6 Hotel Transformation for Litchfield Courthouse



13 Winsted's Wandering Youth Come Home



* See Below & Page 8 How To Subscribe To The Winsted Citizen

PRESORTED
STANDARD
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
PERMIT #140
BRIDGEPORT, CT

The Winsted Citizen

If it's important to you, it's important to us

"All the News That Fits, We Print"

$3.00

LITCHFIELD COUNTY & BEYOND MAY 2023



The future remains uncertain for Barkhamsted Pleasant Valley Drive-In.

Pleasant Valley Drive-In Sold

Emotional Ending for McGrane's Run as Owner

BY MIKE PATRICK

BARKHAMSTED – Three springs ago, Donna McGrane experienced two surprises.

The first happened when she arrived at her Pleasant Valley Drive-In to open it for the season and found the roof had collapsed under the winter snow.

The second happened when she started a GoFundMe campaign to raise the $8,000 it would cost to fix the roof.

"I shut it down within a week because there was $40,000 in the account," McGrane said. "It didn't cease to amaze me how much people cared and how much they loved the drive-in and never wanted to see it close."

McGrane, 62, said she grew up watching movies at the Pleasant Valley Drive-in, as her father ran the projector and her mother worked in the concession stand. When it went up for sale almost 30 years ago, she bought it, prompted by her nostalgia for the place.

Now, nostalgia is all she has. In December, the 4.5 acres she leased was sold, along with the rest of the almost 50-acre parcel on which the drive-in was located, to an LLC called "Pleasant Valley Properties." The drive-in is now under new management and ownership. McGrane declined to discuss the sale, of which she was not a part, beyond a Facebook comment saying it was "not my choice to leave."

According to Bizapedia, Pleasant Valley Properties was formed as an LLC in October 2022 by David Dzenutis and partners Anna Smolen and Peter Driscoll. Its registered address is the site of Dzenutis' father's Royal Construction company, where Dzenutis operates the roofing division.

Town records show that Pleasant Valley Properties paid $800,000 in December to purchase the parcel that includes the drive-in and a single-family home from the estate of Catherine K. Jones, longtime owner of the property, who died in 2021.

Reached by phone, Pleasant Valley Properties partner Smolen declined to comment for this story.

A Facebook Page that refers to itself as, "the new home of The Pleasant Valley

continued on Page 10

Norfolk Dog Park Proposal Raises Hackles

BY THERESA CRAMER

NORFOLK – For some, a dog park is a welcome addition to the community—providing dogs with the ability to socialize off-leash in a safe area, and owners with a way to meet like-minded people while exercising their dogs. For others, dog parks are a nuisance, a potential source of unwanted noise, traffic and even crime. This debate is familiar to communities nationwide, and now it's come to Norfolk.

The controversy kicked off in February after The Friends of Norfolk Community Dog Park (FNCDP) applied for a special permit to put a two-acre dog park on a 58-acre parcel of land on Westside Road. The application was approved by the Inland Wetlands Commission. According to Zoning Enforcement Officer Michael Halloran, Norfolk zoning regulations allow for recreational uses in residential zones with a special permit. The matter spurred a Valentine's Day public hearing with dozens of letters read into the record and plenty of public comment. The public hearing was eventually continued to April.

According to the permit application, the owner of parcel 7-10/18 which is located along Westside Road, would lease the property to FNCDP. Additionally, Joel Howard, a spokesperson for the group, told The Winsted Citizen via email that the closest home is 460 feet from the fenced-in area. For reference, a football field is 360 feet long.

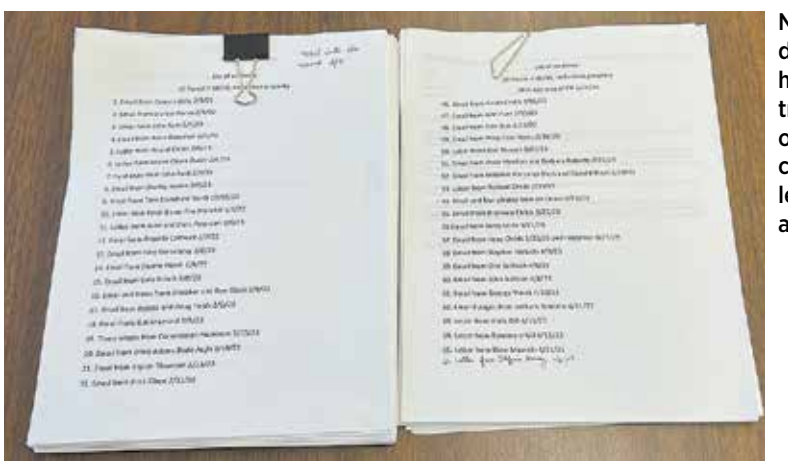
"The proposed site and design have been carefully chosen and reviewed in order to minimize any impact on the environment," explained Howard. "Tucked away from the road in an area nestled in the woods, it will sit at the base of a hill, allowing surrounding trees and elevations to serve as natural sound buffers." Howard also noted that the group continues to receive feedback and will incorporate it where possible.

To bolster its case, the FNCDP's application outlines several potential benefits of the dog park, including the ability for people with mobility issues or without fenced-in yards to exercise their dogs in a safe area. The organization—a tax-exempt 501(c)(3) charitable organization—raised $105,000 to cover the costs of building the dog park. The facilities would feature a vinyl-coated chain link fence, gravel and grass surfaces, benches, picnic tables and 10 parking spaces.



SAVAGE FRIEZE

Cooper with his human Theresa O'Mally.



Norfolk's proposed dog park was highly contentious, triggering an outpouring of public comment and 66 letters—both for and against.



Daisy takes Glen and Donna Hill for a walk.

Of the non-profit status, Howard said, "This will allow us to raise tax-deductible contributions from individuals and foundations for the construction and maintenance of the park, as well as a fund for decommissioning the park should the need or desire arise. We will not be seeking nor accepting funds from the Town of Norfolk either to build or maintain the park."

During the first public hearing, Edward Barron, planning and zoning commissioner, asked how the group would handle dog waste—a common issue for public dog parks. Cindy Leffel, a spokesperson for FNCDP, said the group would contract with a service called Shamrock to clean up the area.

Local veterinarian Dr. Kim Maynard spoke in support of the project at the public hearing on April 11, 2023—having already sent in a letter of support before the February meeting detailing the benefits for dogs. Dr. Maynard wrote: "Dogs are social creatures and are like children. If they do not have an outlet for their energy and a chance to engage with their own kind, they will develop unwanted behaviors." She also mentioned an increase in pandemic-related dog adoptions and increased anxiety in her canine patients—ultimately reminding commissioners that "A tired dog is a happy dog."

continued on Page 11

* SUBSCRIBE

RECEIVE A MONTHLY HOME DELIVERY OF THE WINSTED CITIZEN FOR THE REMAINDER OF 2023.

$30

VISIT WINSTEDCITIZEN.ORG TO SUBSCIBE ONLINE OR REQUEST A MAIL-IN FORM

SCAN TO SUBSCRIBE ONLINE

More Than Just a Pretty Face

How Torrington's Facade Grants Are Helping Local Businesses

BY SERENA PIERVINCENZI



BOB THIESFIELD

Nutmeg Conservatory used its facade grant money for a variety of projects including the installation of LED lighting on their Tower sign and structural repair. Next, they plan to repaint the front of the building.

TORRINGTON – The city of Torrington, in Litchfield County CT, is over 280 years old. If you walk the streets of downtown Torrington, you will find yourself surrounded by century-old Colonial, Queen Anne, and Art Deco architecture. Historic buildings like these come with a lot of history and beauty, but they also bring substantial challenges. With some of the buildings in Torrington deteriorating and falling out of code, city planners came up with a way to help business owners both beautify and renovate their buildings.

Torrington first introduced its Facade and Building Improvement Grant Program in August of 2021. The program provides grants to commercial property owners and businesses within Torrington to upgrade structures and bring them into compliance with new building and fire codes. The city invested in this program in an effort to make Torrington a more appealing location for businesses. For example, when new businesses move into these buildings, they will already be up to code and thus be more attractive and affordable for potential buyers.

Since the program's inception, three rounds of grants have been given, with the most recent one finalized on April 17, 2023. To date, they have issued just under $700k worth of grants and leveraged over 1.4 million dollars in investment into commercial properties and businesses within the city. The program offers 50% reimbursement grants, meaning that it will fund half of the estimated project cost.

Rista Malanca, Economic Development Director for the city of Torrington, said, "When you invest in your properties it shows that it's a vibrant community. This grant really incentivizes local property owners and business owners to continue to invest in their properties and businesses. Our intention was to really incentivize that development."

The Nutmeg Ballet Conservatory for the Arts, Inc. was among the grant recipients. The dance studio on Main Street, Torrington, has been open since 1969.

Nutmeg used the grant money for a variety of projects: They installed LED lighting on their Tower sign, which Director of Operations Holly Hawk describes as their way to light up the downtown community and welcome visitors. They used some of the money to repair elements of the building, which she described as "dangerous and an eyesore." They also plan to repaint the front of the building, a project that has been in the works for the past year.

Hawk believes that the Facade and Grant program has enhanced Nutmeg's business by allowing them to make their buildings safer and more attractive for visitors and patrons.

Malanca said, "I think it is important that small businesses and commercial property owners can continue to invest in their properties so that we can be attractive for small businesses and city-wide growth. I would hope that we can continue to help incentivize those investments… This facade grant is just one tool that we use to create vibrancy within our community."

The Facade and Building Improvement Grant Program has helped many businesses with everything from sidewalks to storefronts. While these may seem like mainly aesthetic fixes, town planners and local business owners believe that they are of great importance because making a place visually attractive helps attract visitors and businesses.

"Any program designed to support property owners in making improvements, particularly in our downtown area, is beneficial and appreciated," Hawk said. "It allows for beautification of our city, preservation of historic elements and hopefully eventually brings more people to support the area economically."

The city has been designated as a Cultural District by the State, only the second city in Connecticut to be named as such. This means that it has been identified as a cultural hub, and is home to various cultural facilities, and activities. Besides the Nutmeg Ballet Conservatory, Torrington is also home to The Warner Theater, Five Points Center for the Visual Arts and the and KidsPlay Museum,, along with shops, housing, and restaurants. It's a walkable city and is home to places where the community can gather, like the new Franklin Plaza or Coe Park.

