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No. 235

May - June 2025

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- “Dye & Bleach House Poetry Series”: 3rd Thursday
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- May 15, 2025
- “EC-CHAP Friday Film Series:
- April 25, 2025: “The Allman Brothers Band”
- May 02, 2025: “Great Guitars”



We would like to thank all those who came out to “*Songs for Ukraine II*”, a Benefit Concert to support the people of Ukraine. Your generous support is greatly appreciated. 100% of all funds raised will go directly to Ukraine through our charitable partner, *Direct Relief*.

We wish to give special thanks to Sponsors: Creative Champion Level - Larry Grasso & Cindy Moeckel. Enthusiast Level - Willimantic Food Coop and Willington Veterinary Center. Alex Kuzma, Master of Ceremony; CT State Troubadours Kala Farnham, Kate Callahan, Lara Herscovitch, and Pierce Campbell; Resident Artist Jack Broderick; and all the generous donors to our Silent Auction.

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Wake Up to Spring

By Loretta Wrobel



This time of the year is such an exciting and captivating season. I get exhilarated just considering the endless joy as I wander around my yard, searching for new sprouts. What will pop up this year? Each spring holds new surprises, some welcoming and others exasperating. I am not thrilled with seeing the list of invasives increasing, but I am delighted to search for where the crocus pop up each new season. Watching the poppies start slowly and then burst forth with a rush. I marvel at the patience of the daffodils that don't open up quickly, only to be eliminated by those freezing night temperatures characteristic of Spring in Connecticut. The unfolding of the tree blossoms is such a miracle, as the different species take on a spectacular display of color and add new life to the bare branches. It makes me feel energized and buoyant, and lifts my spirits every year.

Spring cleaning is a time to clean up the trash and detritus accumulated during the fall and winter. In Ashford during March or April the Conservation Commission plans a town-wide trash day where we attempt to attack the litter that is omnipresent along our roadways. Over the past several years we have been deeply deflated by the small turnouts, and considered not repeating this exercise in futility. However, we persisted and were rewarded this April. We had a decent group that joined us, at least eighteen folks, and we stuffed numerous bags that day! It was a great lesson to stay strong and committed. Don't drop out because you feel defeated and depressed. Stay with your goal and don't be stopped by slow or barely visible progress. Be like the early spring growth, be patient and don't accept immediate results.

I know that many are disappointed and shaken by what is happening in our Country or unsure of what will happen. The attitude appears to reflect these feelings: "This is the end," "There is no hope," and "It will never change." I recall fifty years ago when the battle for LGBTQIA+ was just beginning and the rallies were small and comprised of small numbers of brave souls. Again, with persistence, more and more activists and supporters began standing up and speaking out. We eventually obtained legal status with civil unions, followed by marriage in our state of Connecticut. It didn't happen overnight, but by embracing resiliency and toughness for the grueling long haul, we succeeded. Alternative relationships became legitimate! When you are fighting for cause, don't expect immediate positive results.

Another wake up occurred when a program on invasives was held in March in Ashford. Some concerned landowners who care about the environment met with residents to discuss their own experiences battling with invasives. They reiterated how imperative it is to keep up with the invasives or they will take over. It is demanding, tedious work, but so necessary to keep our environment healthy. Taking care of our special community helps keep our air, water and trees, crops, and wildlife in good shape. It was a surprise to see the workshop well attended and many questions were raised. We also have an invasive species working group in Ashford, set up by Joe Hendrick (website is ashfordinvasivespecies.org) to help educate and motivate folks. It takes a community to work on maintaining our valuable resources, and it requires ongoing efforts. Thanks to our dedicated farmers, Greg Goodwin and Danny Zaicek, who year after year nurture their land and wanted to share their wisdom gained through long hours of trial and error. Spreading the word, sharing, and ongoing efforts pay off in the long run. Thankfully, our residents didn't miss the opportunity. We will all benefit from a steadfast commitment to be aware of and stay on top of invasives. Waking up continues and thrives when we care for our environment. Just like our smart allies, the trees, that send out communication to other trees when an invasion of destructive plants and/or insects is threatening. When an old tree is dying, it sends out its nutrients to its neighbors. Look to Neighbors for help, information and comradeship including the paper you are currently reading!

Nature has much to teach, if we pay attention. We can also learn from each other when we are open to growing. It becomes much easier to be ready and to listen to each other rather than attempting to do it all by ourselves. As we learn about the importance of staying aware of how our system works, and ask questions, we feel more informed, and this is what makes democracy thrive. We need to wake up and participate in expressing our beliefs and pointing out what is ok with us and what is not acceptable.

I recently participated in a rally with a group of students that taught me mega lessons about the value and enthusiasm of youth. As an 81-year-old woman who has been around the block several times, I can express a biased and jaded view about the present. My young friends were a refreshing change, as their freshness and optimism burst forth and surrounded me with a sense of possibility, like the early spring. I was totally rejuvenated and upbeat, after hanging out with them in the protest line, standing up for our beliefs regarding justice and equality. It gave me a much-needed boost, of which I wasn't aware I desperately required! What a jolt to my own awakening. It is more challenging to reflect on my lack of knowledge about my blind spots! When we have the audaciousness to honestly examine our own shortcomings, we truly are fearless warriors!

I challenge you to think as a spring plant. Evaluate your perception of what is happening within yourself, honestly pay attention, and don't hesitate to seek out what you need. It is courageous to apologize for your errors and admit that you are human and flawed. Often it is not as hard as we make it. Pride is strong within us and difficult to acknowledge. It is never too late to learn, and spring has just begun. In CT we have a long growing season, and are wealthy with educational opportunities from nature to expand and grow into kinder and smarter humans. I support your growth and applaud your efforts to see the wisdom in nature.

On our cover:
At the Bread Box Theater in Willimantic:
8 to the Bar (top) and Jake Kulak and The Modern Vandals.
Photos by Pete Polomski.

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

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From the Ground Up - Buying Local in Connecticut

By Rebecca Toms

There is quite a bit of excitement in spring for farmers and non-farmers alike in northwestern CT. Despite having snow, just recently, the blooms of daffodils and trees in every corner assures us, warmer weather is on its way. Winter always must give way to the turning and tilting of our hemisphere closer to the sun.



But as I planted my peas (outside!) this past weekend, I also became acutely aware of the fact that this is not the only change we are stepping into. Egg prices have been (for a while now) at a high never seen before, and it looks like the price of normal groceries will be will start creep up on our wallets. All this to accompany the shrinkflation that we recently “enjoyed” in the last couple years. Give a bank account a break!

Though I do farm myself, there are plenty of things that I depend on from others (especially in this early spring season), that make it so I too must put together a weekly shopping trip. And of course, I look for coupons and savings, while also trying to shop my ideals (less plastic, more organic and local) as much as my budget allows. It’s hard. I think we all get tired of going through the mental gymnastics of trying to save a buck here or there.

Back to those ideals though. My mom was a typical Yankee scrimper and worked her hardest to stretch a dollar so she could feed five active and hungry kids. That means fresh food was not a regular occurrence in our home. Rather, if it was canned, boxed, or frozen, it found its way into our pantry and into some sort of casserole on a Tuesday night. I still can’t bring myself to make a casserole, but I understand what my mom was trying to do. At the same time, I want to approach it differently.

As I said before- the cost of groceries is projected to rise- and yes, that includes what you are purchasing from local farmers. They may be a little more competitive with the grocery store prices, but they are still going to rise. Even in our local economies, we still have a dependence on a global economy. The peat moss in many farmer’s seed starting mix comes mostly from outside the country. The packaging for your favorite farmer’s salad greens comes from a company (most likely) shipping items from overseas. Those fertilizers- organic or not, have to travel from somewhere unless the farmer has the time build the infrastructure to make their own- which requires the ordering of other materials- lots of it shipped.

Most farmers *want* to buy local. Many try as hard as they can. But when the things they need just aren’t produced nearby anymore, those costs add up. And to stay in business, they sometimes have to raise prices. Materials cost more to ship, and the cost goes to the farmer- and to keep being able to pay themselves and their employees, the farmer then must pass the cost over to you, the customer.

It’s easy to romanticize the idea of buying local— as if it exists outside the broader economic system. But local farms don’t operate in a vacuum. They’re influenced by fuel prices, labor shortages, climate shifts, and policy decisions, just like bigger producers. The difference is, they often have less cushion to absorb the hit. When you shop from a local farm, you’re not just buying food— you’re investing in a system that’s more transparent, more accountable, and more rooted in your own community.

So, as the season begins again, if you see prices going up a little bit at the local farmstand or local farmers market try to meet it with understanding. Think about the ways that you are trying to scrimp and save and make your dollar stretch further in your own home. Farmers are doing the same for their businesses, so they can provide their amazing products as affordably as they can.

Supporting small farms doesn’t have to be all or nothing. Could one ingredient come from a nearby farm and show up in multiple meals? Could you skip a few store-bought sweets to buy fresh carrots instead? Or cut back on meat in general, then splurge on a quality local pork chops or whole chicken now and then?

We often think of food choices as personal—and they are—but they’re also collective. The strength of a local food system depends on shared effort: customers showing up, farmers staying committed, and communities valuing the work behind every meal. This isn’t easy, but it makes for the type of place I want to live.

For the recipe this month, I thought we’d focus on something simple, something that you can buy from a farm and use through many meals. Radishes are one of spring’s earliest crops, and they’re often budget-friendly. If the

spicy crunch of raw radishes isn’t your thing, try pickling them. A quick brine softens the bite and adds bright flavor to salads, bowls, sandwiches— whatever’s on the menu. They’ll keep in your fridge for weeks, quietly reminding you that a little local goes a long way.



Pickled Radishes (for everything)

Adapted from David Lebovitz

1 bunch or 4 longer radishes
1 cup water
1 cup white vinegar
2 teaspoons salt
2 teaspoons Local honey
1/2 teaspoon ground pepper
1 to 2 cloves garlic, peeled, and smashed
optional: a pinch (or more) of chili flakes to taste

Slice the radishes into thin rounds. For a crunchier radish, let the round be thicker, for a softer radish, slice thinly.

Combine water, vinegar, salt, and honey in a saucepan and bring to a boil, until everything is dissolved. Remove from heat and add the pepper, smashed garlic (put on its side after peeling clove, put wide part of knife on top and whack with your palm) and chili flakes, if using.

Take all your radish rounds and place in a clean pint-sized jar. Pour the hot liquid over them and make sure the garlic goes in too!

Cover and let cool to room temperature, then refrigerate for at least one day. They should keep in your fridge for at least a month!

Take Note! Concert in Mansfield

Join the acclaimed a cappella ensemble, Take Note!, as we host our annual donor appreciation concert! This event celebrates the end of our 22nd performance season and showcases exciting new additions to our repertoire, featuring a delightful mix of jazz, pop, traditional, and multicultural music.

Take Note! is a vibrant group of 20 local singers based in Mansfield, all of whom come from diverse backgrounds and share a passion for challenging and eclectic musical styles.

Under the inspired artistic direction of Linda Tracy, we hold our annual June concert as a heartfelt “thank you” to our amazing supporters. It is not only a celebration of music, but a crucial fundraiser that helps us continue to provide benefit performances for local nonprofits and help Take Note! maintain and expand its outreach.

Take Note!’s mission statement expresses its vision well: “Through performances in support of charitable endeavors, we are raising spirits, raising voices, raising hope.”

The concert will begin at 3:00 p.m. on Sunday, June 8, 2025 at the First Church of Christ in Mansfield, 549 Storrs Road Mansfield Center CT.

The vocal ensemble’s only source of financial support is through donor contributions. Tax deductible donations towards Take Note! outreach will be gratefully accepted at the door.

To learn more about Take Note! and stay up-to-date with our events, check out our website at:

<http://www.take-note.org/>

or follow us on Facebook at:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/71306851330/>.

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BEWARE

Inside the room where all secrets reside
Silent nights scream to robed listeners
One wonders why only two never
seems enough to matter
Cries pierce the darkness of broken spirits
seldom found whole again

Feel for the center of beings tangled
and torn from below the most mundane
Here in this sullen nocturnal nonsense
others carry identical crosses
covered in the heartbreak found hidden
inside discarded old closet doors

Kneel and pontificate accepting they
hold all the unblemished empty spaces
Neglected by the caretakers of pledges
who offer bitten tongues
and pearly white excuses against a
house full of devilish dastardly deeds

These are the misunderstood meanderings
trapped between the barbed indignations
and flightless creatures seeking repair
Somewhere clocks no longer have faces
and the cast shadows ignore necessary light
leaving emptiness as the constant companion

Photo and poem by Wayne Erskine

Words

Tumbling in space.
Bumping, crashing,
knocking into each other.
Sometimes aimlessly.
Sometimes as if bullying and threatening.

Some neat stacks.
Some piles spread to the edges of the mind.

At times they come one by one,
to be poked, prodded, examined for their usefulness.
Kicked, squeezed to determine their strength, power,
suitability for purpose.

Sometimes they just flow
as water over a fall
to arrange themselves
into the desired image.

Those chosen fit together
like the puzzle pieces they are.

To warm, excite, anger, incite
the wants, dreams, passions
of those who behold
the ethereal moment
put to paper
by its creator,
now able to return to sleep
to rest and await
the new adventure to come.

Danny Nalven

Looking Up

Spiritual Notes When Things Don't Go Quite Right

By Bob Grindle

Looking up is as much about contemplating as about seeing...perhaps more. The long walk each of us is taking along the shoreline that separates the fine granular reality of our day to day lives from the cosmic ocean of our imaginations, hopes and dreams is best managed by taking frequent breaks to rest from the endless grinding surf of a universe that consumes stars that live billions of years, only to assist in the creation of living cells whose lifespan is less than a wink. Somewhere along this journey from infancy to adulthood we develop the defining ability to contemplate our own mortality and it can scare us...so stepping out onto the porch or onto the grass; walking up into the field or to a nearby clearing in the forest, or maybe just up onto the roof—just about anywhere there is a bit of open sky—and looking up into the deep trenches of the Cosmos or into a mysterious shrouding cloak of clouds is to know there is a world over our heads that invites us to explore its wonders and perhaps find reverence in its inexpressible beauty.



Only yesterday I wondered if a day could be more beautiful, a sky any bluer, the spruces and pines more majestic, horizons any more promising...the kind of softly crisp and sharply clear New England spring day that energizes ones spirit, and things that have long been languishing on to-do lists nearly forgotten get done... when there is time only for the briefest nod of acknowledgement to the spiritual notes that help each of us manage the ballast that steadies our course through this life and the renewal that spring promises gently massages the seasonal weariness out of our senses. Evening brings a change though. The curtain falls.

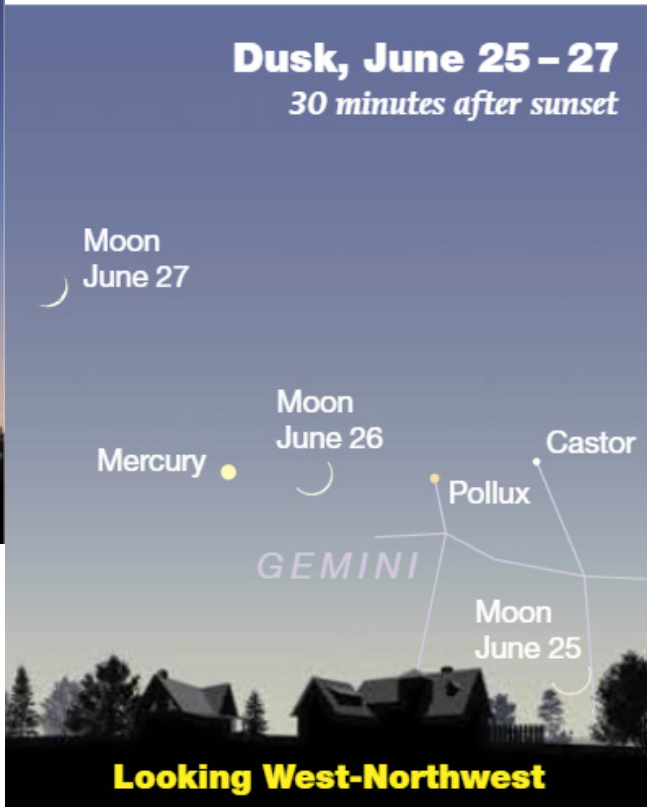
And the partial solar eclipse that had been the Cosmos' promise for today's late March morning sunrise dissolves into the drizzly, misty and wood-fire scented smoky haze of dawn's meteorological reality. While Earth's planetary veto of our New England seat at the eclipse table might feel a bit disappoi in this early sunrise atmospheric washout, when nature's curtain stubbornly fails to lift, and the show can't go on. Those towering Norway spruces and white pines that form the western edge of the field and ring the pond, however, find just enough energy in the morning breezes to orchestrate a soundtrack of melodies that perfectly fit the soulful mood, reverence and tranquility of this unexpected change of program...an auditory palette of Debussy and Ray Charles, of Paul Simon and Nora Jones play inside my head as I stare across the field into the eastern sky.

There are outcomes in cosmic reality, though, that are so grand and challenging to human understanding... the birth of a star, perhaps; maybe coming to grips with the almost unfathomable size of the universe, and certainly the complex evolutionary history of life on our planet that includes at least five near complete mass extinctions... that the simpler matters of planetary motion and solar alignments feel a bit de rigueur, rather like entitlements. Turning around from staring off into the eastern sky, I sigh, knowing there will be other times when looking up will be rewarded more fully, but walking across the chill, misty, droplet-carpeted field I can recall the melody to Paul

Simon's "An American Tune," and as I cross the pasture back toward the house, thinking about today's news and current events, I whisper a passage from the song, an anthem to a troubled nation, written in 1973:

"but it's alright, it's alright...
for we've lived so well so long...
still, when I think of the road we're traveling on...
I wonder what's gone wrong...
I can't help it, I wonder what has gone wrong."

As for the coming months, look for the brilliant and easy to spot Venus to shine in the early pre-dawn sky for all of May and June, joining Saturn for a tag team on the 15th of May as the two planets hang close for much of the month, forming some striking alignments with the moons of May. In June, about a week after the summer solstice on June 20th, there will be a great chance to catch a view of the incredibly elusive planet Mercury. You'll need a good west-northwest view of the horizon (such as the top of the hill in Chaplin where route 6 looks across to Gampel pavilion on the UConn campus—about ¾ mile east of the 198 intersection), and a pair of binoculars would help, but the effort would be rewarded if clouds and weather cooperate. The whisper-thin waxing crescent Moon and the setting Gemini twins, Castor and Pollux, all come together in this 9 pm, post-sunset alignment ballet to make for a simple summer pleasure.



The full Moons of May and June also seem to capture the mood of the season...the Full Flower Moon of May and the Strawberry Moon of June are the brushstrokes of a kind of childlike sense of wonder and firefly flight of magical fancy that herald the brief explosion of life and renewal all of us here in the northeast come to cherish. So, whether looking up is a brief, sort of what's going on up there quickie, or a drawn out, reflective several moments of inner balancing and searching for realignment, by all means look up and perhaps the music and poetry of a planet that will likely outlast us all will have something to say to you. Be well, enjoy the season that is upon us and enjoy the ride on this spaceship called Earth.

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Final Sale

By Delia Berlin

In 43 years, David and I have shared five houses. During our first three years together, we were both single parents, with kids at home ranging from 4 to 19 years of age. During that stage, we “lived together apart,” following a semi-nomadic life using both of our houses. It was the kind of chaotic lifestyle that always had us waking up to rain in the house with no umbrellas.

I already knew that David did not like change, but did not know yet to what extent. For many months we looked for a joint house to replace our two individual ones. David’s kids were about to fledge, but my daughter was about to start school. I wanted to be firmly rooted by then. I needed to live in a town with a good school system and decent access to my work, where I could stay for the entire duration of her K to 12 schooling. After considering dozens of homes for sale, I realized that we would never find the right one and decided to go solo. I would build a house that, hopefully, would also appeal to David. Then, we would reassess our course.

I built a contemporary saltbox in Bolton, in the woods, backing up to wetlands and a brook. With lots of big windows, skylights, and a deck, it was bright and well-connected to the outdoors. David moved in, we got married, and put in an addition that made it more comfortable for all of us. After all his hesitation, David loved that house and never wanted to leave it.

But 12 years later, my daughter was finishing high school and applying to colleges. David was planning early retirement, while I was spending at least eight hours per week driving to and from work, at different locations. In addition, living in the woods meant that any errands, like banking or grocery shopping, involved lots of driving. My job was not easy, and I was starting to feel like I had a second one as a driver, leaving me with very little time for anything else. Being much younger than David, I had to work for at least 15 more years. Before he retired, we had to move very close to my main place of work.

Well, I will spare you the details of this transition. But as my daughter was finishing high school, we were moving to our Windham Center house. This house was a project, but one with enormous potential. It was much bigger than what we needed, but it had a barn, a woodshed, nice gardens, and a pond for our old goose. It was literally five minutes away from my primary workplace, and perfectly situated between my primary and secondary workplaces. I gained eight hours per week just from that move. In addition, it was also much closer to all other destinations we frequented, like stores and restaurants, so my life decompressed.

We worked hard and fast on fixing and updating that house. It was much more beautiful and comfortable already by the time we moved in. And over the course of 18 years, we spared no effort to bring it to its full potential. Also full of light, with huge cottage-style windows on all sides and with inviting patios and gardens, the house and grounds were ideal to establish a nature sanctuary and just watch it in comfort. There, we enjoyed the company of Stubby, a short-tailed chipmunk who made her home in the center of one of our patios,



raised many broods, and became quite tame, coming when called to wrestle peanuts or cherries from our fingers. Also there, we spent seven magical summers during which Cry Baby, a catbird, spent every summer seeking our company and handouts, by finding us through the windows and summoning us outside, to fly to our hands and eat from them. We still regard Cry

Baby’s friendship as a most special gift. Catbirds are migratory birds that venture as far as Panama to winter. Surviving so many migrations to return to us, as friendly as if he had never left, was indeed beyond special. Earning the trust of this beautiful and charming bird, who skillfully trained us to feed him blueberries and mealworms for seven summers, was a miracle.

All good things must come to an end, though. And soon after the summer when Cry Baby did not make it back, we listed the house for sale. This had become another house that David never wanted to leave. But it was enormous for just the two of us, and I wanted to retire in a more walkable location. We found a house in Willimantic that offered much of what we were looking for, and it was just around the corner from my sister’s.

Fast forward 12 years, and lots of loving work given to this house and its grounds. It is now a rare gem, indeed. The character of 1930 architectural design was nicely merged with energy efficiency, solar panels, and other comforts. And despite its much smaller size, like our Windham Center house it has a pond, patios, gardens, fruit trees, and lots of plantings loved by native birds. On a particularly beautiful fall, we had nine different species of warblers passing through our yard, all viewed with naked eyes from our deck. Surprise: this is a house that David never wants to leave.

But the passage of time is unrelenting. And we are now both well past the years of wondering if one qualifies as a “senior” under certain establishments’ rules. This past winter, as David turned 85, he was hit with quite a barrage of ailments, mostly affecting his balance and mobility. The amount of freezing rain and ice we had did not make getting around easier. After much thought, discussion, and anguish, we decided to move on.

As I write this, our house is “sale pending” and we have signed a lease at a retirement community in West Hartford. We will set up home in an independent living apartment, but we will have house-keeping, meals, transportation, and other support services, if needed. We will miss our local community terribly, but we will not be that far and plan to visit.

