www.BobLorentson.com](http://www.BobLorentson.com)



*“Rousing stories that burst with wit.”*  
- *BookLife*

### Tai Chi Home

**Stir Yourself**

By Joe Pandolfo

With that new light in the morning sky, waking us from some forgotten dream, it’s time to welcome Spring.



The Taoists say the spirit of Wood energy is emerging... reaching up and out from dormant winter roots. Bluebirds and robins are back from their nesting deep in the forest.

It’s the season to stir yourself, to look out from your quiet unseen place. Open your eyes wide, and the horizon grows. However far your vision goes, the drum of your heartbeat will follow.

**JOE PANDOLFO**  
Tai Chi & Qigong Certified Instructor,  
American Tai Chi & Qigong Association

Continuing & Professional Ed. units  
Holistic Exercise & Wellness classes  
Integrative Patient Care programs  
Mind-Body-Spirit Balance workshops  
Event & Workday Recharge sessions

**Connect: (959) 444-3979**  
[joeptaichi@gmail.com](mailto:joeptaichi@gmail.com)

**Monthly Guides & more: [www.joeptaichi.com](http://www.joeptaichi.com)**



Advertise  
Locally Written  
Locally Wread

# Finding the Source of the Shetucket River — Part Two

By Martin Moebus

Last issue, your intrepid explorer left to find the source of the Shetucket River and planned, if successful, to inform Google that the source has been discovered and that I should be bestowed with all the honors and accolades for its discovery, so here continues the quest for the source of the Shetucket, part two!



The ruins of the old Baltic Mill.

Leaving the Occum Dam behind, we come to the ruins of the old Baltic Mill. In 1895, the mill became the largest cotton mill of its time, housing a 40,000-square-foot dyeing and weaving shed. The town of Sprague was named after the mill owner. In its later years, it produced uniforms, parachutes, and life rafts for WWII before ending operations in the 1960s.

## The Great Freshet of 1876

During my journey, the river was low and peaceful, but the Shetucket can also be fierce and angry. Heavy rains caused a deluge of water on March 25, 1876, when the “most disastrous flood ever known in this vicinity” (*Hartford Courant*) hit the Shetucket. Cotton bales, sacks of wool, debris, chicken coops, even outhouses were all swept up in the floodwaters flowing downriver.

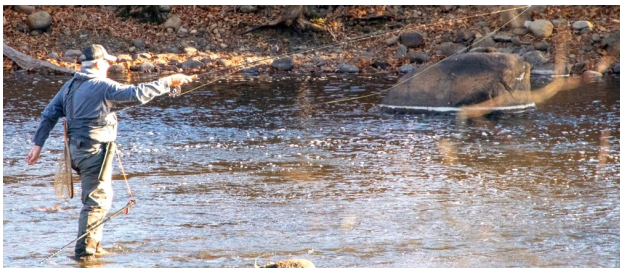
The Greenville Dam had 12 feet of water over the top but held. Similarly, the Ponemah Mill Dam held with 10 feet of water over it. The Occum Dam bulkhead washed away and the mill was seriously damaged. The worst damage was done to the dam at Baltic Mill, where the bulkhead of the dam washed away and the river carved a new path over the mill’s headrace, removing 25 feet of the mill in the process. The mill remained closed for three months. The entire village of Baltic was underwater. Seven people drowned. Travel became difficult as the railroad tracks were torn up and roads were unpassable. Communication was out, as the telegraph cables were down.



The Baltic Mill Dam Headrace.

## Cleaner Waters Ahead!

The river has become noticeably fresher as we leave the mills behind. Connecticut has created an Atlantic Salmon Management Area, stocking salmon with some weighing five pounds. Sometime in the future the salmon will hopefully return on their own, using the river as it was intended.



Fishing the Shetucket.

As we journey upriver, the landscape grows rural, more serene, and increasingly beautiful. Entering Scotland, we pass the Providence & Worcester railroad track going over a stream pouring into the Shetucket. The P&W started in 1844, and is now owned by Genesee and Wyoming Inc. Mostly ethanol, automobiles, steel, coal,

and quarried rock travel over the tracks these days. Some may still remember the train derailment on Plains Road in Windham in 2010.

Scotland’s Waldo House stands on the aptly named Waldo Road. This house, with origins back to 1715, served seven generations of the Waldo family. In 1798 a black walnut tree was planted that is still there—the oldest documented walnut in America. The Waldo House sits about 1,600 feet from the Shetucket River and remained in the Waldo family until 1975, when it was given to the Scotland Historical Society.

During colonial times, Mohegan tribal members often lived here. Owaneco, son of Uncas, had claims to the land they called Mamosqueage, below today’s Windham Center. Uncas had another son, Joshua, who also claimed the land. After Joshua died, his son Abimileck kept up a lengthy court battle and won. He quickly sold the land to the settlers. A hut near the Waldo House was home to the Moch family, part of the royal Mohegan line.

In 1864, the state passed a law which gave dam owners the right to flood farmland upstream. The Occum Dam owners bought the rights between Sprague and Greenville; the Baltic Mill had the rights upstream in Scotland. The Waldos were affected, losing some of their farmlands as well as their sawmill to the Baltic Mill flooding. More land was lost to the railroad right of way through their farm.



The Waldo House and a railroad bridge.



Scotland Dam

The last dam on the Shetucket, Scotland Dam, was originally built by the Uncas Power Company to furnish power and light for the city of Norwich. The dam has a shadowy origin story, as Uncas Power was accused of trying to take a Mr. Cuddy’s land, his water power, and even his axe-handle factory either by eminent domain or by passing laws in the state legislature.

Mr. Melony, lawyer for Cuddy, said, “While Cuddy thus held down on his back in Windham County court, this company comes to the general assembly and asks the power to condemn his land” (*Norwich Bulletin*, May 19, 1909). Cuddy lost.

In 1909 Uncas Power contracted with the Willimantic and Stafford Street Railway [trolley] Company to furnish any power that Norwich didn’t use to power lighting in Willimantic, Stafford, and Rockville. Later, the Rockville–Willimantic Lighting Company took over providing

electricity to Windham, Willimantic, and beyond using the power from the Scotland Dam.

Now owned and run by First Light, the Scotland Dam is still used to generate power—about 2 mw when it’s running. As Scotland has a little over 600 houses, this is enough to power the whole town. Scotland Dam also has fish and eel passages. Over 50,000 eels were seen in 2024—a record—along with 13 American shad. Over 3,000 local resident sunfish also used the fish lift that year—local thrill seekers riding down the dam, then using the fish lift as their personal elevator back to the top of their own water slide!



Scotland Dam.

Upriver of the Scotland Dam lies the haunts of the endangered brook floater or *Alasmidonta varicosa*, for you Latin types. The brook floater is a freshwater mussel and is not a fan of sewer plants or runoffs from farms, so this is prime habitat. Fifteen years ago, two divers spent five days looking for the elusive brook floater and found only one. They are exceedingly rare but rumors abound of a “source population” living in the Natchaug—perhaps an adventure for another day.

## Crossing Route 203

On September 9, 1865, Aaron Geer had a stalk of corn 12 feet 6 inches high, a Scotland man had a horse stolen, and Windham voted

to close Jerusalem Road’s Manning’s Bridge, over the Shetucket (*Hartford Courant*).

First built in the 1700s, Manning’s Bridge was near the site of the Windham Fish and Game Club. The bridge played a small part in our War of Independence, but that is a tale for another day. Manning’s Bridge was part of the Windham and Mansfield Turnpike and stagecoach route. This toll road linked Mansfield and Windham all the way to Norwich. Our modern-day “Manning’s Bridge” is on Route 203.

## Plains Road

Meandering under Route 203, the Shetucket heads north, with yet another bridge, this time crossing Plains Road. From this site, J. Alden Weir, the renowned American Impressionist, painted his famous painting *The Red Bridge* in 1895. Like the current bridge, his was metal, re-



Today’s ‘Manning’s Bridge’ carries route 203 over the Shetucket.

placing an old covered bridge that had fallen into disrepair. Also, near here, on Lovers Lane, was the fourth campsite of Rochambeau, used in 1781 on his way to meet with the Continental Army and George Washington. This site, an aide remarked, was on “a beautiful river [the Shetucket] with a fine wooden bridge.”

continued on next page



Plains Road Bridge.

### The Source of the Shetucket Is Found!

I have found it! We have arrived at the fabled source of the Shetucket River. Where the Shetucket starts, the mighty Natchaug (left) and Willimantic rivers (right) end. Stretching over 20 miles, this river has witnessed much and has its beginnings in Romantic Willimantic.



The source of the Shetucket River.

How does Willimantic celebrate its fame as the source of the Shetucket? Why, with a sewer plant, of course—the Windham Water Pollution Control Facility (WPCF)! Well, at least the WPCF doesn't dump untreated water into the river when it rains. They are also working on a plan to incorporate nitrogen removal, striving to better the river's health and enhance their stewardship of this natural resource.



WPCF at the source of the Shetucket River.

So, our beautiful river begins with a ceremonious discharge of effluent in Willimantic, then, after winding its way through our lands, meets a similar fate at journey's end in Norwich. Along the river's curving course, magnificent landscapes and vibrant wildlife dance within the haunting ruins of a forgotten past, blending beauty with the echoes of decay. Some along its route have lost land through legal battles, battled against eminent domain, or been overpowered by more powerful businessmen.

Today, more folks appreciate the natural resource that is the Shetucket. People and governments are doing their best to make the river a better one, helping fish travel back to their old haunts, providing beautiful recreational areas, and increasing our use of cleaner energy sources. Henry Bowers, a Scotland resident and descendent of the Waldos, helped efforts to designate seven miles of the river between Windham and Sprague as the Shetucket Greenway to preserve and protect the natural historical and cultural assets of the river, providing hiking, fishing, and boating.

The future of the Shetucket is brighter. Let's hope it stays that way. Let Google know that the search for the explorer who discovered the source of the Shetucket is over. I have found it.

*Photos by the author.*

To all our contributors—  
**Thank You!**

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



In left photo (left to right): Scholarship Recipients Rowan Magee from Dudley, MA and Emma Massey of Woodstock, CT with Ann Bastien, QCGC Scholarship Committee. In photo above: Anastasia Serating from Pomfret, CT with Ann Bastien.

## Quiet Corner Garden Club Scholarships

Submitted by Caroline Delaney

Five scholarships were awarded to students by the Quiet Corner Garden Club at its February meeting. Receiving awards were Kate Landis of Brooklyn, CT, Rowan Magee of Dudley, MA, Rhiannon Martin of Dayville, CT, Emma Massey of Woodstock, CT and Anastasia Serating of Pomfret, CT.

Kate Landis is majoring in Forest / Rangeland Stewardship and Forest Biology at Colorado State University. This summer she will be working for the Colorado Forest Restoration Institute and hopes to continue that type of work upon graduation.

Rowan Magee attends Clark University majoring in Environmental Science. She aims to work as a scientist protecting the earth from climate change.

Rhiannon Martin is majoring in Environmental Engineering at Connecticut State Community College Three Rivers. Rhiannon wants to continue in the field of Conservation and Environmental Management.

Emma Massey attends Northeastern University. Upon completion of her studies in Ecology and Evolutionary Biology, her ambition is work that impacts local and global systems.

Anastasia Serating is majoring in Sustainable Plant and Soil Systems at the University of Connecticut. She plans to be a plant breeder of crops and threatened species.

QCGC awards scholarships each year to high school and college students pursuing a major in an agriculture / horticulture related field (see our website). Students are selected based on a combination of academic achievement, leadership qualities, community service, letters of recommendation, and personal statements.

Funds raised at the Club's Plant Sale, always the Saturday before Mother's Day, are used to provide the scholarships and other civic projects in the Quiet Corner. For more information about scholarship applications and other activities find us at QuietCornerGardenClub.com or on Facebook.

**Franc MOTORS INC.**  
Since 1949

ROUTE 32  
WILLINGTON  
(860) 429-2614 • [www.francmotorsinc.com](http://www.francmotorsinc.com)

**FOUR GENERATIONS - SINCE 1949**

Franc Motors is a general automotive repair facility servicing cars, trucks, trailers and RV's. We offer light, medium and heavy-duty towing and recover. Road service is available.