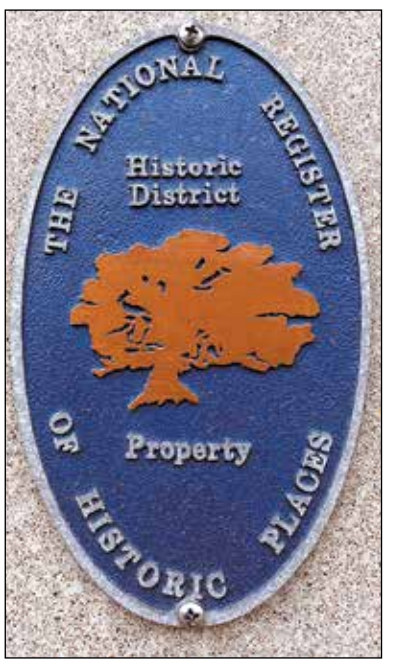
While enhancements like those funded by these grants make the city safer and more attractive for its residents, the main hope for this program is that investing in these building upgrades will support the long-term growth and economy of the city of Torrington.

Malanca explained, "Improving the aesthetics of commercial buildings helps create vibrancy and attractiveness to our commercial areas, and that leads to more businesses and visitors."

With the third round of grant funding closing in mid-April, officials at city hall are figuring out what the next steps for Torrington's improvement are as facade funding is running low.

"We are looking for additional ways to fund additional rounds, like through grant opportunities. But right now, we are running through all the funds that have been allocated for this program," Malanca said.

"Small businesses are the heartbeat of our community," Malanca said. As long as the city and the people who live there continue to invest in local businesses, Malanca is confident that this heartbeat will only grow stronger. ■



Home to many historic buildings, Torrington has been designated as a Cultural District by the State, only the second city in Connecticut to be named as such.



BOB THIESFIELD

The Winsted Citizen
7 Elm St. Winsted, CT 06098
PO Box 134
winstedcitizen.org

It's Your Paper, We Work for You

REPORTERS
Kathy Megan
Liz Dupont-Diehl
John Torsiello
Reynaldo Cruz Diaz
Erik Ofgang
Mike Patrick
Jack Coraggio
Nancy Gottfried
Rand Richards Cooper
Susan Granger
Jennifer Almquist
Sam Scott
Susan Hansen
Theresa Cramer
Ella Gannon
Molly Leonard

PHOTOGRAPHERS
Savage Frieze
Bob Thiesfield
Michael Fiedler
Melanie Stengel
Logan Grosclaude

EDITORIAL CARTOONIST
Bob Englehart

ASSOCIATE EDITOR
Serena Piervincenzi

OFFICE MANAGER
Ellen Walsh

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS
Douglas P. Clement
Michelle Manafy

ASTROLOGIST
Hilary Carpenter

ADVERTISING REPRESENTATIVE
Kay Page Greaser

CAPITOL PAPERBOY
Dan Newmyer

ART DIRECTOR
James Valentino

EXECUTIVE EDITOR & GENERAL MANAGER
Melanie Ollett

EDITOR & PUBLISHER
Andy Thibault

FOUNDING DONOR
Ralph Nader

The Winsted Citizen, a non-profit, is a member of The Chamber of Commerce of Northwest Connecticut.

Northwest Connecticut CHAMBER OF COMMERCE Business Working Together

Senator Chris Murphy Visits Winchester



SAVAGE FRIEZE

In connection to $3 million in congressionally directed spending to support projects in Winchester, Senator Chris Murphy is given a tour of the public works department by Director of Public Works Jim Rollins.



Senator Chris Murphy discusses problems with the existing communications systems and the need for new police and emergency services radios on April 13 at the Winchester Town Hall. Pictured L-R: Murphy, Selectman Candy Perez and Superintendent of Schools Melony Brady-Shanley.

Growing New Hartford Land Trust Conserves, Preserves and Provides Space for Recreation

BY NANCY GOTTFRIED

NEW HARTFORD – In 1978, Bernice Gilkyson, renowned poet and a contemporary of Robert Frost, became the first person to make a donation to the New Hartford Land Trust. She left a bequest of 20.5 acres of land located between Stub Hollow and Town Hill Road.

Now entering its 50th year, the New Hartford Land Trust is a member supported, all volunteer, non profit organization. The goal of the group is to provide permanent protection of open space, wetlands, woodlands, meadows, and wildlife in New Hartford. Open space also includes forests and farmland. Land Trusts provide sustainability, hiking trails for the community, and they secure the integrity of the land from building and development.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Doug Roth

The New Hartford Land Trust is passionate about benefiting the environment in ways that help local ecosystems and waterways. A recent newsletter from the National Land Trust Alliance states that natural and working lands offer great benefits to the environment by reducing greenhouse gasses by 37 percent, worldwide. In the United States, protecting millions of acres of grasslands annually is an effective way to manage protected space and retain more carbon.

Since Gilkyson's first donation, the New Hartford Land Trust has acquired over 700 acres, due in large part to conservation-minded land owners and the effective steerage of Madeline McClave, President of the New Hartford Land Trust since 2009.

In March, McClave was awarded the 2023 Katchen Coley Award in Conservation from the Connecticut Land Conservation Council.

"I have always held Madeline as a gold standard for the sort of passionate devotion that makes people want to support land preservation," said Anne C. Hall, PhD, NHLT Land Conservation Committee member, and former NHLT board member of McClave.

That devotion was inspired by a childhood spent mostly outdoors in rural New Jersey. "We were lucky to live in an area where there was an extensive network of trails to explore on horse or on foot," said McClave.

"The area I grew up in New Jersey eventually lost much of its key farmland and important wildlife habitats to the pressure of development. One inspiration was the Great Swamp National Wildlife Refuge near my hometown."

She also spent summers working on a ranch in Wyoming. When McClave and her husband settled in New Hartford, she naturally gravitated towards the importance of land conservation and wildlife preservation, having worked the land for so many years in her youth. Arriving in New Hartford, she felt herself gravitating to like-minded people.

Doug Roth, Chair of the Town of New Hartford Open Space Preservation Commission has lived in New Hartford for 30 years.

"We are completely synchronized with our goals and objectives," said Roth. "We're available if the Land Trust needs support for funding, grants, and collaborating on properties that the Town gets involved in… the Town has a great relationship with the Land Trust."

Since 2020, McClave and the Land Trust have been responsible for acquiring an additional 27.64 acres from the 109 acre Alfred Sabolcik farm, 31.4 acres from the Hines property, 2.3 acres from Goldstein/Schmidt, a 32 acre land parcel on West Hill, the completion of the Jones Mountain public trail system, and have successfully placed a conservation easement on the 16.9 acre Taylor property. The New Hartford Land Trust holdings total 791 acres.

"Through my volunteerism and the many talks I give to the public, I try to emphasize the value of our natural environment, natural resources from flora to fauna, to land, much of which is disappearing. Land Trusts that strive to protect our lands are invaluable. Their efforts are beneficial to the health of plant and animal species, and also to humans," said Ginny Apple, a Master Wildlife Conservationist who has given many wildlife lectures for the New Hartford Land Trust.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Madeline McClave

McClave emphasizes how land conservation can help, in some way, to counteract the negative effects of climate change, which is a major focus of the trust. "By preserving upper reaches of a watershed, such as the recently acquired parcel in Stub Hollow, we can protect water quality and temperature downstream."

The most recent acquisition for the New Hartford Land Trust was two major grants from The John T. and Anne A. Wiederhold Foundation and The Field Foundation Family Trust which completed the property on Sabolcik Road.

With the help of close to 60 volunteers, the New Hartford Land Trust continues to prioritize opening more of their owned parcels for public use. And, Apple encourages people to enjoy the Land Trust acreage.

"Everyone loves Jones Mountain and its trails, from the Carriage Road to the Yellow Trail. But lately, I really like the Alfred Sabolcik Preserve and its varied and interesting property," Apple said.

McClave's personal favorite parcel is the Crockett Preserve.

"It's a very special place...with its meadow and millpond, lovely wooded hillside and a steep ravine where the stream drops dramatically." ■

To become a volunteer, donate land, or become a member at the New Hartford Land Trust, email newhartfordlandtrust@yahoo.com

Legislature Again Debates Bill To Shift Liability for Tree Damage

BY ANGELA CARELLA

CTExaminer.com

Connecticut is heavily forested and, at the same time, densely populated.

The 2020 Connecticut Forest Action Plan showed that 61 percent of the state is covered in trees, and it ranks fourth in the U.S. in number of people per square mile.

So people and trees live closely together.

The forest study revealed a problem—Connecticut's trees are aging, and dying at a quick clip. They are under assault by the emerald ash borer and the gypsy moth. And they are battered by the effects of climate change, particularly drought and high winds.

So it's no surprise that the state legislature is again considering a bill that would hold property owners responsible for damages when a tree or limb falls from their yard into a neighbor's yard.

Now, property damage caused by a neighbor's fallen tree is covered by homeowner's insurance.

Bills that would shift those costs from insurers to property owners have been raised in just about every legislative



session in the last decade. They all failed except for one that passed the House and Senate in 2014. But former Gov. Dannel Malloy said he feared that people would cut down healthy trees to avoid the possibility of future liability, and refused to sign the bill. It died by veto.

Now it's back.

Senate Bill 1061, An Act Concerning a Property Owner's Liability for the Expenses of Removing a Fallen Tree or Tree Limb, was introduced in the legislature's Judiciary Committee, where it passed, 30-7. As of Friday, the bill was sitting on the Senate calendar awaiting action.

The Judiciary Committee raised the bill, according to the Connecticut General Assembly website, because "storms hit year after year with a significant amount of damage done to properties. Under current law, if a tree falls on your property, it is your responsibility to clean it up. This bill would make property owners liable for their trees that fall on adjoining properties."

Under the bill, a property owner would be liable for the cost of removing a tree or limb that falls on an adjoining property under three conditions:

- If a licensed arborist inspected the tree and documented that it was diseased, decayed, or damaged and likely to fall within five years.
- If the neighbor notified the property owner about a damaged tree and asked that it be removed, pruned or sprayed.
- If the landowner failed to act within 90 days after receiving such notice, which would have to be sent by certified mail.

The property owner with a questioned tree would not be liable if an arborist deemed it to be healthy, or if it fell for some reason other than disease, damage or decay—such as fire, lightning, car crash "or other act of God."

The bill would not require a property owner to allow an arborist to enter the property to inspect a tree, but the arborist still would have to make a determination about the tree.