Moving is stressful, but it can also reduce stress if the new situation better matches your current needs. We are focusing on the positives, which are many: our dog Curly, of course, will be coming with us. David has a daughter who lives just two miles away, and I will be a little closer to mine, in New York. Indoor swimming is available just minutes away, and there is also a ceramics studio nearby. We will not burden our children with inherited real estate. We plan to move a small garden installation of David’s assemblages, and perhaps some of my bird feeders. We have a friend who lives there, and we are still able to make new friends too. Finally, *Neighbors’s* submissions are handled via email, and I can promise an update from our new digs. Onward.

How to Tell Your Friends from the Endangered Species

Even Chameleons Get the Blues

By Bob Lorentson

People are called chameleons for their ability to change their personalities to fit any social setting. This is otherwise known as sucking up, and does not at all characterize the average chameleon. If the average human knew them better, they wouldn’t be so comfortable around people called chameleons. What would you do if you just met someone at a party and they suddenly flicked out an enormous tongue to grab a pickled mushroom off your hors-d’oeuvre plate, began to swivel their eyes independently of each other, and then changed colors to signal they were ready to mate? I thought so.

If the chameleon doesn’t top the list of weirdest animals, it is only because of such creatures as the platypus, the great potoo, the axolotl, the blobfish, and those humans who have hobbies like salad making, or “liking” posts on social media. Chameleons may be weird, but they’ll have to settle for weirdest reptile.

Not to further disappoint you, but chameleons don’t change their color as a means of camouflage. They change color for such reasons as regulating their temperature and warning off potential predators. Also for communicating with other chameleons. When trying to impress a female, for instance, a dominant male will turn a more vibrant color than a submissive male, and the female will change color to say, “Hurry up, handsome. Pretend I’m colorblind.” Biologists say that chameleons relax or tense their skin to cause the photonic crystals in them to reflect different wavelengths of light and produce the color changes. Biologists can say the sexiest things without so much as blushing.

A chameleon’s color-changing alchemy is nothing compared to the magic of its tongue. (It’s not often that anyone talks about magic tongues outside of the adult film business, but bear with me.) The magic happens when the chameleon spots something good to eat, then contracts its ultra-sticky tongue and fires it up to 2 ½ times its body length, returning with its prey in time to make you wonder what you could do with a tongue that fast. For those keeping time, its tongue can go from 0 to 60 mph in 1/100 of a second. To put all this on a human scale, you could give someone a French kiss from across the room in the same second they winked at you.

This brings us to a chameleon’s eyes, or as they’re known in optometry circles, a worst case scenario. Each bulging chameleon eye has an amazing range of movement that can see 90 degrees vertically and 180 degrees horizontally, and move independently of the other to give them an incredible 360 degree field of vision. As no other animal has an eye design like it, scientists aren’t sure if it is a remnant from evolution’s past, or a harbinger of evolution’s future. Optometrists wishing to stay ahead of the curve may want to take

Dramamine and practice trying to look chameleons in the eye.

About half of the 200 species of chameleons live in Madagascar, with the rest living in mainland Africa, India, the Middle East, and southern Europe. Sixty-six are currently vulnerable to extinction from habitat loss, global warming, and the illegal pet trade. Here are three who may soon only live in our memory.

Veiled chameleons live in trees in the Middle East and are prone to making bad life decisions. Males reach two feet long and have circling bands of bright, varied colors across their bodies. They have tarsal spurs and prominent head crests. Their gular crests are worse. Females are smaller and muted in color, but turn a pale green with blue and yellow spots when pregnant. Even scientists consider this more advanced than peeing on a stick.

Veiled chameleons aren’t veiled enough. There is a big market for them in the illegal pet trade. Locals throw live ones into fires for good luck. Their body parts are widely sold to locals for use in magic rituals, and to tourists for souvenirs. If there is any magic or good luck in the Middle East, veiled chameleons haven’t seen it.

Jackson’s chameleons live in East Africa and like to do things differently. The males are fourteen inches long, have three large horns on their heads, and no gular crests. They like to inflate themselves with air to look bigger, turn bright colors, and try to knock each other off branches with their horns. The winners attract females and other predators. After 190 days, the females give birth to live young instead of eggs like normal chameleons, but then walk away from them like it was all a big mistake. When the babies grow up, they all make the same mistakes their parents made. To Jackson’s chameleons, this is called learning.

Parson’s chameleons live in Madagascar and in pet cages around the world. They are twenty-seven inches long, have green skin, orange eyes, and nasal appendages. If you have to have appendages, this is not the place to have them. Parson’s chameleons rarely leave their home tree, often just moving from sun to shade on the same branch. For exercise they rotate their eyes, uncoil their tongues, or change their color to suit their mood. Like all chameleons, they prefer to be left alone. This is what you get for \$3,000.

Do you really want a chameleon or just something that makes you look more colorful than you are?

(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)*.)

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



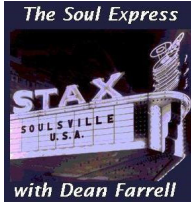
Unsung Heroes of Soul:

Johnny 'Guitar' Watson

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 Johnny "Guitar" Watson, a flamboyant performer whose 40-year career spanned blues music, R&B, soul, and funk.

John Watson, Jr. was born in Houston, TX, on February 3, 1935. His father, a pianist, taught him how to play. However, the lad was more attracted to the electric-guitar stylings of bluesmen like T-Bone Walker and Clarence "Gatemouth" Brown. Watson's grandfather was a preacher who sang and played guitar in church. He offered to buy his grandson a guitar, but only if the boy eschewed "the devil's music."



When Watson was fifteen, his parents separated. He and his mother moved to Los Angeles, where Watson entered talent shows. While still in his teens, he got jobs with jump blues acts like Amos Milburn and Chuck Higgins. Watson made a name for himself and waxed his first recordings for the Federal label, as Young John Watson, in 1952. Two years later, he got his new stage name from the Joan Crawford film, *Johnny Guitar*.

On stage, Watson wore flashy clothes, engaged in wild showmanship, and affected a swaggering but humorous personality. His "full frontal assault" style of playing, without a guitar pick, often necessitated his having to change strings during a show (usually more than once). His 1954 instrumental, "Space Guitar," was the first of his recordings to feature Watson's offbeat playing style. That sound would prove influential to future guitarists like Frank Zappa, Steve Miller, and Stevie Ray Vaughan.

In 1955, Watson enjoyed his first charting R&B single with the ballad, "Those Lonely, Lonely Nights." Two years later, on Keen Records, he cut "Gangster of Love." Though it did not chart, Watson re-cut the song in 1978, whereupon it became a hit. "Gangster of Love" also became his theme song.

Watson did not return to the charts until 1962, hitting #6 R&B with "Cuttin' In." In 1967, he made the pop charts for the first time (albeit briefly) with "Mercy, Mercy, Mercy," a duet with '50s rock 'n' roll veteran Larry Williams ("Short Fat Fannie," "Bony Moronie"). The song had begun life as a jazz instrumental by Cannonball Adderley; it also became a pop hit for the Buckingham. Other Williams-Watson duets worth checking out are "Two for the Price of One" and "Substitute for Love."

Watson toured with West Coast R&B acts like Johnny Otis, Little Richard, the Olympics, and Don & Dewey. In the mid-1970s, he toured with jazz innovator David Axelrod. Watson was also a guest performer on three Frank Zappa albums: *One Size Fits All* (1975), *Them or Us* (1984), and *Frank Zappa Meets the Mothers of Prevention* (1985). For good measure, in a 1979 interview, Zappa named Watson's 1956 recording of "Three Hours Past Midnight" his favorite record. Zappa stated that it made him want to become a guitarist.

As the blues declined in popularity and gave way to soul music, Johnny "Guitar" Watson changed both his sound and his persona. He went from being a southern bluesman with a pompadour to an urban funkateer with gold teeth, wide-brimmed hats, garish suits, oversized sunglasses, and flamboyant jewelry. He retooled his music into blues-funk and enjoyed his biggest commercial success to date. The albums *Ain't That a Bitch?* (1976), *A Real Mother for Ya* (1977), and *Love Jones* (1980) were critically acclaimed and sold well to boot.

When his old friend, Larry Williams, was shot to death in 1980, Watson temporarily left the spotlight. *The New York Times* quoted him thus: "I got caught up with the wrong people doing the wrong things."

Watson's 1994 album, *Bow Wow*, received a Grammy nomination. In 1995, he received the Rhythm & Blues Foundation's prestigious Pioneer Award. Watson also sang and played the Vocoder on Bo Diddley's 1996 album, *A Man Amongst Men*.

Johnny "Guitar" Watson, 61, died of a heart attack while performing on stage in Yokohama, Japan, on May 17, 1996.

Rock critic Dave Marsh included "Mercy, Mercy, Mercy" in his 1989 book, *The Heart of Rock and Soul: The 1001 Greatest Singles Ever Made*.

Charted singles:

- "Those Lonely, Lonely Nights" (1955) R&B #10
- "Cuttin' In" (1962) R&B #6
- "Mercy, Mercy, Mercy" (duet with Larry Williams, 1967) R&B #23, Pop #96
- "Nobody" (duet with Larry Williams, 1968) R&B #40
- "Like I'm Not Your Man" (1974) R&B #67
- "I Don't Want to Be a Lone Ranger" (1975) R&B #28, Pop #99
- "It's Too Late" (1975) R&B #76
- "I Need It" (1976) R&B #40, Pop #101
- "Superman Lover" (1976) R&B #19, Pop #101
- "A Real Mother for Ya" (1977) R&B #5, Pop #41
- "Love Jones" (1977) R&B #34
- "Love That Will Not Die" (1978) R&B #59
- "Gangster of Love" (1978) R&B #32
- "What the Hell Is This?" (1979) R&B #83
- "Love Jones" (1980) R&B #28
- "Telephone Bill" (1980) R&B #45
- "The Planet Funk" (1982) R&B #62
- "Strike on Computers" (1984) R&B #77
- "Bow Wow" (1994) R&B #89
- "Hook Me Up" (1995) R&B #48

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

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

Letters and Emails

I am an occasional reader of *Neighbors* (I live in Sprague), and I admire your statement of purpose and enjoy your publication.

Some years ago I submitted to you for publication about 500 words in support of a local candidate for re-election. At the time, as I recall, your paper did not seem to offer much to read in the way of political activity, and I first wondered if you would reject my submission. You did not, and published my contribution.

Times have changed. I read Loretta Wrobel's piece in your March/April 2025 edition. Her sentiments came through as genuine and I commend your paper for publishing her essay. As you might expect, it is not just in Windham County that people are withdrawing from public participation. As a civically active member of my community, it has been difficult enough to find people to participate in local government; now I can't even get people to express their opinions, let alone be community leaders. I think people have become fearful; they don't yet know why, but they are, nonetheless.

I am writing just to let you know, as Ms. Wrobel advised in her essay, that I appreciate what you are doing.

Sincerely,
Dick Waterman, Hanover

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The Curious Case of Dr. Lee's Bilious Pills

By Martin Moebus

I am staring at a bottle from Lee & Osgood, a nineteenth-century pharmacy with Windham connections. How did the bottle come to be, and who were Lee and Osgood?



It's hard to imagine that you would take something to make you sick to your stomach, but in the 1700s and 1800s that was the cure. Back then people believed in humors, a theory pedaled by Hippocrates the Greek in 400 B.C. and further promoted by Galen, a Roman, about 216 A.D. Hippocrates and Galen's advice was still used in ancient Windham times. Of these humors thought to form in the body, one was yellow bile. Too much yellow bile made you bilious, leading to a short temper and bitterness. In Windham, you would go to Dr. Lee, who had just the thing for reducing your bile and getting you to feel well again!

Who was this Dr. Lee? He was part doctor and part strongman, the Arnold Schwarzenegger of his time, with a powerful physique. He could lift a cart with nine of the heaviest men of Windham on it, by crawling under the axle. He could throw a stone a long way with "the precision of ancient slingers." It was said he could hop 40 feet at three bounds, although why he hopped and threw stones is not recorded. I hope he washed up after lifting heavy men before seeing patients!

During the Revolutionary War, Lee, along with Thomas Gray, joined the *Oliver Cromwell*, a privateer and largest ship in the Connecticut navy, as surgeon and surgeon's mate, respectively.¹ They resigned within the month, joining the Connecticut 4th regiment and seeing battle in Germantown while also spending the winter at Valley Forge.

During his doctoring time, Lee invented "Lee's (Windham) Bilious Pills or Family Physic," a whiz-bang cure-all. *Bilious* means "having or causing a sick feeling in the stomach" or "angry or bad-tempered" (*Britannica Dictionary*). What's in a Windham Bilious Pill? Gamboge (a resin used in paint), aloes (used in skin care and moisturizers), soap, and saltpeter (used in gunpowder). This combination was explosive for the digestive tract, as gamboge acts as a powerful laxative and induces vomiting. Dr. Lee claimed it was good for yellow fever, jaundice, dysentery, dropsy, worms, "female complaints," kidney stones, and just about any other ailment.



Junior and Senior Sam Lees Windham Center, Connecticut

One of Lee's sons, also named Samuel Lee, became a doctor as well. Today the two Lees continue to confuse modern historians. I have recently discovered that it was Dr. Samuel Lee Sr. who invented Lee's Bilious Pills or Family Physic, not his son. His son, Dr. Samuel Lee Jr., patented his father's invention, calling it Lee's Genuine Windham Bilious Pills. In doing so, he became the first person in the United States to hold a medical patent. Unfortunately, the patent was lost in the 1836 patent fire. (This is sad because it was signed by George Washington, whose autographs are very valuable.) Another son, Charles Lee, named for the famous General Charles Lee of the Revolutionary War, will appear shortly. As you will find out, there really are too many Lees in this story!

The Dr. Lees said their pills made you feel better, but the historical record is mixed. Their own relatives said that the pills were the cause of much suffering. "Those

pills used to cause fearful contortions of the body, with groanings that could not be uttered. – The bare mention of Lee's Bilious Pills makes everyone who knows what they are feel uncomfortable" (Lee family gathering of 1884). On the other hand, Ellen Larned, the Windham County historian, said, "So great was their reputation that the lawyers at court maintained that even to carry a box of Lee's pills in their pockets would ward off disease." It seemed everyone wanted them, and they were soon sold up and down the East Coast colonies, accompanied by the groanings and symptoms described above.

The bilious stampede was on! Other medicines soon joined the bandwagon. Benjamin Rush (signer of the Declaration of Independence) created Rush's Bilious Pills, nicknamed Rush's Thunderbolts, famously used on the Lewis and Clark Expedition whenever the bowels needed cleansing. One of the ingredients was mercury.

The Bilious Pill Wars



Deacon Charles Lee



The dastardly rival H. P. Lee

As profits were to be made, another Lee in New London, unrelated to the Samuel Lees in Windham, was set to cash in on their fame. Originally known as H. P. Lee, he was a druggist who didn't like the price he had to pay for Windham Bilious Pills. H. P. Lee decided to invent his own pills from "a family recipe from two generations ago," claiming it to be a cure for yellow fever and just about everything else. He named them Lee's New London Bilious Pills, and claimed his pills tamed the liver and eliminated excess (yellow) bile, curing yellow fever. Then, to confuse customers with a name similar to the Windham family, he started calling himself Samuel H. P. Lee. As the bilious pill war progressed, he also patented his concoction and even became a doctor!

Advertising called out the "good effects" of these new pills that were "too well known to need to be inserted here." However, the Connecticut Medical Society frowned upon family recipes as cures. Samuel H. P. Lee was about to be expelled from the Society until he revealed what was in his pills and agreed to back down on some of his more outrageous claims. On the positive side, this Dr. Lee recommended that doctors stop bloodletting and instead use his pills—though his pills, like Rush's Thunderbolts, contained mercury.

The Windham Lees understandably grew upset. They started advertising their pills as the true Bilious Pills, noting that they were signed by Charles Lee and had a red label—the real thing.



Windham Lee's Label

Windham's Samuel Lee took out an advertisement in the *Hartford Courant* telling readers to watch out for imitations—especially from Samuel H. P. Lee of New London, saying "the familiarity of names came forward with singular audacity" in pretending to create an original pill. The Windham Lee pointed out that his pill was patented first. He went on to accuse Sam H. P. Lee of nefarious unprincipled practices, such as writing letters of praise for his pills and "obtaining from the ignorant their signatures" and fake endorsements. New London Samuel H. P. Lee countered by telling readers to be careful to inquire for Lee's New London Bilious Pills or they may "get pills of inferior quality and by no means the fame as the present proprietor's."

The Pills Move South

When both Windham Dr. Lees died, Charles Lee (sometimes called Deacon Lee) took over the business. As

you may know, Charles Lee was instrumental in starting Willimantic, building one of the first mills in 1823, opening a store, and becoming a founding member/deacon of the Congregational church. He was such a big man around town that the neighborhood around the mill was known as Leesburg for a time.



Site of still standing Charles Lee Mill Store in Willimantic and remains of millworks.

According to the Windham Textile and History Museum, all but one cotton mill in Willimantic shut down in 1829. In spring of 1831, Lee left the mill business behind and moved south to Norwich, becoming at first a bookkeeper at Gilman and Ripley druggists, then secretary at Chelsea Manufacturing Company. In 1842 he formed the Lee and Osgood Company with his nephew Hugh Osgood, dealing in drugs, medicines, paints, and oils. He brought the bilious pills with him.



Hugh Lee memorialized at Church in Norwich. Charles Lee and Hugh Osgood shared gravestone

Charles Lee, Do-Gooder

In 1858 several people in Norwich died of lead poisoning. Charles Lee suspected the water supply, and had his city water tap tested. It contained 4 grains of lead per gallon (over 4,500 times the current acceptable lead level). The aqueduct supplying this area of Norwich had for over 25 years killed many local residents with no one knowing it. Sadly, bilious pills were no match for lead poisoning, but Charles Lee undoubtedly saved future residents by identifying the source of the poisoning.

Other Relatives Join the Quack Medicine Party

Dr. Charles Osgood, another uncle to Hugh Lee, soon joined the bilious party. This doctor also came up with a cure-all—his India Cholagogue. He came into possession of the recipe from his days in Monroe, Michigan, about two miles from Lake Erie. Cholagogue was claimed to increase bile flow and cure bilious diseases. Osgood claimed to have a cure for fever and ague (malaria). Cholagogue would "cleanse the system from the morbid effects of a bilious climate"—a climate with high temperatures and humidity. One author described it as "popular and effective but [as] unsightly and nauseous a mixture as was possible to concoct, but it was put up in good style and did its work well."

All these Lees and Osgoods got rich pedaling their quackery and bogus cures. Today, our local doctors aren't allowed to sell homemade pills anymore. We also don't seem to have as many bilious problems as our ancestors had, and thank goodness Windham no longer has a bilious climate to worry about. If it returns, I will be armed with Windham Bilious Pills and Cholagogue!

¹ Thomas Gray was also in Boston from January to March 1776 as part of Colonel Douglas's regiment. As an aside, with most things in Windham, there is a connection to the great battle of the frogs. Gray's father was one of the horsemen during the great Windham Frog Battle—shooting from horseback in the dark at shadows in the woods during the first amphibian assault of the Great Frog War.

Neighbors
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ESG Investment Funds Are a Hot Topic - Are They Right for Your Investment Strategy?

By Holly C. Wanegar, CFP®
Vice President, Associate
Financial Advisor



ESG funds have become a significant topic in both political and financial circles. Amid the debate, a fundamental question remains: Are they a good addition to your portfolio?

At WHZ Strategic Wealth Advisors, we believe whether **ESG funds investment** is right for you is largely a personal decision that should align with your overall financial goals and values. Let's explore what **socially responsible investing** means and how it might fit into your financial plan.

Understanding ESG Investment Fundamentals

ESG funds promote investment in bonds and company stocks with strong environmental, social, and governance practices. These investments span various sectors, from renewable energy to sustainable agriculture, allowing investors to align their portfolios with personal values.

The popularity of **socially responsible investing** has grown significantly in recent years, reflecting a shift in investor priorities toward long-term sustainability rather than focusing solely on short-term gains.

Evaluating **ESG investment funds** requires considering both traditional financial metrics and non-financial factors. As demand grows, transparency and reporting standards continue to evolve, providing investors with clearer information for making confident decisions.

ESG Fund Performance: What the Data Shows

The **ESG fund performance** compared to traditional investments shows mixed results. Some ESG funds have matched or outperformed conventional investments, while others have lagged behind, depending on market conditions and fund strategies.

Proponents suggest that considering ESG factors can lead to more informed investment decisions and better risk management. Critics express concern that prioritizing values over returns could compromise financial outcomes. However, increasing evidence suggests that integrating ESG criteria can complement rather than conflict with financial objectives.

When evaluating **ESG fund performance** for your portfolio, consider how these investments align with your specific financial goals, time horizon, and risk tolerance as part of a comprehensive strategy.

Balancing Values and Financial Goals

Investing with an ESG focus means weighing both your personal values and financial objectives. This balance is central to the appeal of **ESG funds investment** for many investors.

Most investors seek both ethical impact and economic gains, though opinions on which should take priority vary widely. That's why assessing your individual goals and risk tolerance is key to ensuring your investment decisions reflect both your values and financial needs.

ESG Funds in Practice

Like traditional investment strategies, **ESG funds promote investment in bonds and company stocks** to build diversified portfolios aligned with broader financial strategies and risk management principles.

Bonds in ESG portfolios help provide stability, particularly during market volatility. These bonds often support projects with measurable social or environmental benefits. Stocks within **ESG investment funds** target companies committed to strong ESG practices, which might include industries like clean energy, healthcare, and technology firms focused on sustainability and positive social impact.

Tailoring ESG Investments to Your Life Stage and Goals

At WHZ, we believe in personalizing investment strategies to align with your individual financial objectives and life circumstances. For example, those planning for retirement, ESG funds promote investment strategies that support

legacy planning with the added benefit of societal impact. However, if you have a shorter time-horizon you will want to weigh the importance of those values against the impact that ESG funds may have on your overall investment strategy.

For Business Owners, socially responsible investing can enhance your commitment to sustainability while potentially opening doors to like-minded customers, partners, and investors. Similarly, executives may choose ESG investment funds as a way to integrate personal wealth goals with professional responsibilities and mission, creating a cohesive strategy across both aspects of your life.

So, Is ESG Investing Right for You?

ESG funds investment represents more than just a passing trend—it reflects a meaningful shift toward values-driven investing that resonates with many modern investors' priorities.

With potential benefits for both growth and sustainability, ESG investment funds present a compelling option for many investors. However, like any investment strategy, they require careful consideration of your individual goals, timeline, and risk tolerance.

At WHZ Strategic Wealth Advisors, we're committed to providing you with Absolute Confidence and Unwavering Partnership as you navigate these decisions. Our Plan Well, Invest Well, Live Well™ process can help you determine whether and how socially responsible investing might fit into your comprehensive financial strategy.

If you'd like to explore how ESG funds investment could align with your financial goals, we invite you to schedule a complimentary consultation with our team. Contact us at (860) 928-2341 or visit whzwealth.com to learn more.

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To all our contributors- Thank You!