**Open Monday-Friday  
8:00am-6:00pm**

Cooper TIRES

SNOWPLOW SALES SERVICE

**TERRY'S TRANSMISSIONS**

**WE KEEP YOUR REAR IN GEAR**

Ashford, CT  
Phone (860) 429-6571 • Fax (860) 429-0246  
[www.terrys transmissions.com](http://www.terrys transmissions.com) • Email: [terrys.trnsmssns@snet.net](mailto:terrys.trnsmssns@snet.net)

**Automatics / Standards / American / Foreign / Differentials / Transfer Cases**

**SPRING IS AROUND THE CORNER BOOK BEFORE THE RUSH!**

CT Arborist Lic# S-6030

**A SIGN OF SPRING FOR OVER 30 YEARS**

**Tree Removal | Yard Expansion | Trimming | & Much More**

**New Dino Lift with 100' Reach & Lawn-Friendly Tires**

Call for A Free Consultative Walk  
**860-429-TREE (8733)**

2.2005



## A Quiet Café in the Quiet Corner

By Mark Mathew Braunstein

Perched on a hillside on North Main Street, **Heirloom** < [www.EatHeirloomFood.com](http://www.EatHeirloomFood.com) > is a café whose charm is matched by the picturesque town of Danielson that it calls home.

Catering to all sorts of niche diets, Heirloom Food Company is unique. You want foods that are organically grown? You got it. Gluten-free? Yours for the asking. Locavore? Yes, sir. Vegetarian? Step right up. Vegan? Yes, ma'am. Natural foods? That's natural for Heirloom.

Only real foods here. GMOs? Never. Preservatives? No way. Hydrogenated oils? Nope. Ultra-processed foods? Not a chance. Salt shakers? Not on these tables. Fried foods? Other than some anomalous bags of outsourced potato chips, nothing here is deep-fried.

To outsiders, the two above lists may seem to be needless dietary restrictions. To the cognoscenti, these are mindful dietary choices. At Heirloom, options abound. For cheeses, either cow cheese or nut cheese. For breads from a local bakery, either sourdough or sprouted wheat. Sweet-toothed vegans will be happy to know that all the desserts contain neither dairy nor eggs. Meat eaters, too, are provided choices here. One turkey sandwich and one tuna salad. Real meat, not mock meat.

All the food here is fresh and wholesome, often organically grown, often locally grown, mostly gluten-free, and almost all vegetarian. Whatever appears on the menu as vegetarian can be veganized because eggs are completely absent. Quote from its website: "At Heirloom all of our recipes begin vegan."

As a vegan food snob, I felt right at home when I visited soon after its debut in 2012. Before I even sat down, I knew I would want to come back. And I've done precisely that around thirty times, even though my travels seldom bring me to this corner of the Quiet Corner.

Only whole grains are served. That's brown rice with the veggie bowls and quinoa with certain specials. The veggie bowls and salads are wholesome and huge. Add-ons that can make them even larger. My favorite additions are the thinly sliced Smokey Tempeh and the Mock Chick Salad, comprised of tiny cubes of roasted tofu. It is also sold refrigerated for takeout, so I buy a container of Mock Chick to whet my appetite while waiting for my order. Yet, the wait is never long, partly because the waitperson who takes your order often also prepares it.

Weekly specials and weekly soups are posted on Facebook, Instagram, and the

café's online menu. The soups are always thick and luscious. The veggie burgers and sandwiches are tall and meticulously crafted. To fully appreciate their contents, I eat them with a fork, drilling down, layer by layer. My favorite is the Beta Burger, made with beans, beets, grains, and almonds whose flavor and nutrition far surpass industrialized mock meats.

To my delight, all the meals at Heirloom abide by my food mantra. Delicious and Nutritious.

Three idyllic eating areas complement the food. (Even the parking lot is idyllic.) In addition to the sunny central dining room (depicted in the photo), the interior hosts two booth-like nooks that assure an intimate dining experience. Outdoors, the patio by the front entrance and the two-tiered shaded deck in the rear provide al fresco dining.

Though the outdoor deck overlooks Main Street, the building is set back from the street and inclined on a hill, so treetops buffer the motorized hum of the passing cars below. And unlike many cafés whose loudspeakers shatter the silence with imposed music, Heirloom remains peaceful and, except during busy lunchtimes, quiet. Quiet Corner indeed.

During summer, the exotic plants outdoors match the esoteric plant-based foods indoors. Year-round, the festive interior is furnished with potted plants, including vines crawling up the walls, and adorned with party decorations, including streamers hanging from the ceiling. You might feel like you've walked in on a celebration. What's being celebrated is the food. And you.

You'd think that this eatery on the edge of town would be a little known, but the good word has gotten around. Lunchtime gets very busy, so try to visit at other times.

The café is one mile off Exit 38 of I-395. If taking this exit, you'll bypass Danielson's quintessential New England downtown. All four blocks of it. This exit does bring you past the town square, which is especially worth visiting around Halloween when it is occupied by an army of homemade scarecrows. Just don't let any advancing army of scarecrows scare you away from Heirloom.

**Mark Mathew Braunstein**, a vegan since 1970, is the author of the 1981 book, *Radical Vegetarianism*, the first book to espouse veganism. You can download a free PDF of the Lantern Books 30th-anniversary edition at [www.MarkBraunstein.Org/radical-vegetarianism](http://www.MarkBraunstein.Org/radical-vegetarianism)

## Wind Chills

By Claudia Lebel

Mary stood by the window, her breath fogging the glass as she watched birds flit to the feeders in her frozen garden. The wind outside screamed like something alive, clawing at the bare trees with icy fingers. Though she had only been out a few minutes to refill the feeders, her hands were still red and raw, the sting lingering deep in her bones. The wind chimes clanged wildly, a discordant alarm in the relentless gusts. Dry leaves tumbled across the yard, and the tree limbs whipped violently.

A polar vortex, the weatherman called it. Mary thought of it more as a predator, some great white beast that slunk down from the Arctic to hunt. It roared and howled, its frigid breath leaving frostbitten scars across the world. She shivered despite the warmth of the house, her eyes narrowing on the whirligigs spinning furiously in the garden.

The house felt smaller, darker, after three days of isolation. She hadn't left, except for the ritual of filling the feeders. But now Bella, her little white pooch, was out of food. She had no choice. Mary bundled up, layer after layer, remembering how she bundled up the kids when they were little.

Her black winter coat was heavy on her thin frame, the hood too big and cumbersome. The furry boots pinched her toes. She tugged on a hat, scarf, and mittens before slipping her wallet and house key into her coat pocket. She took a shopping bag off the hook. As she moved to the door, she hesitated, her hand brushing over the red cardigan she wore beneath the coat. He'd given it to her years ago—how many Christmases had passed since then? She pushed the thought away and opened the door.

The wind struck her like a living thing, slamming the storm door from her grip and flinging it against the house with a metallic shriek. She wrestled it closed behind her, cursing under her breath. He'd told her to put a railing by the steps. But no, she'd said it wasn't necessary. Now, as she descended cautiously, one hand gripping the house for balance, she felt his ghost smirking at her stubbornness.

The boy across the street had done a fine job shoveling, though the jagged chunks of snow and ice left by the plow still littered the edges of the road. Forced closer to the center, she trudged along the sanded tire tracks, her boots crunching with each step. The wind pushed at her back.

At the intersection, she pressed the crosswalk button and waited, feeling the cold seep through her mittens as the seconds dragged. Cars rushed past, their headlights glaring in the gray daylight. When the walk signal finally blinked on, she moved quickly, though her feet slipped against the ice-slicked pavement. She barely made it across before the light switched again.

On the far corner, a man stood hunched against the cold. His sign, scrawled in shaky letters on damp cardboard, read: "Homeless, please help." He shifted from foot to foot, blowing on his bare hands, his face obscured by a scarf and thick, fogged glasses.

Mary stopped, her frown deepening. "What are you doing out here? You'll freeze to death."

He startled at her voice, his head snapping up. For a moment, he said nothing, just stared at her. Then, in a voice muffled by the scarf, he replied, "Trying to stay warm...and alive."

Something in his tone gnawed at her. She glanced toward the store and then back at him.

"Come on," she said sharply, gesturing for him to follow. "You can't stay here. Let's get you something warm to eat."

For a long, uncomfortable moment, he didn't move. She felt his eyes on her, assessing, weighing her offer. Finally, he nodded and stepped away from the corner, his sneakers crunching against the icy pavement as he fell into step beside her.

At the store, Mary bought him a coffee, soup, and a sandwich, handing them over with a firm nod and tucking her wallet back into her pocket. "There," she said, watching as he took them with trembling hands. "That should help."

The man hesitated, looking at her through the fogged lenses. "Thank you," he said softly.

Mary gave him a tight smile, brushing her scarf back as she turned to leave. "You're welcome," she murmured. "Take care of yourself."

"You too," he replied.

She walked over to the dog food aisle and selected four cans of Bella's favorite. There weren't many people in the store. She went straight to the self-checkout, pulled her wallet out of her pocket and took out her credit card.

Once outside she was in a hurry to get home. She was relieved to see that the man wasn't at the corner. She pressed the button, and the walk sign came on immediately. This time she rushed across the street, beating the signal.

She crossed over to the opposite side of the street in order to face the oncoming traffic, cautiously avoiding the chunks of ice and snow. Finally, she was walking up her driveway.

Mary stood frozen on her doorstep, the cold seeping through her boots into her bones. But as she reached into her pocket for her house key, her stomach dropped. It wasn't there. Frantic, she patted her other pockets, her pulse quickening as the truth set in. It was gone.

A man's voice came from behind her.

"Looking for this?" He held up the key, a wry smile tugging at his lips.

Her head snapped up, and there he was, holding the key in his bare hand. His scarf had slipped slightly, revealing a thin smile.

Mary stared at him dumbfounded, her heart pounding. "How...?"

"Didn't think I'd have a chance to repay your kindness so soon. I guess you dropped it when you bought me lunch. The clerk gave it to me." He stepped closer, pressing the key into her hand, his fingers lingering against hers. "Stay safe, Mary."

Her breath caught. "How do you know my name?"

But he was already walking away, his figure disappearing into the swirling wind like a shadow swallowed by the storm.

*Claudia Lebel is a member of the Font 'n Pen Writers' Group, a writing group in Ashford.*

# Trump and Sartre Letters and Emails

By Cathy Cementina

I have been hearing Jean-Paul Sartre in my head these days in the face of all that we are witnessing with the new administration. As I write this, I can't know what Trump's government will have done by the time this gets published, so my words may be dated.

Sartre, in describing existentialism, notes that the core feature of that philosophy is the recognition that man (or woman) creates his own essence; he is not born with a fixed essence or intrinsic nature. Rather, a man must make what he is, who he is, as he moves through life.

Thus existentialism's central thesis: *Existence precedes essence*. In the course of all that a man does, day after day, year after year, in all of the decisions he makes, he defines who he is through his existence in the world. But even more, Sartre says, he defines what humanity is. He is creating the meaning of mankind as he creates the meaning of himself. As each individual makes his/her choices, performs his/her acts, that individual is participating in, and representing, what Man is. What Woman is. He and she are contributing to the collective meaning of humanity in the era in which they find themselves. Consequently, every human being not only has responsibility for himself, but simultaneously for all of mankind. And this of course causes—or should cause us—"anguish," because it is a huge responsibility.

I had trouble with this notion when I was a philosophy major long ago. But now I get it, and it rings true. I should also say, it took Trump to help me truly understand it. If we are to look at the collective actions that Trump *et al.* have taken, we would have to say he is building a picture, in fact a reality, of humanity. And one has to ask: Is this the picture of humanity we accept and wish to project into history?

A Trump-defined humanity is one that hunts down its fellow man in churches, in bodegas, in neighborhood gathering spaces, and, we will soon see, on farms, without due process. This is a humanity that characterizes all human flourishing that it finds offensive (gender fluidity, gayness) as "woke" and therefore to be routed out of society (it won't work). This is a humanity that denies the historic and embedded racism in this country that has rendered Black family incomes 10% of that of white families, and has resulted again and again in the denial of coveted government contracts to Black-owned businesses. To reverse any of these inequities of racism is, in the eyes of humanity as defined by Trump and his supporters, to pander to Marxist diversity and inclusion, a downright sin for Trump and the Republicans. And finally, the humanity—the type of person—that Trump and company exhibit rejects science if it undermines the project and values of the newly established State. Science! There is probably no other single enterprise that has benefited human beings more than science.