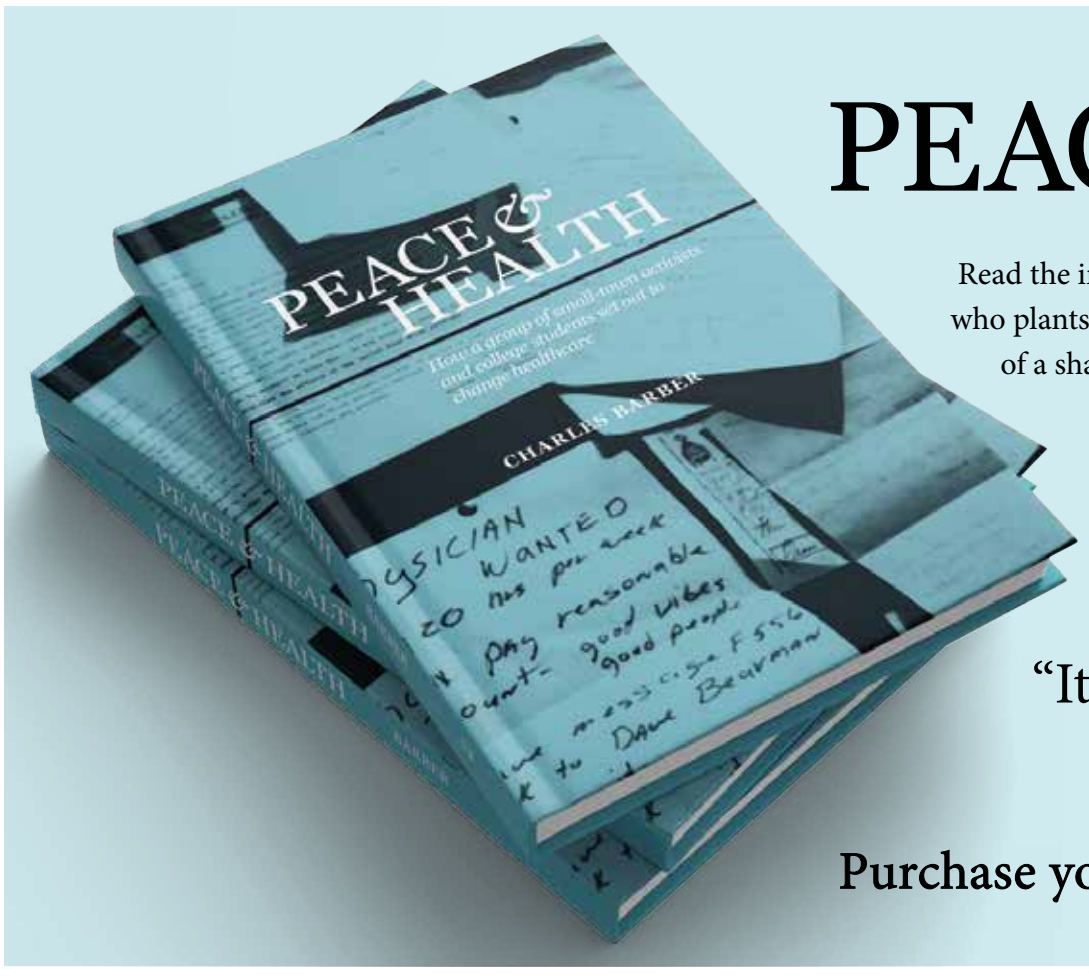
Under the bill, an insurance company could deduct from a payment the amount the policyholder recovers under the bill, to the extent that amount would be a covered loss under the policy.

From where it sits now on the Senate calendar, the bill can be kicked back to another committee, or senators can act on it before the legislative session ends June 7.

It's not known whether Gov. Ned Lamont, like Malloy, would veto it. Lamont has not weighed in, according to information from the General Assembly's bill-tracking website.

Opponents of the bill testified during a March 3 public hearing that the measure arose out of Connecticut's position as an insurance industry hub.

In Connecticut, a property owner may remove limbs from a neighbor's tree if they hang over the property line. ■



PEACE & HEALTH

Read the inspiring Connecticut-grown story of the Middletown 20-year-old who plants the flag for health care being a right, not a privilege; the daughter of a sharecropper, who becomes the North Star in the quest to transform health in the community; the pharmacist son of a Jewish émigré who breaks from his peers to support the cause; the musician and patient who played in the big bands of the South in the1930's; and the college student and future U.S. Senator who helps ensure the free clinic would not be shut down.

"It reads like a novel, but it's all true."

— Joseph J. Fins, MD
Professor of Medicine & Medical Ethics, Weill Cornell Medical College

Purchase your copy at Amazon | Barnes & Noble

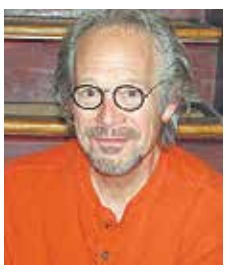
EDITORIAL & OPINION

DRIVEN TO DISTRACTION

Old Guy Dares Texting Drivers To Calculate Odds

BY RAND RICHARDS COOPER

As we plow ever deeper into the Smartphone Century, I'm flabbergasted by one symptom of our mass device addiction—namely, how many people are on their phones while driving. Not just while stopped at an intersection, but while *actually driving*. There's a telltale posture that gives it away. A person is driving… but looking down. Hey, there's one! Oops, there goes another! And another!



I don't have numbers, but it's a lot of people. And it's making our roads a lot more dangerous. An insurance industry report issued last month concludes that cellphone use increased the incidence of accidents by 50%, while US government statistics report that it accounts for over a quarter of all accidents.

When I see cellphone drivers I always wonder, "What do they think they're doing?" I mean this question literally. "What exactly is the thought process?" I know, I know, the likely answer is, "There is no thought process." But all decisions follow a logic, whether or not the people making those decisions acknowledge it or even understand it.

The phenomenon of the cellphone driver highlights the difficulty of assessing situations in which the likelihood of a problem is low, but the cost of a problem can be very high. It's the situation in which routine action X seems highly unlikely to be dangerous—yet if the highly unlikely bad thing does happen, it might be really bad. How, in that setup, should we behave?

Our epidemic of cellphone driving suggests that for millions of people, the answer is: Why worry about it? In a practical sense, what this probably amounts to is: "OK, yeah, I may occasionally glance down at my phone for a second, but only in really simple driving situations."

Well, given the boundless capacity of human beings to deceive themselves, if someone admits to routinely glancing down for a second, I'm guessing that in reality they sometimes glance down for, say, three seconds. And a lot can happen in two or three seconds when you're behind the wheel. If you are going 30 mph, in two seconds you cover 90 feet. Ninety feet! Can you say, "Little kid darts out into road"?

But along with self-deception, there's an even more basic problem. We lack what might be called a statistical imagination. It is so tempting to think only about the tiny chance of anything bad happening right now—this time, today—when you take that little glance down at your phone. But thinking this way is a cognitive error. What you really need to think about is the entirety of the risk you take on when you do this a thousand times. Not the little crumb, but the whole cake.

To shed light on this phenomenon, and on the risk/reward decisions that cellphone drivers are making every day, I have devised a thought experiment. Imagine a flat wooden bar, similar to a balance beam, four inches wide and, say, fifteen feet long, set into your living room floor at an elevation of five inches. Now imagine that you are offered $5 to walk across that bar from one end to the other. You'd do it, right? And maybe a lot. Because what is the risk in walking across a 15-foot-long board that's just five inches above the floor? Bingo, another $5!

Now imagine you were presented with the same setup and told, "OK, go ahead and take your $5, as often as you want… But once in the next thousand times you do this, when you're halfway across the beam, the situation is going to magically change, and you will find yourself suspended hundreds of feet above the ground. This will only happen once in a thousand times—it could be the 500th time, it could be the fifth time. But it *will* eventually happen."

What would you do? Would you dare to cross, even once?

This is essentially the game that cellphone drivers are playing. They just don't realize it. Or don't believe it. Or won't admit it.

The problem is, when that one-in-a-thousand time comes up, they won't be the only ones in trouble. ■

Rand Richards Cooper has published in The New Yorker, Harper's, GQ, Esquire, The Atlantic, and in Best American Food Writing. A longtime contributor to Bon Appétit and a former restaurant critic for the New York Times, Rand lives in Hartford with his family. He is the restaurant critic for the Hartford Courant and is a critic and essayist for Commonweal Magazine.



POLITICAL HYSTERIA IN CT

Commutations, The Problem of Mass Incarceration Cannot Be Put on Hold

BY ALEX TAUBES

In 1981, then Chief Justice of the United States Warren Burger, in rejecting the appeal of a Connecticut prisoner, noted that at that time, at least 75 percent of all prisoners with life sentences in Connecticut received commutations leading to an early release. In the case, *Connecticut Board of Pardons v. Dumschat*, the Supreme Court ruled the Board need not give any explanation when it denied a prisoner's commutation. Connecticut conferred unfettered discretion on its parole board, the court said, and a prisoner's expectation he might receive one is "simply … hope."

Back then, and for essentially all of Connecticut's centuries of history, a life sentence in Connecticut meant a prison term of 25 years—20 with good behavior—unless a prisoner received a commutation for an early release. Most who got life got commutations. As the Supreme Court noted, at least 75 percent of prisoners were receiving commutations in the years leading up to its 1981 ruling.

Then the 1990s happened. In Connecticut, a life sentence skyrocketed from 25 years to 60 years. Life with parole was abolished—life sentences automatically meant no parole.

Good behavior stopped being a thing, too. Up until 1994, prisoners were able to earn up to 16 days off of their sentences each month, through good behavior and by working a job in prison. In 1994, that was abolished, and for the first time since 1862, prisoners in Connecticut had no ability to earn any time off of their sentences for good behavior. Although up to five days of good behavior time was instituted for most prisoners in 2013, Connecticut prisoners convicted of murder and manslaughter are still unable to earn time for good behavior to this day—a historical anomaly.