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

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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

Scotland's 'Farmer Governour'

By Bill Powers

In 1731 Samuel Huntington was born in the Scotland Society, which at the time was part of Windham, Connecticut. He was the fourth child and second son in a family of 10 children. According to author Larry Gerlach, Samuel grew up in a "well off, but not well-to-do" farming family. "In all essential respects, the Huntington household was typical of the rural homesteads that dotted the hills and valleys of Connecticut in the second quarter of the eighteenth century."

Unlike some of his brothers who attended Yale, Samuel was self-educated. It seems that he made good use of not only the libraries but also tutoring by the well-educated, such as the Reverend Ebenezer Devotion and prominent Windham attorneys Jedediah Elderkin and Eliphalet Dyer. In 1754 Samuel was admitted to the bar and began to practice law in Windham.

It is widely understood that Samuel's religious upbringing and family background, in addition to his natural ability, contributed greatly to his eventual accomplishments and contributions to Connecticut and the nation. He was admired by his colleagues in Congress, in state government; and, by the citizens he served. His commitment to Connecticut included both his election to the Assembly and King's Attorney for the Colony of Connecticut. He was not only a signer of the Declaration of Independence but also the Articles of Confederation. Furthermore, he became President for the Second Continental Congress, and also the Confederation Congress; he became Chief Justice of the Connecticut Superior Court and Governor of Connecticut.

Tom Pelc, a life-long resident of Scotland, said: "Increased recognition of Samuel Huntington's many accomplishments throughout his lifetime of public service is warranted. Historians may believe they know all about Huntington's life story, his role and his importance but until we can read more original letters to, from, and about him, the picture remains incomplete. His love and dedication to his country is shown in his last official presidential letter to George Washington, he said, 'Whatever my future Situation in Life may be, I shall always love my Country. In her Happiness and Prosperity will consist my own personally'."

The Huntington Homestead preserves the birthplace of Samuel Huntington. In 1972 the property was designated a National Historical Landmark. Its Museum was established "to tell the particular story of Samuel Huntington as well as the history of the farm, Scotland, and eastern Connecticut." It is the only birthplace opened to the public of the four Connecticut signers of the Declaration of Independence.

The documented comments of the British agriculturist and naturalist, who was known for both inventive methods of crop rotation and introducing new types of farm machinery, are evidence of how Huntington was respected and admired by his contemporaries.

William Strickland in his *Journal of a Tour in the United States of America 1794-1795*, visited Connecticut's governor and wrote: "In the evening I accompanied Mr. Wadsworth to wait on the Governour of the State, Mr. Huntington who happened to be there on public business. He was Governour many years having been first chosen in 1785 and annually rechosen since that period. He is usually called the "Farmer Governour", not being much exalted above that rank of life.... When the Governour travels to attend to the sittings of the Assembly, I am told that he bestrides a pair of saddlebags, unattended by a servant; but he is everywhere known where he passes, and everywhere accompanied with the blessing of the people; such a governour requires no guard; he is not a wolf about to devour his flock, but a shepherd attending to their welfare; How great is the contrast between this Governor, and those of some of the other states, and more distinguished countries! When compared to them, how much greater is he!"

The Huntington Homestead in Scotland, CT, is the birthplace of Samuel Huntington. He was a signer of the Declaration of Independence and a distinguished statesman during the Revolutionary War and early Republic. The House was where Samuel Huntington was born and raised and it was built by his father in 1723. The Governor Samuel Huntington Trust, Inc. is the owner of the Huntington Homestead, a Museum of Early Connecticut Life. It is located at 36 Huntington Road (Route 14) in Scotland, CT. The Homestead is open to visitors May through October on the first and third Saturday from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

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



Joshua Trust Welcomes Spring... and a New Executive Director!

By Marie Cantino

April showers bring May flowers and new leadership to our organization. David McCarthy recently joined us from the Wilton Land Trust where he served as its Executive Director. David holds a Master's of Environmental Management from the Yale School of the Environment, has served on the Board of Directors for the Southwest Regional Conservation District and worked for the Town of Branford's Department of Inland Wetlands and Natural Resources, where he protected wetlands, served as Tree Warden, and led community and sustainability initiatives.

At the Wilton Land Trust, David significantly raised the Trust's profile and enriched the community through community partnerships. His efforts not only connected more people with nature but also fostered and inspired the next generation of conservation leaders. He played a pivotal role in securing major sponsorships, making the organization younger, and more agile to ensure the organization's continued relevance and long-term sustainability.

David brings enthusiasm, experience, and a deep passion for connecting people with the natural world. As time allows, he enjoys world travel, astronomy, photography, antique furniture restoration, riding his bicycle and motorcycle, and exploring New England's history and the great outdoors with his wife Kelly, six-year-old daughter, Clara, and three-year-old son, Miles.

Please come and help us welcome David at our Annual Meeting on April 26 (details in the events list below).



David McCarthy. Contributed photo.

Joshua's Trust 59th Annual Meeting

April 26, 2025, 4:00-6:00 PM

Knowlton Memorial Hall, 25 Pompey Hollow Rd, Ashford CT

Join us for refreshments and meet our new Executive Director, then learn about "Partnering with Beavers for Ecological Restoration and Climate Resilience" from speaker Michael Soares. Be sure to visit <https://joshuastrust.org/events/> for registration, details, updates and cancellations.

Maypole Celebration

May 3, 2025, 2:00-4:00 PM

Atwood farm, 624 Wormwood Hill Road, Mansfield Center, CT

Come welcome spring while we dance around the May Pole, accompanied by the Mansfield Middle School String Players. Be sure to visit <https://joshuastrust.org/events/> for details, updates and cancellations.

Contemplative Walk at Knowlton Hill Preserve

May 10, 2025, 10:00-11:30 AM

Knowlton Hill Preserve, 81 Knowlton Hill Rd, Mansfield, CT

Join Debra Pallatto for a guided walk, stopping for contemplative reflections along the way. Be sure to visit <https://joshuastrust.org/events/> for details, updates and cancellations.

The Forest, Management and Birds of Two Sisters Tract

June 1, 2025, 8:30 AM

Two Sisters Tract, with the hike beginning from US Rte 6 (just east of Mansure Rd), Chaplin

Join us for a visit to the site of a recent Joshua's Trust forest management project. Emery Gluck will explain the benefits and challenges of reestablishing a healthy ecosystem in a preserve stressed by disease and human impacts, Alex D'Amico will address stewardship issues, and Erin King will help identify birds along the trail. Be sure to visit <https://joshuastrust.org/events/> for registration, details, updates and cancellations.

CT Trails Day Walk at Proposal Rock/Coney Rock Preserve, Mansfield

June 8, 2025 9:00-11:00 AM

Proposal Rock Trailhead, south end of Woodland Rd, Mansfield CT.

Join Master Naturalist & Joshua's Trust member Deb Field for an exploration of the forest and views in the Proposal Rock/Coney Rock Preserve in Mansfield. Hike is approximately 3 miles, with some hills. Pre-registration is required. For more information contact Deb Field: 860-208-5459 (leave a message) or dfieldview@gmail.com. Be sure to visit <https://joshuastrust.org/events/> for registration, details, updates and cancellations.

Connecticut Open House Day

June 14, 2025 2:00-4:00

Atwood farm, 624 Wormwood Hill Road, Mansfield Center, CT

Enjoy a trip into the past with a self-guided tour of the historic farm buildings Atwood Farm. Learn about life on a small farm in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries Be sure to visit <https://joshuastrust.org/events/> for registration, details, updates and cancellations.

'The Wonders'

By Judy Davis

I was blessed to have been introduced to the wonders of poetry at a young age. My dad loved Robert Frost, and my mom loved William Butler Yates.

I have wonderful memories of both of my parents, Raymond and Maureen Davis, reading poems to me, while we sat on our living room couch.

I was also blessed with an aunt and uncle, Marion and James McGeehan, who would also read me their favorite poems. They always asked me, "How did it make you feel?" They smiled at me every time I would answer, "I feel happy! I feel full!"

When my aunt Marion's eyesight started to fade, my aunt Peggy would visit her, and read her poetry.

Becoming a poet was my way of honoring those who loved me.

Because of them, as Walt Whitman once wrote, "I am large. I contain multitudes."

5 Crow Haiku

Crow chorus at dawn
Saying quick write down your dreams
In black fingerprint

The crows tell me so
Sharp scraped syllables echo
No apologies

Say crow do you know
The fivefold amen I crave
Caw Caw Caw Caw Caw

A crow blown sideways
By the January wind
Droll squadron of one

Crow in the treetop
Last golden light rests upon
The cone-laden boughs

Joseph Zelman

Ian Mack

Twinkle, twinkle, little one,
I have a brand new grandson.
Resting, down in his soft bed,
A lazy look, after he's been fed.

When the adoring family is gone,
nobody else to shine upon,
you close your little eyes,
to the last of the goodbyes.

The moonbeams in the dark,
accent your tiny spark.
To showcase you to the world,
as you are now unfurled.

In the warmth of your home,
you are as a poem.
For mama and papa to beam,
adoringly as you dream.

'Tis your bright and tiny spark,
Lights the trav'ler in the dark:
Tho' I know your are far from done,
Twinkle, twinkle, little one.

Danny Nalven
(on the shoulders of Jane Taylor)

Neighbors
a little paper
big on community

The Freedom of Upside-Down Thinking

By Jesse R. Clark

With so many important issues being talked about today, I would like to take this platform to talk about an issue that, over the last couple of years, has come to my attention: the term “BFFs” doesn’t make any sense. When someone says, “She’s my BFF,” the meaning is “She’s my best friend forever.” When someone says, “We are BFFs,” they mean “We are best friends forever.” Look at the “s.” Where is it? If you say, “We are BFFs,” you are saying “We are best friend forever.” What you *mean* to say is “We are BFFs.” Now, I’m sure that there may be some sound reasoning behind this. Maybe it’s because there are two of you that the plural automatically goes on the end, or something like that. But the fact of the matter is, “best friends forever” has an “s” on “friends” and *not* on “forever.” Therefore, “BFFs” makes more sense to say.

Now about this whole “save the date” business. I was unaware this even existed until a couple of years ago. I always thought that you got a wedding invitation and that was it. For those who are unaware, *apparently* the “save the date” announcement tells you when the wedding is and who is getting married, and the rest of the information comes later on the formal wedding invitation. Why not have just the wedding invitation, then? Won’t the wedding invitation have the couple’s names along with the date? Why the extra effort? What they *should* do is have a “save the date” for the wedding invitation: “Save the date! On October 9th, 2025, Margaret and Kevin will send their wedding invitation out. Keep an eye on your mailbox!”

Here’s another hot take: People who aren’t Christians shouldn’t say “Jesus Christ!” or “God damn it!” Especially if you’re an atheist, it just doesn’t make any sense. You are asking someone who doesn’t exist to damn something. Christians say, “You shouldn’t use the Lord’s name in vain.” Well, they are the ones who believe in Him, so they would have the right to. I’m not saying they *should*, but it makes more sense than an atheist saying it.

One summer day, my neighborhood was blessed with the gift of a rain shower. I’ve noticed that in rain showers, people tend to run or hold their jackets tightly closed. Sometimes, in cold weather, it can be not the most comfortable situation. But this was different; this was a *summer* shower. So, I put on my bathing suit and went for a walk. Sure, I felt like I stood out when I was among others running, trying to keep their clothes dry, but I was embracing it. It was a realization that I could do something that, to my mind, wasn’t normal behavior but seemed to make perfect sense in this situation. Why would you try to stay dry, scared of the rain, when you could be happier if you embraced it? Of course, there are times when you are walking and it starts to pour down and you don’t have your trusty bathing suit to change into. If the weather isn’t too cold, I still embrace it. I dance; I have fun. I even do this gag where I stop, acknowledge my glasses have gotten wet, dry them off on my soaking wet T-shirt, and put them back on, smiling. *Ahh! That’s much better!*

This is a kind of “Upside-Down/Inside-Out” thinking. It opens your mind and makes you question things. The problem is when people look at the world and only see two choices, two outcomes. They see what always was and think that that is normal. They may question

things, but they keep on going. But if you stop and take time to consider the wide world of possibilities, no matter how odd or strange they seem, you can change your life and find a new sense of freedom. A lot of times, I run into things on the job that cause my co-workers to say, “Why do they do it like that? Why don’t they do it like this?” I always say with a chuckle and a knowing look, “Cuz that would make sense!” So many times, people explain rules and traditions by saying, “This is the way it is. This is the way it should be.” Their reasoning makes sense—until it’s put into practice. Ideas and concepts are great, but they have to take into account real-world situations and exceptions.

Now, what does this have to do with “BFFs” or “save the date”? Well, those ideas were played up for comedy, but, like the best comedy, it’s rooted in philosophy—the studying and questioning of reality. There is a reason that in Mel Brooks’s *History of the World: Part I* his ancient Roman was a self-proclaimed “stand-up philosopher.” Comedy *and* philosophy take ideas that we question and allow us to come up with ideas of our own. Why are things the way they are? Why can’t we do things differently? Why are we looked on as the strange ones when the way we do things actually makes more sense?

Of course, some of these differences are just due to our own perspective, but if we make our point, we can affect the way someone else thinks. So many things in this world seem backwards, and so many issues people care about seem to come from a mindset that not only doesn’t make that much sense but is actually harming other people. I’ve always wondered why the whole “profits over people” mentality exists. If I was in charge of a company, I would want to do what was best to ensure that consumers are healthy and alive, and not be destroying the planet that not only do they live on, but I live on as well. However, I realized that of course the people in charge know they are eventually going to die, like the rest of us. So their goal is to make all the money they can in the short time they can, because one day they are going to be gone, and who cares what happens *then*? It makes perfect sense. Thinking differently would be completely upside-down, inside-out thinking.

Now, if you are wondering if this upside-down thinking can really make a difference with big issues such as this, let me ask you, which do you think is more realistic: that people will start saying “BFFs,” that they will send out “save the dates” announcing the wedding invitation itself, and that atheists will stop saying “God damn it,” *or* that positive change can be made by the efforts of people organizing in the face of situations that really don’t make a whole lot of sense? Keep hope alive, keep the comedy, and keep thinking as creatively and upside-down, inside-out as you can, because, as the song “Anything Can Happen” from *Mary Poppins: The Musical* says:

Anything can happen. Raise the curtain!
Things you thought impossible will soon seem certain.
Though at first it may sound clownish,
see the world more upside-downish.
Turn it on its head, then pirouette it.
Anything can happen if you let it.

‘Tribute to the Music of Leroy Anderson’ Concert

By Jane Anderson Vercelli, NCCO President

The Northeast Connecticut Community Orchestra will present our spring concert “Tribute to the Music of Leroy Anderson” on Friday, May 16 at 7 p.m. and Sunday, May 18 at 2 p.m. at Clark Memorial Chapel on the campus of Pomfret School, Route 44/ 169, Pomfret. Admission is free. Donations are welcomed.

We will celebrate Connecticut composer Leroy Anderson, who created some of the most recognizable and joyous light orchestral music ever written. The program will include the romantic music of “Blue Tango” and “Belle of the Ball;” the whimsical music of “The Waltzing Cat” and “Syncopated Clock;” and the seasonal classic “Sleigh Ride” plus much more.

As the daughter of Leroy Anderson, I am grateful to NCCO conductor Linda Tracy and all the musicians in NCCO for playing one of

the few all-Anderson concerts ever to be performed.

The occasion is the commemoration of 50 years since Leroy Anderson died on May 18, 1975, at the Woodbury, Connecticut home he shared with his wife, Eleanor, and their children. The mid-century modern house is open to the public on occasion.

My brothers, Rolf Anderson and Kurt Anderson, will be introducing the pieces at the NCCO concert.

My son, Lars Vercelli and his wife Laura Apruzzese, will be singing several of Dad’s songs composed for the 1958 musical “Goldilocks.” These are “I Never Know When to Say When” and “Save A Kiss.” They will also perform an early composition, “The Music in My Heart,” and the nostalgic “Forgotten Dreams.”

Lars and Laura met when they were students at New York University majoring in vocal performance in musical theater. They appeared

together their senior year in “A Little Night Music.”

Another highlight of the concert will be a performance of “The Typewriter,” a piece Dad wrote using an actual typewriter as the featured instrument. The performers will be Kevin Tracy on the typewriter and Dennis Patton on piano.

The vintage typewriter being used in the concert was purchased recently at the Cambridge Typewriter shop in Massachusetts for this occasion.

Two songs on the program are played pizzicato. For “Jazz Pizzicato” and “Plink, Plank, Plunk!”, the musicians will pluck the strings, playing entirely without bows.

Questions? Call or text Jane Anderson Vercelli at 860 428-4633.

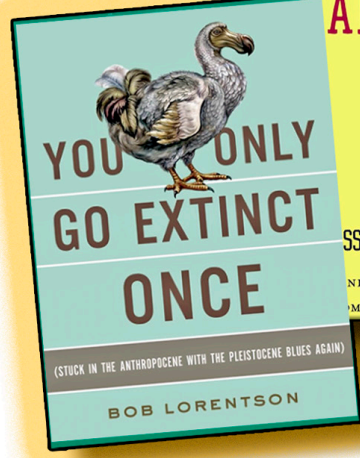

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Two books by Bob Lorentson

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

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

www.BobLorentson.com

Tai Chi Home

The Legends Say

By Joe Pandolfo

For millennia the Taoists watched how energy moves and things change - year over year, during the moon phases of each year, and even through the hours of the day. There’s a natural pattern, ripples within ripples.

In the lunar calendar May and June are months of the Snake and the Horse. Those spirits animate the season. Snake holds the hidden strength of inner wisdom, drawn from *Yin* earth. Horse showing all the brilliance of power released, as much *Yang* as the midday sun.

These are times to find your deepest wisdom, grounded like Snake, guided from head to tail. Find the field where your real self feels unbound, where you reach your fullest stride; the legends say that Horse even has the power to fly.



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The Little Horse That *Could*: The Narragansett Pacer and the American Spirit

By Donna Dufresne

In the beloved children's book *The Little Engine That Could*, by Watty Piper (1930), the diminutive steam locomotive chugs up the steepest of mountains fueled by a mantra of determination, "I think I can, I think I can," spewing American optimism into the hearts of countless generations. Derived from a sermon written by Charles S. Wing in 1906, the Little Engine became an icon for grit and determination woven into the fabric of the great American mythology: the belief that even the little guy can make it with a dose of spunk, hope, and a tug on those privileged bootstraps. It's a lesson that appears to have faded with the malnourished American Dream but lingers deep in the past as we search for the meaning of "the American Spirit" after 250 years.

Long before the mighty steam engine was invented, the mythology of the American Spirit was embodied in the form of a diminutive yet powerful little horse. The Narragansett Pacer was the first truly American-bred horse, the progenitor of American Standardbreds, Canadian Pacers, Rocky Mountain Horses, Kentucky Mountain Horses, Saddlebreds, and the Tennessee Walker. Even the iconic Morgan, often touted as the first American breed, was originally crossbred with a Narragansett Pacer. Throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the sure-footed little horse with the smooth gait was in high demand by New England colonists whose itchy feet aimed to travel. The hotrod sportscar of the day, the Pacer enabled communication and exploration in the rough terrain beyond coastal waterways. Sadly, the little horse that seemed to embody the American Spirit of grit and fortitude became extinct by the mid-nineteenth century.

Modern bioengineers could not have designed a more perfect species to traverse the rugged and harsh terrain of the early New England colonies. Derived from Scottish Galloways, Spanish Ginets, and Andalusians imported from England in the mid 1600s, the distinctive Narragansett Pacer was created by crossbreeding in Rhode Island by the end of the seventeenth century.¹ A rough and tough genetic strain with its straight spine and odd proportions, the Narragansett Pacer proved to be incapable of trotting and unlikely to gallop. However, it was the Cadillac ride of its day, with a sturdy, gaited pace offering a smooth and hasty ride on rugged roads that were hardly more than Indian footpaths.

It didn't take long for the Narragansett Pacer to enter into the American zeitgeist as a symbol of the pioneer can-do spirit. A slightly homely beast, unlike the more refined European breeds, it was not unlike the emergent America itself. By the turn of the eighteenth century, horse breeding had found its niche in the rich farmlands along Narragansett Bay, particularly in Portsmouth and Point Judith. As trade increased with the West Indies, wealthy merchants like Godfrey Malbone bought large tracts of farmland referred to as "plantations" in coastal Rhode Island. Often managed by tenant farmers and enslaved labor, they produced massive quantities of salted beef, cheese, sheep, goats, and grain for export to the sugar plantations, where every inch of land was devoted to the export of sugar and molasses rather than subsistence farming.

Rhode Island, Connecticut, and Massachusetts exported timber, barrel staves, farm products, barrels of salted cod and alewives, and raw materials to feed and clothe the enslaved captives working on the sugar plantations. When forests along the coast became scarce, merchants like Malbone bought thousands of acres in Pomfret and northeast Connecticut to cull the red and white oak timber for barrel staves. The cleared land became feeder farms for the West Indies trade. In Malbone's case, the Pomfret farm was run by 27 enslaved men and women, who saved the captain and crew from a pirate attack during their middle passage. As a "reward," they were sent to Pomfret in lieu of being sold in the West Indies.

The Narragansett Pacer was sometimes called "the slave horse" because it was raised and tended to by enslaved men on the Rhode Island plantations owned by merchants, then shipped to the plantations in the West Indies. In fact, I stumbled upon the Narragansett Pacer while investigating the ship ledgers of Godfrey Malbone. By 1727 his ship records in Newport were concerned with

materials produced on his "plantations," including dozens of horses packed onto the decks.

Although the Narragansett Pacer lacked the versatility of a draft horse or later American breeds, it quickly became the favored riding horse of the plantation owners. The Pacer could easily cover a hundred miles of the rugged Caribbean terrain in a day, which made it ideal for overseeing the enslaved labor in the sugar cane. But it also provided safe transportation for the wives and daughters of planters in a terrain like New England that lacked coaches and roads.

As the Narragansett Pacer became more popular for export and breeding in the eighteenth century, the stories surrounding it grew with the cumulative mythology of the American Spirit and became immortalized long after the breed became extinct. In 1711 a Narragansett Pacer was purchased by Rip Van Dam of New York for Jonathan Dickinson of Philadelphia: "The horse was shipped from Rhode Island in a sloop, from which he jumped overboard and swam ashore to his former home. Recaptured, he finally arrived in New York after fourteen days passage much reduced in flesh and spirit. He cost 30 pounds plus 50 shillings for freight and was evidently an animal of spirit. He would not stand still but played about all the time. He would drink a glass of wine or beer or cider, and Rip Van Dam further opined that he would drink a dram on a good cold morning."²



Photo of a Narragansett Pacer

War. Only the Narragansett Pacer could match Putnam's grit, fortitude, and zest for life. Surely no other breed of horse would willingly have taken that plunge.

While America forged ahead into the age of steam engines and trains, the Narragansett Pacer began to fade into romanticized American mythology. James Fenimore Cooper featured the Narragansett Pacer as the horse that carried Cora and Alice Munro on their journey in *The Last of the Mohicans* (1826). The mighty little horse that helped to create America took its place on the mantelpiece beside the statuesque Native Americans who were pushed aside in the name of progress.