So, yes, Trump is defining what it means to be a human being in this country, in this era, and for all of history. But despite the myth of a "mandate," half of America doesn't agree with that portrait of who we are as human beings. We will continue, therefore, to resist. We will insist on a humanity defined by compassion and truth.

To the Editor:

As a long-time resident of Ashford, I am very concerned about pollution from the Algonquin Gas Transmission/Enbridge compressor station in the neighboring town of Chaplin. After all, air pollution does not confine itself to the town where it is emitted!

Compressor stations are highly toxic facilities that burn gas in order to create pressure along interstate pipeline systems. They leak methane, an extremely dangerous greenhouse gas, into our air. My family has suffered from asthma even out here in the country, leading me to wonder how much pollution from the compressor station contributes to our poor air quality.

Right now, Connecticut's Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) is considering the renewal of this compressor station's permit to operate. As DEEP considers this permit, I hope they prioritize the health and quality of life of our communities. The small, rural towns in this area do not have access to natural gas hook ups. Dirty methane gas flowing through our towns and leaking from this compressor station, is not needed, or wanted, by residents who only feel the negative impacts.

I would like to see this permit denied. However, if it is passed, I suggest adding several requirements that will help to monitor and mitigate the harm done by the methane pollution. These include continuous air monitoring by DEEP, not spotty self-monitoring and reporting by Enbridge, and frequent and random inspections of the compressor station by DEEP. Enbridge should be required to notify residents in advance about large releases of gas (called "blowdowns"), other large emissions and/or noise events. Additionally, DEEP should require Enbridge to fund public health education to inform the community of known health risks associated with living near a compressor station. I would suggest signage detailing the health impacts of methane, mailings, and other methods to make this important information available to all.

Strong new federal methane regulations were recently passed that require existing gas infrastructure to reduce methane emissions. A new law requires fees if emissions exceed a set amount. These new regulations are missing from the draft permit. CT DEEP must amend the draft permit to include these important limits. While Connecticut law mandates the state to reduce emissions by 80% by 2050, carbon dioxide equivalent emissions (CO2e) from the Chaplin compressor station have increased. In 2019, 2021 and 2022, emissions at the facility exceeded 50,000 metric tons annually of CO2e. The continued operation of the Chaplin compressor is not compatible with Connecticut's climate goals, nor is it sustainable for our future. If approved, the draft permit would give approval to Enbridge to operate the facility for five more years - the length of the permit must be shortened. DEEP should plan to shut down the Chaplin compressor station in the near future, not extend a lifeline.

DEEP must focus on meeting Connecticut's energy needs with renewable sources and move away from rubber stamping fossil fuel industry expansion.

Susan Eastwood  
Ashford, CT

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!

# Regional Community Media & Arts News

Dear Readers, our times are not normal, and I am sorry to say that they are historically dangerous. In the midst of our nation's declining behavior and function, domestically and internationally, we must believe in spring and keep the faith for better days ahead. The world is looking at us and scratching its head or laughing and watching as we fail our own tests for managing a stable government. We are taking our unique history and success for granted.



We all need to find a way to stay positive, as our country is suffering from a potent mixture of fear, anger, hope, and faith. Our national conversation is disappearing in a show of bullhorns, fireworks, and arguments that go nowhere 24/7 on nonstop screens with a kaleidoscope of talking heads sharing lots of opinions but few facts most of the time. As troubled as the media beast is, and as low as its public approval is, it is still all we have to share information and find solutions that are urgently needed.

In the meantime, turn off the national "show" occasionally and pay attention to your local media and support it any way you can! They need you! Local media is the closest public safe space to your home and family, the closest to your accountability, the closest to the community you live in. Keep that media circuit alive and healthy and it will serve us all well.

I start off this issue with good news about an opportunity to recognize wonderful people in our state.

## CONNECTICUT OFFICE OF THE ARTS SPECIAL RECOGNITION AWARDS NOMINATION DEADLINE IS MARCH 15, 2025

The *Connecticut Office of the Arts* provides a wide range of support throughout the year to individuals and arts organizations. Whatever your path or level of development with your art, COA offers training, networking, funding information, and special events. Visit their website above and sign up for newsletters.

COA is currently accepting nominations for people to serve as State Troubadour and Poet Laureate for 2025-2026. The deadline is March 15 so act now! See below for details and if you have questions, please reach out to Tamara Dimitri by email at [tamara.dimitri@ct.gov](mailto:tamara.dimitri@ct.gov). The COA main website is [www.ct.gov/arts](http://www.ct.gov/arts).

### 1. Connecticut State Troubadour

The CT State Troubadour is an ambassador of music and song and promotes cultural literacy. They are important champions of the art form in their community and work to inspire the next generation of singers and songwriters.

#### Responsibilities:

- Serve a three-year term from July 1, 2025 - June 30, 2028
- Be a Connecticut resident during the full three-year term
- Present up to three public events annually as requested by COA
- Participate in music experiences throughout Connecticut

#### Nomination Process

Any Connecticut resident may nominate one eligible singer-songwriter who embodies the characteristics of the Troubadour role. Please note that people cannot nominate themselves and we do not give this award posthumously.

More info: [https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/CT\\_Troubadour](https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/CT_Troubadour)

### 2. Connecticut State Poet Laureate

The CT State Poet Laureate promotes poetry and literature throughout Connecticut. They are important poetry champions, and they work to inspire the next generation of poets and readers.

#### Responsibilities

- Serve a three-year term from July 1, 2025 - June 30, 2028 Be a Connecticut resident during the full three-year term

- Present up to three public events annually as requested by COA
- Participate in poetry experiences throughout Connecticut

#### Nomination Process

Any Connecticut resident may nominate one eligible poet who embodies the characteristics of the Poet Laureate role. Please note that people cannot nominate themselves and we do not give this award posthumously.

More info: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/CTPoetLaureate>

### ON THE HOMEFRONT CONTINUES LOCAL SERVICE

As this issue goes to press the new legislative session is well underway and it is very busy! Only a few proposals will make it through the process to be signed into law and I will focus my attention on a few issues that have been of great regional concern:

1. The continuing restructuring of health care delivery in the region.

After prolonged delays, local hearings were held in February as part of the required feasibility study for determining the need and viability for a dedicated birthing center in Windham. This is connected to the closing of the maternity unit at Windham Hospital several years ago and the ongoing activity of the Windham United to Save our Healthcare Coalition. For more information contact WUSH at: <https://www.facebook.com/WindhamUnitedtoSaveourHealthcare>.

2. The growth of tenant unions across Connecticut.

Bills have been proposed to protect tenant rights in situations with so-called "no fault eviction" and when landlords fail to maintain health and safety standards. Landlords are seeking new ways to deal with tenants who cannot pay. The housing shortage and related inflation of rent levels, including gouging, will be covered. For more information: <https://www.cttenantsunion.org/>

3. Individual Freedom and the Right to Die.

Last session a bill almost passed that would have opened the door for individual freedom in our state and the right to die by your own choice due to medical conditions at the final stages of life. This has been controversial for many years, but I believe public discussion in the media has been limited in many cases due to religious stress, personal differences, and the uncomfortable nature of the topic. A public media safe space is hard to find. I will find a way to dive deeply into this critical choice with respect to all sides to find a resolution. It is time!

4. Increased coverage and support for the arts in all forms.

Over recent years *On the Homefront* has developed an effective communication network connecting the public with music and arts venues, large and small, individual artists working in all forms, and arts service organizations. This will continue in 2025 with increased effort to build connections to the southeast region, completing the arts community ecosystem across our whole region.

### RECENT GUESTS FOR ON THE HOMEFRONT



Danira Martel/Village for Families and Children;  
Taniqua Huguley- Chaplin/United Way



David Wollner/Willimantic Brewing Co.;  
Patty Smith/Willimantic Food Co-op

The *On the Homefront* series is an integrated media hub for community service on all local platforms on a 24/7 basis, YouTube, podcasts, public access TV, Neighbors (print), streaming and mobile.

-Flagship originating broadcasts will continue in Willimantic at WILI AM 1400 and 95.3 FM on Wednesdays from 5:00-6:00 pm.

-WICH Radio 94.5 FM and 1310 AM on Fridays from 11:00 am to 12 noon. Covering Norwich and New London, rounding out our three-county coverage area.

-WILI YouTube Channel for all Monday-Friday local talk shows—available at:

-<https://www.youtube.com/@wiliradio7000>. Each program has its own playlist with all the shows. Search on "WILI Radio" and subscribe!

-The *On the Homefront* audio podcast archive is available 24/7. Subscribe to get every new program!

<https://www.wili.com/on-the-homefront-podcast/>

-Archive of my media/arts columns in *Neighbors* at: [www.neighborspaper.com](http://www.neighborspaper.com) and the January-February 2025 column at: <https://neighbors.pageflip.site/publications/NeighborsPaper#page/17>

-Channel 192 at Spectrum Public Access TV. *On the Homefront* is featured Tuesdays at 5:30 pm and Fridays at 8:00 pm. Check out the other unique shows!



As always, thanks for reading *Neighbors* and for listening to or watching *On the Homefront*. I appreciate your interest and support for local media wherever you find it—and I 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](mailto:john@humanartsmedia.com)

**Song-a-Day Music Center**  
Coventry, Connecticut  
860-742-6878 or [songadaymusic.com](http://songadaymusic.com)  
Lessons in: Guitar, Piano, Bass Guitar, Banjo, Mandolin, Ukulele, Dulcimer, Violin, Woodwinds, Brass & Drums  
Instruments New & Used - Books, Gifts, Accessories, Instrument Repair  
Buying used instruments! We pay cash!  
Band Instrument Rentals & Supplies

**SECOND MONDAY FILM SERIES**  
at Storrs/Mansfield Unitarian Universalist Meetinghouse, 46 Spring Hill Road (1/10th miles from Storrs Road./Route 195)  
7:00 pm EACH 2nd MONDAY of EVERY MONTH since 2011  
ADMISSION ALWAYS FREE • DONATIONS WELCOME  
Documentaries to promote critical thinking  
Find & Like Us on facebook • info: 860 428-4867

**Be Light as a Feather**  
Loretta Wrobel • Feminist Therapy  
860-429-2629  
297 Pumpkin Hill Road, Ashford, CT 06278  
860-233-6076 (Office) Sliding Scale



# In Your Corner

## Songs of Protest

By Pamela Skelly

Recently I have been immersed in a do-it-yourself renovation involving too much cleaning, repairing, and painting. Feeling overwhelmed and needing some motivation, I absentmindedly began to sing to myself the song “We Shall Overcome.” Although the immediate task at hand not was not particularly significant, I realized the power of African American spirituals as protest songs and how they have been used to confront very serious issues. Songs and chants bring a group together in a unified voice. And we are going to need to speak out and protest to make our voices heard right now considering what is happening in our nation’s capital.

The songs that slaves sung had their musical roots in their African homeland and the lyrics in Old Testament stories that described their unhappy conditions. In this way, a slave’s singing was an act of protest. “We Shall Overcome” is representative of how the music and lyrics evolved, as did their purpose. Originally, this African American gospel song was sung by slaves. In 1901, the Rev. Charles Albert Tindley of Philadelphia first published the song, as “I’ll Overcome Some Day.” Tindley, a minister of the Methodist Episcopal Church, was the author of about 50 gospel hymns. His greatest importance was as a lyricist and poet who put words to the feelings of his audiences only 36 years after the abolishment of slavery.

By 1909, the United Mine Workers began opening their meetings with a prayer, followed by singing the popular song with slightly changed lyrics, “I” to “We.” This was documented that year in the February issue of the *United Mine Workers Journal*, therefore we know the song “We Shall Overcome” was sung in a secular and mixed-race setting.

The modern version of the song is believed to have been first sung by striking tobacco workers organized by Lucille Simmons at the Charleston Cigar Factory in 1945–1946. By 1959, the song started to be associated with the protests of the civil rights movement. Famous folk singers such as Pete Seeger and Joan Baez sang “We Shall Overcome” at rallies, festivals, and concerts. Now the song is so popular that it is sung at protests worldwide.

Other gospel hymns that evolved into protest songs during the civil rights movement are “This Little Light of Mine,” “Wade in the Water,” “Will the Circle Be Unbroken,” “Peace Like a River,” and “Amazing Grace.” These songs use short refrains with powerful words and a musical hook to unite the singers.