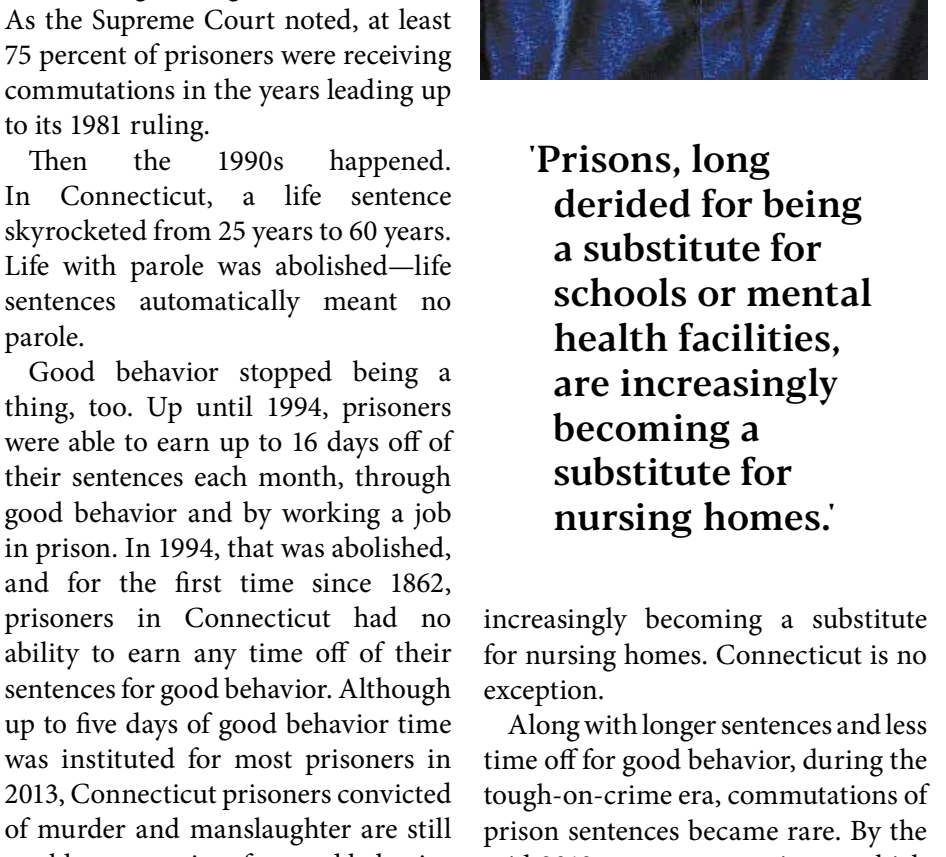
Approximately 30 years after the tough-on-crime era, Connecticut, like most of the United States, is encountering something it has never encountered before: a growing geriatric prison population. The hyper-long prison sentences of the 1990s, combined with the inability of prisoners to earn time off of their sentences, has created a generation of prisoners who have been incarcerated for decades but who nonetheless have decades more prison time ahead, into their 80s or 90s or beyond. Prisons, long derided for being a substitute for schools or mental health facilities, are



'Prisons, long derided for being a substitute for schools or mental health facilities, are increasingly becoming a substitute for nursing homes.'

increasingly becoming a substitute for nursing homes. Connecticut is no exception.

Along with longer sentences and less time off for good behavior, during the tough-on-crime era, commutations of prison sentences became rare. By the mid-2010s, commutations—which were once used on at least 75 percent of prisoners with life sentences—were being given out approximately once per year. This became particularly stark during the COVID-19 pandemic, when prisoners were dying in overcrowded facilities. But, the Connecticut Board of Pardons and Paroles refused even to accept commutation applications.



SERENA PIERVINCENZI

Under pressure from criminal justice reform advocates and state legislators, in 2021 the Connecticut Board of Pardons and Paroles created a new commutation policy. The policy recognized the many people in prison who, because of harsh penal laws unparalleled in our state's history, have little hope for a possible release from prison—but who pose no threat of danger to the outside world, who have made extraordinary contributions from inside the big house, and who have strong support for reentry into society. Prisoners were only allowed to apply after serving 10 years in prison, with no parole hearing or other relief available in the coming years.

Peter Gilhooly has been incarcerated for over two decades for a crime he committed when he was 18 years old. In 2000, Gilhooly pleaded guilty to shooting a man fatally and helping a friend shoot another man in a vacant building in Hartford. Family members of the victims told a prosecutor they believed Gilhooly's 35-year sentence was adequate punishment, The Hartford Courant reported.

During his decades in prison, Gilhooly earned his GED and took courses to address drug addiction that had started at age 13. He then began college study. Now over 40 years old, having served years in the big house with no disciplinary violations, statistics in the criminology literature suggest he poses little to no risk of committing any future crime. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Gilhooly volunteered in the COVID unit of the prison, earning the respect and praise of staff members for helping to keep a positive attitude among sick prisoners. When he applied for commutation, the staff provided positive references.

Channy Khuth, the fifth of seven sons of Cambodian refugees, was 18 years old when he received a 30-year prison sentence for his role in a nonfatal assault—no guns, no knives, only fists, which caused two young men to suffer serious injuries. Three other young people involved in the fight, his co-defendants, plead guilty and received prison sentences of less than 10 years for their involvement. Channy went to trial. He got 30 years. Channy, too, got his GED in prison, and began taking college courses in the decade after. He became so trusted by prison guards that he became the prisoner given the responsibility of cleaning the officers' mess hall and quarters. When he applied for commutation, he had a letter of recommendation from a deputy warden.

Anthony Azukas was 23 when he committed a crime that today—because of a Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)—he can no longer remember. He received a 60-year prison sentence, with no parole and no opportunity to

continued on page 8

Mind, Body and Stone: Your Permanent Memorial





Adam Paul Heller

INTERVIEW AND PHOTOS BY MICHAEL J. FIEDLER

NORFOLK – Adam Paul Heller is a stone carver. Heller began his career as an Artist in Residence at the Abby of Regina Laudis in Bethlehem. He creates memorials and collaborates with artists, architects and designers.

Why do you choose to work with stone?

Stone is very permanent. Slate, marble and limestone have been here for more that 350 million years. It requires precision. The feeling of the work is methodical and very measured. It creates a non- modern concept of time. It takes a certain personality to work with stone. It requires immense patience, presence and mindfulness. There's a mind-body connection to the material. It's very grounding.

How does your work connect you to the community?

As a craftsperson and an artist, I try to connect to people in a meaningful way. What's most rewarding is the way my creativity helps my clients grieve and honor the memories of their loved ones. This process takes time, sometimes as much as a year from start to finish, but by doing so it allows something very rewarding and transcendent to happen.

What is the most challenging aspect of what you do?

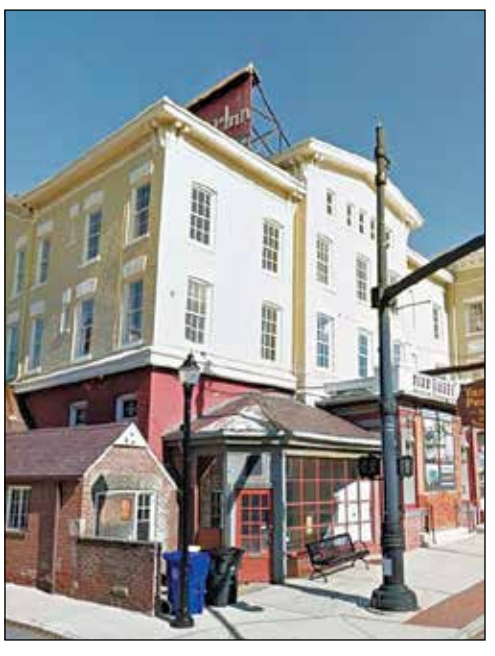
The hardest part for me is managing a small business. I'm competing with large corporations that do this work quicker and cheaper. Nowadays, 99% of funerary arts are done by machine. The modern world values efficiency and speed. Craftsmanship takes time.

What is next in your career as a stone carver?

After 25 years of carving stone I feel that I am only just now ready to explore the fuller depth of my humanity and creativity. I needed all this time with this material to slow me down and be less concerned with 'me' and more awake to the gorgeous, never-ending abundant flow of life. Stone has been my mentor, my guru and my home on Earth. For that, I'm profoundly grateful and humbled. ■



Just Need a Tool: Bill Aims to Bolster Smaller CT Towns in Battle Against Blight



In 2021, Torrington filed a case against the Yankee Pedlar Inn, asking for a court-appointed receiver. The case is scheduled to go to trial in June. (Image: Google maps)

BY CATE HEWITT

CTExaminer.com

HARTFORD – In towns across Connecticut, blighted buildings often remain eyesores for years because local ordinances have very little teeth other than levying fines and imposing liens.

But a new bill could give more towns —depending on their size or density— the ability to ask the Superior Court to appoint a receiver, which is a neutral third party, to make the improvements needed to bring a blighted property up to municipal codes.

A 2019 state law, already allows towns with populations of 35,000 or higher to ask a judge to appoint a receiver for a blighted property. Once rehabilitated, the court may approve the sale of the property.

The proposed bill, introduced in early March, would lower the population threshold to anywhere from zero to 25,000, opening up the possibility of more towns requesting receivership for blighted properties.

So far, the original law has been used only twice—once in Hartford and once in Torrington, where the city's case is going to trial in June.

Opponents say that with so few cases, the old law is essentially untested and should not be expanded without knowing its effects, and that lowering the population cap could result in unintended consequences for small towns and agricultural communities.

Meanwhile, supporters of the bill say more towns would have the option of requesting receivership for blighted properties, which would clean up communities and increase economic development.

"We have buildings that are historic, 300 years old, and they're sitting, basically being demolished by neglect. The owners have left the windows open, unable to get demolition permits because of the history of the building, so just allowing the building to just basically rot in place, and that affects our whole downtown," New London Mayor Michael Passero told the Planning and Development Committee in a hearing for the bill on March 20.

Passero said lowering the cap to 25,000 would include New London—population 27,600—and help the city remediate blighted, abandoned buildings in the central business district.

Buildings have remained blighted for decades, Passero said, because the city has been unable to find a mechanism to make the building owners remediate their properties. ■



Hartford Developer to Transform Antique Litchfield Courthouse Into Boutique Hotel

BY MICHAEL PUFFER

Hartford Business Journal

LITCHFIELD – Over the past 133 years, people have visited the granite-block courthouse just south of Litchfield's Town Green for everything from murder cases to child-custody disputes.

In less than two years, however, the roughly 18,000-square-foot historic building could become a mecca for leaf peepers, wedding guests and tourists seeking an escape to the tranquil Litchfield hills.

A planned $14-million redevelopment spearheaded by Hartford-based Lexington Partners will transform the building into a 20-room boutique hotel.

Under the plan, the main second-floor courtroom will be converted into an upscale restaurant, accentuated by a rooftop lounge overlooking a portion of the town center and wooded hills beyond.

With all needed approvals in hand, Lexington anticipates finalizing the purchase this month and beginning a 15-month renovation in May.

The firm specializes in developing and managing large-scale multifamily properties, but opted for a hospitality development after hearing from locals, including the Litchfield Preservation Trust Inc.

The nonprofit acquired the property after the court relocated to Torrington in 2017.

"We listened to the townsfolk and did our own due diligence," said Martin Kenny, owner of Lexington Partners. "If we did apartments or condos, it wouldn't generate the traffic to help support the rest of that beautiful center. To me, it's one of the most iconic architectural buildings in the state, particularly in the area."