As roads and turnpikes became more streamlined and America moved ever westward, more utilitarian horses and mules replaced the little horse that once carried New Englanders into the future. The high demand for exports led to the depletion of breeding stock and by the 1840s with the transcontinental railroad on the horizon, the Narragansett Pacer as it was once known became extinct, a victim of crossbreeding and the ever-changing American landscape. Despite its demise, the American Spirit lives on in the memory of the Narragansett Pacer as we grope our way into the future in search of the next "Little Horse That Could" to carry us into our American Dreams.



Several pictures of Israel Putnam on horseback depict a sorrel-colored horse of the size and shape of a Narragansett. Only a Narragansett Pacer would have had the sure-footed spirit to plunge down the granite steps when Israel Putnam escaped the British Dragoons in Redding CT during the Revolutionary War. D.D.

The spirit and grit of America's little horse grew with the Revolutionary spirit in the mid-eighteenth century. Favored by postal riders for its speed and durability as well as its gaited pace, the Narragansett Pacer was well known among America's Revolutionary heroes. Jedidiah Wadsworth of Hartford bred Pacers and sold them to Jonathan Trumbull during the Revolutionary War, in which they were used by messengers and postal riders, making them the original Pony Express. Wadsworth is also known to have given his friend and comrade George Washington a few of his Pacers, including a mare for breeding stock. Washington, renowned for his horsemanship, admired and kept Pacers in his stable in Virginia and was fond of racing them. The folklore that Paul Revere mounted a Pacer on his famous ride to Lexington is unlikely because his description of that horse was that it was large, and Pacers were notoriously only fourteen hands at most. However, Revere, like many in his generation, was known to admire the little horse, which is mentioned in some of his correspondence.

Since the Narragansett Pacer was so beloved by America's Revolutionaries, surely it was known and admired by America's favorite folk hero, General Israel Putnam. Although there is no definitive proof, it is plausible that Putnam was astride a Narragansett Pacer when he outran the British by careening down the steep granite stairs in Redding, Connecticut, during the Revolutionary

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Illustration: <https://alchetron.com/Narragansett-Pacer>
Illustration credit: Alchetron

Common Sense Car Care

By Rick Ostien

This month I would like to ask my readers a question. What kind of vehicle owner are you? The vehicles today be they new or used are a large investment. You need to get some kind of return for that investment.

The area we live in has limited mass transit so to go to work or even to do many pleasurable activities that means we have to have a way to get there. We need to rely on our vehicle to take us where we want to go. The least expensive normal maintenance is an oil change. The excuse that I do not have time really does not work anymore. Many of the large chains are open seven days a week. The only problem is that they will try to up sell; meaning that from air filters and wiper blades to brakes and tires they try to tack on extras. So, I would be careful and beware of this selling technique. The reason I say oil changes are so important is that today's vehicles need clean oil and the correct amount to run properly. The vehicle manufacturer tries to lead you to believe that 12,000 miles is ok between oil changes. We suggest 5,000 miles is better with today's oils. The way to look at oil is like looking at your blood. The engine needs oil and oil pressure just like you need blood and blood pressure.

The next normal maintenance is tires and brakes. These repairs, depending on how you drive, usually happen around the 30,000-mile mark. Do not be afraid to ask questions on these repairs or any others you are having done. Do some research on any major repairs. The more you know about what you are paying for the better off you will be.

Have you noticed that more people are using hand sanitizers in public places than ever before? Another question for you is how sanitized is your vehicles interior? Today's vehicles have temperature control settings. Most vehicles have a cabin air filter which is designed to filter outside air. The filter collects everything that comes in from the fresh air duct. That also includes mice discharge and droppings. The mice will eat through the cabin air filter. From the filter they enter the inside of the vehicle to find a food source. The food or drink containers that you get from a drive thru that never seem to make it to the garbage can is a great food source. In fact, candy, crackers, and food wrappers produce mold and bacteria. I suggest cleaning and spraying a sanitizer inside your vehicle frequently. You will feel better and your passengers will thank you.

The cost of replacing a vehicle and repairs are going to increase like everything else. The overhead will be passed down to the consumer. Some options for you are leasing, new car warranty, independent insurance for vehicle repairs, or maintaining what you already own. The backyard repairer or a licensed and insured repair facility is another choice you will have to make. The backyard mechanic does not provide warranties and is not libel for his or her repairs. The state licensed repair facility is libel for repairs. This means the state motor vehicle department can receive and act on a problem you may have. The parts a licensed facility uses will have a factory warranty on the parts they provide.

I want to take a moment to remember a long-time small business owner servicing the Storrs and surrounding area. Dick Kruescher passed away this past month. Dick owned Mansfield Exxon and then opened a repair business across the street know as Dick's Auto Care. Dick had the old school attitude of the customer always comes first. I feel privileged to have known Dick all these years. He will be missed.

Rick Ostien is the owner of Franc Motors in Willington.

New Art Exhibit in Tolland

Join us on the opening day of an inspiring art exhibition featuring the works of Kim Bova, Photographer, and Nancy Bunnell, Painter, on Saturday, May 3, 2025, from 1:00 – 4:00 PM at the Arts Center of Tolland, 22 Tolland Green, Tolland, CT.

Guests will enjoy a welcoming afternoon filled with art, engaging conversation and refreshments, along with live acoustic guitar music by Tim Maynard from 2:00 – 4:00 PM.

This exhibition showcases the unique perspectives of two talented local artists, bringing together a stunning collection of photography and paintings. The exhibit will be open to the public throughout May during the following hours: Saturdays: 10:00 AM – 2:00 PM
Wednesdays: 3:00 PM – 5:00 PM

Hampton Energy Fair and Electric Car & Bike Show

Submitted by Kate Donnelly

On Saturday, May 3, from 10 am – 2 pm, the Hampton Green Energy Committee is sponsoring an “Energy Fair and Electric Car & Bike Show” at Hampton Elementary School, 320 Main Street, Hampton. The focus of the fair is on energy and conservation. With enthusiasm for alternative energy generation, conservation, and electric vehicles growing, the fair will share information about technologies, products and services that are available.

Local vendors and organizations will present information on how to save money and make homes more comfortable. Featured at the fair will be presentations and displays on solar, energy efficiency, heat pumps, electric cars, and geothermal energy. Electric cars and bikes will be there to test drive and representatives will answer questions about them.

Solar expert Chamae Mejias will discuss how solar works, financing options available, and solar storage with batteries. “Homeowners go solar for many reasons. Solar panels reduce your energy bills, minimize your reliance on fossil fuels, and increase your independence from your utility. They increase the value of your home by about 4% on average, based on multiple studies,” said Mejias.

“The cost of solar has come down significantly over the past decade, while electricity prices have dramatically increased. The Green Energy Committee encourages people to attend our fair to find out more about how to reduce their energy consumption and take advantage of incentives for solar energy and other clean energy measures. Most homeowners qualify for a 30% tax credit on clean energy installations,” according to Green Energy Chairperson Kate Donnelly.

The fair will feature the Energy-In-Action Mobile Interactive Exhibit. This science museum on wheels is an innovative mobile learning experience. It will teach children and adults how to become an Energy-Efficient Generation by making smart, energy-saving decisions daily. There are many fun exhibits including:

- The Energy Grid – Place a token at the top of the wall and watch the path of electrical power as it travels from the generation station to homes or business.
- Plasma Tube – By placing your hand on the plasma tube you'll safely experience the built-up charge that will concentrate in the area around your hand.
- Thermal Tunnel – Walk through the tunnel and see the thermal energy coming from your body on a tv display screen.
- Water Wall – See how your daily water consumption adds up by stacking pegs that represent everyday actions that involve water.
- Generation Station – Use your physical strength to power incandescent and LED bulbs and feel the extra effort needed to illuminate the incandescent bulb.
- Wind Power Podium – Crank a source of wind power to illuminate an LED bulb.
- Light Wall – Select a colored peg that correlates to an energy-saving action. All pegs together will create a lit image representing the actions everyone will take to save energy. Great for a class photo!
- Pass It On – At the end of your visit inside the exhibit, place a stamp on the poster for each person you plan to share your newly learned positive energy messages.
- Solar Power – Learn about the rooftop solar panels on the trailer and see various meters and gauges that are powering the panels.
- Careers – Explore various green jobs in the energy efficiency and sustainable energy field.

“The Hampton Green Energy Committee has worked for over a decade finding energy savings and working toward clean and renewable energy for town buildings and Hampton residents,” continued Donnelly

For more information call Kate Donnelly at 860 604-4846.

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed citizens can change the world...Indeed it's the only thing that ever has.”

-Margaret Mead

Neighbors 13

Willington Library News

Submitted by Debra Linares

Spring is in the air and there are so many wonderful things going at the Willington Public Library! All of the following are free to those who attend or participate.

We are starting a new adult Poet Tea Time every first Thursday of every month at 6:30pm beginning this May. For this first meet and greet feel free to bring one of your favorite poems to share whether someone else's or your own.

This will be a fun and creative time to open up a whole new world of poetry.

During Children's Book Week, join us on Saturday May 3rd at 10:00 for a fun time celebrating “Star Wars Day” along with “Free Comic Book Day” where we will be giving away comic books all day long...just for the fun of reading.

Meet Robert Harris, author of an adult book, “Historical Moments: Military Contributions of African Americans” and now a new children's graphic novel, “The Story of the Buffalo Soldiers”. He will read and present his newest book as a first person narrative and in full re-enactment attire. Co-sponsored with the Willington Historical Society, this program is for all ages and will be a site and experience to behold. Join us Saturday, May 17th at 1:30.

Local artist, Jennifer Jeffreys will teach a two hour drawing class on Thursday, May 29, from 6-8pm. We will learn how to draw woodland creatures. She will have a selection of woodland creatures from which to choose from...a squirrel, a mouse, a raccoon, and a bunny. We will explore drawing from a photo using a grid, creating form and value with graphite pencils and how to draw fur! No prior experience is necessary. You've got this!

Our Family Movie Series is back! We will be showing “Paddington In Peru”, Saturday, May 31st and “Sonic Hedgehog 3” on Saturday, June 28th, all on our BIG screen at 12:30pm. Feel free to bring your own lunch or enjoy complimentary popcorn.

The Willington Public Library's Friends group will hold their annual Book Sale, the weekend of Saturday, June 7th 8:00-4:00 and Sunday, the 8th from 9:00-4:00. coming this weekend will insure a first choice and availability of the selection. The Book Sale will continue to run from Monday, the 9th until Friday the 20th. Friday is the last day of the sale and will prove to be a “surprise and gift” day for all who come. We will be open later until 7:00 pm on this Friday, to accommodate those last minute lookers and shoppers. All proceeds go toward Library programming. We appreciate your support and we thank the Friends of WPL for all of their support as well! Friday, June 27th will start off our Summer with “The Not So Quiet Corner” Summer Music series with “Concert Festival Express” which will be a “better “ than Woodstock concert to see and hear. This is a fun watch, listen, and learn documentary series that is being presented by Arthur Rovozzo.

The library's annual 8 week long Summer Reading Program begins on Saturday, June 21st and run through Saturday, August 16th. Our Kick-Off program, “Hoops, Tops, and Rabbit Sticks: Native American Games” will be held at 11:00am.

This is an exciting hour of immersion into the realm of play in the Native American tradition. The opening performance draws from such Native stories as “Turtle Races with Bear” (Seneca), “The Great Lacrosse Game” (Menominee) and “Gluscabe and Dzidziz” (Abenaki). We'll chant to the stories, sing along to the music and move together in a round dance. Then everyone will have fun playing a variety of Native North American games, including hoops, rings, rabbit sticks, foot races and cat's cradle. This participatory program for children and families explores the importance of games when growing up and how games help to keep us fit and sharpen our minds throughout our lives.

Play is one of the ways we learn to relate to others, to think in new ways, and to foster friendships, new and old. Level Up at Your Library is an all ages summer reading program based around puzzles and games. Whether you're playing with STEM concepts or gamifying your reading logs, learning to play chess or how to code video games, iREAD 2025: Level Up at Your Library reminds us that libraries are not just a space for knowledge, they are a space for fun!

For more ongoing programs, go to our website at www.willingtonpubliclibrary.com or signup 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

Art and Garden Tour

Saturday and Sunday, June 7 & 8, 10 am to 5 pm

Submitted by Suzy Staubach

Visit twelve private gardens created by local working artists. Enjoy the art! Enjoy the gardens!

There is much new to see. Experience paintings - watercolors, oils, and acrylics, plus sculpture, ceramics, fused glass, pyrography, photography, calligraphy, jewelry, and other works of art. The diverse gardens include a field of massive cairns, water features, stone arches, and two greenhouses made from recycled windows. There are sculpture gardens, orchards, berry patches, oh-so-pretty vegetable gardens, and flower beds filled with Canterbury bells, hollyhocks, nepeta, peonies, roses and poppies.

Art work, much of it horticulturally inspired, will be available for purchase. Individuals, families and groups are welcome. Bring your camera or sketch book if you wish. This relaxing self-guided tour through Ashford, Coventry, Mansfield and Willington in the beautiful hills of northeastern Connecticut is free.

For more information and a map, please visit:

ArtGardenCT.com

Willington

Holes in the Woods, 17 Lustig Road, 860-878-0768

A labor of love, this garden includes streams, a half-acre pond, a colorful wildflower meadow, and acres of blooming mountain laurel. Two miles of named woodland trails wind through a lavish display of ferns, moss, boulders and ledge. And, oh yes, there are traditional flower beds too. Trail maps available.

Host Artist: John C. Starinovich uses natural holes from downed trees combined with metals, crystals, deer antler, bone, shells, seed pods, various woods, LED lights, and most importantly, mirrors to create his sculptures. He works with both hand and power tools to create his one-of-a-kind art. John was featured on CPTV and has won numerous awards for his work. He has more than 100 wall hung and pedestal sculptures in his gallery.



NC Bunnell Studio, 12 Red Oak Hill Road, 860-377-7817 Nancy calls her garden "a bit of heaven painted on earth." Through the years, she and her husband, a retired landscaper, planted flowering shrubs including azaleas, lilacs, hydrangeas, dogwood and a towering thirty-foot rhododendron. There are flower beds and vegetable gardens and a fishpond surrounded by butterfly bushes.

Host Artist: Nancy Cooke Bunnell is an award-winning pastel and acrylic painter. Her work ranges from realism to energetic abstractions. She is inspired by Ireland, landscapes, flowers, cows, lambs and recently, octopuses. She divides her time between creating paintings and teaching others. She is presently teaching abstraction at the Glastonbury Art Guild and a skill and creative based program for homeschool children at Willington Library. Her awards, too numerous to list, include first in state at the Connecticut Pastel Society.

Guest Artist: Julie M Beckham's work is characterized by a vibrant, shimmering color palette which she transforms into flowing, whimsical abstract and realistic compositions. She draws inspiration from nature with the aim that her paintings summon a joyful and blissful response. Julie's work reflects a lifelong fascination with nature and the movement of water.

Storrs/Mansfield

FentonRiver Studio, 287 Gurleyville Road, 860-429-3646

This flamboyant cottage garden surrounds an old button factory located next to the Fenton River in the quaint, historical neighborhood of Gurleyville. It is resplendent with pink, purple, red and white peonies, iris, and poppies. Displayed amongst the flowers are garden sculptures including colored cement leaves, a large lighted fairy house, and a beautiful Koi pond and waterfall.

Host Artist: Shauna Shane works in oil, pastel, watercolor and sculpture. Her goal is to share her love of the



natural world with others through color, light and energy. Her studio is filled with 150 impressionistic paintings. Her garden is filled with sculptures. Shauna has won many awards for her work and has been a teacher and mentor for many Connecticut artists.

Flying Dragon Farm Studio, 533 Chaffeeville Road, 860-429-5222

An expansive, colorful garden surrounds the spacious barn studio. Guests can wander through a lush mix of fruit trees, berry bushes, flowers and vegetables. Amidst this profusion of horticultural delight, there is an unusual aquaponics garden in a hoop house and a fish pond. Birds and bees abound. Located near the historic Gurleyville Gristmill.

Host Artist: Mary Noonan works in oil, water colors, encaustic, graphite and collage. Using multiple styles and techniques, Mary reflects her relationship to the people and natural world around her in each of the pieces she creates.

Guest Artist: Elizabeth Clark creates jewelry, ornaments, Dragon Eyes, fairy doors and more. She uses metals such as silver and bronze, various woods and stones, beads, resin, and glass. Her work reflects her love of nature and gardens. Indeed, she even makes miniature gardens!

Khuyay Farm, 441 Warrenville Road, 860-377-3016

Two years ago, Janet began converting the perennial gardens on her alpaca farm to native gardens. Among the flowering shrubs and mature trees, she has made a native woodland shade garden and a native full sun garden. It is an exciting and ongoing process. Her alpacas are very friendly and enjoy visitors.

Host Artist: Janet Dauphin makes gorgeous window decorations, night lights, dishes, trays, and jewel-like pendants in fused glass. This winter she focused her work on reactive glass and the interplay between copper and sulphate, creating interesting color effects.

Guest Artist: Nora Charters says that "deep down" her work "is ... a celebration of beauty." Her photographs capture gardens, nature, a small Connecticut farm, a local greenhouse, "the smile of a perfect flower." She has framed and unframed images on paper and canvas.

Scott Rhoades Studio, 422 Browns Road, 860-423-9779

Ellie and Scott Rhoades have created a picture-perfect garden around their house and the studio Scott built himself. There are stone arches, formal borders, terraces, a pool, fruit trees, a highly productive vegetable garden, an old-fashioned swing and a wealth of specimen shrubs, trees and perennials.

Host Artist: Scott Rhoades works in the style of traditional realism using acrylic paint mostly on gesso primed panel. The smooth surface enables him to work with fine details. His award-winning paintings are inspired by his travels around New England: the wilderness, weathered barns, historic buildings, people, and animals. His works are shown and collected throughout the US and internationally.

Michelle Allison Metal Art, 638 Browns Road, 860-933-5072

There are four interconnected yet distinct spaces in Michelle's spacious and deeply creative gardens. There's a front meadow, a sculpture garden, a cairn field, and a peren-

Timberman gardens.

Contributed photo.

nial garden with a small pond and intriguing architectural elements. A visual feast!

Host Artist: Michelle Allison makes fabricated and welded metal sculptures using both new and recycled materials. Her work is impressively scaled for stunning outdoor display. She finishes her pieces with modern hot rod paint in vibrant colors or a traditional rusty patina. Much of her work explores the vessel form which she constructs of ribs and rings, thus allowing the viewer into the interior spaces.

Coventry

Barbara Timberman Watercolor Paintings 1194 Main Street, 959-929-2112

Visitors in June will delight in the abundance of lettuces planted in red-and-green patterns; garden peas and snap peas coming into harvest: chard, broccoli, beans and other later vegetables all laid out in pleasing blocks of greenery with the startling explosion of color from the central poppy walk. The herb garden supplies all the culinary flavors needed in the kitchen. Surrounding the entire edible garden are the delightful flowers of late spring: foxgloves and roses, Canterbury Bells and columbines

Host Artist: Barbara Timberman begins her watercolors with a close observation of plant structure and form, drawing on her background in botany. She is keenly interested in color relationships. In her work, Barbara often juxtaposes her plant subjects with complex and beautiful handmade objects. The result - exuberantly joyful paintings that call attention to the "tangled, intertwining beauty of the material world." Her art graces many homes and has won a multitude of awards.

Irina Trzaskos Studio, 449 North School Road, 860-931-4873

The gardens surrounding this circa 1800 home were inspired by early English and Dutch gardens. There is an abundance of Canterbury bells, daisies, Sweet Williams, hollyhocks, and sunflowers. A border of rhododendrons, holly, dogwoods, almonds and Chinese dogwood frames a 50 X 50-foot garden room anchored by a gazebo. The orchard includes pear, apple, peach, cherry, and pawpaw trees. Nearby are blueberries, a small vineyard, and a raspberry bed. Plus, many birdhouses, a handmade greenhouse and a blue barn!

Garden Host: Irina Trzaskos explores the rich intersection of folklore, nature, culture, childhood, and memories in her watercolors. She strives to create paintings that are both visually captivating and emotionally resonant. Irina teaches hugely popular online art classes.

Maple Brook Studio, 950 Main Street, 860-916-4232

A stone labyrinth, its path defined by moss, graces this hidden garden. Visitors are invited to walk the spiral path one at a time, and feel the calming effects. The labyrinth is sheltered by a red Japanese maple and fringed with woodland ferns. There's also a sanctuary garden punctuated with sculptures, set in a rough meadow.

Host Artist: Aline Hoffman calls her art "Emotional Realism." An artist since early childhood, her work has included pen and ink, graphite, oils, acrylic, stone and metal sculpture, colored pencil, pastel, Chinese brush painting,

continued on next page

Early Childhood Programs Receive Grants

Submitted by Jennifer O'Brien, Program Director

NEW LONDON – The Community Foundation of Eastern Connecticut announces grants totaling \$60,000 to two early childhood programs serving more than 110 low-income families in Willimantic and in New London.

The Margaret S. Wilson Child and Family Development Resource Center (CFDRC) of Eastern Connecticut State University will receive an award of \$30,000 for toddler and preschool programs to enhance literacy, arts and STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics) learning. Child & Family Agency of Southeastern Connecticut (CFA) will receive \$30,000 to increase safety and enrich the learning environment at the Early Childhood Development Center in New London. Both grants will focus on improving quality in their early childhood programs, laying the foundation for children's future success during critical brain development years.

"The Community Foundation is deeply committed to ensuring that every child can thrive and reach their full potential. We are thrilled to announce these inaugural grants from the Brighter Futures Fund for Our Kids to help address the needs of the next generation" states Maryam Elahi, President and CEO of the Community Foundation. "We urge our legislators in Hartford to prioritize funding for early childhood care and education in this session and to implement universal, quality early childhood care and education as soon as possible."

Lisa Otto, LCSW, CEO of CFA says: "I am beyond excited that we've received a grant to support much-needed renovations at the Child and Family Agency's New London childcare center! This funding will allow us to create an even more welcoming and inspiring environment for the incredible children and teachers here. We're committed to making high-quality early childhood education accessible to every child in our community, and this grant helps us move one step closer to that goal."

According to Niloufar Rezai, Director of the CFDRC, they are "excited for the opportunity to increase access to literacy and STEAM opportunities for our students through generous funding by the Community Foundation of Eastern Connecticut. This funding will allow CFDRC to open a library which will include literacy and STEAM materials and program-



ming empowering young children from diverse backgrounds. Building these skills, and engaging families in the process, fosters critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving. These foundations not only enhance academic success but also open doors to a wide range of opportunities, helping to bridge gaps and promote equity in education and future careers."

These awards represent the first grants of the Community Foundation's Brighter Futures Fund for Our Kids, an endowed fund that was established to advance equitable outcomes for and improve the lives of children and youth in Eastern Connecticut. The grants were supplemented by generous donors who prioritize investing in children's wellbeing.

The Fund is part of a larger effort led by the Community Foundation to End Child Poverty Now in Connecticut. More than 110 organizations have signed onto the End Child Poverty movement and have taken



part in submitting testimony, both online and in-person, to the legislature and reaching out directly to legislators about bills that can help lift children and families out of poverty.

"The Office of Early Childhood (OEC) deeply values the Community Foundation of Eastern Connecticut's commitment to invest in the earliest years of a child's life, serving families and children in Willimantic and New London," says Beth Bye, OEC Commissioner. "These strategic investments are helping more children develop social emotional skills and enhance learning in literacy, arts and STEAM. The OEC will continue its partnership with the Foundation as Connecticut works toward taking historic steps to strengthen and build upon our state-funded early care and education system."