Many years ago when I was in my 20s, I was sewing and had an old movie on as background. Initially I wasn’t paying attention to the movie until I was awestruck by the powerful bass voice of Paul Robeson. I learned he was also a scholar and athlete, and politically active throughout his life. The song, “Ol’ Man River,” was written for him in the stage version of *Show Boat*, with music by Jerome Kern and lyrics by Oscar Hammerstein II. The original lyrics use the offensive N-word, which was unfortunately commonplace in 1927. Throughout the years, Robeson altered the words, making it more of a personal protest song as it evolved.

“Ol’ Man River” was popularized by Robeson in the 1936 film version, and “darkies” replaced the more offensive original word. This powerful song is sung by the character Joe, a stevedore on a showboat, and it contrasts the struggles of African Americans with the unemotional, endless Mississippi River. Robeson himself changed some of the lyrics beginning in 1938, giving a more truthful version of his song. No longer is Joe impassive; he now stands up for himself. He is resilient as he faces the obstacles that oppress him. Here are some of the changes Robeson made:

-Instead of “Dere’s an ol’ man called de Mississippi, / Dat’s de ol’ man that I’d like to be,” Robeson sang, “There’s an ol’ man called the Mississippi, / That’s the ol’ man I don’t like to be.”

-Instead of “Tote that barge! / Lift that bale! / Git a little drunk, / An’ you land in jail,” Robeson sang, “Tote that barge and lift dat bale! / You show a little grit / And you lands in jail.”

-Instead of “Ah gits weary / An’ sick of tryin’; / Ah’m tired of livin’ / An’ skeered of dyin’, / But Ol’ Man River, / He jes’ keeps rolling along!”, Robeson sang, “But I keeps laughin’ / Instead of cryin’ / I must keep fightin’; / Until I’m dyin’, / And Ol’ Man River, / He’ll just keep rollin’ along!”

Music can reach a wide audience to send an intense message. In 1939, Billie Holiday first performed “Strange Fruit,” which describes the horrors of lynching as a type of racial terrorism. This song does not spare the ugly details and forces the listener to confront this evil practice.

Southern trees bear a strange fruit  
Blood on the leaves and blood at the root  
Black body swinging in the Southern breeze  
Strange fruit hanging from the poplar trees.

Now is the time to become active in our country’s destiny. We need to raise our voices so we can be heard. I expect there will be opportunities to protest as well as actions you can take on your own. Find your voice and sing. Make your voice heard.

If you also feel strongly about civil rights and justice in our country, please consider joining our Windham/Willimantic NAACP branch. Members receive emails about events and meetings, but we keep membership information private. An annual membership is \$30, a reasonable price to support a worthy organization. Please visit our website at <https://windhamctnaacp.org/> to learn more. You can contact us at (860) 230-6911 or email [info@windhamctnaacp.org](mailto:info@windhamctnaacp.org). You can also check out our Facebook page at Windham Willimantic CT NAACP.

We shall overcome  
We shall overcome  
We shall overcome, someday

Oh, deep in my heart  
I know that I do believe  
We shall overcome, someday

We shall be alright  
We shall be alright  
We shall be alright, someday

Oh, deep in my heart  
I know that I do believe  
We shall overcome, someday

We shall live in peace  
We shall live in peace  
We shall live in peace, someday

Oh, deep in my heart  
I know that I do believe  
We shall overcome, someday

We are not afraid (oh Lord)  
We are not afraid (oh Lord)  
We are not afraid, today

Oh, deep in my heart  
I know that I do believe  
We shall overcome, someday

Version by Joan Baez

## Cocaine

By Peter Kosciusko

Cunning, baffling, enemy of life,  
I’ll take your soul; I’ll take your wife,  
I’ll taunt you, trick you, life’s divine  
Come ride with me; I’ll make you mine.

Lose your will, your spirit, your health,  
Stay with me long; I’ll have your wealth.  
I’ll show you how to lie, cheat, and steal,  
Lose your mind; you don’t know what’s real.

You have no will; I’m stronger than you,  
You want to stop; but you have no clue.  
Your reason’s gone, your mind’s a sponge,  
Your eyes are wide; you’ve a swollen tongue.

A body racked, withering in pain,  
You cry for help, but all in vain.  
You’ve burnt your bridges wherever you go,  
Look what you have; only your snow.

There is a way to stop this Hell:  
I can’t spend more time, in this tiny cell,  
I need you now; this very hour,  
I must ask for help; from a Higher Power.

## News from Joshua’s Trust

Submitted by Marie Cantino

We at Joshua’s Trust invite you to celebrate the promise of spring at one or more of these events:

Herp Walks at Allanach-Wolf Woodlands  
March 28, 2025 7:30-9:30 PM  
March 29, 2025 10:00 AM-12:00 PM  
Allanach-Wolf Woodlands, 164 Back Road, Windham, CT  
Herpetologist Dr. Susan Herrick from the University of Connecticut’s Department of Ecology & Evolutionary Biology will be leading a nighttime walk to observe the nocturnal spring breeding activity of local frogs and a morning walk to search for the results—frog eggs! The Connecticut State Museum of Natural History is partnering with Joshua’s Tract Conservation and Historic Trust to host these field-learning activities with Dr. Herrick as part of an ongoing research project to observe and track the herps that seek shelter in artificial habitats called coverboards throughout the Allanach-Wolf Woodlands. Space is limited and separate registration is required for each date! Visit <https://s.uconn.edu/herpwalks2025> for more information and to register for one or both of the hikes.

Cellphone photography at Allanach-Wolf Woodlands  
April 5, 2025 10:00-12:00 AM  
Allanach-Wolf Woodlands, 164 Back Road, Windham, CT  
Join amateur nature photographer, Michelle Poudrette, in a collaborative cellphone photography workshop. She’ll share some tips and tricks that she’s learned over the years using her Android device then participants will explore the property and practice as we share ideas from other phone photographers. No skill or expertise required. Be sure to visit <https://joshuastrust.org/events/> for details, updates and cancellations.

Nature Walk at Rankin Preserve  
April 12, 2025 (Sat) 9:00-11:00 Am  
Rankin Preserve, Rte 89, Ashford (0.5 miles north of the intersection with Rte 44).  
Join Master Naturalist Deb Field for a quiet exploration of Rankin Preserve in Ashford. This 1.5 mile trail winds through hardwood forest, wetlands, and swamps and provides a glimpse into how Nature reclaims lands formerly farmed and mined for gravel. This trail does have some elevation changes. Bring sunscreen, insect repellent, and water. Sturdy shoes and hiking poles are recommended. Rain will cancel. REGISTRATION REQUIRED Be sure to visit <https://joshuastrust.org/events/> for registration, details, updates and cancellations. 14 person cap.

Finding Deep Time on Earth Day  
April 22, 2025, 4:00-6:00 PM  
Church Farm Preserve, 29 Varga Rd, Ashford, CT  
UConn’s Professor Thorson will guide us up to a viewpoint ledge and back for a moderate round-trip hike of about 2 miles. Enroute he will link the local tangible landscape in real time to the global causes in deep time. At several points, he will read brief literary excerpts, one being by James Hutton’s Theory of the Earth (1795). Trail is steep in places. Be sure to visit <https://joshuastrust.org/events/> for details, updates and cancellations.

## Contra Dance

First Friday of each month  
Patriots Park Lodge, 172 Lake Street, Coventry, CT  
7:30 - 10:30 p.m. Introductory session at 7:15  
Partner not required, all dances taught  
Live Band & Caller See: [HCDance.org](http://HCDance.org)  
Questions: Dennis at [knowdj@frontier.net](mailto:knowdj@frontier.net)

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

## 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 Knowlton Hall** Tue, Fri 9:30-10:30a  
**Coventry Senior Center:** Wed 9:30-10:30a  
**Lebanon Senior Center:** Tue 4-5p, Thu 6:30-7:30p  
**Lebanon Library: Thu 5-6p**  
**Storrs Friends Meetinghouse: Sat 8:30-9:30a**

Call or text Joe Pandolfo: 959-444-3979



Dennis and Janet on top of South Twin Mountain.

Contributed photo.

## Ridgetop Hiking

By Dennis R. Blanchette

*The Mountains are calling and I must go.*  
—John Muir

A ridgetop hike in the White Mountains in autumn when the foliage is changing color is the epitome of scenic hikes. And there are plenty of ridge hikes that can be done in a day. But some hikers believe that the best view is in the remotest place, just like some (most) fishermen believe that the best fishing is in the remotest part of the lake. Our plan was to hike up to the AMC (Appalachian Mountain Club) Galehead Hut on Sunday, spend Monday on the ridges enjoying the views with our fellow hikers, and hike back down on Tuesday, a total of 22 miles in three days.

That night there were about 24 people at the tables in the hut for dinner, ranging in age from 30 to 70 years old. Talk naturally revolved around hiking, mostly how fast everyone was going.

“I’m attempting the Pemi Loop in three days,” announced thirtyish Olivia, sitting across from me.

A middle-aged couple stated that they were planning to complete the Pemi Loop in two days.

Well after dark, another hiker arrived, a thirtyish Canadian from Montreal. He was dressed in shorts and a T-shirt and had no gear except for a hydration pack and headlamp.

“I’ve been hiking since 3 a.m. I’m trying to finish the Pemi Loop in under 24 hours,” he said as he filled up with water and went out the door into the darkness. Later that night we looked up the Pemi Loop in the AMC guidebook.

Eight wide-open summits each offering spectacular views of the Pemigewasset Wilderness, plus four other “optional” 4,000ft. peaks, bagged via short side trails... Connecting those vistas is 31.5 rugged knee-buckling miles with over 9,000ft. of elevation gain. Most hikers take at least three days to complete it.

Apparently, we had stumbled into the world of speed hiking. A quick Google search confirmed that speed hiking (one day) or fastpacking (multi-day) is a thing. It has a definition—faster than hiking but slower than trail running. It has acronyms, like FKT—fastest known time. It prioritizes speed over views. It was hard to wrap our heads around, as if someone had told us in 2014 that the game show host of *The Apprentice* would someday be elected president.

Speed hiking also has rules and etiquette guidelines, one of which is “don’t put yourself in a position where you have to be rescued.” Hiking alone at night over the boulder-strewn paths that pass for trails in the White Mountains, with no gear, going as fast as you can, seemed to be a clear violation of that rule.

The next morning, we hiked up the Twinway Trail to South Twin Mountain and then continued on to Mt. Guyot. A bald summit with a 360-degree view, it was the perfect place for a long leisurely lunch. The mountain ranges receded into the distance, one after the other, like silent sentinels guarding the valleys, which were dotted with patches of red and yellow leaves like someone had thrown a giant quilt over them.

That night there were several new people at dinner.

“I’m Dan. Sorry I’m late. Been hiking since 4 a.m., but I had to make a side trip to bag Nawth Twin. I work construction and my crew took off for two days, so I drove up heya to do the Pemi Loop.”

“Sounds like you’re from Boston,” the guy to his left remarked.

“Dwohchestah,” he replied.

“Too bad you don’t live closer,” said the guy to his right.

“I have no problem driving from Bawston to Nawth Conway for the day,” Dan replied.

“Where do you sleep?” said the guy to the right.

“In my cah.”

“Well, I figure I’m an adult, so I rent a motel room.”

The day’s activities having been dissected in distressing detail, conversation turned to the various patches they were attempting to earn by completing various hiking feats, such as hiking all forty-eight 4,000-footers, hiking them in winter, or hiking them in four different seasons, to name a few. It was like listening to pubescent boys bragging about their sexual conquests. It was turning into a real contest and I wished I had a ruler with me.

Finally, someone asked us, “What did you do today?”

Janet responded, “We went leaf peeping.”

Everyone within earshot turned and looked at us like we were the crazy people.

On a cold and sunny Tuesday morning, we started out on the Garfield Ridge Trail. Near Garfield Ridge Campsite we watched a marten as it watched us, skittering from tree to tree. We scrambled up the boulders on a nearly vertical section of trail that would have been a waterfall in the wet season and summited Mt. Garfield around noon. Then we began the 4.8-mile downhill trudge back to the car, thinking all the while about the marten, the beautiful vistas, and the interesting people we would have missed had we been speed hiking in the dark.