STEVE LASCHEVER

Patrick Kenny, vice president of development at Hartford-based Lexington Partners, stands in front of a historic courthouse in Litchfield his firm is converting into a boutique hotel.

Proud history

The Romanesque Revival-style courthouse—adorned with a Seth Thomas clock tower—dates back to 1889, and was designed by noted Waterbury architect Robert Wakeman Hill, according to state historical records.

The exterior was remodeled in 1913 and 1914 to more closely reflect the town's colonial style.

Kenny said he initially saw the courthouse conversion as a relatively modest effort, something that his younger staff, including his sons Kevin and Patrick, could lead from design through construction.

However, challenges have crept up.

Patrick Kenny, Lexington's vice president of development, said federal historic preservation guidelines and state and local desires haven't always perfectly meshed.

For example, there were disagreements over the design of a planned tower addition that's needed to make room for stairs, a dumbwaiter and elevator that will carry people and food from the basement to the rooftop lounge.

Lexington and Hartford-based Tecton Architects proposed cedar-board siding to complement the town's colonial-style buildings; town officials and the National Park Service preferred brick.

The brick design won out.

"That's an example of getting every board and committee on the same page, and why it was so time-consuming," Patrick Kenny said.

The courthouse interior currently has cracks in plaster, loose and threadbare carpeting and at least one broken window covered with plywood. Patrick Kenny said the planned renovation will transform the deteriorating building while maintaining its historic character.

Eight fireplaces will remain. A judge's bench from a first-floor courtroom will be repurposed and used in the reception area, as will a scrolled wooden rail from the jury box.

Other courtroom furnishings will be incorporated into the restaurant. A massive safe will be redesigned as a bathroom for one suite.

"We are used to doing projects of $50 million and up," Martin Kenny said. "This deal has been just as complicated as some of the larger projects we have done. But it's a labor of love. I've told people that this little project is probably going to be one of the most significant things we have done in our body of work."

Development costs pencil out to about $700,000 per hotel room. The restaurant will be an important source of additional revenue.

The project is relying on $3 million worth of state and federal historic tax credits, in addition to $2 million in Connecticut Green Bank C-PACE financing for energy efficient building technology. Massachusetts-based PeoplesBank is loaning $7.5 million.

Parking magnate Alan Lazowski, a longtime business partner to Martin Kenny, is among a group of friends and family also investing in the hotel.

Patrick Kenny said Lexington is working to fill a small gap in the private equity portion of financing.

Eagerly anticipated, much needed

The new hotel will complement fashion boutiques, antique stores, restaurants and other Litchfield center shops far better than what came before, said Andrew Goldstein, who runs a jewelry shop a few doors down from the shuttered courthouse.

Goldstein moved his Ideal Jewelers business from downtown Waterbury to Litchfield shortly before the court closed in 2017.

The consensus among retailers was that the court didn't generate much business for merchants along the stone-brick sidewalks of the commercial core, Goldstein said. Most staff seemed to bring their lunches and head right home after work.

The planned hotel, however, will provide much-needed lodging for an area that springs to life with tourists Thursdays through Sundays, Goldstein said.

"It's a great addition," he said. "I know everybody on the street is very excited about it. It is going to bring in people. You can't imagine how much business we do from people who want to escape the city on the weekend."

JoAnn M. Ryan, president and CEO of the Northwest Connecticut Chamber of Commerce, said the area will greatly benefit from another hotel, especially one that is more moderately priced than some existing options.

"I'm a resident of Litchfield and live not too far from the Green, and the weekends are filled with New York cars," Ryan said. "You have to make reservations at the restaurants to get a meal."

Ryan said it can be hard to find an available hotel room, and existing options can run above the average visitor's budget.

For example, the 113-acre Winvian Farm resort and spa in nearby Morris rents luxury cottages starting at $799 per weeknight during the off season; daily rates jump to $1,599 for weekend nights during the September and October peak foliage season, according to its website.

The 35-room Mayflower Inn in Washington costs $520 to $708 for a weekday night stay in mid-May, in addition to a $40-per-night resort charge, according to its website.

The 32-room Litchfield Inn on Bantam Road has more affordable rates—$236 to $289 per weeknight in May—but fills up quickly.

"There are bed and breakfasts, but you really have to search," Ryan said. "If you have a larger party, it's really kind of hard to find a place. There is no question there should be more places that could accommodate a number of people."

Patrick Kenny said he anticipates rooms will rent somewhere between $200 to $300 during off-season months, and $400 to $450 during peak season.

Unique offering

Provincetown, Massachusetts-based Salt Hotels will have a 10% stake in the courthouse redevelopment and manage the day-to-day functions of the restaurant and hote—neither of which yet have a name.

Salt currently operates boutique hotels in Provincetown, Nantucket, Miami Beach, Minneapolis, Los Angeles and Mexico.

David Bowd, who co-founded and owns Salt Hotels with Kevin O'Shea, anticipates opening in late 2024 or early 2025.

O'Shea said Salt is still working on concepts for the restaurant, which will be accessible to the public. Special attention will be paid to complement, rather than compete with, existing eateries, he said.

The courthouse represents the unique and niche offering Salt Hotels prizes for its boutique destinations, O'Shea said.

"Obviously, this building is really iconic and just an incredible piece of architecture," O'Shea said. "As a courthouse, this building was open to the public but not necessarily a place you would want to be in. I think this is such a wonderful opportunity as a hotel to be able to invite people in and have them experience this incredible piece of architecture in the center of Litchfield." ■

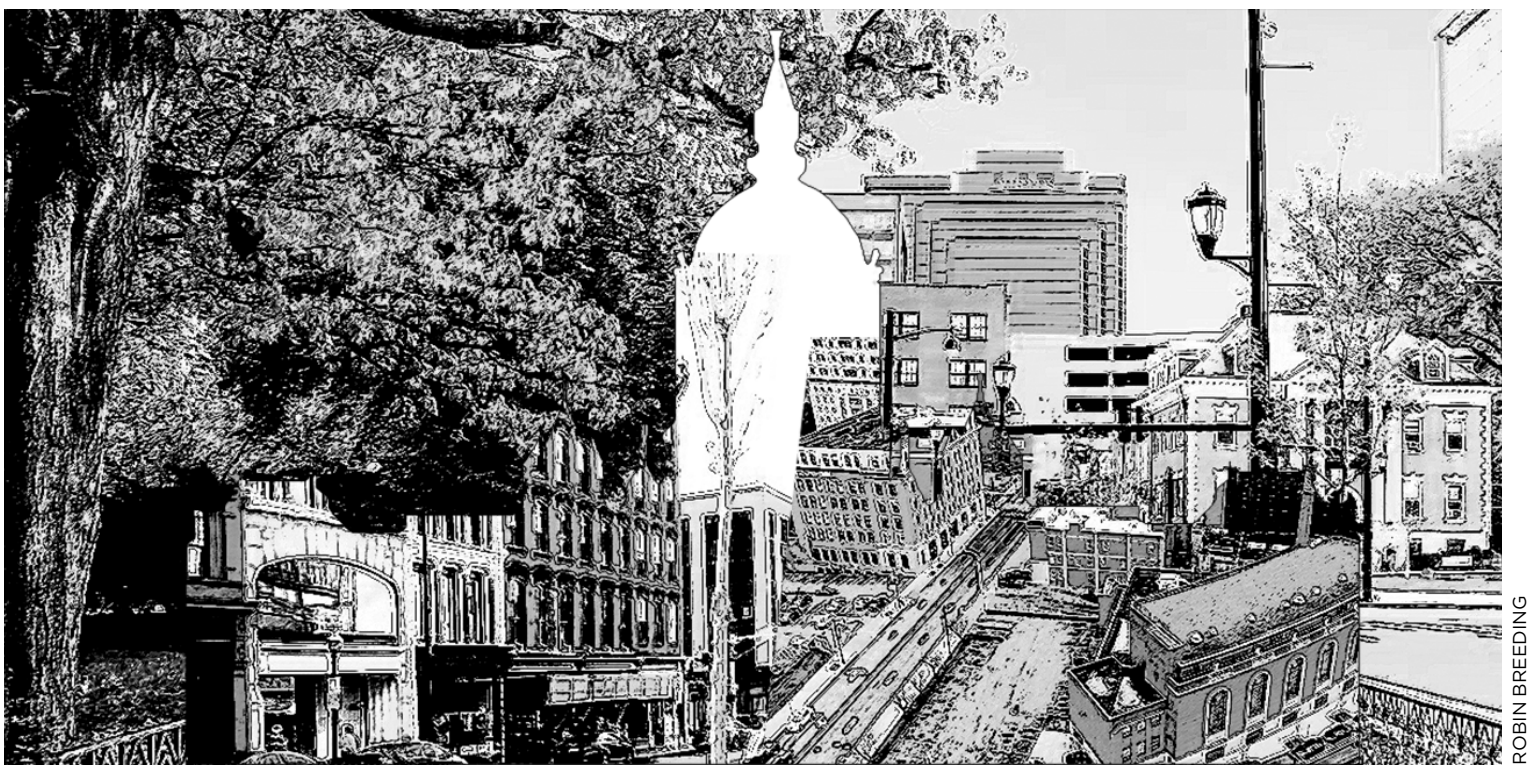




As Federal School Dollars Dry Up, State Lawmakers Aren't Coming to the Rescue With Latest Budget

BY EMILIA OTTE

CTExaminer.com



ROBIN BREEDING

HARTFORD – The state legislature released a draft budget in April that includes less than half of a requested $357 million increase in school funding that many districts had planned to use to plug budget shortfalls left as federal COVID aid is depleted.

In February, legislators and advocates pushed for $275 million to speed up the implementation of a new funding formula that will increase the amount of money given to many of the state's poorest districts. The additional money, meant to come from a surplus accrued by a change in the state's fiscal policy, would fully fund the new formula by 2025.

Since then, updated enrollment data raised the amount needed to fully fund the formula to $357.5 million. About $163 million of this funding would be directed to public schools, $22 million to charter schools and $53.5 million to magnet schools, with the remaining money going to vocational agriculture and open choice programs.

The legislature's proposed budget offers to fund just $150 million of this total.

State Rep. Jeff Currey, D-East Hartford, the chair of the Education Committee, said that money would go toward increasing funding for schools across the state, although he did not know how it would be divided up.

"Given that it is not nearly enough to cover the entire projected cost for that [bill], this is a starting point for us to build off of crafting policies to ensure that we are moving towards equitably funding all public schools, using the same formula in the same manner," Currey said.

The budget also includes $19.7 million to continue funding towns that were scheduled to see a decrease in their state funding over the next two years, and an increase of $7.9 million in state funding for public schools based on updated enrollment numbers.