To learn more about the Brighter Futures Fund for Our Kids or how to set up your own named fund to benefit Eastern Connecticut, contact the Community Foundation's Development Team at development@cfct.org or call 860.442.3572.

Photos from Child and Family Agency of Southeastern CT (used with permission and signed releases).

pyrography, gourd sculpture, and her forest delights series. She is currently engaged with a series of birch tree paintings on translucent textured papers.

Guest Artist: Elizabeth Lindorff throws and hand builds pottery for daily use and special occasions. Each pot is unique with glazes that compliment rather than repeat. Though she has been potting for many years, she still considers herself an "explorer" of the art. For her, pottery is deeply personal as well as professional and community oriented.

Ashford

Lance Glass Gallery & Studio, 62 Amidon Road, 860-933-7953

Lance rolled out the red carpet - for real!!! - in his garden, creating bright paths between his beds of vegetables, hollyhocks, dahlias and gladioli. His gardens bring daily peace and pleasure.



Allison 'Welded Steel Jar.'

Host Artist: Lance Arnold

is a flotsamist sculptor, a stained-glass artist and a painter. His varied palette consists of found object material from the forest and the sea, stained glass, and paint. Making use of driftwood, animal bone, oxidized metal, dump debris and other retrieved detritus, he creates unique pieces: glass panels, table sculpture, wall sculpture and fairy houses.

a little paper
big on community

Willow Tree Pottery, 24 Bebbington Road, 860-287-8056

This is an old-fashioned and rustic country garden. Foxgloves, peonies, nepeta, roses, and perennial geraniums color the borders. There are benches and chairs for sitting, arbors, a small stone terrace and an old hay rake. Josephine (the scarecrow) watches over the cutting garden. In the midst of it all, is the green corrugated kiln shed with an outdoor Szalay hummingbird print.

Host Artist: Suzy Staubach is inspired by the country pottery of ancient Korea, early America and 18th and 19th century England and France. She throws on a simple kick wheel and makes her own glazes from feldspars, clays and sand. Her elegant and quiet pots are meant to be used and enjoyed in the kitchen and at the table. Suzy is the author of books on gardening and pottery and is currently at work on a garden book for Brandeis University Press.

Guest Artist: Barbara Katz is a sculptor and potter working with clay. She creates simple forms based on and evocative of ancient rituals, artifacts and shamanic figures. When she discovers forms in clay she is conscious of her continuity with other artists as they have created objects for thousands of years using the same methods of shaping and processing this most elemental material available.

Guest Artists: Gretchen Geromin and Lauren Merlo work as a team, collaborating on cutting and serving boards and signs they make from local downed trees. After the trees are dried and milled, Lauren painstakingly crafts them into cheese and other boards. Gretchen then wood burns them with her original art: frogs, hummingbirds, sunflowers, roses, dragons, fish and more. Finally, Lauren gives them multiple coats of oil, making them satiny smooth and a pleasure to use.

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Regional Community Media & Arts News

Greetings everyone, some “good trouble” is coming to our regional airwaves and media channels this summer!

A New Program Format for *On the Homefront*—more time for in-depth coverage

In May, 2025, I will launch a new design for the series that will provide more time for in-depth coverage of many major emerging issues affecting our everyday lives. The live weekly radio broadcasts will continue on Wednesdays at 5:05 pm on WILI AM 1400 and 95.3 FM. All programs are available 24/7 on the WILI Radio YouTube channel on any device. (Full distribution info at end of article.)

On the Homefront is more than 25 years old with over 1000 episodes produced in different media studios in our region, and part of my joy in sharing the programs with you is the freedom I have been given to reach out and connect on any topic with anyone at any time. This is rare in the media, and I have always tried my best to honor that freedom with continuing community service to support our quality of life.

In recent years I expanded my weekly coverage of the arts and arts organizations working in all forms of expression across the region. I have shared the studio with great people who are working on unique events and programs for a wide range of community and human service organizations. The graphic below is my map and compass, and I am always looking for stories and people who want to communicate their energy and ideas.

The new format will present a variety of shorter 10-minute segments with longer 30-minute expanded segments and the usual community news and events calendar listings.

We Are in a Crisis of Time and Patience and Competence

The people in charge of change in our country now, our dear leaders, all of them, are impatient and unwilling to do the arduous work that has been evaded through previous decades of leadership and complacency. By generations of previous dear leaders! No matter the good intent or vision, it is the process employed that determines the ultimate success. When too many people are hurt along the way, the mission fails.

When it comes to these major challenges and risks, many folks are keeping the faith that when the macro gets screwed up the micro can show the way out. Regular people, local citizens, working at their local grassroots levels with their local officials and leaders, will find some solutions that might be shared upstream at higher levels. Bottom-up solutions and inspirations, smaller-scale and tested, can bring new light to the growing darkness in our TV and telephone screens. Locally based and community-focused media across our country can spread all the good news, connect the dots of understanding, and open the doors to corrective action.



I am two months into my tenth year of writing columns for *Neighbors* and I want to thank Tom King for creating and protecting this precious community resource and for giving me a continuing opportunity to contribute. It has been an honor to be part of this family of writers and creators serving eastern Connecticut.

Below is a highlight from my first column in *Neighbors* in 2014. It shines a very bright light on the spirit, purpose, and intention for all of my community media work since my earliest days in radio, at WAER-FM at Syracuse University (early 70s). I share it with you now because it speaks to us directly and clearly today. It is also in the heart of every column I write. It is about becoming a *community creature* and then living that way:



The Virtual Community

We know the rules of community; we know the healing effect of community in terms of individual lives. If we could somehow find a way across the bridge of our knowledge, would not these same rules have a healing effect upon our world? We human beings have often been referred to social animals. But we are not yet community creatures. We are impelled to relate with each other for our survival. But we do not yet relate with the inclusivity, realism, self-awareness, vulnerability, commitment, openness, freedom, equality, and love of genuine community. It is clearly no longer enough to be simply social animals, babbling together at cocktail parties and brawling with each other in business and over boundaries. It is our task—our essential, central, crucial task—to transform ourselves from mere social creatures into community creatures. It is the only way that human evolution will be able to proceed.

—M. Scott Peck, from *The Different Drum: Community-Making and Peace*

[From the Introduction to “The Virtual Community: Homesteading on the Electronic Frontier,” by Howard Rheingold, Addison-Wesley Publishing Co., 1993.]

Edgar Allen Poe and the News!

When you feel bad about what you are seeing or hearing in the news today and you consider tuning out, I want you to do something else and tune into Edgar Allen Poe’s short story, *A Descent into the Maelstrom*. This tale presented a vision and a perception that gave Marshal McLuhan a powerful metaphor to translate how the sailor in the story survived the storm when those around him were drowning.

I will not give it away, it is worth the read and the impact of the sailor’s perception on his survival will open your eyes to your own mediascape, *your personal maelstrom*, in a new way! Once you get that message you will be more prepared to protect and preserve your sanity, living in what has become our modern media malfunction. I will give you until the next issue to read it, and then I will continue this translation of perception and bring it up to date with help from some Ravens.

ARTS NEWS AND OPPORTUNITIES Upcoming Free Workshops

1. CT Volunteer Lawyers for the Arts (VLA) 101

The Connecticut Office of the Arts partners with the Arts & Business Council of Greater Boston to provide legal services, advice, and education through the Volunteer Lawyers for the Arts (VLA) program. This service is available to CT artists creative entrepreneurs, performing groups, and arts & culture organizations throughout Connecticut.

If you are an artist or creative worker, an arts educator or administrator, or a mix of creative roles, there’s support for you! Whether you need help with a particular situation, or even just the day-to-day business of being a working artist, the Volunteer Lawyers for the Arts is here to help!

When: May 14th, 4:00 - 5:00 PM

Where: Virtual Webinar

Who’s Invited: Artists, creatives, lawyers, cultural workers, nonprofit leaders, board members, community organizers, and anyone who works in this sector and is interested in learning about the services offered by the CT VLA.

Registration is required—go to ct.gov/arts. For questions about the workshop, contact Tamara Dimitri by email at tamara.dimitri@ct.gov.

2. State Historic Preservation Office Educational Program

Introduction to Section 106—Historic Properties

Section 106 is an implementing regulation of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 that requires Federal agencies to consider the effects of their undertakings on

historic properties. This introductory course is designed for individuals, organizations, early-career cultural resources practitioners, municipalities, and government agencies that are interested in learning the basics of this compliance process.

Wednesday, June 25th 9:00 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

This class will be held in-person, location TBD, contact the office at:

<https://portal.ct.gov/decd/services/historic-preservation/about-the-state-historic-preservation-office>

RECENT GUESTS FOR ON THE HOMEFRONT



CT Veterans for Peace/February 19
L-R: Curtis Brand, Bill Potvin, Gregory Laxer



Windham Theater Guild/March 26-Twelfth Night Production/March 26. L-R: Stella Maranous, Ed Lewis, Michael Spencer

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 5:05-6:00 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 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

In Your Corner

Hands Off!

By Pamela Skelly

I decided that I wanted to be part of a larger protest in Hartford on April 5th. My friend Marleen and I dressed for the cold, rainy weather along with 2,500–3,500 others. We were a diverse group of individuals, joining together on this day to tell the current administration, “Hands off!” April 5, 2025, was the largest one-day series of protests against the second Trump administration nationwide. Demonstrations drew an estimated 3 million people in over 1,400 locations in all 50 states, as well as some in other countries. In Willimantic, over 700 community members came out to protest! Locally, my friends tell me, the Willimantic *Chronicle* did not carry the story. Another Quiet Corner protest was held in Killingly. Throughout Connecticut, many local communities held April 5th protests.

I was impressed by the creativity of the signs and banners at the Hands Off protest in Hartford and in photos from other locations. The signs were cleverly worded, graphically impressive—and protected from rain! One sign encapsulated my feelings with a quote from Sun Tzu: “An evil man will burn his own nation to the ground to rule over the ashes.”

Marleen and I have been protesting together for the last 50 years. We even camped in Seabrook, New Hampshire, against nuclear power in 1978. (The irony of stopping in Seabrook to get a fast charge on my electric car on the way to see my cousin in Maine is not lost on me. But I still think nuclear power is potentially dangerous.) Do we need to be protesting visibly? I think we do because we need to make sure our elected representatives know our positions on the important issues. We vote for them and pay their salaries. Our elected officials can’t ignore us if throngs of citizens show up to peacefully protest, as is our right as U.S. citizens.

The NAACP is not partisan, but we do endorse policies consistent with civil rights and justice for all. The Hands Off protests were led by a coalition of organizations that included our NAACP as well as other civil rights organizations, labor unions, LGBTQ+ advocates, veterans groups, and women’s rights groups. The protest was designed specifically to stop the arbitrary and capricious funding and workforce cuts dictated by the current administration, as well as protest new global tariffs, brutal immigration raids, rollbacks on rights, and growing authoritarianism. These cuts are hurting most of the people in our country financially, unless you are a multi-millionaire. Also, the administration has been brazenly acting against court rulings, with the support of the majority in the Senate and the House, restricting freedom and targeting specific individuals just for doing their jobs. Hands Off organizers, reported CNN, “say they have three demands: ‘an end to the billionaire takeover and rampant corruption of the Trump administration; an end to slashing federal funds for Medicaid, Social Security, and other programs working people rely on; and an end to the attacks on immigrants, trans people, and other communities.’”¹

At our meeting following the 2024 presidential election, our branch president Leah Ralls commented that she had listened to the speech by Trump. When she turned it on, she was upset to hear him state that there are only two genders. Her reaction was to be proud to be in the NAACP because we are an inclusive organization. The NAACP’s members are a diverse group in race, age, gender, religion, etc., united by the common goal for justice for all. We are unified by our shared values and we become better when we learn from others who have had different life experiences.

A huge concern to our community are possible cuts to Social Security, Medicaid, Medicare, and educa-

tion. Many retirees depend on Social Security, often living check to check, so reducing their benefits, especially with inflation and tariffs, would make it impossible for them to make ends meet. When it comes to health care, our country’s president, senators, and representatives have the world’s best health care paid for by our tax dollars, yet they will not make sure that ordinary citizens have *their* basic health care needs met? Cuts in education will definitely impact our communities because schools may lose breakfast and lunch programs, special needs funding, and more. Parents and students soon will be able to report teachers who teach topics considered “woke.”

Our local community has many immigrants from various countries who are concerned about their safety and their rights. Due process has not always been given even when the documents and court orders prove someone’s right to be in the United States. During my years of teaching, I have had elementary school students worried about

their family members’ safety in their birth country as well as their own safety if they had to go back.

Different policy changes affect those living in the U.S. differently. My eldest daughter teaches high school English in an American school in Bolivia and has taught in Latin America for over 20 years. She has worked in private schools where a big goal of the students is to get into a university in the United States. For the very first time, her students were warned to scrub their social media if they wanted to receive a student visa. They were told to delete even “likes” on posts that the current administration may categorize as “woke,” such as those supporting LGBTQ+ or Black Lives Matter. The school community was reminded that the students do not have the same rights as U.S. citizens.

No taxpayer wants to fund waste and fraud, but slashing funding and workers without careful attention is not an efficient method of government oversight. In fact, the current administration has actually spent more than the last at this point in time. NBC reported, “A *Wall Street Journal* analysis of daily financial statements issued by the Treasury Department found that government spending since the inauguration in January is \$154 billion more than in the same period in 2024 during the Biden administration.”²

Originally Elon Musk stated his DOGE team would save the government \$2 trillion. Now he’s dropping that number to \$150 billion for the fiscal year. Although Musk claims transparency, the information posted has been inaccurate and incomplete. Isn’t that an example of fraud?

One large expenditure is Trump’s weekend golf trips, which cost taxpayers \$3.4 million per trip! A recent one cost \$4.2 million because an extra day was spent with the Saudis (instead of attending the dignified transfer of U.S. soldiers’ remains) and it included a helicopter flight from Miami International Airport instead of Trump taking his motorcade for the 7.7-mile ride. I consider this wasteful spending.

In Connecticut, our senators and representatives have been working for our needs as well as our state administration. Our attorney general has joined several lawsuits challenging executive actions. Still, I think we need to be vocal in our support of these efforts and call on them to do even more to fight inequality under the Trump administration. Protesting is one way to express your opinion. Contacting your local, state, and federal elected officials through phone calls, letters, or emails is another way. If you feel strongly about your concern, let your elected officials know! The NAACP, at the national, state, and local levels, will speak out whenever they see injustice, and, as a large organization, their opinion is noticed.

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. The annual membership is \$30, a reasonable price to support a worthy organization. Please visit our website at <https://windhamnaacp.org/> to learn more. You can contact us at (860) 230-6911 or email info@windhamnaacp.org. You can also check out our Facebook page at Windham Willimantic CT NAACP.

¹ Alaa Elassar, Shania Shelton, and Mina Allen, “‘Hands Off!’ Protesters across U.S. Rally against President Donald Trump and Elon Musk,” CNN.com, April 6, 2025. <https://www.cnn.com/2025/04/05/us/hands-off-protests-trump-musk/index.html>

² “‘A Joke’: Despite DOGE, Gov. Spending under Trump vs. Biden Up \$154 Billion This Year, WSJ Reports,” NBC Universal, April 11, 2025. <https://www.yahoo.com/news/joke-despite-doge-gov-spending-022501388.html>

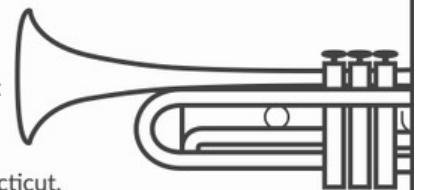


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2025 CONCERTS

MAY

Experience Eastford Day, Eastford, CT
Memorial Day, May 26, Ashford, CT
Ashford School Jamboree, Ashford, CT

AUGUST

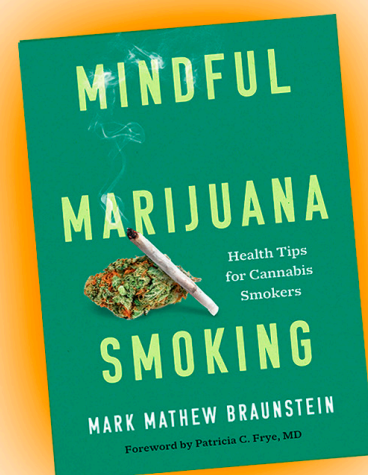
Old Home Day, August 16, Union, CT

SEPTEMBER

Family Day, September 21, Ashford, CT

Stay updated on our concerts through our Facebook page.

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Her Story

Women of the Revolution

Submitted by Bev York, The America Museum

For over a week I have been outraged at the news that the current administration demands that Museums, Libraries and on-line resources like the Arlington Cemetery Burial listing remove and delete mention of women, blacks, and other peoples with diverse backgrounds. Remove marginalized peoples? Erase history? Millions of people, other than white males, have made enormous contributions to our American story, securing our liberty and improving education, health and the general welfare of all peoples everywhere. That is history! Over the past few decades more deserving people from all walks of life are finally getting their stories into the narrative and published. That is our American history.

Also, the attack on the reporters who have been called “the enemy of the people,” threatens our very freedoms of speech granted in the Bill of Rights! How fortunate we are to have this *Neighbors* paper to share our knowledge and voice our opinions.

Many women achieved greatness and usually under difficult and challenging circumstances. I offer a sampling of one of my historical semiquincentennial programs which is about “Women in the American Revolution.”

Deborah Champion is eastern Connecticut’s Paul Revere. In 1775, Deborah, age 22, rode sidesaddle from Colchester to Boston to deliver a dispatch to General Washington. Her father surmised that she would manage to evade the British sentries better than a male. Museums preserve the red cloak and the saddle of this courageous patriot rider.

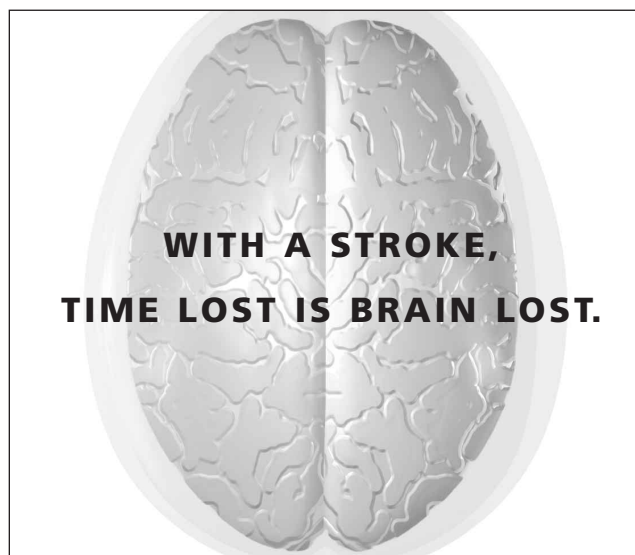
Elizabeth Freeman, formerly known as the enslaved Mum Bett, sued for her freedom- and won. In August 1781, Elizabeth, an African American woman, after living approximately thirty years in slavery, successfully filed and won a freedom suit in Massachusetts. The jury found that Elizabeth should be “free” and not the property of Colonel John Ashley. Elizabeth, taking on a new surname, helped to set a legal precedent for abolishing slavery in the Commonwealth in 1783.

When Ebenezer Watson died of smallpox in the fall of 1777, his young widow Hannah, with five children under age seven, was left to publish the paper. *The Courant*, in Hartford, was the only paper dedicated to the patriot cause. When the paper mill burned down, possibly the work of Tories, Hannah and another widow, Sara Ledyard, worked to get it rebuilt. Thanks to the efforts of Hannah and Sara, the paper never missed an issue!

Hundreds of women followed the camps during the Revolutionary War as cooks and nurses. And a few, like Deborah Sampson, were on the battlefield. Sampson disguised herself as a man and served under the name Robert Shirliff. She was in uniform for seventeen months before she contacted a fever and her severe illness revealed her true identity. She was honorably discharged at West Point.

Over the past 250 years of the United States of America, millions of ordinary people have done extraordinary acts of service to help win and secure our liberty. Jesse Jackson said,

“America is not like a blanket—one piece of unbroken cloth, the same color, the same texture, the same size. America is more like a quilt: many patches, many pieces, many colors, many sizes, all woven and held together by a common thread.” With Liberty and Justice for all!



Coventry Celebrates Make Music Day

Participating in a global celebration of making music on the longest day of the year-

Submitted by Ruth O’Neil

Coventry joins the international Make Music Day Celebration taking place on Saturday, June 21, 2025. Make Music Day is a one-day event where free, live musical performances, opportunities to make music, and other musical events take place around the world on the longest day of the year. Musical offerings in Coventry and throughout Connecticut are part of a global celebration of music making in over 800 cities inspired by France’s *Fête de la Musique*.

At 11 A.M. aspiring musicians of all ages, especially those who are the youngest, are invited to visit the Booth and Dimock Library located at 1134 Main Street. Coordinated by the Song-a-Day Music Center, activities will include short performances by students, an interactive sing-a-song and a lively on the spot musical parade around the library.

“To create, to make music is inside each one of us. We all should have the chance to express that creative part of ourselves whenever possible,” says Ruth O’Neil, owner and director of the Song-a-Day Music Center. “We are proud and excited to be part of Make Music Day and are trying to offer something special for all of our community members of all ages. This day is a true gift to communities everywhere.” Music has been shown to strengthen social connectivity, reduce stress, lower blood pressure, stimulate memory, and is integral to a well-rounded, enjoyable life. Now participating in Make Music Day for its seventh year, the Song-a-Day Music Center encourages every form of music making.

For more information on this event contact the Song-a-Day Music Center at 860-742-6878, inquiries@songadaymusic.com or the Song-a-Day Music Facebook Page as well as the Booth and Dimock Library at 860-742-7606. The Song-a-Day Music Center, located at 2809 Boston Turnpike, has been in operation since 2002 offering musical instruction, sales, rentals and repairs.

Throughout the afternoon other “pop-up” musical performances are planned along Main Street.

Later in the day, the Coventry Arts Guild will host an Open Mic/Stage Event at Mill Brook Place for Make Music Day from 3 P.M. to 9 P.M. All types and levels of performances are welcome. Pre-registration is encouraged by emailing Tim Timberman at timbermant@sbcglobal.net. Include performance type and length and time preference. This information will be used to develop a performance schedule. Mill Brook Place is located at 1267 Main Street in Coventry. For more information on this and the Coventry Arts Guild, call 860-428-1919 or email timbermant@sbcglobal.net.

About Make Music Day:

Held annually on June 21, Make Music Day is part of the international *Fête de la Musique*, taking place in 800 cities across 120 countries. The daylong, musical free-for-all celebrates music in all its forms, encouraging people to band together and play in free public concerts. This year, more than 65 U.S. cities are organizing Make Music Day celebrations, encompassing thousands of concerts nationwide. Make Music Day is presented by The NAMM (National Association of Music Merchants) Foundation, and coordinated by the Make Music Alliance. For more information, please visit makemusicday.org.



Giving a Boost to Local Libraries During National Library Week

Submitted by Jennifer O’Brien, Program Director

NEW LONDON – Why do we love our libraries? Because of everything they provide. From books and digital resources to job assistance and creative programming, libraries are essential to thriving communities.