*Dennis R. Blanchette is a retired civil engineer and part-time travel writer.*



## Birch Trees Can Heal You!

By Amelia South

Black Birch, *Betula lenta*, (photo top left) is definitely one of my Top Ten favorite herbs of all time. And luckily for me, it’s ALL OVER the place here in Northeastern Connecticut!

I’m Amelia, a foraging instructor and practicing Herbalist working out of my small farm in Killingly, CT. At Black Sun Farm I grow and forage a large number of herbs and medicinal plants that I turn into various remedies to help clients heal with the power of nature.

Black birch and its brother, White birch, also known as the Paper Birch, (top right) can pretty much be worked with interchangeably medicinally speaking, so I have been trying to only work with black birch trees because the white birch are kind of endangered due to the bronze birch borer and a condition called birch dieback. Birch trees can be tapped in the early spring to collect their sap (a great drink in and of itself) in order to make birch syrup, and the inner bark can be harvested to make a flour substitute, though I would only ever try this on a recently fallen or cut tree.

It is never recommended that you harvest bark directly from the trunk of the tree, as doing so could accidentally girdle it and cause it to die. Instead, ask the plant’s permission to harvest a branch or two and simply prune them off if it tells you it’s okay. I always leave an offering for the tree, such as a pinch of tobacco or kinnickinnick (a special blend of aromatic herbs I grew or foraged), or a few pieces of my hair in way of thanks. Do you have arthritis? Have you ever hurt yourself and desperately sought pain relief from some Ben Gay, Tiger Balm, or some of those weird patch things you can buy in the pharmacy? Do you get migraines? Sciatica? If you answered yes to any of that, you want to know birch!

Birch bark contains methyl-salicylates, which are basically like a minty version of the same stuff willow bark has. Similar to aspirin but with a menthol kick and way stronger (in my opinion.)

The best time to harvest birch twigs is winter and early spring, while the tree is dormant and before the tree sends buds out that will become leaves.

I make a tincture (an internal remedy made with alcohol) and an infused oil with birch bark and I often save some to make tea as well.

One time I had a really bad stomach virus and was in pain all day. I went out for a walk (this was early March) and harvested a little birch bark so I could make medicine later. I kept hearing the birch trees tell me “Make tea!” So when I got home, that’s what I did.

I drank one small cup of birch bark tea and my stomach pain was gone for nearly 6 hours!

I have applied birch to the arthritis in my knuckles and knees for the past few years and on days when I can get relief from nowhere else, it definitely saves my life. Once I rub some of the oil onto my arthritic fingers, the pain is gone in about 15 seconds.

Black birch twigs are useful as fire starters, and fresh twigs can be chewed by adults as a breath freshener and by toddlers to help relieve teething pain.

I heard from a few of my customers that it does wonders for their migraines and sciatica pain. I use birch oil on my lower back and hips on those chilly, grey sky days when my arthritis acts up.

Two amazing medicinal mushrooms that I work with, Chaga and Birch Polypore, grow exclusively on birch trees, and I find a majority of the turkey tail I harvest on dead birch trees as well.

Remember that my oils are meant to be applied topically whereas tinctures are taken under the tongue (or in a glass of water) and work systemically, similar to taking an aspirin.

You can find my products in some local health stores or at [Blacksunfarmshop.com](https://blacksunfarmshop.com)

If you’re interested in having me come to your property to show you what edible and medicinal plants are growing in YOUR backyard, please check out my website at [blacksunfarmct.com/foraging](https://blacksunfarmct.com/foraging)

Amelia South  
<https://blacksunfarmct.com/>  
TikTok and YouTube: @theoriginalmealchan  
IG: @blacksunfarm  
[amelia@blacksunfarmct.com](mailto:amelia@blacksunfarmct.com)

## The Pail

By Judy Davis

My mom, Maureen Donnelly Davis used to tell me stories about growing up in 1930s New Haven. Her parents, James and Annie Donnelly emigrated from Ireland, specifically County Leitrim, Mohill being the village. They settled in an Irish neighborhood. My mom's father would sit on the family's home porch surrounded by friends. My mom would be sent out to buy the Irish Times Newspaper, and then sent across the street to Slavin's Pub, carrying a metal pail. The bartender would fill the pail with Ballentine's Ale, and my mom, a child, would carefully bring the pail to her father. She would sit on the steps, and listen to the men recite Irish poems, and sing the old Rebel songs. Everything my mom learned, she taught me, including a love of the poetry of Yeats:

"The winds that awakened the stars, are blowing through my blood."

## River Rats

They called us "River Rats", those of us living on the Hudson in the tiny Hamlet of Rhinecliff.

Spring there, brought the sounds of a rambling brook and the aroma of cherry blossoms, lilacs, daffodils and violets drifting in on the back of a cool spring breeze.

Lazy summers had us picking blueberries and blackberries or swimming in the lake. There were softball games out by the barn, fishing down on the river and fireflies dancing in the night.

The autumn maze was designed with fallen leaves, while the smell of homemade applesauce filled the cool crisp air, making everything feel amazingly right.

Winter toboggans and sleds flew down the hill, while brothers did their very best to try and make you spill. Walt's igloo was a surprisingly warm hide-away and afterwards a bowl of hot milk rice and cocoa was the perfect end of the day.

Days were filled with explorations and nature's wonder, along with endless hours of play. Nights of silent stillness were broken only by the hoot of an owl or the late evening train chugging down the tracks.

The moon's reflection off the river put on its own special kind of light show, made even more captivating when it sparkled off a coating of snow or ice crystals from a winter freeze.

So call us 'River Rats' if you so please, however these childhood memories are engrained in our souls making our spirit far richer than most could ever dream of.

Lynda George Bowen

## The Story of Ireland

By Jesse C. Clark

Oh what a gift to live in a reality of fantasy!  
Not a world that denies the true realities of life, mind you,  
but a reality that embraces fantasy elements that brings joy to your heart.  
The gift to be in a world where your mind is filled with wonder and possibilities.

I am there when I think back to Ireland and hear the mystical flutes  
as I visit places I've been and places I've only seen,  
such beautiful greenery mixed in with the grey of rocks and the brown of the earth.

The spirit around me, the culture, the dialects,  
makes me feel like I am taking a journey back home,  
though I never lived there  
and I feel like I never left.

With my eyes closed, Fiddle music enters my bloodstream, causing my legs to dance.

The spirit takes over. The history surrounds me.  
That part of history where you aren't quite sure what was real  
and what was just a really good story.

A story of the emotional and physical pain of war;  
a story of the deepest spiritual peace.

A story with a cast of characters stretching out over the millennia,  
all with their own style, experience, use of language,  
meet in community

at a place both on the Aran islands by the sea,  
and inland in Dublin's fair city,

as words from novels, songs and poems  
filled with satirical wit,

tell the history and present of this place.

Glasses are filled with drink,  
and moments of mournful joy  
as death is a serious reality  
and a punchline.

I find echoes of this story in other cultures,  
including mine.

My Mexican side and Irish side appreciate  
the memory of the San Patricio Battalion-  
The Irish Americans who left their American post  
to fight alongside the Mexicans in the Mexican-American War.  
They knew who the oppressors were in that war too.

And now, my Native American side joins my Irish side –  
as side by side they stand in the woods, under the full moon  
as I feel the spirits of those gone,

filling me up,  
I am beside myself.

This place, this reality,  
can't be real.

And I, so blessed to be connected to this feeling,  
this culture,

continue on my way, living out that spirit in me,  
inviting people to join me

in the reality of this fantasy,

a reality that I can take with me wherever I go.  
Oh, what a gift!

## Hello Haiku

Although other forms of haiku do exist, for my purposes I follow the convention of ancient Japanese haiku as a three-line stanza containing lines of 5, 7, and 5 syllables. Although I often write on traditional subject matters, I do so from the standpoint of a modern person and therefore I can't say that these are traditional in many ways. I'm constantly writing about the moon, and just finished a volume called *The Garden of Moonly Delights*. This haiku is from that volume.

Joseph Zelman

Moon come paint her face  
Just her face so far from dawn  
Peers out the front door

Imagination  
Let your Jolly Roger wave  
From moonlit galleons

Huntress Diana  
Beasts chase beasts blood orbits blood  
In your moonlit court

I'm not your pet rock  
She sings down you don't own me  
To oceans mirror

Silicon blossoms  
Size 12 footprints on the moon  
Show me your haiku

Dried corn nearly gone  
Cherokees called it bone moon  
The moon of hunger

Carve yourself English  
Serve yourself with the trimmings  
Moonlight gravy? Yes!

The kids were bonkers  
Jumping from their desks today  
Like the moon's yoyos

Dry dust my craters  
From cracked lava eyes I watch  
Earth a blue green taunt

Moon a post-it note  
In your eyes reminding you  
Nevertheless shine



## SOUP & SALAD ANNUAL BAZAAR

**Saturday, March 29th, 4-7pm**  
Hampton Fire Company, 190 W. Old Rte 6, Hampton, CT

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

Cash donation at will at the door, to benefit our community and local church missions

Optional RSVP to: [soupsaladbazaar@gmail.com](mailto:soupsaladbazaar@gmail.com)

### MENU

#### HAM & BEAN SOUP

*smoked ham, white beans, and vegetables in a hearty broth*

#### TRADITIONAL AMISH CHICKEN & NOODLES

*chicken soup with wide egg noodles hand-rolled by our youth group leader  
gluten-free noodles available*

#### CLAM CHOWDER

*homemade, creamy, New England style chowder*

#### BREADS

*homemade to compliment soup & salad*  
BREADSTICKS - CORNBREAD

#### DELI SALADS

*deli salads handmade in our kitchens*  
POTATO - BROCCOLI - ITALIAN PASTA

#### FULL SALAD BAR

*a buffet of salad ingredients arranged on ice in a canoe*

LETTUCE - SPINACH - CUCUMBERS - BROCCOLI  
TOMATOES - GARDEN PEAS - SWEET BELL PEPPERS  
CARROTS - BACON - DICED HAM - PICKLES  
CHOPPED HARD-BOILED EGGS - "RED BEET EGGS"  
KIDNEY BEANS - GARBANZO BEANS - PURPLE ONIONS  
MUSHROOMS - RED BEETS - PICKLED JALAPENOS  
BANANA PEPPER RINGS - BLACK/GREEN OLIVES  
SUNFLOWER KERNELS - DRIED CRANBERRIES - CROUTONS  
COTTAGE CHEESE - FETA CRUMBLES - CHEESES

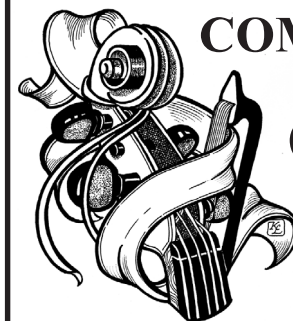
#### HOMEMADE SALAD DRESSINGS

RANCH, ITALIAN, THOUSAND ISLAND, SWEET & SOUR, SWEET BALSAMIC

#### DESSERTS

HANDMADE, MADE-FROM-SCRATCH PIES:  
BLUEBERRY - CHERRY - CHOCOLATE CREAM  
FRUIT - HANDSCOOPED VANILLA ICE CREAM

GLUTEN-FREE & DAIRY-FREE OPTIONS AVAILABLE



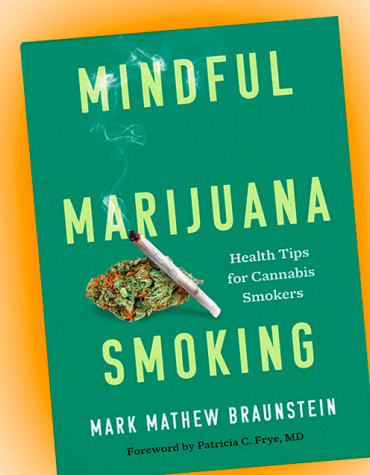
**COME JOIN US!**

## QUIET CORNER FIDDLERS

*Is there a violin in your home hiding under a bed or tucked away in a closet somewhere? Are you an active player or has it been many years since you played? The Quiet Corner Fiddlers are seeking new members and we would love to have you join us. We meet on Monday evenings to play jigs, reels, waltzes and traditional fiddle tunes. If you are interested in joining us, please email Bernie Schreiber for further information at [b.schreiber@snet.net](mailto:b.schreiber@snet.net).*

Traditional Music in Connecticut's Last Green Valley

## Health Tips for Cannabis Smokers



**How to smoke  
in ways that  
reduce its risks**

Book & eBook  
from all booksellers  
Audible audiobook  
from Amazon  
Rowman & Littlefield  
Publishers  
2022

**"The bible for cannabis smokers who care about their health."**  
— Carol Bedrosian, editor *Spirit of Change Magazine*

[www.MarkBraunstein.Org](http://www.MarkBraunstein.Org)

# 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).

## For lawmakers in CT, lowering electricity costs is complicated

**CT Mirror.** “To provide relief for utility customers in Connecticut, officials must confront at least one obstacle they cannot change: the state’s location squarely within one of the nation’s most expensive electric markets...Within the state legislature, members across the political spectrum seem to agree that much of the problem stems from the fact that Connecticut, like its neighbors, draws the bulk of its power from natural gas that is fed to power plants through a network of pipelines that stretches thousands of miles across several states before reaching New England...Legislative leaders on both sides of the aisle have declined to set clear expectations ahead of their promised campaign to address widespread fury over electric bills. Building the new infrastructure necessary to get those sources of power online, some warned, will take years and is unlikely to lower costs in the short term. “To say that somehow rates will magically come down at a certain number, nobody can predict any of those kinds of things...”