Daniel Pearson, executive director of Educators For Excellence, which represents teachers in Hartford, Bridgeport and New Haven, said the lack of assurance of continued funding after federal COVID aid runs out has caused districts to hesitate to use the funds to hire personnel they need.

"There's only so many one-time costs you can do in our highest-need districts. They were under-resourced and understaffed for a long time," Pearson said.

He added that the legislature needed to set aside the additional funding this year, while districts still had a chance to put some of those federal funds toward hiring teachers. The districts that used the money for tutoring and mental health support services need to have enough money to keep those positions in the district, he said.

"In order to maintain the success that we are seeing, we need to be able to fully fund and make sure that we fully staff these positions and make it a permanent part of education, because if not, we're going to go right back to where we were before," Pearson said.

In February, a panel of superintendents and charter and magnet school directors came before the legislature to speak in favor of the increased funding. Stamford Superintendent Tamu Lucero told legislators that her the district had used the money to fund over 100 positions in the school budget, and Kate Ericson, CEO of LEARN, which operates four magnet schools in Eastern Connecticut, said that her schools were currently running at a deficit.

Union leaders also criticized the legislature's budget. Mia Comulada Breuler, a counselor at Wilbur Cross High School and executive secretary for the New Haven Federation of Teachers, said that the Wilbur Cross building is overcrowded and underfunded. She also said one in four students there are learning English as a second language, but that the programs were not being implemented properly because of a lack of staff and resources.

"Our state is sitting on a multibillion dollar surplus and an overflowing rainy day fund that should be mobilized for equity. If we improve the working conditions in city schools, teachers will stay and students will thrive," Breuler said. "Urban educators know how to care for and engage our young people … but we can't fully implement what needs to happen with our current lack of equitable funding."

The Connecticut Education Association, the state's largest teacher's union, declined to offer comment. ■

District school leaders in the Winsted area said in recent interviews that they are not facing a "financial cliff" next year with the depletion of Covid aid because of careful planning.

Leaders in Region 7, Winchester and at The Gilbert School, said they were careful to spend the money mainly on pandemic-related supplies, capital expenditures and other non-recurrent expenditures. In cases where they did use it for staffing to help out with learning loss, they were careful to fold those costs into the regular budget gradually so as not to create budget problems.

Melony Brady-Shanley, Winchester superintendent, said the federal funds were spent on capital expenditures—air conditioning for the Pearson School—and Covid-related expenses such as masks and the rental of additional school space to keep kids safely separated.

"We knew it would create a cliff if we put in recurrent costs," Brady-Shanley said.

At the Gilbert School, head of school Greg Shugrue said the school used the Covid funds for custodial cleaning products and also for staff support to address "learning loss" during the pandemic. However, he said those staffing supports were moved over to the regular budget, gradually over time. "So as not to create a cliff," he said. ■

-Kathy Megan



MAY AT A GLANCE

Is everyone enjoying Mercury retrograde? Don't worry, it ends on May 14th, when you can tread mindfully back into communication mode. Until then, continue to hold off on booking travel or signing contracts, or triple-check everything if you can't do that.

On May 5, a lunar eclipse asks you to look at a change you've been going through or a journey you've been on for the last year and a half. This eclipse brings an end of sorts to that.

The biggest astrological event of the month happens on May 16th, when Jupiter enters Taurus. The planet of generosity enters a most earthy sign, where the newly direct Mercury will also be until June 11th. Pay attention to where the wind is at your back (check individual horoscopes for details). Devote yourself more fully to protecting and loving our planet for the next year or so.

Keep your dream journal handy for when you wake up on May 18th – your subconscious was telling you something while you slept. May 28th is a good day to commit fully to what you desire.

ASTROLOGY THROUGH THE SIGNS

For best results, read the entry for your rising sign. Don't know it? Online birth chart calculators can tell you in a matter of minutes, if you know the exact time and place of your birth. If not, go ahead and use the entry for your sun sign.

ARIES: Shower your home and family (especially mothers) with love on May 7th – no need to wait until Mother's Day. May 16th ushers in an era of plenty for your personal assets and self-worth. Set intentions in that area on May 19th and see what unfolds over the coming months. On the 21st, get curious about your communicative style and daily rituals for the next month. Research different approaches in those areas.

TAURUS: Share the love with your siblings and cousins on May 7th, and beautify your daily routine. The planet of fortune blesses you big time starting on May 16th. Set whatever intentions you want on the 19th and spend the next few months enjoying the universe's feedback. On the 21st, get curious about how to expand your fortunes and your own value. This is your month!



GEMINI: Connecting with others will boost your bottom line as well as your feelings of self-worth this month. Don't try to go it alone. Mid-month brings an era of expansiveness to behind-the-scenes, very private areas of your life for the next year. On the 21st, prepare to shine bright for the next month. It's all about you during Gemini season.

CANCER: Love yourself unabashedly! Venus enters Cancer on May 7, inviting you to give yourselves some serious love for the next month or so. On May 19th, your networking groups and friend circles get a boost from the planet of good fortune for the next year or so. Set intentions in those areas on May 19th. On May 21, Gemini season invites you to get curious about your inner self for the next month.

LEO: Private feelings of love and longing are prominent this month. Explore them with tenderness. May 16th ushers in an era of expansiveness and fortune in your career. Set intentions in that area on the 19th. On May 21, Gemini season wants you to get curious and communicative with your networks and friend circles for the next month.

VIRGO: Spread the love in your networks and friend circles this month. Be the host with the most. On May 16th, travel, learning and spirituality begin an era of expansiveness. Set intentions in one or more of those areas on the 19th. On the 21st, get curious about your career and share your ideas enthusiastically at work.

LIBRA: Make connections with others in your career this month – they will pay off. On May 16th, the planet of expansiveness enters your sector of mental health, death and other people's money. You will see growth and opportunity in one or more of these areas. Set intentions for your mental health on the 19th. On the 21st, get curious about religion, spirituality, travel and higher learning for the next month.

SCORPIO: Venus in Taurus starting on May 7th attracts you to foreign cultures and spirituality. Look for connections in those areas this month. The 16th ushers in a year of fortune and expansiveness in committed partnerships (romantic and otherwise.) Set intentions in that area on the 19th. On the 21st, get curious and communicative about your mental health for the next month.

SAGITTARIUS: Starting on the 7th, deep and intimate connections will be healing and transforming over the next month. On the 16th, say hello to a year of good fortune in your daily work life and health. Anything you work on in these areas will get a boost, so be sure to set intentions on the 19th and follow up with action. On the 21st, be curious and communicative in committed partnerships for the next month.

CAPRICORN: Shower your committed partners, romantic and otherwise, with extra love this month. On the 16th, your creative life and/or your work with children will enjoy a year of abundance. Set intentions in those areas on the 19th to give them an extra boost this month. On the 21st, get communicative and curious about your daily work life and health habits.

AQUARIUS: This month, go the extra mile in connecting with your co-workers and partner for your physical health. On the 16th, a year of abundance begins in your home, foundations, and parentage. Set intentions in one or more of those areas to see the best results. On the 21st, get curious in your creative life and/or your work with children. Ideas will be flowing for the next month.

PISCES: Pour your love out to children and creative endeavors this month. On the 16th, welcome an era of good fortune in your relations with siblings and extended family, as well as your daily rituals and communications. Set intentions in these areas and be bold about experimenting with them. On the 21st, Gemini season invites you to be curious about your ancestry and parentage over the next month. ■

POLITICAL HYSTERIA

continued from Page 4

earn time off for good behavior. Azukas got injured when he fell in a prison shower a few years ago, striking his head, fracturing his skull and causing his TBI. Although he was taking college courses in prison at the time, his studies were put on hold indefinitely. Prisoners approach Azukas to this day because, before his injury, he taught other prisoners how to read as a tutor. He doesn't remember helping them. His brain injury is so severe he has difficulty walking and is sensitive to light and sound, which are almost impossible to avoid in prison. His family has arranged for therapy to rehabilitate Azukas, which holds out hope for restoring his cognitive function and memory, but it is unavailable to him in the prison.

You might think Gilhooly, Khuth and Azukas received commutations of punishment under the new policy of the Connecticut Board of Pardons and Paroles. You would be wrong.

Each of these individuals was granted a hearing—the possibility of relief—but ultimately denied.

I mention these three men who did not receive commutations to underscore how difficult it has been.

The denial of commutations to these three men shows how difficult it is for people to earn them. Even three men with extraordinary rehabilitation, with extreme mitigating circumstances, who committed their crimes while their brains were still developing, were denied.

I have represented 43 individuals—40 men and three women—who have received commutations. In those 43 commutation hearings, the board has taken more than 750 years of excessive prison time off my clients' prison sentences. Each of those individuals deserved the relief that the board bestowed on them.

But, I have also represented individuals who, like Gilhooly, Khuth and Azukas, I believe deserved relief, who were denied. Many, like Gilhooly, Khuth and Azukas, should have a second chance at life. At least, the board was giving people like them a chance at that second chance.

The major variable for the board was victim input. In all commutation hearings, the board listens to the input of victims or their surviving families, if they choose to provide input. Many times—such as in Gilhooly, Khuth and Azukas's cases—victims and their families came to oppose a commutation. In many of those hearings, like Gilhooly, Khuth and Azukas's, commutations were denied.

But there were also hearings where victims and their families supported relief. Daryl Valentine was serving a 100-year sentence for a double murder he maintains he did not commit. At his trial, the state's two supposed eyewitnesses testified that New Haven police had bribed and coerced them into giving statements against him. No reliable evidence exists that he committed the crime—DNA, no blood, no fingerprints, no gun—but for 32 years the courts have rejected his appeals.

At Valentine's commutation hearing, the only member of a victim's family to speak showed Valentine mercy the courts never did: "It is up to the board to check his background and verify that he has done what is needed," she said. "I am a Christian. We have suffered. Nothing will bring my son back … I leave it in the Lord's hands."

Mack Young served more than 28 years in prison by the time he received a commutation hearing. Having received a 55-year sentence after the ability to earn time for good behavior had been abolished, Young had more than 30 years in his sentence left to serve. At 58 years old, that meant a near certainty of death by incarceration. Then came his commutation hearing in early 2022—and a chance at life.

At Young's commutation hearing, a statement from his victim's family was read. It read "we are no longer grieving, we have moved on and are at a good place in our lives now. [They] were good friends. We were like family, and we feel like since [the victim] had such a good heart, he would feel the same way if he was here with us today. The defendant has served a lot of time in jail and if the [board] wishes to reduce his sentence, we are okay with that." The board reduced his sentence by more than 28 years, and Mack Young is a free man.