In recognition of the many ways libraries bring people together, spark imagination, and support lifelong learning, the Community Foundation of Eastern Connecticut is today announcing proactive grants to three libraries in the region. Grants totaling \$45,000 will be distributed to the public libraries in New London, Norwich, and Willimantic so they can continue to provide the unique programs and services, such as free Wi-Fi, digital collections, career workshops, STEAM programs, and so much more, that their communities depend upon. Each library will receive an award of \$15,000.

“Like so many others, we are concerned about the drastic federal cuts that are impacting institutions in our communities, most recently the elimination of the Institute of Museum and Library Services,” says Maryam Elahi, President & CEO of the Community Foundation of Eastern Connecticut. “These cuts will have a disproportionate impact on already underserved communities. Libraries are our most trusted institution. We love our libraries and value their contribution to our society. If you love our libraries, too, and want to help, you can donate to the Love Our Libraries Fund.”

The Community Foundation established the Love Our Libraries Fund in 2008 as part of its 25th anniversary celebration. Since then, the Fund has distributed over \$1.6 million to community libraries. To donate, visit bit.ly/LoveOurLibrariesFund.

Libraries serve as hubs for learning, creativity, and connection, helping people of all ages explore new ideas and opportunities. The Community Foundation is pleased to show its support for this important institution that draws us together as a community.

National Library Week was celebrated April 6th through April 12th, 2025.

About the Community Foundation

Serving 42 towns and comprised of over 650 charitable funds, the Community Foundation of Eastern Connecticut puts philanthropy into action to address the needs, rights and interests of the region, focusing on four priority areas: empowering youth, promoting basic needs and rights, preserving the environment, and advancing animal welfare. The Foundation stewards net assets of roughly \$110 million and has awarded more than \$100 million in grants and scholarships to nonprofits and students since its founding in 1983. To learn more, visit cfcet.org.

Two AM Sleep Intermission

By Carol Wheelock Hall

Up from slumber, elusive sleep!
Gone was dreaming, buried deep.
The new day hardly just begun,
And hours before a glimpse of sun.

No need to just lie there awake,
When time be early, or is it late?
A wagging tail and wet-nose “Hi”
Says “I’m with you no matter why.”

Blessed silence to read or think,
Perhaps turn thoughts to paper, ink.
My rocking chair bids “Sit the night,
And if desired, then start to write”.

But no bright thoughts come from my head.
An hour plus passed...so back to bed!
And now more weary off I go,
Where I relax and dreams can flow.

Please thank and patronize our advertisers for making the Neighbors paper possible.

'Ghosts'

I walk around with ghosts inside me.
Their colors are faded,
not unlike dried orange peels
arranged artfully for a painting.

They rattle my windows sometimes
like giddy schoolchildren on a snow day,
eager to get outside and play,
and go sledding downhill.

At night I bid them farewell,
but they still quietly lurk,
careful not to wake me
playing silent violins by the door.

I ask them why they visit,
dancing in my dreams,
hiding underneath the table
with my aunt and her favorite doll.

But then when the answers come
I am fast asleep, traveling to distant
lands I have never seen on Earth.
There are galaxies under my eyes.

I wore my grandmother's face
once on a Broadway stage,
little bits of Barbara Munch
hiding behind her coy smile.

Was she really a hatcheck girl
working in a famous Manhattan club,
pretty Irish lass waiting for her father to pick her up?
She never tells me the truth.

They mention their names but I soon forget,
memory filled with other signs and symbols
as I toss and turn in the sheets.
Each one has a story.

But on occasion, I remember the
sturdy gentleman caller or sweet Allie Rose,
relics of days gone by as they
patiently wait to be acknowledged.

— Jolene Munch Cardoza

National Book Award Winner Martín Espada at Poetry in the Park

Poetry in the Park will begin this season with a reading by Martín Espada on Thursday, June 26, at 6:30 pm. Martín Espada has published more than twenty books as a poet, editor, essayist, and translator. His new book of poems, *Jailbreak of Sparrows*, was published by Knopf in April 2025. His previous book, *Floater*, won the National Book Award for Poetry and a Massachusetts Book Award. His poetry collections from Norton include *Vivas to Those Who Have Failed*, *The Trouble Ball*, *The Republic of Poetry*, *Alabanza*, and *Imagine the Angels of Bread*. He is the editor of *What Saves Us: Poems of Empathy and Outrage in the Age of Trump*.

Espada has received the Ruth Lilly Poetry Prize, the Shelley Memorial Award, the Robert Creeley Award, an Academy of American Poets Fellowship, the PEN/Revson Fellowship, a Letras Boricuas Fellowship, and a Guggenheim Fellowship. The title poem of his collection *Alabanza*, about 9/11, has been widely anthologized and performed. His book of essays and poems, *Zapata's Disciple* (1998), was banned in Tucson as part of the Mexican-American Studies Program outlawed by the state of Arizona. A former tenant lawyer with Su Clínica Legal in Greater Boston, Espada is a professor of English at the University of Massachusetts-Amherst.

Poetry in the Park is a series of free poetry readings and open mics presented by the Curbstone Foundation the fourth Thursdays of June, July, August and September in the Julia de Burgos Park in Willimantic. The park is on Curbstone Way/Poet's Corner at the corner of Jackson Street. Also reading this summer: July 24, Hugh Blumenfeld; August 28, Julien Strong; September 25, Penelope Pelizzon.

Bring a blanket or lawn chair. And a poem if you wish.

God Help The U.S.A.

(Sung to the tune of Lee Greenwood's execrable "God Bless the USA")

Lyrics by Dean Farrell

If tomorrow all the things were gone I'd worked for all my life,

Thanks to Trump and Musk and DOGE and ICE causing such domestic strife.

No, I wouldn't cry or bitch and moan, instead I'd stand and fight,

'Cause the flag still stands for freedom, so to hell with the far right!

I'm ashamed to be an American,

Now that Trump is running things.

And I won't forget we're ruled by laws,

And not the whims of kings.

And I'll gladly stand up next to you,

And deport Elon today.

'Cause there ain't no doubt both need to go.

God help the USA!

From the border with friend Canada and down south to Mexico,

Tens of millions of Americans say these Nazis need to go.

But we won't accomplish a damned thing if we sit around and talk.

It is only through bold action, so we need to walk the walk!

I'm ashamed to be an American,

Now that Trump is running things.

And I won't forget we're ruled by laws,

And not the whims of kings.

And I'll gladly stand up next to you,

And deport Elon today.

'Cause there ain't no doubt both need to go.

God help the USA!



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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.

Traditional Music in Connecticut's Last Green Valley



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Keep Blooming

an essay by Carol Wheelock Hall

When are you too old to pursue your inner calling? When is it too late to follow your passion from long ago? Never, I say! If you have the determination and energy within, then let it out. Time's ticking! Chase those dreams with the best of your abilities. Use to your advantage your life lessons, accumulated wisdom, and the knowledge of how to focus to see the possibilities that wait for you.

There are innumerable older people in their 70s, 80s, and even 90s who are luckily going strong in meeting and surpassing their goals. These include famous architects, actors, painters, musicians, writers, etc. But more importantly, there are people like you and I, who are not famous, who will continue to reach for and grab their fulfillments in life. It gives them purpose and satisfaction.

One little girl, about ten years old, told her mom that she would like to write a book someday. Sixty-five years later and after her retirement, she was encouraged by family members to share her travel pictures and poems. Bingo...she wrote her first self-published book and several more books have followed, including children's books, animal poems, and her anthology of works! It was not done for fame or fortune but for a fulfillment. That little girl was me, and I continue to enjoy sharing my thoughts in writing with others, and to maintain my own self worth in the process.

So what rings your bell? You most certainly don't need to wait until after retirement if you can find the time and have the fire in your belly to chase your dream. And if you have found your bloom already, then continue with it into your sunset of days, or until a new pursuit calls to your heart and mind. May you discover, and then try to do what you want in life, to make yourself happy and fulfilled.

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).

Judge upholds PURA decision to deny UI request for rate increase

CT Mirror. “A superior court judge Thursday dismissed nearly all of United Illuminating’s claims that state regulators acted unfairly in denying most of the company’s 2023 request to increase electricity rates for its customers in Connecticut. The case was an appeal of the Public Utilities Regulatory Authority’s final decision in UI’s most recent rate case, in which the authority’s three commissioners unanimously approved a roughly \$23 million increase in the utility’s annual revenues — far below the company’s request for a \$131 million increase over three years. The utility quickly appealed the decision...”

Opinion: Utilities’ web of misdirection unraveled by court ruling

CT Mirror. “For too long, Connecticut’s regulated utilities have benefited from subterfuge and obfuscation — using complex energy and legal jargon to bamboozle anyone who might try to rein in their corporate greed. They create a false sense of controversy, manufacturing a crisis at PURA [Public Utility Regulatory Authority] where none exists. But under its current leadership, PURA has become exactly what it was always meant to be: a staunch defender of ratepayers, grid reliability, and statutory authority. PURA’s resistance to regulatory capture is precisely what has utilities scrambling.”

Plant to convert trash to gas, electricity to be pitched in Plainfield: What’s the plan?

The Bulletin. “SMART Technology Systems, LLC, is proposing a new waste processing plant in Plainfield, Connecticut to address the state’s growing trash problem. The plant would use sorting and gasification technology to convert garbage into renewable electricity and natural gas, reducing reliance on landfills and incinerators...The bulk handling system directs the organic material to the anaerobic digester, which captures biogas by digestion/fermentation of the organics. The biogas upgrader converts biogas into renewable natural gas, and separates and recovers the methane and carbon dioxide separately and liquifies the carbon dioxide for sale and transportation.”

Dan Haar: Trump wants to bring big energy savings to Connecticut. Is it possible?

CT Insider. “President Donald Trump has turned his attention to a natural gas pipeline for Connecticut, New York and the rest of New England with a promise of thousands of dollars in savings for typical families. Sounds great! The price of energy, especially electricity from gas-fired generation plants, has emerged as a huge headache in Connecticut and we’d love to see big savings just by adding a new pipeline or two...As for the savings, if the president is saying families would see an average of \$5,000 a year in lower costs after a new pipeline came online, that’s preposterous. The average Connecticut family spends about \$2,800 a year on electricity and \$1,800 a year on gas for heat.”

Connecticut considers incentives to spur networked geothermal projects

Canary Media. “Connecticut could become the latest state to pursue networked geothermal systems as a way of cutting greenhouse gas emissions, improving public health, and reducing energy cost burdens for residents. State lawmakers are considering a bill, HB 6929, that would create a grant and loan program to support development of geothermal networks, which tap into energy stored in the earth to deliver heating and cooling to multiple buildings in one neighborhood... Eversource has shown interest in developing a pilot project and taken preliminary steps to seek approval to proceed, but specific legislation supporting geothermal networks would be more likely to galvanize action from utilities.”

Eliminating public benefits charge in CT electric bills could be ‘catastrophic,’ official warns

CT Insider. Dueling Republican and Democratic ideas on how to lower consumer electricity costs took center stage in a crucial legislative committee [meeting]... Katie Dykes, commissioner of the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection, favored the Democratic plan...But Republicans...stressed the need to remove the so-called public benefits charge portion of consumers bills and roll the charges into the state budget...[Dykes] voiced opposition to the Republican plan, which she believes would increase consumer costs... “We feel that some of the measures in this bill would actually undercut critical investments that are providing benefits to rate payers today in terms of us being able to keep the generation and distribution and transmission rates lower by supporting consumer investments in energy efficiency, for example.”

Contract to convert CT utility poles to EV charging stations given to California & New York company

CT Insider. “A San Francisco-based company that specializes in retrofitting utility poles to also serve as electric vehicle chargers has been chosen by Connecticut regulators to be part of an 18-month pilot program to expand charging station availability in the state. Voltpost... announced its agreement with the Connecticut Public Utilities Regulatory Authority Wednesday morning. The company will deploy a total of 50 charging stations, which include a total of 100 charging ports, across Connecticut. Sites will be located in both the United Illuminating Co. and Eversource Energy service areas...Exactly where the Voltpost chargers will be deployed hasn’t been determined yet.”

Eversource and Avangrid join fossil fuel lobby, undercutting climate targets

Boston Globe. “Last year, two major energy companies working in Massachusetts [and Connecticut] joined the ranks of an innocuous sounding group: the Consumer Energy Alliance...according to financial documents, the alliance was formed and is operated by a fossil fuel lobbying group based in Houston. Its stated purpose includes “the promotion and defense of natural gas.”...Across the country, the alliance has fought the kinds of climate policies that are taking root in Massachusetts....That makes it “incredibly troubling” that both Eversource, one of the state’s largest gas and electric utilities, and Avangrid, offshore wind developer and the parent company of Berkshire Gas, became members of the alliance last year.”

Opinion: Bullying has no place in energy policy

CT Insider. “Marissa Gillett has been the most effective PURA [Public Utility Regulatory Authority] commissioner since its inception. She has held the line on rate requests and stood up for ratepayers time and time again. That these [utility] companies and their allies would undertake such a despicable smear campaign is proof that she and PURA have done a very good job standing up to their pressure...If her opponents succeed in ousting her, they will render PURA a toothless tiger and regulators on many issues will know corporations can get away with bullying them if they do not do what the companies want.”

Connecticut cities and towns push for greener, less-expensive power

Canary Media. “Connecticut’s version of aggregation could be particularly ambitious, following a model used in California and New Hampshire. This approach allows cities and towns to choose between a basic aggregation program, in which a hired energy broker negotiates for electricity on behalf of residents, and a system in which multiple municipalities band together to form a larger aggregator that could handle the process of procuring power itself...In its first year, New Hampshire’s aggregation program saved ratepayers in participating communities about \$14 million and created revenue of \$10 million for reinvestment.” Plus: Lawmakers Weigh Bulk Energy Buying Plan

Connecticut manufacturer invests in 750-kW rooftop solar array

Solar Power World. “Budderfly, an energy-as-a-service company and The Gilman Brothers Company, a 128-year-old, family-owned manufacturer of foamboard products based in Connecticut, have announced a new 750-kW rooftop solar project. Over the 15-year agreement, Budderfly expects to lower Gilman Brothers’ annual energy costs by up to 30%...Following this project, Gilman Brothers will benefit from a rooftop solar system, all-new LED lighting and an ultra-high-efficiency HVAC system, in addition to several other cost-saving technol-

ogies like high-efficiency motors paired with variable frequency drives.”

How Massachusetts is trying to turn EVs into grid batteries

Canary Media. “The batteries inside electric vehicles can do a lot more than power a car. They can back up homes, schools, and businesses during power outages. They can soak up grid power when it’s plentiful and cheap and send it back when it’s scarce and costly...In Massachusetts, a new V2X [vehicle to everything] pilot project is now seeking households, businesses, schools, nonprofits, and municipal governments to test all of these ways that EVs can help the grid. And unlike many V2X tests done by other U.S. utilities, this one will offer two key financial incentives: bidirectional chargers at no cost to participants, and real money to those who commit to letting utilities tap into their EV battery power.”

CT bill would ban gas-powered leaf blowers

Connecticut Public. “A bill in the Connecticut General Assembly would ban the use of gas-powered leaf blowers in the state starting in 2029. Co-sponsored by 10 Democratic state lawmakers, House Bill 6263 would first direct state and municipal agencies to begin phasing out the use of gas-powered blowers beginning in 2027. Beginning in 2029, the use and sale of such blowers would be outlawed statewide...“They are much more than just a nuisance — they are actually a very meaningful public health threat.”...the blowers emit fine particulate matter “which is respirable, which goes into the lungs, goes into the bloodstream,” as well as conventional air pollutants like ozone.”

Historic Church In Tolland Going Solar

Patch. “The Rev. Dr. Jeffrey Gallagher, the church’s senior pastor, added, ‘It was rewarding to work with the town and its Historic District Commission to create a solution that balances the practicality of solar installation while maintaining the historic character of the Tolland Green. Not only does our solar project reduce the church carbon footprint and show our commitment to ecological justice, it serves as a viable example for other churches in historic districts to gain value from solar projects.’”

Opinion: CT’s energy story: high utility rates and reliance on natural gas

CT Mirror. “Connecticut residents should not be burdened with high and polluting energy prices and sources. It’s time for change and there’s a clear way forward. It’s time for Connecticut residents to stop subsidizing fossil fuels and for the state and utilities to start investing in clean energy. Fossil fuels, “natural” gas, are an energy of the past and should be left there.”

Dan Haar: CT electric rates are going up. The fight over a regulator doesn’t matter. Here’s why

CT Insider. “Every couple of years, the state Capitol falls into a frenzied froth over the fate of a top appointee who’s a lightning rod for some real or perceived gripe. On Thursday, Marissa Gillett, the state’s top utility regulator since 2019, comes before a key committee of lawmakers for a new term...Gillett, the thinking goes, will help the state stabilize and even lower its way-too-high electric rates by reining in Eversource and Avangrid, the parent of United Illuminating.Well, that thinking is wrong. Dead wrong. Here’s a news flash: Our electric delivery rates are going up over the next two to three years, not down. It doesn’t matter whether PURA, as the authority is known, is headed by Gillett and two other tough commissioners, or by Mickey Mouse, Donald Duck and Pluto.”

Opinion: CT must find new ways to pay for the energy transition

CT Mirror. “As recent anger and debate over the cost of electricity in Connecticut rage on, a glaring truth has surfaced. To meet our grid expansion, modernization, and climate goals, significant investments must be made to the tune of \$3-7 billion over the next decade. The old mindset about how to pay for it all must be completely reimagined, for this decades-old business model no longer works, as evidenced by our energy costs skyrocketing. That model never anticipated the massive upgrades needed to prepare for the 21st century of renewable power, energy storage, electric cars, heat pumps and AI.”

Advocates rally for PURA Chair Gillett, accuse utilities of ‘smear campaign’

CT Mirror. “A coalition of climate advocates, social justice groups and Democratic lawmakers ratcheted up their criticism of Connecticut’s for-profit utilities...Their argument: Gillett’s tenacious approach to dealing with the utilities has triggered a backlash from an industry concerned with its own profits and shareholders, rather than

continued on next page

Solar Today - Honoring Earth Day, every day

Greetings all,

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

My annual Springtime reminder for Mother Earth.

Please be gentle with your ambition to get out there to do spring cleanup. There are many bees, small insects and animals that are very beneficial to the well-being of our bio-diversity that need your grass, twigs and perennial plants to stay "as-is" until the day and nighttime temps reach a consistent 50 degrees for at least one full week.

Springtime and Solar!

Lately, I've been getting quite a few inquiries from folks who have added mini splits or heat pumps over the past year or so. They're discovering that the units use a lot more electricity than they anticipated. Additionally, the last four months of increasingly higher electric charges here in CT. also prompted the calls. Their concerns are not only the extra amount of electricity they are using from the new heating and air-conditioning units, but the actual cost of that electricity being used.

I'm also getting calls from people who are exploring adding onto existing solar systems. There are a lot of particulars that need to be discovered here. Including, how much electricity is being used over their current solar production, is there enough roof space to accommodate adding to the system, is the equipment compatible, etc..

With new or add on systems, there are some new and challenging fire set back regulations for town permitting requirements and of course, the grueling solar production limitations put in place by, you guessed it, the utility company!

All in all, it's always worth it to at least take the time and look into solar with a local reputable person that has YOUR best interest in-mind.

It's all in the numbers so make sure you work with someone

its ratepayers in Connecticut. "The fact of the matter is that for the first time in a long while, PURA is actually holding the utilities accountable," ...Both of the state's largest utilities — Eversource and United Illuminating — have pushed back against those claims and instead pointed the finger at Gillett, arguing that she is responsible for abusing her powers and creating a hostile regulatory environment."

Opinion: Ratepayers deserve answers on PURA changes

CT Mirror. "...what are the legal implications of transforming PURA into a quasi-public agency, a model that does not appear to have been tried in other states?... how will the proposed changes ensure transparency in decision-making and address the increased risk of regulatory capture, an all too common dynamic where utility regulators become dominated by the interests they regulate rather than being driven by the public interest? PURA exists as a check on monopolies — to ensure, in the absence of competitive market forces, that corporate interests do not outweigh the public interest...Quasi-public also means quasi-private, which might work well in the context of many of our current quasi-public agencies that have hybrid business missions, but what impact would moving this regulatory authority from a state agency to a quasi-public agency have on its unique balancing role?"

Opinion: A better energy future for Connecticut

CT Mirror. "Seduction: "to lead astray." There is a move afoot to seduce Connecticut energy rate payers. An energy strategy that includes "all of the above" initially sounds like common sense. "More natural gas means lower prices" at first glance appears to make sense. And "we need more gas generation" continues the myth that Connecticut doesn't have enough power. Let's kick the tires on these seductive arguments."

Opinion: Lamont aligns himself with Trump's fossil fuel agenda

CT Mirror. "Governor Lamont should be "Trump-proofing" Connecticut from this oil and gas industry and its campaign on disinformation and harmful policies. The bottom line is that Connecticut did not elect Trump as our governor; we elected Lamont and it's time for our governor to fulfill his original promises that got him into office. Expanding the state in collaboration with the fossil fuel-friendly federal government would derail efforts to build an affordable, clean energy system that would serve generations to come."



that has an in-depth knowledge of the different finance option. As "they" say, cash is king with the fastest return on investment, a solar loan is next and for some people a Lease is the proper fit. Make sure your rep knows detailed information on each and can intelligently explain each option and the benefits of each one.

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.

A revision and worthy re-visit from last edition:

Spring is here and we are seeing more solar door knockers in our area. MANY are NOT local!

If you choose to chat with someone MAKE SURE AND ASK TO SEE THEIR CT HIS LICENSE!! Read it well and make sure it matches their drivers license! Take pictures of both, the CT HIS and their DL. A picture of the person also helps for safety sake. Yeah, I know, weird, but it's crucial that you do not just look at their badge. Many are fake. "If" they are not willing to be transparent on who they are up-front, they may not be your most trusted source with solar either.

Tread with caution and especially beware of a solar company and sales person who uses a lease as the first financing option!! In the industry, we call this 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 that usually better suit a homeowners financial gain with solar.

Many 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're all 100 Hooley sales tactics to get folks to sign up.

Personally, I am super 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 suns energy or Hydro Electric technology to power your home, please reach out for a no obligation consultation.

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

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
Questions: Dennis at knowdj@frontier.net

A contra dance is a social dance that one can attend without a partner. The dancers form couples who form sets in long lines. At the core 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.

Making Music in Chaplin

Did you enjoy playing a musical instrument a while ago?

Or you would like to learn how to play one now?

An informal instrumental music group is forming on Thursday mornings at the Chaplin Senior Center.

There are no auditions to join the group, just an interest in making music together. All levels including beginners are welcome.

If the string, wind or brass instrument that you played in high school has been idle for the past 40 years in a closet or the attic, you might have it checked (perhaps lubricated!) to insure it will play properly and not frustrate you.

Let the Chaplin Senior Center know if you might enjoy playing again in a welcoming setting.

Contact Peggy Church at peggychurch2@gmail.com if you would like to learn more.

Song-a-Day Music Center

Coventry, Connecticut
860-742-6878 or 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

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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

At Hampton's Fletcher Library

Submitted by Janice Trecker

Book & Author Program at Fletcher Memorial Library

Fletcher Memorial Library hosts Hampton author Jamie Boss, who will discuss his Vietnam memoir, *Coming of Age in Vietnam*, Wednesday, May 21, at 5:30 p.m. Boss will accompany his remarks with some of the many slide photographs that he took during his 1968-69 tour of duty.