## CT environmental groups lobby in support of controversial electric ‘public benefits charge’

**WHSU.** “The public benefits have been inappropriately scapegoated as the reason our bills exploded last summer, and judging from the slew of anti-public benefits bills in the front of the General Assembly’s Energy and Technology Committee, the reality of what actually happened last summer has been badly misunderstood or ignored...”

## Opinion: CT needs Gillett as PURA Chair

**CT Mirror.** “A Brown University Institute for Environment and Safety study (CSSN Research Report 2021:3 “Who’s Influencing Connecticut Climate and Clean Energy Politics? Five Questions) demonstrated that electric and gas utilities spent over \$24 million to lobby against the position of key environmental organizations on climate legislation over the eight years of the study, four times that of renewable energy firms, and more than eight times that of environmental organizations. Eversource and Avangrid primarily opposed certain solar expansion policies, natural gas regulation, testifying against bills to limit pipeline construction and reduce methane leaks in the state. Thanks to Gillett’s leadership, Connecticut is a national leader in forward-looking utility regulation through ground-breaking initiatives.”

## Could Trump force the region into more of the fossil fuels it’s trying to get away from

**CT Mirror.** “We have an energy emergency? What IS an energy emergency? What does this mean? And, perhaps most specifically, could the president force the states in this region to increase their use of the very fossil fuels they are working to replace with clean energy?...Along with the order that blocks offshore wind, Macey said what the emergency order says to him is: “Let’s put a big thumb on the scale of the types of resources that were supportive of Trump’s presidential bid.” Among the questions that leads to are: Could the emergency declaration enable the federal government to overturn New York’s fracking ban? Could it be used to build gas pipelines against state and local wishes? Could it force a state to accept an LNG terminal, even if it doesn’t want one?”

## North Branford Launches Money-Saving Energy For Campaign Residents

**Patch.** “The town is partnering with the South-Central Regional Council of Governments and grassroots environmental action group People’s Action for Clean Energy to launch HeatSmart, an energy efficiency and heat pump outreach program...The HeatSmart program provides local community groups, nonprofit organizations and municipalities with resources to promote adoption of efficiency measures and educate residents on potential savings...” We strongly encourage residents and business owners to take advantage of these low-cost assessments that can lead to serious savings on their utility bills.”

## Do Eversource, Avangrid have too much influence at CT Capitol? They’re among the biggest spenders

**CT Post.** “...some climate and energy advocates in Connecticut have said for years that the state’s largest utility companies have a large presence at the Capitol and aren’t afraid to aggressively press their case.” The utilities are a hindrance to energy policy in this state, from both a climate and consumer perspective,” said Tom Swan, executive director of the Connecticut Citizen Action Group. “They’re a barrier to good policies in the state of Connecticut.”... State records show Eversource and Avangrid have consistently ranked among the state’s biggest lobbyists, spending hundreds of thousands of dollars a year to influence lawmakers at the Capitol...executives at Eversource and Avangrid defended their lobbying at the Capitol, arguing that their principle goal is to offer facts to lawmakers and other stakeholders.”

## Opinion: Threats are no way to win the CT energy rate war

**CT Mirror.** “Within the past year, I have received two letters from two major Connecticut utility companies: one implied that I was engaging in defamatory speech, and the other admonished me because I called for greater utility accountability during my state senate campaign. These letters are deeply concerning. Not only do they and the language they use represent a clear attempt to stifle legitimate criticism, they’re also a bald-faced attempt to intimidate an elected official (me) charged with setting energy policy in the state. They also hint at the bareknuckle utility tactics to come in the 2025 legislative session, which begins on January 8...as a state, and as a people, we literally cannot afford to let a few powerful special interests dictate the terms of our shared energy future.” [The writer is Sen Norm Needleman (D), Co-chair of the CGA Energy and Technology Committee]

## Resident-led solar committee energizes 763-kW project at Connecticut retirement community

**Solar Power World.** “Meadow Ridge, a continuing care retirement community (CCRC) in Redding, Connecticut, recently energized a 763-kW solar project. It is the long-time vision of Meadow Ridge’s resident-led Solar Committee... Two of the project’s three solar arrays are on top of carports over employee parking areas. The third is on the roof of Ridge Crest, Meadow Ridge’s sub-acute rehabilitation and skilled nursing center...“I’m so proud that we are leading by example at Meadow Ridge,” said Auslander, who has been dubbed the “Green Granny” for her work leading the Solar Committee and advocating for the project...The project was designed and built by West Hartford-based Verogy and financed through a combination of zero-emission renewable energy credits (ZRECS) through Eversource, investment tax credits, and a commercial property-assessed clean energy (CPACE) loan from the Connecticut Green Bank.”

## In 2024, solar contributed to the New England grid like never before

**Connecticut Public.** “ISO New England is reporting that for the first time in a single year, it has recorded over 100 days in which energy demand actually went down in the middle of the day due to solar use. In 2024, 106 days were characterized as “duck curve days,” named after a curve in the energy usage graph that loosely resembles waterfowl in profile. These are times in which energy demand dips in the middle of the day...“Midday energy demand was lower than it was overnight...And this is happening because of the adoption of what’s called behind the meter solar...”

## CT bails on offshore wind, chooses solar projects instead

**CT Mirror.** “After months of will-they-or-won’t-they speculation, the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection announced it would not buy into a new offshore wind project through the very process it has long advocated and helped set up...what was supposed to be New England’s biggest and most innovative offshore wind initiative ever ended with a thud that also killed a project Massachusetts had planned. The DEEP also announced procurements of grid-scale solar and storage projects, roughly equal in power to what a wind project might have been but not as reliable...“The failure to support offshore wind in this procurement round places Connecticut’s energy future in jeopardy and strands the infrastructure investments that we have already made to support offshore wind projects,” said Charles Rothenberger, director of government relations at Save the Sound, a nonprofit advocacy group.” Plus: Why CT decided to take a temporary pass on offshore wind energy amid decarbonization efforts

## Developers propose billions for Connecticut battery farms — but where?

**CT Insider.** “ISO New England lists about 30 active battery farm projects statewide in Connecticut where developers want to hook up to grid substations operated by Eversource and the United Illuminating subsidiary of Avangrid. This year, feasibility or impact studies for at least 10 more battery farms have been filed as well...Multiple developers have disclosed their projects publicly, including Elevate Renewables and its Boston-based parent ArcLight Capital Partners. Elevate has five battery farms planned for the sites of existing power stations in Bridgeport, Middletown, Milford, Montville and New Haven...Battery farms are seen as an integral part of the power grid equation for utility-scale wind and solar farms, socking away electricity for discharge during calm or cloudy days when electrical output is lower at those installations to keep a steady flow of power on the grid.”

## Dan Haar: Eversource spending billions on Massachusetts upgrades as it cuts Connecticut investment sharply

**CT Post.** “Eversource CEO Joe Nolan Jr. and his deputies at Eversource gathered in Cambridge, Mass...for the groundbreaking of a \$1.8 billion, underground electrical substation with new urban transmission lines — a substation that’s said to be one of the most advanced in the world...Nolan personally announced to Wall Street analysts last May that the company would cut its spending on the Connecticut grid by \$500 million over five years, or about 15 percent. The company later slashed another \$83 million of 2025 spending and it might cut even more beyond that. Spending in Massachusetts? It’s up sharply...Nolan said nary a negative word about Connecticut. He didn’t have to. The multi-billion-dollar actions spoke loudly enough: In Connecticut, we will invest the bare minimum to maintain reliability and we might see some slippage on that front.”

## CT Democrats propose modular nuclear power plants to tackle rising electricity costs

**WHSU.** “Connecticut Democrats’ energy proposals this year include an override of the state’s 40-year moratorium on nuclear power plants to allow for the construction of small modular reactors...Senator Norm Needleman, co-chair of the Energy and Technology Committee, said there is bipartisan support for building small modular reactors to address the rising cost of energy and electricity demand. “It’s not an immediate fix. It’s not a panacea. But it is a carbon free resource and as long as the new nuclear is safe I think you will see that happening here...” Gov. Ned Lamont also supports the proposal.” Plus: Democrats Drop Wind, Pitch Solar, Small Nuclear Reactors

## Verogy installs rooftop solar at 2 FedEx sites in Connecticut

**Solar Builder.** “West Hartford-based developer Verogy has completed a pair of rooftop solar installations at two FedEx facilities in Stratford (866 kW) and Middletown (2,075 kW), Connecticut. The projects are the first for FedEx in the state. These state-of-the-art systems, comprised of more than 5,300 solar panels/modules in total, are designed to reduce the facilities’ carbon footprint while providing a reliable source of renewable, zero-emission energy...“By embracing renewable energy, FedEx is not only making strides in reducing its carbon footprint but also setting a powerful example for other businesses on how to mitigate the effects of climate change.” Combined, the solar projects are expected to generate more than 3,468,700 kWh of energy annually.”

## Developer asked to pay \$26 million interconnection charge for 1-MW solar landfill project

**Solar Power World.** “...a planned 975-kW solar project on a former landfill in Windham, Connecticut, has been met with a \$26 million estimated bill for grid interconnection [from Eversource]. Typically, transmission interconnection upgrades for projects less than 1 MW cost approximately \$50,000 to \$300,000...the landfill solar project is now at risk of cancellation due to the unexpectedly high cost of interconnection, which project developers are expected to pay in entirety...” the astronomical interconnection costs have created an almost insurmountable roadblock. We need immediate action to reform these barriers and ensure this project and others like it can move forward.”...“The Connecticut Public Utilities Regulatory Authority (PURA) is currently working to develop a framework for equitable cost-sharing for interconnection of renewables...”

# Solar Today - Questions and answers about solar in our community and beyond

Greetings all,

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



As a reminder for those who already have solar: Your systems will start to increase production in March and will significantly increase at the beginning to the middle of April, and for an average system, by May, a good portion, if not all of your electricity needs will be covered by the increased solar production.

Let's talk solar financing. There are several ways to finance a solar system. Cash, a bank or credit union loan that the homeowner procures on their own or you can use a solar specific lender. Solar specific lenders are usually partnered with a solar company. They specialize in helping homeowners finance a solar system by offering several loan options and normally include a one year grace period on the principal amount of the loan. If one chooses to go with a lender that specialize in solar loans, after the first year, the homeowner has an option to pay the 30% ITC (Fed Tax Credit) or any amount of money to the principle of the loan. At that time, the loan will be reamortized and the monthly payment will be adjusted accordingly. Some folks like to keep the 30% ITC and some choose to pay down the principal for a lower monthly payment. All solar specific loans are simple principal and can be paid off at any time with no penalty, just like a mortgage.

Cash option has the fastest Return on Investment (ROI). I'm currently seeing 6 to 8 years as an average ROI. This means the same amount of money paid for the solar system would be handed over to Eversource in a 6 to 8 year timeframe. After that, it's free electricity for the next 20 to 25 years.