These are not isolated incidences. I was once at a hearing for potentially reducing a prisoner's sentence where, at the start of the hearing, the mother of the victim was against relief. But by the end of the hearing, she changed her mind. She spoke up and said she wanted my client to be released. The Connecticut Board of Pardons and Paroles, with its policy, opened a space for such extraordinary events.

Those who wish to put an end to the Connecticut Board of Pardons and Paroles's commutation policy want to condemn reformed, rehabilitated people to a fate that is unprecedented in hundreds of years of Connecticut history.

'The commutations have actually shown how the system has worked with victim input all along.'

During a very brief period of our history, that changed dramatically. That coincided with a racial disparity in our prison system that persists today. Though it coincided, it was no coincidence. That is why "mass incarceration" is now recognized as an issue that needs to be addressed.

Halfway into what is truly an experiment—the 50 to 100 year prison sentence—the time has come to look at individuals who have been serving those sentences.

Are the reasons for handing down that condemnation of a human being still present today?

Is there still anyone out there, who feels pain from what they have done, who still wants to see them incarcerated?

Is this person still a danger to society?

Did the evidence of their guilt stand the test of time?

Is there the possibility of redemption?

Commutations of sentence have existed, in some form or another in Connecticut, since 1883. From the beginning, its purpose has been to temper to harshest punishments doled out by society by showing some measure of grace or mercy. These questions are therefore the questions commutations are meant to ask—and to answer.

As a society, it seems we rarely ask whether the cost of the 30-plus year prison sentence, a new government innovation, is justified. In 2021, Connecticut Supreme Court Justice Andrew McDonald noted that since it costs about $62,000 to keep someone locked up for a year, it costs taxpayers $1.8 million for a 30-year sentence, and $3.1 million for a 50 year sentence. During a meeting of the Criminal Justice Commission, McDonald asked then-Chief State's Attorney Richard Colangelo "whether the public is really made more safe between years 30 and 50" of a 50-year prison sentence. Colangelo not only couldn't say—he said he had never been asked, and had never thought about it.

'As a society, it seems we rarely ask whether the cost of the 30-plus year prison sentence, a new government innovation, is justified.'

The courts cannot be expected to answer the questions that need to be asked. From 1994 through 2018, only 24 prisoners trying to get an earlier release received new trials through the court process known as Habeas Corpus, and several of those were convicted again at their new trials. Courts are often reluctant to review old cases, as new judges fear being seen as passing judgment on the judges they have succeeded on the bench. Meanwhile, for many prisoners there is no outlet to seek a reduction of the sentence, which may not involve—like a Habeas Corpus—claiming innocence or some other problem in the original trial.

The parole board, which oversees commutations, has access to parole officers and other resources that can determine who is best fit for a possible sooner reentry into society. Each commutation in recent years has only followed a public hearing after a long vetting process, culminating with an investigation and interview by a parole officer. The parole board is the proper vehicle for reconsideration of a long sentence after decades have been served, often with exemplary behavior and other extenuating circumstances, and its work in 2021, 2022, and the first two months of 2023 was a good, albeit slow, start.

During the last few weeks, however, a political controversy has erupted over a historically small number of commutations in Connecticut: approximately 90, out of a prison population of over 9,000. Fewer than one percent of Connecticut's prisoners have received relief. This is a process that used to benefit nearly all of Connecticut's prisoners serving sentences of 20 years or more. That this small number is being called a "spike," "skyrocketing," and more shows only that politics remains a field lacking in quantitative rigor. But the controversy has resulted in Governor Ned Lamont intervening in the work of the parole board and putting a stop to all commutations in the state.

Emotions have run high in recent weeks' debates. Many are claiming the banner of fighting for the victims. But the families protesting the commutations have actually shown how the system has worked with victim input all along. The family of Elizabeth Carlson, who was murdered by her ex-boyfriend Jonathan Carney, has been the most visible family protesting the commutation process. But Jonathan Carney's commutation was denied, before it reached a hearing. No hearing was held on his application. In fact, none of the victims' families at press conferences held by the Republicans in the General Assembly was a family that had a commutation granted over their objection. None were forced to even go through a hearing.

The Carlsons have been portrayed as speaking for all victims' families. But the examples of Daryl Valentine, Mack Young, and many others show that the Carlsons do not speak for all. Not all families think alike. If commutation hearings were denied to all prisoners, victims' families would lose the right to see a prisoner's rehabilitation. Some families are interested in seeing what the person has done in prison over decades. Victims' families would also lose the right to show mercy, or even to forgive, as some have during commutation hearings. That would take away victims' rights, not enhance them.

Many of the sentences given out in the 1990s, if they were given out today, would have been a lot lighter. But the people who received historically-harsh sentences in the 1990s, by and large, remain in prison decades later. No deterrence effect exists from keeping these sentences excessively long and outside the standards of today.

If we are to ever address the problem of mass incarceration, we cannot look simply at how we sentence today and who goes to prison for the first time tomorrow. We need to take a long, hard look at our past, the effects of which are having a long overhang in our prison system and society. The Board of Pardons and Paroles began that look in 2021, and started with a select number of cases. It has done a good job. That look has now been put on hold by Governor Lamont. But the problem of mass incarceration cannot be put on hold. The prison population continues to stay massively larger than it has been throughout most of our state's history, larger per capita than most nations on Earth, and is now getting older and older with the ripple effect of the 1990s.

We need our governor to have the political courage to continue what the board had begun—a return to historical normalcy—and a return to freedom for reformed people who have served decades in prison and who have earned a second chance. The hold is particularly cruel to two of my clients, who have served a combined more than 50 years in prison, who had hearings scheduled for April 25 that were canceled at the last minute. Governor Lamont, these men's families waited for decades for this chance. The hold on commutations should be lifted, the scheduled hearings restored, and more people who are incarcerated should be granted a hearing and the possibility of relief. ■

Alex Taubes is a civil rights lawyer based in New Haven. His practice focuses on civil lawsuits against powerful institutions and individuals, and representation of incarcerated people seeking freedom from excessive prison sentences. A graduate of Yale Law School and lifelong resident of Connecticut, Alex lives in New Haven with his wife and son.

The Winsted Citizen

MAIL-IN SUBSCRIPTION

Receive a monthly issue of The Winsted Citizen through 2023

Mail form & check to:
The Winsted Citizen
PO Box 134
Winsted, CT 06098

Name

Address

Phone

If you're able, please subscribe at our Friend's rate as a donation to support local journalism.

Check one:
☐ FRIEND'S RATE $50.00
☐ STANDARD $25.00

Please make checks payable to:
The Winsted Citizen
PO Box 134
Winsted, CT 06098

Or Subscribe online at WINSTEDCITIZEN.ORG

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT

Town of New Marlborough
Employment Opportunity

The Town of NM Highway Department is now accepting resumes for a full-time Highway Equipment Operator/Truck Diver/Laborer.
We are looking for a motivated individual that has the ability to work alone and also as part of a team.
Applicants must be willing to submit to a pre-employment physical and a CORI check. Depending on licenses and experience, starting pay will be $24-$25/hour.

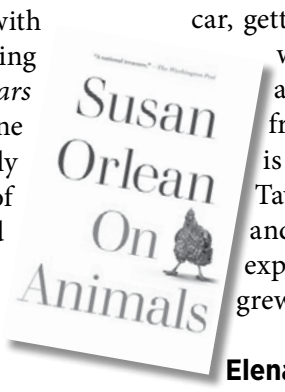
This is a 40 hour a week position that includes a competitive benefit packages

Please email or call us at sbletsos@newmarlbroughma.gov or 413-854-3213.

What Our Local Librarians Are Reading

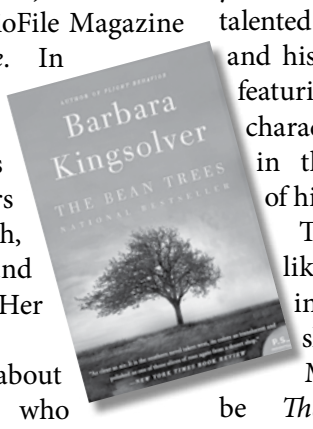
What books (and videos) can our local librarians not put down?

Beverly Crawford, New Hartford: I am listening to *On Animals* by Susan Orlean, which covers animal stories and issues I haven't heard about before and includes some autobiographical stories about her own relationship with animals. I am also enjoying a book about bears, *Bears of the North* by Wayne Lynch. It is an absolutely gorgeous amalgam of amazing photographs and the latest bear science. I have recently decided to revisit the Charlotte and Thomas Pitt mystery series by Anne Perry, but this time I am listening to the audio versions read by Davina Porter. The first book in the series was especially good. Perry's wonderfully informed historical writing and interesting characters and plots will be truly missed by mystery fans.



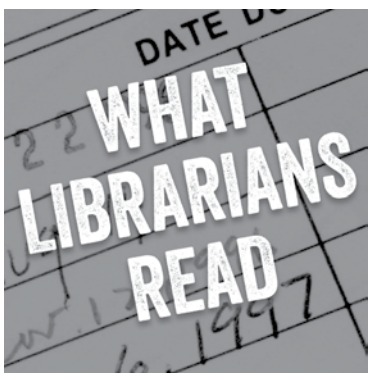
Jeanette Francini, New Hartford: I am often late to the party but almost always glad I came. That's how I feel about finally discovering *The Bean Trees* by Barbara Kingsolver. I am not really sure why I waited so long to listen to the audiobook read by C.J. Critt.

C.J. Critt is what AudioFile Magazine calls a *Golden Voice*. In addition to Barbara Kingsolver, she has narrated hundreds of books for authors including Janet Evanovich, Margaret Marron, and Patricia Cornwell. Her narration is spot on.

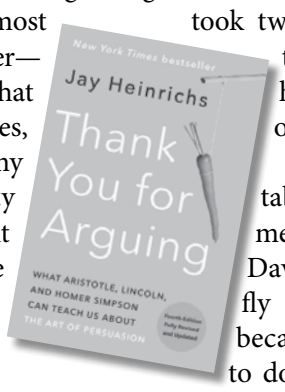


The Bean Trees is about a young woman who decides to leave her hardscrabble life in rural Kentucky behind for what she hopes will be something better. She also leaves behind her name, Marietta, changing it to Taylor, and buys an ancient VW bug and begins her new life, planning to stop when the gas in her car runs out.

Taylor's car breaks down in the middle of the Cherokee Nation in Oklahoma where she stops in an old bar for a cup of coffee and a hamburger. As she sits in her car, getting ready to leave, a woman approaches and puts a baby in the front seat of Taylor's car. The story is poignant and heartwarming. Taylor finds family, community, and understanding that she did not experience in the town where she grew up.