Although Boss recalls keeping extensive notes during his time in Vietnam, they did not develop until about ten years ago when he says, "I was concerned with the lack of info out there about Vietnam. My presentation will be about the Vietnam no one ever told you about, how we lived day to day and the types of jobs."

His particular job was tank repairman. A mechanic in civilian life, Boss was trained to handle tracked vehicles at the Aberdeen Proving ground. Working in the field, he was in a good position to understand the three part division of military labor.

"Basically you had three categories, Infantry, they were in the field probably all the time only once in a while back to base camp; the base camp people, there all the time, and fellows like me who went out in the field to do their job."

He notes the considerable responsibilities given to teen age mechanics like him and the difficult adjustment they had coming home, where no one cared about the war and where would be employers were skeptical of their abilities.

Boss has been active in the local music and has worked in graphic design. As a result of his graphics training, he can put a book together from writing through production and has chosen to self publish. *Coming of Age in Vietnam* is his third book, following his earlier memoir, *Growing up in Milford and Other Far Away Places*, and a volume on self publishing.

Fletcher Memorial Library is at 257 Main Street, Hampton. Info: 860 455 1086. All library programs are free.

The June-July show at Fletcher Memorial Library's Top Shelf Gallery is *An Eye for Beauty*, works on canvas and paper by Xiaohong Song. The North Windham artist will be showing a variety of landscapes and floral pieces in oil and a series of still life and figurative pieces in charcoal and pencil. The show will officially open Saturday June 7 at 1 p.m. with an artist's reception and demonstration.

Song received early art training in her native China. "When I was in elementary school," she says, "I especially



enjoyed art class. I copied many portraits of Chinese mythological fairies, and was noticed by my art teacher, who recommended that I go to the Children's Palace to learn sketching systematically and build up a foundation. This played a very good role in my later paintings and drawings."

As an adult, she says she loves all forms of art. "Anything that brings beauty to the world captivates me and is something I continuously strive for."

Her drawings are elegant and finished, but Song says she is still experimenting with her artistic practice. "I often find it challenging to convey a sense of three-dimensionality in painting," she says. "Although I can use light and shadow to enhance volume, I have always wanted to find a more intuitive way to express depth and space."

Her solution has been to experiment with using hot melt glue to bond strands of yarn together, creating double sided yarn sculptures. She will include two of these experiments in her show. A sunflower piece is a tribute to one of her favorite artists Vincent Van Gogh, while *The Bright Moon over the Sea and The First Snowfall*, hints at her Chinese artistic heritage.

When Song isn't painting, she enjoys writing, crafting, cooking, making videos and pictures for her editorial work, as well as walking, "where connecting with nature is often a source of artistic inspiration", she says.

Song participates in Artists Open Studios in our area, as well as showing her work at The Slater Memorial Museum, Paul Nigra Center, and Arts of Tolland. Her Top Shelf Show will be her second solo exhibition.

Fletcher Memorial Library is at 257 Main St., Hampton, CT. Info 860-455 1086. The Top Shelf Gallery is open during library hours.



Local Artist's Work on View Through May

Submitted by Steve Schumacher

My First 55 Years - A Retrospective Exhibit featuring Mixed Media, Drawings, & Paintings 1968 - 2024. Artist - Educator Steve Schumacher shares his creative path through change, joy, and anguish to a new promise of beloved community. On view

in April and May at Windham Community Center, 1 Jillson Square, Willimantic, Ct. For information: schumachersteve57@gmail.com.

<https://windhamct.gov/Facilities/Facility/Details/Windham-Community-Center-11> The exhibit space is a long hallway off to the right as you cross the main lobby.

Introducing The River Room: A Performing Arts Venue Where Creativity Flows

By Chris Beaudry

This spring, Willimantic, Connecticut welcomes the newest addition to its already thriving arts scene. Located beneath Spiral Arts Ceramic Studio at 50 Riverside Drive, The River Room is a brand-new nonprofit performing arts venue that promises to bring music, dance, visual art, and community together in a beautifully constructed "speakeasy-style" venue.

Founded by local musicians/artists Chris Beaudry and Daniela de Sousa, The River Room seats just 65 guests, offering an intimate and welcoming space for performances and creative gatherings. The venue is part of Hands On Projects (HOP), Inc.—a new nonprofit created by the duo to foster community engagement through the arts. While awaiting official 501(c)(3) status, the project is supported by Willimantic Renaissance, Inc, an organization many know for its yearly production of Willimantic's 3rd Thursday Street Festivals.

Beaudry, a saxophonist and music industry veteran, and de Sousa, a Brazilian-born artist and educator who also runs Spiral Arts, have long shared a passion for fostering the arts and culture scene. Their new venture is built on that vision: a place where artists and audiences alike can enjoy performances, connect, collaborate, and be inspired.

The River Room's Grand Opening Celebration takes place Friday, April 18, with a ribbon-cutting ceremony at 11:00 AM. Its first ticketed concert happens the following Friday, April 25, featuring the Gray Sargent Trio, led by Tony Bennett's longtime guitarist of 24 years.

Upcoming events showcase a wide range of talent, from live mural painting and jazz-hop fusion to Brooklyn indie duo Paris Monster, and even a visit from theoretical physicist Dr. Ronald Mallett, whose time-travel theories inspired the documentary *How to Build a Time Machine*. Later this spring, beloved Connecticut author Wally Lamb will host a book release and Q&A moderated by fellow local writer Laura Heeger.

Starting on Wednesday, May 7th, The River Room will also offer Latin and salsa dance classes with Grasshopper Arts owner and dance instructor Oswaldo Tirano, along with open mic nights, gallery showcases, and comedy events down the road. The bar at The River Room will be run by Trigo Wood-fired Pizza—recently voted Best Restaurant in Windham County at the Connecticut Restaurant Association Awards—offering craft cocktails, local beer, wine, and treats from nearby makers.

To see the full schedule and learn more, visit riverroomwilli.com or follow @riverroomwilli on Instagram.

In a time when meaningful connection feels more important than ever, The River Room invites art and music lovers to gather and celebrate the arts—together.

'Turning 15 On the Road to Freedom'

By Larry Gag

The young adult book "Turning 15 On the Road to Freedom" was written by Lynda Blackmon Lowery about her experiences as a teen activist in the civil rights movement. On Monday, April 7, grade 8 students at Mansfield Middle School had the opportunity to question the author, now age 75. After all 130 eighth graders read the book, they met with her live on Google Meet (a program similar to Zoom). The students posed brilliant questions to the author for a full hour. The students were patient, respectful, and attentive listeners as the author shared her wisdom.

Ms. Lowery grew up in Selma Alabama when voting rights were denied to minorities. In 1965 she was the youngest person marching for voting rights on the Edmund Pettus Bridge during "Bloody Sunday." She was tear gassed and severely beaten by police and deputies, many on horseback. Ms. Lowery left the hospital to participate in the second march, this time protected by federal troops. This march lasted 4 days, all the way to the State Capital in Montgomery.

Young Lynda was jailed multiple times in high school for helping with sit-ins for public integration. People had to rely on the students to do sit-ins, because adults would be fired and black-listed and their families would starve.

The MMS principal and teachers were also brave leaders to accept this opportunity. With today's attempts to rewrite history, in "any-town USA", educators can lose their jobs when angry parents over-react about "DEI". In fact, this project was previously turned down in one of our local communities. The community of Mansfield is a step above, and the citizens deserve kudos for creating a community climate where educators can feel free to "do what is best for students."

Poets at Large Continues in Year Six

Poets at Large will present spoken word/poetry events at The Vanilla Bean Café, 450 Deerfield Road, in Pomfret, CT and at Roseland Park, 205 Roseland Park Road, Woodstock, CT this year. Reading at The Vanilla Bean will be poets Sandy Yannonie (4/26), Meg Smith (5/31) Nadia Sims (9/20), Tom Lagasse and Karen Warinsky (10/25) and Gloria Monaghan and Heather Treseler (11/22). Reading at Roseland will be Sarah St. George, Eric Petersen and John W. Cormier, Jr. (6/15) and John Hodgen and Catherine DeNunzio (9/7). Roseland Park events are free.

Poets at Large is a part of Windham Arts. All events are ADA compliant and are recommended for ages 14 and up. All Vanilla Bean events are \$15.00 which includes a raffle. These readings are sponsored in part by Linemaster Switch, WHZ Financial Advisors, bankHometown, The Putnam Area Foundation and Charter Oak FCU. Contact karen.warinsky@gmail.com to sign up for the open mic. 5-minute max as time allows.

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!

Rabbits

We hear things that are cute, innocent, or funny,
like get going and be “quick like a bunny”.
So, in keeping with your learning habit,
here’s a few facts about bunny rabbits.

First, get comfy, relax, think about it, take a look
at some very famous rabbits in film and books.
There’s the Easter and Energizer bunnies, remember?
Plus there’s Bugs, Br’er, Roger, Peter and Thumper.

In beloved stories, seeing these mammals is a treat.
Did you know in history, rabbits were hunted for meat?
Single digits are generally the length of a cottontail’s life,
but rabbits can hop, kick, bite, go to burrows to hide.

A wide field of vision makes it easier for them to see,
and longer ears in warm climates can regulate their heat.
They look, and avoid many predators by agility and speed.
Energy comes, not from carrots, but from eating greens.

Babies are “kits”, females are “does”, and males are the “bucks”.
They portray images of endurance, innocence, fertility, and luck.
Pet rabbits know their own names, and know their caring host.
They’d say “I’m pretty smart” if they could speak and boast.

*This is one of the entries in the book Animals,
to educate and entertain, by Carol Wheelock Hall.*

Are We For the Birds?

By Carol Wheelock Hall

Can you identify a sparrow or a cute little wren?
Of course there’s a difference, and it matters to them.
You may say “Who cares”, while birders raise their hackles
if you call a warbler a finch or a starling a grackle.

Humans may have long flights to reach dreams and druthers.
Our world is interdependent. We depend on each other.
Our disciplines, or melodies, may highlight our smarts
in science, math, history, or in the creative arts.

Seeking things in life, sometimes we win, sometimes we lose.
Each of us is different in what we wish and choose.
For your nest, do you shop for Frosted Flakes or Raison Bran?
Are your travel wings a sedan, sports car, or mini van?

As for rules and regulations, views are conservative or liberal.
Tempers may flare with ingrained tones that are rude and visceral.
You may have feelings and ideas that others are quite daft,
as you fly as a Republican, Independent, or Democrat.

People all have similar needs. We really are much the same.
Can’t we accept a different view and stop acting so insane?
Dinosaurs and primates have somehow evolved,
but will mankind’s current differences ever be resolved?

Please recognize our common ground. Be tolerant and caring.
Some of the real birds at feeders seem alright with sharing.
Contribute a joyous songbird tune, not a grumbling song.
Let’s be the best in our different feathers, and try to get along.

Let Me Blow Your Mind A Bit

You’ve heard that there is only the present. That new age statement that it’s a gift
and that’s why it’s called the “present”.

The truth of it is...There is only this moment. The past is just a thought. Me sitting
down to type this..wasn’t real. It is just a thought. You getting up this morning...not
real...just a thought of it.

You’re thinking now...that doesn’t make sense.

Our brains think in linear terms. This happens, then that, then that.

We are not our brains. Think of them as a computer running, calculating. Can you
step away from that? It’s hard.

If we can not think in linear terms, then this moment becomes so full.

The past, a thought, can we change it?

The future, it’s nothing.

And take a step further in this potent moment. That that too is just a thought. That
we are all just energy. The brain manifesting that energy into illusion that we perceive as
reality. Thought made “real”.

So “now” really is a present. It is a gift. All that you think becomes. How
wonderous.

Now...what do we do...with Now?

Chamele

Benton Museum Exhibition: Minnie Negoro: From Heart Mountain to UConn

By Irene Barnard

Minnie Negoro: From Heart Mountain to UConn, a major exhibition at UConn’s Benton Museum of Art, celebrates the 60th anniversary of UConn’s Ceramics program. At a confluence with our current political moment, the retrospective, curated by UConn History & Social and Critical Inquiry professors Hana Maruyama and Jason Chang, lets visitors consider history through Negoro’s innovative art.

The young UCLA art major’s life was upended in 1942, when she and her family were taken by force from their California home and incarcerated at Wyoming’s Heart Mountain camp. She was one of over 125,000 Japanese Americans, two thirds of them US citizens, forcibly removed from the West Coast by the US government during World War II under FDR’s Executive Order 9066.

At Heart Mountain, Negoro continued the ceramics training she’d begun in college. She was mentored on the pottery wheel, making tableware for other camps and the army as part of a program later shuttered due to anti-Japanese sentiment. She left the camp after two years, thanks to efforts on her behalf by her former UCLA professor and her Heart Mountain mentor, completing her studies with an MFA in Ceramics at New York’s Alfred University. She embarked on a prolific,

successful career spanning decades, opening her own studio, selling and showing award-winning work widely from France to Peru; to the US’s Smithsonian, Museum of Modern Art, and Lyman Allyn Art Museum.

In 1965 Negoro came to UConn, founded the Ceramics department at the School of Fine Arts, and ran it almost singlehandedly for 25 years. She became an extraordinary source of wisdom and friendship to generations of students, many of whom went on to teach students of all ages. Fusing form and function, her unique artistic vision was shaped by her upbringing, life experiences, elements of traditional Japanese art, and the prevailing midcentury modern aesthetic of her time. She lived in Mystic until her death in 1998.

The exhibition provides a rare opportunity to see privately-owned objects loaned by friends and former students, including bowls, tea sets, textiles, photos, and other mementos. It’s an exceptionally intimate view into the complex life and singular work of this under-recognized ceramicist, who devoted her life to making art. The Minnie Negoro retrospective is on view through July 27, 2025, admission free.

<https://benton.uconn.edu/minnie-negoro-from-heart-mountain-to-uconn>

HELLA BASU IN ALL
OBJECT MAKING,
that aspect which
relates to its conceptual
interpretation is art,
that which relates the object
to an intended purpose is
design, & the quality
of its execution is craft.

Calligraphy by Michael Hughey of Tolland.

A TALK ON CHRISTIAN SCIENCE

BE SET FREE

We can feel trapped by circumstances—
but living a spiritual sense of
God-given liberty opens the way
to overcome what binds us.

Tuesday, May 13
at 7:00 p.m.

First Church of Christ, Scientist
870 Main Street
Willimantic, CT 06226



Renowned Buddhist Nun Scholar to Teach in Scotland

By Losang Donyo, Chair, Forest of Wisdom

Scotland, CT – Forest of Wisdom is honored to host Geshema Lhadron (pronounced *Geshayma Hladron*), a highly accomplished Buddhist nun scholar from Dharamsala, India. Geshema Lhadron is among fewer than 100 women in the world to have earned the Geshe degree—the highest level of Buddhist philosophical training, traditionally awarded only to men until 2011.

In addition to being part of this groundbreaking first cohort of female graduates, Geshema Lhadron is also one of the few high scholars – male or female – who speaks fluent English. Her proficiency allows her to directly share the profound teachings on mindfulness, meditation, and compassion training with Western audiences.

Starting Date & Weekly Schedule

-Ongoing, beginning May 3rd

·Every Saturday at 10:00 a.m. EST

·Forest of Wisdom | 51 Palmer Road, Scotland

Class Title

Merging Mindfulness and Altruism – Advice for Daily Life from the “37 Practices of Bodhisattvas”

Each session will include a short, guided meditation and an exploration of *The 37 Practices of Bodhisattvas*, a 14th-century spiritual guidebook by Tibetan master Thokme Sangpo. Attendees will learn practical techniques to calm the mind, build resilience against modern life’s challenges, and uncover deeper insights into human psychology and personal well-being.

About Forest of Wisdom

A registered 501(c)(3) nonprofit, Forest of Wisdom is dedicated to creating the Buddhist monastery of the future. We combine traditional monastic values—ethical living, loving-kindness, harmony, and contemplative study—with modern scientific observation and service to humanity. Our aim is to make the teachings of the Buddha accessible in contemporary contexts, offering practical tools for mental well-being and spiritual growth.



Geshema Lhadron.

Contributed photo.

Whether you are seeking to develop a regular meditation practice, explore timeless philosophical insights, or simply learn more about yourself, these Saturday classes at Forest of Wisdom provide a welcoming environment for all.

To Learn More

Visit www.forestofwisdom.love or check out Forest of Wisdom on Facebook and Instagram. Call 860-248-6477 or email contact@forestofwisdom.love for additional details. Join us and discover how the wisdom of Tibetan Buddhism can enrich your daily life!

Fundraiser for Asheville, NC

Submitted by Catherine Shires

When Hurricane Helene hit the community of Asheville, North Carolina last September, hundreds of artists in the once thriving arts district were displaced. The devastation was unmatched. The French Broad River rose to over 24 feet, and the waters washed away countless studios, shops and workspaces. There were 43 casualties from the storm, and an estimated \$53 Billion in property losses. According to the Asheville Citizen Times newspaper, the resulting debris from the event is 3 million cubic yards. To put that in perspective, that amount of debris would fill 140 football fields, end zone to end zone, and piled 10 feet high in each field.

Nancy Bunnell, a Willington artist, teacher and founder of the local Art & Garden Tour saw the news coverage and knew that something needed to be done to help the artists of Asheville who lost so much. She made connections with local art groups such as the Ashford Area Arts Collaborative, Windham Regional Arts Council, and Artists Open Studios, to name a few. Thanks to Nancy’s vision, the foundation if laid for a major art and musical event to take place on Saturday, September 13, 2025 at the Jillson Park and Shaboo Stage, Willimantic. The mission of the endeavor is to raise much needed funding for non-profit arts groups in Asheville who are recognized leaders in helping these artists rebuild their businesses and their lives. All profits from the event will go directly to this effort. With the help of local musician and philanthropist Bruce John, there will be music throughout the day, concessions and other fund-raising efforts. Plans are in place for a number of visitors from the Asheville area to attend the event, and give testimony to what they experienced during and after the flood, and describe local efforts to rebuild.

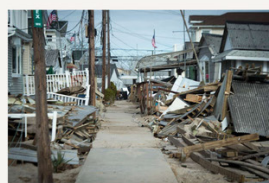
How can we help? Artists and volunteers who are interested in taking part in the show should contact the Windham Regional Arts Council for entry information.

Email: contactus@windhamrac.org

Entry fees collected will be put toward the fund-raising but sales would remain with the vendor. Food vendors are being sought. Interested licensed vendors should contact Bruce John via email: brucejohn1951@gmail.com Let’s show our support for Asheville, Eastern Connecticut style!

ARTISTS FOR ASHEVILLE

An Arts & Music Event to Support the Asheville, North Carolina Arts Community



Hosts:
The Town of Windham
Windham Regional Arts Council
Ashford Area Arts
Bruce John Music

Saturday, September 13, 2025
11:00 - 5:00

Jillson Park / Shaboo Stage
Willimantic

Mark Your Calendars
Media & Business Sponsorships Welcome
brucejohn1951@gmail.com

2025
Friends of the Willington Public Library
BOOK SALE
Children's books
Fiction
Non-Fiction
DVDs
**Saturday & Sunday
June 7-8
9:00 am - 4:00 pm**
Willington Public Library
7 Ruby Rd. Willington
All proceeds go toward Library programming funded by the Friends
For more information or to join the Friends, please email willingtonfriendsofthelibrary@gmail.com

Thursday, we met our guide, Paul, picked up provisions and drove several hours down gravel roads to Mollepata and the first weird coincidence of this trip. A young couple approached us and asked if they could ride with us to the trailhead. They spoke good English, so we asked, "Where are you from?"

"A little state in the U.S., you probably never heard of it."

"Try us," we said.

"Connecticut," they replied.

The plan was to hike the Salkantay Trail for the first three days to avoid the crowds on the Inca Trail. The first night, we camped in the shadow of Mt. Salkantay (20,486 ft.) and it began to snow. The sky was as black as squid ink and the twinkling stars suspended from the inky blackness as if by invisible filaments seemed close enough to touch, as if the whole sky had been turned into a planetarium.

Friday, we passed by the terminal moraine (scree field) of the Salkantay glacier on our way to the high point of the trek, Salkantay Pass (15,190 ft.). Beyond the pass it got very windy and suddenly our guide was directing us to a hut where two old men sat selling hats. He greeted them and we sat down to rest out of the wind. I was trying to decide if it was customary to buy something when suddenly Paul got up and started walking. As we hiked away, it struck me as odd that there should be such a place in the middle of nowhere. But when I turned around to take a picture of it, it was not there.

A few hours later, we were hiking along the top of a river valley several hundred feet deep when Paul spotted some people on the other side of the river, high up on the side. He whistled at them and they waved. Less than a minute later a man appeared out of the brush, walked up our side of the valley, and embraced Paul. Yet there was no way he could have crossed from the other side in such a short time. These two events were unsettling and reminded me of Carlos Castaneda and his experiences with "nonordinary reality." I briefly wondered if Paul was somehow affecting my perceptions, but my brain convinced me it was only the altitude.

Sunday, we arrived at the junction of the Inca and Salkantay trails. It was here, while waiting for the porters to arrive, that we met Val, a high school student, and her mother, Pat, an engineer. They were from Chile and were trekking alone, like us. When the porters had our gear, we set off for the highest spot on the Inca Trail, Dead Woman's Pass (13,700 ft.), barely shuffling our feet and resting between each step. At the top we shared a toast of Drambuie, then headed for camp. That night we encountered the first vestiges of the Incas, a canal built to carry water from the high mountain glaciers to their crop fields.

Due to its elevation changes, the Inca Trail passes through an astounding variety of ecosystems and microclimates: puna grasslands, polylepis forests, and cloud forests. In the latter we saw dense masses of trees, smothered in lichens, bromeliads, and orchids, and surrounded by tree ferns and bamboo. Kestrels and caracaras (types of falcons) floated overhead on the air currents as if weightless; hummingbirds of all kinds flitted about; llamas and alpacas were ubiquitous. And we kept seeing Val and Pat, leapfrogging them throughout the rest of the trek.

Monday's destination was Phuyu Pata Marca, an impressive ruin with stone baths of possible religious significance. The work of the Incas was everywhere: tunnels and steps carved into the solid rock; ruins of other settlements, way stations, and religious sites. The overuse of the Inca Trail became evident. There was barely room to pitch a tent at the campsite, and the toilets overflowed onto the concrete floor.

On Tuesday we arrived at the Sun Gate late in the afternoon and beheld the verdant terraces of Machu Picchu below us, surrounded by hundreds of stone buildings, and Huayna Picchu towering above everything like a sentinel guarding the city. Wednesday, we toured the ruins and climbed Huayna Picchu, the stairs ascending almost vertically, for even more spectacular views. At the end of the day we departed for the train station, where we again encountered Val and Pat. They were taking the same three-hour train ride along the Urubamba River back to Poroy. It was a strange coincidence and we said goodbye a final time, assuming we would never see them again, as they were headed back to Chile.

Two days later, we arrived at the Cusco airport for the flight home. Janet proceeded to her seat on the plane and found Val and Pat already sitting in the adjacent seats. The synchronicity continued even after we left Peru. They were in Ecuador at the same time as us the following year, and we remain in contact, hoping to visit them in Chile one day.