Loan options have varied ROI's depending on the length of the loan and the interest rate. Solar loans have a couple of different philosophies. Short (5 yr), medium (10-15yr) or long term (20-25yr) loans are offered with either a higher interest rate with zero points added to the principal loan amount or lower interest rates with points added to the principal. The later can add anywhere from 13% to a whopping 32% to the principal loan amount! In my opinion for solar specific loans, I prefer a higher interest rate with no front loaded interest where the principal is the same amount as a cash purchase price. Sure, you may pay a few extra dollars monthly but when/if interest rates go down and you buy out the loan for a lower interest loan or if you have a windfall and want to pay the loan off, your principal payoff will be much lower than if you went for a loan with front loaded interest built into the principal. If you'd ever like more clarification on this, please contact me directly.

Lease options are not for everyone, but for the proper circumstances, homeowners could benefit greatly with a lease option. Some of the reasons a homeowner may choose a lease are: They may be moving in 3 to 5 years, they don't want to take ownership and just simply pay a lower electric cost, they are retired and won't benefit from the 30% ITC credit, or they just purchased a home and they don't want to assume another loan. Those are just a few reasons why one might prefer the lease option. Everyone has their own specific needs and over the 14 years I've been in the local solar industry, I have seen the trends ebb and flow in popularity. So, what's the best option? It

really depends on each specific homeowner's needs and what they may be looking for as an investment outcome compared to the cost of delivered electricity from a conglomerate like Eversource. It's all in the numbers and it is definitely worth exploring the different options.

Spring is right around the corner and we are already seeing more solar door knockers out in our area. MANY are NOT local! Tread with caution and especially beware of a solar company or sales person who uses a lease as the first financing option!! In the industry we call it Leading with the Lease!

Most new sales people are trained to Lead with the Lease. It's the easiest conversation for a sales manager to train a new solar sales person with. It eliminates the confusing conversation of ownership through a cash purchase or explaining the plethora of solar loan options.

This scenario is selling solar from a financing perspective rather than a what's best for the solar customer's perspective. It ties into the Churn n Burn through sales people ideology that many of the mid-sized and large solar companies rely on to make solar sales. I know, I trained well over 400 sales people at SolarCity back in the early days of the solar revolution. Back then, I didn't know any better just as new sales people don't. You don't know what you don't know!

Many of the larger solar companies are experiencing sales layoffs and some are getting desperate. So please don't fall for some of their tactics such as >> Just sign here: "to get a survey, to see your proposal numbers, to see your final design., it's not a contract, to see finance options, to allow us on the property", etc.. and "Don't worry, you can cancel at any time". They are all 100 Hooey sales tactics to get folks to sign up.

Personally, I am passionate about helping homeowners transition to Solar and Hydro powered energy while always looking out for their personal best interest.

### My newest venture with residential renewable energy is the Home Hydro unit.

Recently a lot of folks that cannot, or do not want to go solar have been asking me about the new Home Hydro Electric Power Generating turbine that installs in your basement. It's been a game changer for quite a few folks for sure.

If you, or anyone you know, would like to learn more about capturing the Sun's energy or Hydro Electric technology to power your home, please reach out.

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

If you, or anyone you know, would like to learn more about capturing the sun's energy or Hydro Electric technology to power your home, please reach out.

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

Thanks for reading and let's make every day Earth Day!

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

## Ashford Business Fair Helps to Connect the Community

Submitted by Margaret Chatey

Community members are encouraged to connect with local businesses and service providers face-to-face on Sunday, March 16 at the Ashford Business Fair. The Ashford Winter Farmers Market along with the Ashford Economic Development Commission (AEDC) have invited Ashford businesses to join the farmers and agricultural product providers at the Winter Farmers Market at Knowlton Memorial Hall, 5 Town Hall Road (Rte. 44 near intersection of Rte. 89) from 10 AM to 1 PM.

Business fairs have been hosted by AEDC and the former Ashford Business Association over the past 15+ years, elevating the visibility of product and service providers who might not have a retail storefront. This is the first business fair in Ashford held since the pandemic. "Whether hiring a pet-sitter, a plumber, a carpenter, or a bookkeeper, many people want to do business with a local neighbor. They want to have an in-person conversation about a service they might need, but it's not always easy to find or connect with them online," says Margaret Chatey, Acting Chair of the AEDC. "This is a great way for business owners to meet prospective clients."

Hosting the fair at the Winter Farmers Market was suggested by Market Master, Jacqueline Kulig. "The market is always looking for ways to bring more community members out to the farmers market and encourage more local business," she said. "Ashford and its surrounding towns have so many products and services available; it would be great to keep more of our spending dollars local. The Farmers Market has become a time and space for neighbors to gather and interact with one another, and the business fair is a way of bringing another part of our community into the conversation."

The AEDC reached out to more than 300 registered businesses in Ashford inviting them to participate, as well as members of the former business association.

The Ashford Farmers Market is sponsored and supported by the Town's Conservation Commission. According to Chair Loretta Wrobel, "The commission is excited to partner with The Economic Development Commission to support all area businesses and provide an opportunity for residents to gather to enhance local businesses and encourage healthy area growers. We hope to continue collaboration with other town commissions and groups."

## Call For Artists: Equinox and the Arts Returns

After a four-year hiatus triggered by the Covid pandemic in 2020, the Friends of the Jonathan Trumbull Library in Lebanon, in conjunction with the Windham Regional Arts Council (WRAC), is excited to announce the return of the Equinox and the Arts exhibition! This will be the 25<sup>th</sup> year of this popular art show to celebrate the arrival of spring and showcase the works of local adult artists. WRAC reached out to the library to see if they could assist in reviving this much-loved community event.


Artwork in all media (oil, acrylic, watercolor, pastel, pen and ink, pencil, sculpture, and photography) will be accepted. The library has wall space for work to be hung. Work must be framed or gallery wrapped and wired, ready to hang. The library also has easels available for unwired work to be displayed on top of bookshelves. There is a limit of one entry per artist.

Artwork will be accepted at the library only at the following drop-off times:

Thursday, March 13 from 6-7:30 pm  
Friday, March 14 from 4-5:30 pm  
Saturday, March 15 from 12-1:30 pm  
No work will be accepted at any other time.

The art show will open on Friday, March 21, with a reception hosted by the Friends of JTL in the community room for artists and their guests from 7-9 pm. The show will run until Friday, April 11. All artwork must be retrieved on Saturday, April 12 between 9 am and 1 pm.

Registration forms are available at [www.windhamrac.org](http://www.windhamrac.org) and [www.lebanonctlibrary.org](http://www.lebanonctlibrary.org) and at the JTL information desk.




ASHFORD AREA ARTS COUNCIL INVITES YOU TO PARTICIPATE!

## CALL TO ARTISTS

### A Summer's Palette

at Westford Hill Distillers




**JUNE 28**  
**10-4**  
Rain Date June 29  
196 Chatey Road  
Ashford, CT

Art • Music • Drinks

The Ashford Area Arts Council (AAAC) and Westford Hill Distillers (WHD) would like to welcome you to display your talents at our annual A Summer's Palette! The show is well attended and well marketed.

**Registration & Payment MUST be received by Wednesday 3/15/25 to reserve your spot.**

Use QR code to register or visit [AshfordArts.org](http://AshfordArts.org) for registration link



**Saturday, June 28th**  
**10:00am - 4:00pm**  
**(rain date 6/29)**

## Comedy Show Fundraiser

The Coventry Lions Club is sponsoring a Comedy Night show at Manchester Country Club on Friday March 21 at 6:30.

Tickets are \$60 and include dinner. Max Dolcelli is the headliner. All proceeds go to community projects supported by the Coventry Lions.

For tickets or information, go to the Lions Club of Coventry website or Facebook page.

# The Planet Press

Happy Spring!

No 10

March & April — 2025

The.Planet.Press.Contact@gmail.com  
Email

@Ferdinands\_Flower\_Patch  
Instagram

Cameron Yanicky  
Writer, Designer, Editor



## The Planet Press Mission

We strive to build a resilient community through accurate, and engaging environmental news. Our mission is to illuminate issues affecting Connecticut, fostering positive change through informed dialogue. We value diverse voices and aim to preserve Connecticut's natural beauty for future generations.

News, Articles, and Opinions Impacting Our Planet



## We're Looking For Stories!

Submit your environmental related stories, poems, and photos:  
the.planet.press.contact@gmail.com

## Peacocks in Connecticut Euthanized After Bird Flu Outbreak

The Department of Energy and Environmental Protection reports that the Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) H5N1 is being detected in numerous wild birds across various areas of Connecticut.

Anyone who finds more than five dead birds in one location or notices multiple birds dying in the same area over several days should report it to DEEP's wild bird mortality database.

Jay Joseph and his family had six peafowl on their Stonington property. Two of the birds died unexpectedly, and the others had

to be euthanized due to avian flu.

In January, Joseph suspected something was wrong after discovering two dead peacocks and three dead chickens. His wife took the birds to a state laboratory for testing.

In a joint news release, the state Department of Public Health and the Department of Agriculture confirmed that the birds had been infected with HPAI H5N1.

The agencies stated that no human-to-human virus transmission has been reported so far.

Sources:  
CT Insider (2025, January 22). Connecticut family mourning prized peacocks killed after getting bird flu. 'This bothers me so much'

## Lots to Learn at Great Mountain Forest

Great Mountain Forest (GMF) spans over 6,000 acres of contiguous forestland in Canaan and Norfolk, Connecticut. It is owned and managed by The Great Mountain Forest Corporation, a non-profit.

Recently, Great Mountain Forest has been chosen as a flagship site for the New England Forestry Foundation's (NEFF) Grow Resilient Oak Hickory Forests (GROH) program, an initiative designed to support forest adaptation to climate change.

This partnership, part of the USDA's Climate-Smart Commodities project, will establish GMF as a leader in promoting sustainable forestry practices in southern New England.

GMF will offer workshops, field training, and educational programs to help landowners, foresters, and conservationists manage healthy, resilient forests.

This is not even close to the extent of GMF's contributions to

sustainable forestry. For example, for over 50 years, GMF researchers have documented the budding and flowering times of three Persian Lilac trees each spring.

These observations, recorded annually since 1968, provide insight into the effects of climate change on pollinators nationwide.

The lilac is valuable for research because it is the same species monitored nationwide. While not native, it still provides critical insights, which could become even more crucial as global temperatures rise.

GMF also has opportunities for students. For decades, the Great Mountain Forest summer internship program has offered college students hands-on forest experience, enhancing their career opportunities and pathways.

Sources:  
MSN (2025, February 10). Forest in CT to lead climate-smart forestry in New England

## UConn Researchers Partner with Bioplastics Company

It is estimated that an ordinary plastic water bottle takes around 450 years to decompose in an ocean or landfill. For many, that is too long to wait.

Plastic pollution is a worldwide crisis. The United Nations Environment Programme estimates that 19 to 23 million tons of plastic waste enter aquatic ecosystems annually.

A collaboration between UConn marine sciences researchers and a top bioplastics manufacturer offers hope for tackling this challenge.

A recent study in the *Journal of Polymers and the Environment* found that Mater-Bi, a starch-based polymer made by Novamont, degraded by nearly 50% over nine months in a marine environment — far exceeding the breakdown of traditional plastics.

Novamont, an Italian company with a U.S. office in Shelton, partnered with the UConn team

to assess the product's biodegradation.

The study was led by marine sciences Ph.D. candidate Hannah Collins and coauthor Larissa Tabb '22 (CLAS). They conducted their research in the Marine Environmental Physiology Laboratory under the mentorship of Professor Evan Ward, head of marine sciences. Their research explores key findings in the challenge of plastic pollution.

Her team analyzed samples of a Mater-Bi compostable bag, a conventional plastic bag, and a recognized biodegradable plastic in the lab. Every two weeks, they measured the degradation of each sample by mass or area. After nine months, they observed that Mater-Bi samples lost between 25% and 47% of their mass or area, with degradation accelerating during warmer months.

Sources:  
UConn Today (2025, January 28). UConn Researchers Partner with Bioplastics Company to Examine Biodegradable Plastics

## New EPA Chief Aims to Rescind \$20 Billion In Grants

In a significant reversal, the new head of the Environmental Protection Agency, Administrator Lee Zeldin, announced plans to seek the repeal of \$20 billion in grants awarded by the Biden administration for climate and clean-energy initiatives.

The program, established by the 2022 Inflation Reduction Act, is officially called the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund but is widely known as the green bank. Two initiatives, valued at \$14 billion and \$6 billion, aim to provide competitive grants to nonprofits, community development banks, and other organizations

for projects targeting disadvantaged communities.