Peru remains both magical and mysterious. Although there are many theories, most of the mysteries are still unsolved, except for who discovered Machu Picchu. The answer is that it was never lost. The Peruvian landowners knew about it all the time.

Dennis R. Blanchette is a retired civil engineer and travel writer. Pictures of the Peru trip can be found at his travel blog: <https://dennisblanchette.com>

Where to find the Neighbors paper

Ashford

Terry's Transmissions
Ashford Spirit Shoppe
Ashford Post Office

Vanilla Bean Restaurant
Pomfret Post Office
Bakers Dozen CoffeeShop

Putnam

Subway
Putnam Post Office
Putnam Library

Bolton

Bolton Post Office
Subway-Bolton Notch

Brooklyn

Brooklyn Post Office
Bakers Dozen CoffeeShop
Salem Village

Scotland

Scotland Post Office

South Windham

Bob's Windham IGA
Landon Tire
So. Windham Post Office
Guilford Smith Library

Chaplin

Chaplin Post Office
Blondies Restaurant

Columbia

Columbia Post Office

Stafford

Stafford Coffee Company
Subway
Stafford Post Office
Stafford Cidery
Stafford Library
Mill Pond Store

Coventry

Highland Park Market
Meadowbrook Spirits
Subway
Song-A-Day Music
eyeTrade

Tolland

Birch Mountain Pottery
Subway
Tolland Post Office
Parker Place
Tolland Library
Red and White Store

Eastford

Eastford Post Office

Ellington/Crystal Lake

3 J's Deli

Hampton

Hampton Post Office
Organic Roots Farm
Hampton General Store

Vernon /Rockville

Rockville Library
Paul's Music Boutique
Records the Good Kind

Lebanon

Lebanon Post Office
Market on the Green

Willington

Franc Motors
Willington Pizza I
Willington Post Office
Willington Library
Willington Senior Center
The Packing House

Mansfield/Storrs

Storrs Post Office
Starbucks
Liberty Bank
Chang's Garden
Mansfield CommunityCtr

Windham/Willimantic

Willimantic Food Co-op
Schiller's
CAD Marshall Framing
Clothespin Laundromat
Main Street Cafe
That Breakfast Place
Super Washing Well
Elm Package Store
A1 Service Station
Blondie's Restaurant

Mansfield Center

East Brook Mall

Mansfield Depot

Thompson's Store

North Windham

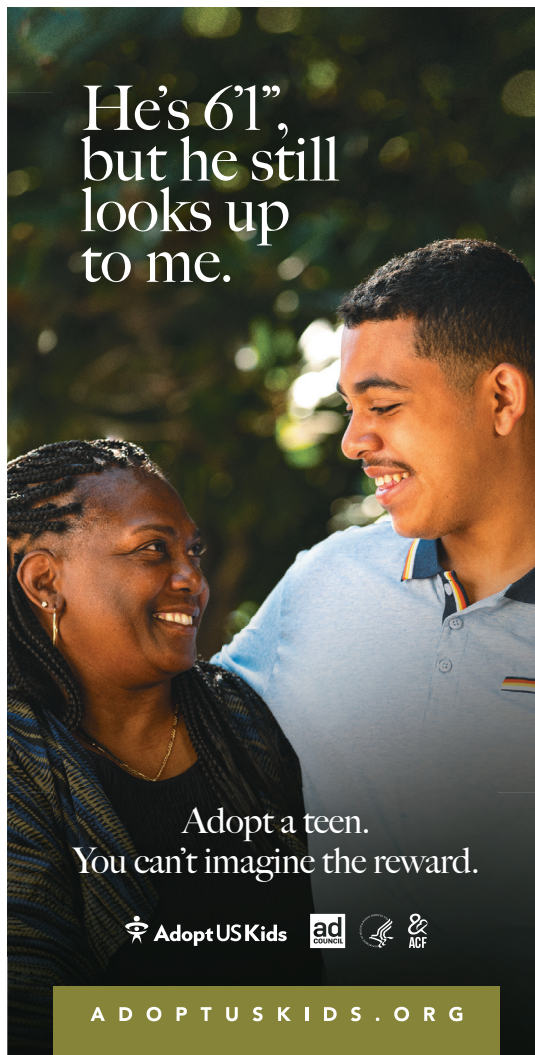
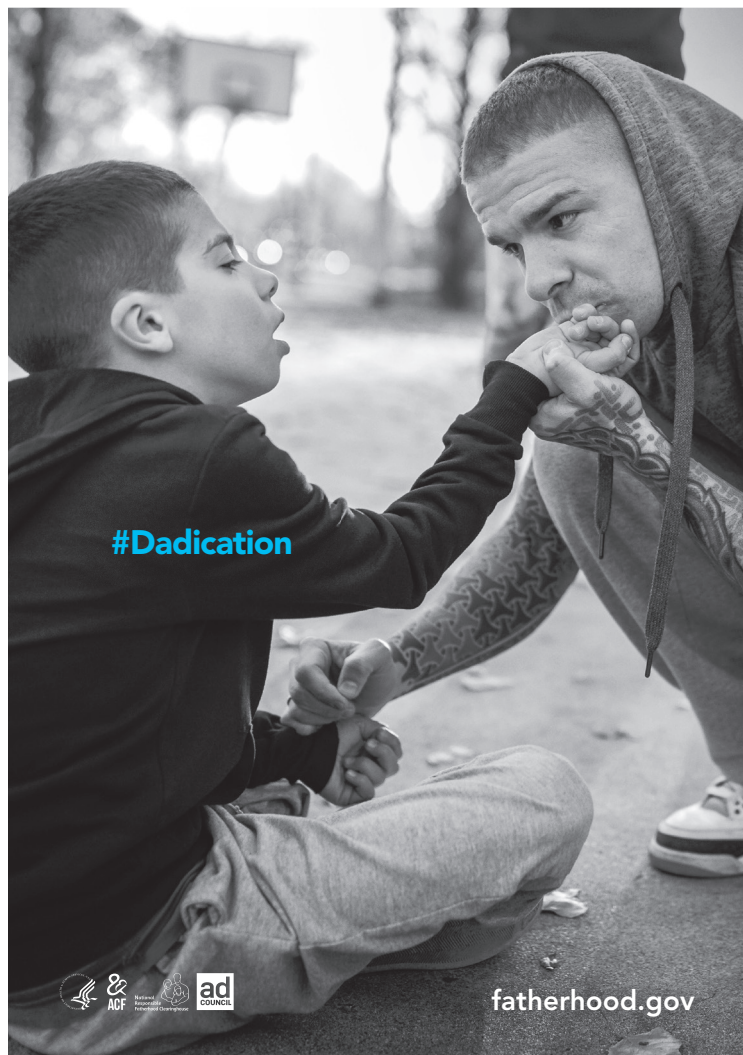
Bagel One
Subway
No. Windham Post Office

Windham Center

Windham Post Office

Pomfret

Weiss, Hale & Zahansky



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The Planet Press

Happy Arbor Day!
Happy Earth Day!
Summer is coming!

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The Planet Press Mission

The goal is to build a resilient community through accurate and engaging environmental news. We aim to foster positive change through informed dialogue by illuminating research, seasonal news, and issues affecting Connecticut. May Connecticut's natural beauty bless many future generations.

News, Articles, and Opinions Impacting Connecticut and Our Planet



We're Looking For Stories!

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the.planet.press.contact@gmail.com

Lawmakers Debate the Plastic Problem, Again

Back in 2019, the Connecticut General Assembly passed a bill to tackle plastic bag pollution. The law introduced a 10-cent fee on plastic bags and banned single-use plastic bags starting in 2021. Connecticut uses over 400 million plastic bags annually, many of which enter the Connecticut River and eventually the ocean. Although the law has successfully reduced plastic bag litter, it has also led to unintended consequences, like people turning to more durable, thicker plastic bags that often still end up in the trash.

Efforts to ban single-use plastic straws were unsuccessful in both 2019 and 2021. These straws con-

tinue to threaten wildlife, particularly marine animals, seriously.

The long-standing debate has returned to the Connecticut legislature, as lawmakers revisit a proposal to ban disposable plastic cups, utensils, straws, and takeout containers.

The bill would require DEEP to develop business guidelines and penalize those violating the single-use plastics ban. However, DEEP officials expressed they may lack the resources to enforce the ban effectively.

Sources:
Connecticut League of Conservation Voters. *Plastics*

CT Mirror (2025, March). *CT lawmakers revive debate over banning single-use plastics, polystyrene*

The New Head of New England's EPA

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Administrator Lee Zeldin announced that President Trump has named Mark Sanborn as the new Regional Administrator for EPA Region 1. In this role, Mark will oversee the implementation of the Administration's environmental policies throughout the six New England states, Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont, as well as across 10 federally recognized Tribal Nations.

Mark Sanborn served as assistant commissioner of New Hampshire's Department of Environmental Services from 2021 to 2023, and has held various state and federal government positions. In 2021, he worked as an energy advisor to the former New Hampshire Governor before joining the Department of Environmental Services. There, he led state initiatives to explore offshore wind development, among other projects.

The agency faced criticism in 2023 after emails revealed that Sanborn and another regulator

had collaborated with an industry lobbyist on the wording of landfill regulations. Shortly after, Sanborn resigned to accept a North and South Construction Services position. He stated that his resignation was unrelated to the controversy surrounding landfill regulations.

Nevertheless, professionals in the field remain uncertain about what to anticipate from Sanborn's role at the EPA, especially given the Trump Administration's efforts to scale back the agency's functions.



MARK SANBORN

Sources:
EPA (2025, April). *EPA announces appointment of Mark Sanborn as Regional Administrator for New England*

Do We Have the Right to Live In a Healthy Environment?

The right to a clean environment is increasingly acknowledged as a core human right. It goes beyond human health and well-being; it's also about valuing and safeguarding the natural world for future generations.

In 2021, the UN Human Rights Council officially recognized the right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment, affirming that everyone should be able to live in surroundings that support their health, livelihoods, and overall quality of life.

While Connecticut already has policies to safeguard its air, water, and natural resources, advocates argue that a constitutional amendment could strengthen prevention efforts by enabling more assertive legal responses.

The General Assembly is reviewing a proposed amendment to the state constitution to grant all Connecticut residents a legal right to a healthy environment. If passed, the measure could empower individuals to take legal action against the government for failing to address environmental issues.

Predicting and addressing every environmental challenge that

may arise across Connecticut's diverse regions is impossible. Forward-thinking public officials view this amendment as a vital tool for citizens. Now more than ever, strong environmental protections are essential.

If passed, the soonest it could appear on the ballot is November 2026.

Montana and Pennsylvania were early adopters, enshrining the right to a healthy environment in their constitutions in the 1970s. This action has since influenced numerous court decisions on pollution, fracking, and other environmental concerns.

In 2021, New York became the latest state to adopt a 'green amendment,' 70% of over 3 million voters supported the measure, adding a right to clean air, clean water, and a healthful environment to their state constitution.

Oregon, New Mexico, California, Hawaii, Iowa, Kentucky, New Jersey, Tennessee, Texas, Arizona, Delaware, Florida, Vermont, Washington, and West Virginia are other states considering a similar amendment.

Sources:
Wikipedia (2025, January). *Environmental rights amendment*
CT Insider (2025, February). *CT again considering making right to a healthy environment part of state constitution*

Fishing in 2025 and Beyond

Although there's no official opening day for fishing, many consider the second Saturday in April as the unofficial kickoff to the spring season. During this time, many anglers in Connecticut begin targeting striped bass, but freshwater fishing opportunities across the state are also excellent and shouldn't be overlooked.

One notable element of Governor Ned Lamont's proposed 2026-27 budget is a \$500,000 reduction in funding for Connecticut's fish hatcheries. Connecticut operates three fish hatcheries in Kensington, Burlington, and the Quinnebaug Valley in Plainfield.

According to DEEP, the hatcheries distribute more than one million eggs, juveniles, and adult fish annually to support fisheries management objectives. These facilities are responsible for raising all the trout and salmon stocked throughout the state.

The Office of Policy and Management spokesperson stated that the proposed funding cut will not affect conservation or stocking efforts. Instead, the reduction targets funds allocated initially to repopulate the American eel, a species notoriously difficult to breed in captivity.

Sources:
Hartford Courant (2025, April). *CT anglers sound alarm on planned \$500K cut for fish hatcheries. State says just 1 species impacted*

Dandelions

Don't let new weeds in your lawn get you down. Dandelions are entirely edible; every part of the plant, roots, leaves, and flowers, is safe to consume. The green leaves of the dandelion are the most commonly eaten part of the plant and are known for their jagged, tooth-like edges.

Staying mindful of your surroundings is essential for foraging for wild dandelions. Be sure about what you're eating, as lookalike plants can be unsafe.



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

Rising Bear Encounters

In early April, at Westfarms, a black bear climbed a tree on the mall's property before eventually retreating into nearby woods. State Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) officers attempted to coax the bear by firing paintballs and striking the tree.

According to DEEP, this comes amid a reported increase in bear encounters across Connecticut. In the past year, 67 bears entered homes, the highest number in the past decade. Bear sightings were recorded in 159 of the state's 169 towns. The highest number reported was 967 bear sightings in Simsbury in 2024.

Last summer was hectic for DEEP officers, especially in the northwest region. Now, they see bears crossing the Connecticut River and moving further east, expanding their range.



BLACK BEAR
URSUS AMERICANUS

Sources:
NBC Connecticut (2025, April). *Bear climbs tree at Westfarms as encounters with the animal rise across CT*

Local Lost Food Funds

Millions of dollars in expected funding for Connecticut schools and food banks to purchase fresh, locally grown food have vanished.

Under the Trump administration, the U.S. Department of Agriculture recently notified state agencies that it will discontinue two significant initiatives, the Local Food Purchase Assistance Cooperative Agreement Program and the Local Food for Schools Program, which allocated \$1 billion annually.

Sources: NewsWeek (2025, March). USDA Cuts School Food Program: List of States Impacted

Burning Season

With the coming season, the state intentionally sets controlled, targeted fires as part of its prescribed burn program to support environmental health.

Burning can be used for various reasons, including promoting native species, habitat management, and clearing underbrush to maintain healthy, safe forests while reducing the risk of wildfires.

Recently, a burn took place along the Massachusetts border in Suffield. This marked the state's second of six prescribed burns of the year, covering 70 acres. The purpose of the burn was to promote the growth of new vegetation to benefit grass-nesting bird species such as the upland sandpiper, grasshopper sparrow, eastern meadowlark, and savannah sparrow.

Controlled burning practices like these date back to before the establishment of the state of Connecticut. Indigenous people used similar methods to encourage the growth of specific trees and sustain forest health.

Sources: NBC Connecticut (2025, April). An inside look at DEEP's prescribed burning program around Connecticut

Gas-Powered Leaf Blowers Ban Bill

A bill before the Connecticut General Assembly proposes a statewide ban on gas-powered leaf blowers beginning in 2029. House Bill 6263 would require state and local agencies to start phasing out the equipment in 2027, with a full ban on their use and sale taking effect two years later.

Leaf blowers release fine particulate matter that can be inhaled into the lungs and enter the bloodstream.

A study by Edmunds Auto Group revealed that running a gas-powered leaf blower for 30 minutes can produce as much pollution as driving a Ford pickup truck for 3,000 miles.

Sources: CT Public (2025, March). CT bill would ban gas-powered leaf blowers

Asthma in Connecticut and The New EPA

Governor Ned Lamont warned that the Trump administration's plans to roll back numerous environmental and health regulations pose a serious risk to the well-being of Connecticut residents. He pledged to collaborate with other states to oppose the dismantling of protections that took decades of bipartisan federal effort to establish.

Officials raised concerns that, without EPA regulations, asthma rates, already high in Connecticut's urban areas, could worsen. In 2020, the state ranked among the top 15 in the nation for adult asthma prevalence. Further alarm has been sparked by Connecticut's 23 days of unhealthy ozone levels recorded in 2024.

Critics say these conditions could deteriorate further under Lee Zeldin, the newly appointed EPA administrator. Zeldin has signaled significant staff cuts and the rollback of more than 30 long-standing environmental rules, including reconsidering the EPA's 2009 finding that greenhouse gas emissions from air pollution threaten public health.

Connecticut has made meaningful progress in improving air quality in recent years. However, that progress is now in serious jeopardy. According to the EPA's models, up to 96% of the air pol-

lution affecting Connecticut on high-ozone days originates from outside the state. As a downwind state, Connecticut depends heavily on the federal government to hold upwind polluters accountable.

This makes the proposed regulatory rollbacks especially troubling for Connecticut and other downwind states, which rely on federal safeguards to ensure that upwind states do their part to reduce emissions that disproportionately harm our air and public health.

Sources: CT Insider (2025, March). Here's how leaders say Connecticut will be affected by environmental rule changes

Fireflies in the Garden

By Robert Frost

Here come real stars to fill the upper skies,

And here on earth come emulating flies,

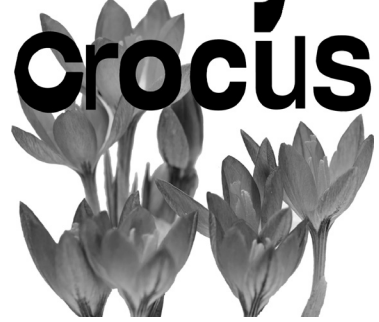
That though they never equal stars in size,

(And they were never really stars at heart)

Achieve at times a very star-like start.

Only, of course, they can't sustain the part.

Flower of the Month May Crocus



Follow the Instagram! @Ferdinands_Flower_Patch

Flower of the Month June Rose



Sewage Spill

Following the major sewage line break near South Water Street in East Windsor, an estimated 300,000 gallons of untreated sewage flowed into the Connecticut River per day. The rupture occurred in a major sanitary sewer line near the river. The town of East Windsor has since halted the discharge by completing a successful bypass repair, and a long-term fix is now in the works. As a precaution, East Windsor officials are also conducting instream water sampling to ensure water quality has returned to normal.

Sources: FOX 61 (2025, April). CT DEEP lowers caution issued for Connecticut River after East Windsor sewage spill

RIP Chappy

About 80% of beach litter consists of plastics that can be carried into the ocean. There, they gradually degrade into tiny fragments called microplastics, which are small particles consumed by many marine species.

The impact of plastic pollution was evident in February with the intestinal disease-induced death of a young seal named Chappy, who had been rescued by aquarium staff after being discovered lying on his stomach on a cold, snow-covered street in New Haven. Although the plastic fragments found in his stomach weren't the direct cause of death, the aquarium noted they underscored the broader problem.

Sources: IOC UNESCO (2022, May). Ocean plastic pollution an overview: data and statistics

Connecticut Farms

According to survey responses from the Connecticut Department of Agriculture (DoAg), the state's farmers reported over \$50 million in weather-related losses during 2023 and 2024. DoAg gathered this information in January 2025, shortly before submitting a request to the USDA for block grant funding. The USDA received \$220 million for block grants to assist eligible states impacted by weather-related events, as part of the continuing resolution signed into law on December 20, 2024.

Reported losses ranged from a few hundred dollars to over \$1 million, most attributed to cumulative excess moisture and severe rainfall events that caused flooding. Vegetable, fruit, and aquaculture operations were especially hard hit by these events, with the highest number of affected farm reports coming from New Haven and Hartford counties. Connecticut applied for \$83,979,000 in block grant funding to cover weather-related losses experienced by farms in 2023 and 2024. The state also plans to use the funds to support resiliency projects on individual farms and allocate a two percent fee for administrative costs. While eligibility requirements have not yet been finalized, DoAg indicated that farmers must submit receipts to qualify for reimbursement.

In more positive news, the Northwest Connecticut Land Conservancy (NCLC) has awarded a new round of climate-smart agricultural grants to support farmers in adopting practices that improve productivity, sustainability, and climate resiliency.

This marks the second phase of the Building Resiliency on Northwest Connecticut Farmland Implementation Grant program. In March 2023, NCLC received \$750,000 from the Connecticut Department of Agriculture through the Climate Smart Agriculture & Forestry Grant program.

Connecticut ranks among the top three states with the highest risk of farm loss. Through the Building Resiliency grant program, NCLC makes direct investments to help local farmers adapt to climate challenges and ensure long-term viability. The organization is proud to collaborate with the farmers to strengthen ecological resiliency and food security for future generations.

The program also aims to fund initiatives that lower emissions, capture carbon, and promote climate-smart agricultural practices.

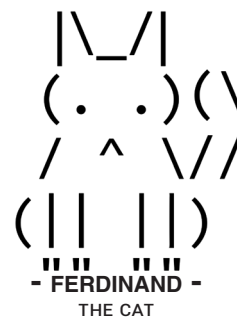
In addition to the 10 implementation grantees selected last fall, the NCLC has recently awarded grants to 15 more recipients. These include a diverse range of farms: beef, dairy, poultry, fish, forestry, vegetable, fruit, and flower operations throughout Litchfield and northern Fairfield Counties.



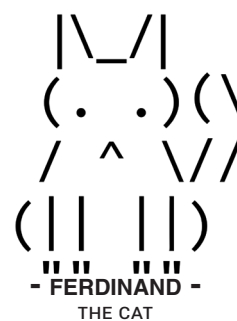
Sources: Hartford Courant (2025, April). CT land conservancy group awards grants. Why farms in the state are 'at risk of loss'

The Cool Down (2025, March). New report exposes over \$50 million in losses from dire issue affecting farms: 'Considerable impacts'

Crocuses are one of the earliest signs of spring, often blooming even while snow still blankets the ground in colder regions. Their vibrant, pastel-like hues, ranging from purple and yellow to lavender, cream, and white, bring a burst of color after winter. Known for their resilience, crocuses are admired as symbols of strength and perseverance, thriving despite harsh, chilly conditions.



Many modern rose varieties bloom continuously, often going through multiple bloom cycles from May to October, depending on the climate. Roses are among the oldest known flowers, with fossils dating back 35 million years. Incredibly, the oldest living rose is over 1,000 years old and still thrives on the wall of the Cathedral of Hildesheim in Germany.



Magic in the Andes

By Dennis R. Blanchette

The most beautiful thing we can experience is the mysterious.
— Albert Einstein

We were waiting for Rory in the hotel in Cusco, Peru, to finalize arrangements for the six-day trek to Machu Picchu. It was Monday, the trek was to begin on Thursday, and Rory was a no-show. The hotel concierge called the travel agency and they said he did not work there anymore. His cell phone was out of service and the travel agency website was down.

Peru is a land of mystery: the Nazca Lines, the Incas, and especially Machu Picchu. Who built it, why was it abandoned, and who discovered it? We flew into Cusco, elevation 11,000 feet, and checked into the hotel. Halfway up the first flight of stairs, we had to stop to catch our breath, gasping for air like out-of-shape marathon runners. Later that day the headaches set in, so we took advantage of the free coca tea to ward them off. Luckily, there were five days to acclimate to the altitude before the trek, but now the adventure seemed in doubt.

On Tuesday morning we walked to the travel agency office and found the door chained and locked with multiple padlocks, as if all the money in Cusco was stored inside. We stopped at other travel agents to see what could be arranged on short notice, but they were all booked up. This was catastrophic because access to the Inca Trail is limited, due to overcrowding, and permits are only issued to licensed guides. In desperation we went back to the travel agency around noon. The chains were gone so we went upstairs to their office, where someone managed to find our permits.

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