In a video posted online, Zeldin said there would be "zero tolerance of any waste and abuse" at the EPA under his administration.

Clean energy advocates condemned Zeldin's move as a political maneuver, claiming he was unlawfully trying to reverse spending approved by Congress for partisan purposes. They vowed to challenge the directive in court.

Sources:  
Associated Press (2025, February 13). Biden's EPA issued \$20 billion in green grants. Now Trump's administration wants that money back

## Connecticut Birds of Early Spring

According to the Avian Records Committee of Connecticut, Connecticut hosts 451 bird species. In spring, 200 - 300 birds migrate through the state, accounting for a significant portion of the birds we see.

Watch for early robins, song sparrows, and bluebirds in the first week of March. If the weather is reasonable, you can also expect to see migrating ducks: mallard, black, greater scaup, lesser scaup, ring-necked, and common merganser. In and around the edges of the woods, Chickadees prefer birdhouses and can be found there.

The last week of March and the first week of April bring the sounds of birds to the state. Morning doves are cooing at the crack of dawn, and male winter wrens are incredibly vocal. The winter wren nests will soon be built hidden amongst the roots of overturned trees.

Around the second week of April, you can expect to see barn swallows. It may be earlier than that, however, as they have been returning somewhat earlier than what was common 20 years ago.

In the third week of April, listen for the evening songs of the hermit thrush.

You can expect various warblers in the fourth week, including ovenbird, parula, magnolia, Blackburnian, and northern water thrush.

Sources:  
Northern Woodlands Magazine (2015, January). The Place You Call Home A Guide to Caring for Your Land in Connecticut



HERMIT THRUSH

# Governor Lamont Unveils 2025 Weather Legislative Proposals

Governor Lamont presented his annual budget address to a joint session of the General Assembly on Wednesday, February 5, 2025. The same day, documents outlining his biennial budget proposal and other legislative initiatives, including this resiliency bill, were filed.

The governor highlighted that in the past year alone, Connecticut faced several major weather events, including:

A series of intense rainstorms in January 2024 nearly caused the failure of the Fitchville Pond Dam in Bozrah and led to severe flooding of the Yantic River in Norwich.

Unprecedented rainfall on August 18, 2024, caused severe flash flooding across Fairfield, Litchfield, and New Haven counties. Three people were killed, and nearly \$300 million in damages were caused.

Exceptionally low precipitation in the fall of 2024 led to a prolonged drought, creating critical fire conditions and sparking multiple brush fires across the state. Among them was a massive fire on Lamentation Mountain in Berlin and Meriden, which took weeks to contain fully and tragically resulted in the line-of-duty death of a firefighter.

Devastating flooding in September 2023 caused the collapse of two bridges and left families stranded in Scotland.

From July 2023 to June 2024, Connecticut experienced its wettest year on record, while 2024 marked both the hottest summer and the wettest year ever recorded in Hartford.

The bill proposal Governor Lamont presented to the legislature includes the following provisions:

## Manufacturers Request an Exemption From Connecticut's PFAS Ban

Cookware manufacturers seek exemption from Connecticut's PFAS ban, potentially reversing last year's restrictions on 'forever chemicals.' Industry groups argue that stronger coatings are safe.

Connecticut's PFAS ban will take effect at the beginning of

## March is Maple Month

March is known as "Maple Month" in New England, particularly Connecticut and Massachusetts. It's the best time to make maple syrup, as production picks up during this time of the season. In Connecticut, Maple Weekend 2025 is March 15 and 16 throughout the state.

Check for local events on CT Maple's website: <https://www.ct-maple.org/maple-weekend.html>

- Flood Insurance Notifications:** Under current regulations, only homeowners in FEMA-designated flood zones must carry flood insurance, leaving many unaware that standard homeowners' insurance does not cover flood damage until they experience a flood. Governor Lamont's proposal will mandate that banks, mortgage companies, insurance providers, and agents inform homeowners about flood insurance availability when mortgage signing and require formal acknowledgment if the homeowner declines to purchase a policy.
- Flood Risk Disclosure for Homeowners and Renters:** State law currently requires disclosures on mechanical, structural, lead paint, mold, and similar issues for homeowners. Governor Lamont is proposing an amendment to include disclosures on a property's flood history and whether it is in a flood zone. The proposal would also extend these flood risk notifications to renters.
- Expanded Review of Coastal Development Plans:** Certain coastal development plans are referred to the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) for review. However, development has increased in high-risk areas not covered under existing regulations. Governor Lamont's proposal would expand the referral requirement to include additional projects in flood-prone areas near natural flood buffers, such as wetlands, beaches, and dunes, allowing DEEP greater opportunity to provide input and recommendations.
- Eliminating the Coastal Site Plan Review Exemption for Single-Family Homes:** Current state law exempts single-family home developments from the coastal site plan review process unless they are adjacent to certain shoreline features. Governor Lamont's proposal would remove this exemption and require these developments to undergo review to protect vital coastal resources and reduce risk.
- Restricting State Investment in High-Risk Flood Zones:** Building homes in the most flood-prone areas raises disaster response and recovery costs, increases displacement, and poses significant risks to residents and emergency responders. Likewise, constructing public infrastructure to support these developments further exacerbates these challenges. Governor Lamont's proposal would prohibit state funding for new residential construction or significant renovations in these highest-risk flood zones.
- Enhances and coordinates existing planning mechanisms:** Municipalities, Councils of Governments, and the state develop plans for land use, hazard mitigation, transportation, and evacuation, essential for securing state and federal funding. Governor Lamont proposes integrating climate risk assessments into these plans with appropriate scale and analysis to enhance capital planning, land use strategies, and funding applications. Additionally, he aims to improve coordination between local and state agencies by expanding the sharing of mapping resources.
- Creating and Modifying Local Funding Sources:** Consistent infrastructure replacement requires reliable funding mechanisms. Municipalities rely on the municipal reserve fund and town aid road to support local capital projects. Governor Lamont proposes clarifying that these funds can also incorporate resiliency measures. Additionally, he suggests introducing a new approach to tax increment financing—Resiliency Improvement Districts. Unlike traditional capital funds focused on individual infrastructure, these districts address community-wide vulnerabilities and foster local economic development.
- Establishing a Regional Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) Program:** TDR programs are a regulatory strategy that allows willing participants to protect property values while reducing development in high-risk areas. Municipalities can encourage growth in less sensitive areas by creating a TDR program. The current statute is limited to direct transactions, hindering the program's effectiveness. Governor Lamont proposes expanding the TDR program to allow municipalities to collaborate on development and conservation objectives, reducing vulnerabilities while preserving the local grand list.
- Mandating Geolocation of Culverts and Bridges:** Many floods are caused by outdated and undersized stormwater systems installed decades ago, as seen during the August 18, 2024, flash floods. When these systems fail, they pose significant risks to emergency responders and are costly to replace. Additionally, due to their age, there is often limited information to help prioritize replacements. Governor Lamont proposes requiring municipalities to geolocate culverts and bridges and share this data with councils of governments and relevant state agencies.

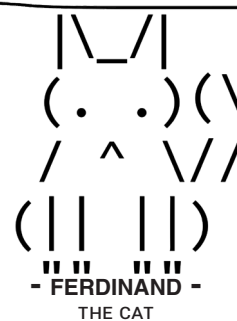
Sources:  
State of Connecticut Office of the Governor (2025, January 21). *Governor Lamont Announces 2025 Legislative Proposal: Strengthen Resilience Against Extreme Weather Events*

## Flower of the Month March



## Persian Lilac

The Persian lilac is a fast-growing, deciduous tree prized for its fragrant, lavender-hued blossoms that cascade in clusters each spring. Native to Asia and the Middle East, this ornamental beauty thrives in warm climates. Beyond its visual appeal, the Persian lilac produces small, golden berries that persist through winter, though they are toxic if ingested. While beloved for its resilience and ability to withstand drought, it can spread aggressively in some regions.



## Ferdinand's Flower Patch

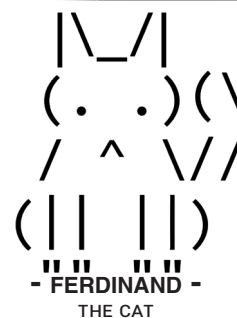


## Flower of the Month April



## Hepatica

Hepatica is a charming early bloomer and one of spring's first wildflowers. It often pushes through the last remnants of snow. It is native to woodlands in North America, Europe, and Asia. Its name comes from the Latin *hepar*, meaning liver, as its leaves were once believed to resemble the human liver – leading to its historical use in herbal medicine.



## Ferdinand's Flower Patch



Sources:  
CT Mirror (2025, January 24). *Cookware manufacturers seek exemption from CT's PFAS ban*

# Bread Box Theater

220 Valley St. Willimantic, CT ~ [www.breadboxfolk.org](http://www.breadboxfolk.org) ~

All proceeds benefit Covenant Soup Kitchen

~Spring 2025 Music Series~

Tickets available at [Eventbrite.com](https://www.eventbrite.com)



~Sunday, February 23rd~

**Lara Herscovitch**  
w/**The Highway Philosophers**  
**Seat Of Our Pants**

4:00 pm ~ \$20



~ Sunday, March 9th ~

**Hungrytown**  
**Stan Sullivan**

4:00 pm ~ \$20



~ Sunday, March 23rd ~

**Eight To The Bar**

4:00 pm ~ \$20



~ Sunday, April 6th ~

**Jake Kulak &**  
**The Modern Vandals**

4:00 pm ~ \$20



~ Sunday, April 27th~

**Christine Ohlman &**  
**Rebel Montez**

4:00 pm ~ \$25



~ Sunday, May 4th ~

**Rani Arbo & daisy mayhem**  
**Mark Mandeville & Rianne Richards**

4:00 pm ~ \$25

## Art at the Fletch



Submitted by Janice Trecker

The February- March show at Fletcher Memorial Library's Top Shelf Gallery opens with a reception and artist's craft demonstration Saturday, January 25 at 1:30 p.m. "Retrospective" features acrylic and watercolor paintings, many done in a vigorous pointillist style, by Hampton artist Marlies Thomen.

Like many painters, Thomen started early, as soon, she says, "as I could hold a pencil, paintbrush, scissors or clay." She remembers a pre-school visit to the New England Art Center in Brooklyn as well as the Hudson River style paintings of her great-grandmother and the paintings and prints displayed in her grandparents' home.

Later she focused on art at Woodstock Academy and attended Yavapai College in Prescott, Arizona. There she "fell in love with painting in pointillism," the use of dots of pure color to create optical effects, under the influence of a number of highly skilled retired painters.

She subsequently studied both painting and ceramics at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock, receiving a BA in fine arts, and later explored jewelry making and received her teaching certificate from Central Connecticut State University.

Before beginning her teaching training, however, Thomen toured Europe and spent time in Ireland on an Artists Visa. "I did pointillist paintings and portraits of local sports heroes and people in Western Ireland for my bread and butter," she says.

Thomen has exhibited with Hartford Art Space Open Studio and currently teaches art at Windham Center School, where she helps students connect with academics through art. Her own art is varied in media, style, and subject.

"There are so many amazing colors, space, textures to experience every day when we look around us," she says. "I want to show you everything."

Fletcher Memorial Library is at 257 Main St., Hampton. Info: 860 455-1086.

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



### eyeTrade Optical & Sunglass Boutique

eyeTrade accepts all eyeglass and contact lens prescription from outside Doctors of Optometry

**Now Available!**  
**Pickleball Glasses**

**Buy 1 Get 1**  
**50% Off**

\*See shop for details

Order your contacts on-line at [eyetrade.vision.com](http://eyetrade.vision.com)



Call **Sonya** Licensed Optician for your personalized eyeglass/sunglass fitting consultation today!

**860-498-0717**

**eyeTrade, LLC. • Optical Shop**

1197 Main Street, Coventry, CT

[www.eyetrade.vision](http://www.eyetrade.vision)

Member Owned and Operated Since 1980

## Everyone is invited!

Friendly staff

Great groceries & wellness products

Community centered

You'll love it here!



**WILLIMANTIC**  
**FOOD CO-OP**  
a community market

91 Valley Street, Willimantic, CT 06226  
[www.willimanticfood.coop](http://www.willimanticfood.coop)



Open 8am-8pm  
7 days a week