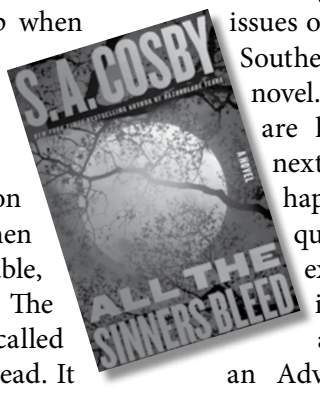
Elena Granoth, Morris: My favorite genre is psychological thrillers. Starting with established authors such as Ruth Ware, B. A . Paris, Gillian Flynn, and going forward with local favorites such as Freida McFadden and Kiersten Modglin, I go through their books at lightning speed! They all possess the most powerful secret of a bestseller—engaging short chapters that keep you turning the pages, yearning for more. In my opinion, the rise in popularity of the genre during recent years started with the talented Sidney Sheldon and his fast-paced stories featuring a strong female character and unpredictable twists in the narration. I have read all of his novels.



The other category of books that I like is nonfiction reads that help me improve my existing professional skills or develop new ones. My recommendation here would be *Thank You for Arguing* by Jay Heinrichs—a fabulous guide to persuasive communication strategies for real life situations.

Bill Meskill, New Hartford: I am still reading *The Power Broker* by Robert Caro. I am around 500 pages into it, with another 700 to go. I only read this book when I have two hours or more. Since I have my own copy, I find myself highlighting passages that I feel are important/interesting. It is not the type of book to pick up when I only have 15 minutes to kill time. I need to sit down when I have a large amount of time available to me.

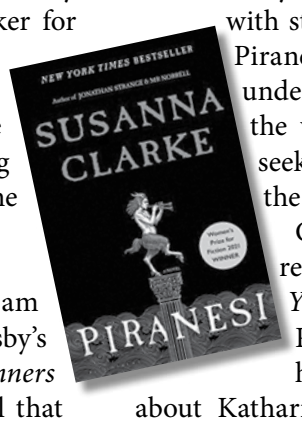
That is where my fiction reading comes into play. When I have only a little time available, I pick up my fiction book. The latest one I am reading is called *Zone One* by Colson Whitehead. It is a literary zombie/end of the world novel that got good reviews when it came out 10 years ago. I also recently finished the latest H. Cobin novel. That one only took two days to read. But like many these types of novels, I would be hard pressed to tell you the plot of it and I finished it a week ago.



The non-fiction that is on the table next to my bed is a fly-fishing memoir called *The Optimist* by David Coggins. I am a sucker for fly fishing books, probably because I wish I had more time to do it. Being so close to the Farmington is truly a blessing and we are lucky to have such a fine river right on our doorstep.

Melanie Ollett, New Hartford: I am about halfway through S.A. Cosby's upcoming fiction novel *All the Sinners Bleed*. It is a contemporary novel that centers on Titus Crown, the first black Sheriff in a rural Virginia county. It is easy to see why Cosby is a bestselling author. I don't usually enjoy stories that are ultra contemporary, however his writing style and the fast pace of the narrative has me hooked and left wondering what twist will happen next.

The novel opens with Sheriff Crown being called to the scene of a shooting at the local high school, where it turns out a "troubled" Black alumnus of the school has shot and killed a universally beloved white teacher before being shot and killed himself by Crown's deputies. Nothing about the case is straightforward, and appearances are deceiving. Cosby grapples with issues of identity politics, race, and Southern identity throughout the novel. At times, these reflections are heavy handed but by the next paragraph something has happened that temporarily quiets any philosophizing. I expect I will finish the novel in the next few days, as it is a quick read. I am reading an Advanced Reader's Copy, so there may be some small changes to the published editions that come out in June. I encourage folks to read it when it comes to your local library.



Emily Young, Winsted: I just finished reading *Piranesi* by Susanna Clarke and found it to be a fascinating exploration of identity and reality. This story follows the protagonist, Piranesi, who lives alone in a mysterious labyrinth house with statues and endless halls. Piranesi begins to question his understanding of himself and the world as a whole as he seeks to unfold the secrets of the house.

Currently, I am reading *Everyone Knows Your Mother is a Witch* by Rivka Galchen, a historical fiction novel about Katharina Kepler, the mother of famed astronomer Johannes Kepler, who was accused of witchcraft during the 17th century. With the combination of historical facts and fictional elements, Galchen creates a fascinating story that I would recommend to anyone interested in witchcraft trials or historical fiction. ■

BRIEFS

Beardsley Library, Winsted

Friends of the Library Book Sale
Saturday, May 20
8:30am-2:00pm

Friends of the Beardsley Library BOOK AND BAKE SALE, along with jewelry and jigsaw puzzles, will be held at the Barkhamsted Garage on Rt. 44 in Barkhamsted on May 20. 8:30am-2:00pm, rain or shine.

Beekley Community Library, New Hartford

May Day Mayhem
Saturday, May 6 (Rain date May 20,) 1:00-2:00 p.m.
All ages

Come play outdoor games, make an outdoor Spring craft, and learn about "May Day" traditions! Register at beekleylibrary.org.

Exploring Art at the Beekley Little Ones Love Art Too
Tuesday, May 9,
11:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.
Ages 1-5 with caregiver

Art Instruction for Children with Miss Melanie. All materials will be provided. Register at beekleylibrary.org.

The Beekley is a recipient of a grant provided by the Northwest Connecticut Arts Council. The Library is pleased to be able to offer these additional and specialized art classes, lectures, and performances open to all ages and abilities.

Between The Lines Teen Creative Writing Group (In Person) Ages 12-19
Wednesday, May 10,
3:30-5:00 p.m.

It's time to challenge everyone's writing skills! Join in every other Wednesday for some fun writing prompts and discussion. Email Melanie Ollett at mollett@beekleylibrary.org with any questions. Register at beekleylibrary.org.

Exploring Art at the Beekley Children's Art Instruction - Painting
Wednesday, May 10,
7:00-8:00 p.m.
Ages 6-10

Children will learn about playing and working with acrylic paints and brushes, using their imagination and exercising their creativity. We'll be using a still life as a reference to start with. Paper and supplies will be provided. Bring a smock. Register at beekleylibrary.org.

Maurice Casas is a highly accomplished multidisciplinary artist and experienced art instructor working and teaching in his studio at the Farmington Valley Arts Center.

The Beekley is a recipient of a grant provided by the Northwest Connecticut Arts Council. The Library is pleased to be able to offer these additional and specialized art classes, lectures, and performances open to all ages and abilities.

Exploring Art at the Beekley Teen/Adult Art Instruction - Painting
Friday, May 12, 7:00-8:00 p.m.

Students will learn painting techniques using acrylic paint and brushes. We will be using a still life group of objects, and at the end each participant will take home a finished piece. Paper and supplies will be provided. No experience necessary. Bring a smock or old clothes, it can get messy. Register at beekleylibrary.org.

Maurice Casas is a highly accomplished multidisciplinary artist and experienced art instructor working and teaching in his studio at the Farmington Valley Arts Center.

The Beekley is a recipient of a grant provided by the Northwest Connecticut Arts Council. The Library is pleased to be able to offer these additional and specialized art classes, lectures, and performances open to all ages and abilities.

Children's STEM Workshop (Rescheduled)
Saturday, May 13,
10:00-11:00 a.m.
Ages 5-11

Come explore STEM with us as we play, learn, and read about various topics. We will experiment with coding, engineering, and robotics. Register at beekleylibrary.org.

Murder Mystery!
Saturday, May 13,
1:00-2:30 p.m.
Grades 6+

Join a Jazz-Age garden party gone terribly wrong. Can you help solve the murder? Snacks will be provided. Registration in advance in required at beekleylibrary.org/teens.

Beekley Book Club
The Sense of an Ending by Julian Barnes
Tuesday, May 16, 6:30-7:30 p.m.

BOOKER PRIZE WINNER • NATIONAL BESTSELLER • A novel that follows a middle-aged man as he contends with a past he never much thought about—until his closest childhood friends return with a vengeance: one of them from the grave, another maddeningly present.

Reserve a copy of the book through a patron account or call the Beekley at 860-379-7235. The Beekley Book Club is a book discussion group that meets on the third Tuesday of each month from 6:30 to 7:30 p.m. All are welcome to join in. Register at beekleylibrary.org.

Pajama Storytime with Miss Val
Thursday, May 18,
6:45-7:30 p.m.
Ages 3-6 with caregiver, siblings welcome

Discover The Secret Life of Squirrels in a picture book by Nancy Rose. Activities and a nutty craft complete the night. Register at beekleylibrary.org.

Artists' Exhibition
Student Artwork on Display
May 19th through June 24th
Opening Reception
Friday, May 19, 7:00 p.m.

Artwork from the classes will be displayed throughout the library from May 19 – June 24. Please join the artists on Friday evening, May 19th, for the opening reception and enjoy light refreshments while viewing the artwork at the library.

Fairy Houses
Friday, May 26, 4:30-5:30 p.m.
Ages 4-11

Build a Fairy House! Bring any natural materials you would like: bark, leaves, sticks, or other supplies. Some materials will be available. Register at beekleylibrary.org.

Morris Public Library, Morris

WOMEN in JAZZ
Thursday, May 11, 7 PM,
via Zoom.

Lecture/Performance by Galen Abdur-Razzaq, world-renowned flutist and lecturer.

Women have been involved in jazz since the early 1920s, not just as vocalists, but as instrumentalists, composers and arrangers. An understanding of jazz would not be complete without highlighting the influence and contributions of women—women such as Bessie Smith, Valaida Snow, Mildred Bailey, Mary Lou Williams, Billie Holiday, Ella Fitzgerald, and Sarah Vaughn.

The program will provide an understanding particularly of the women's personal lives, their ability to read music, perform and survive in a time when jazz was considered "a man's world." It also covers the full spectrum of years, genre, recordings, and recognized achievements.

The event will include a presentation and performance followed by Q&A session.

Registration link is available at morrispubliclibrary.net or by calling 860-567-7440.

This is a collaborative event of the Morris Public Library, Goshen Public Library, Gunn Memorial Library & Museum, and Essex Library Association.

Book Talk and Signing "Align Your Body, Align Your Life: Quit Bending Over Backwards, Getting Ahead of Yourself" with author LisaBeth Lent, of Inner Alignment
Morris Public
Library, Wednesday, May 17,
6:30 PM.

LisaBeth Lent, Progress and Growth Coach, will share a simple approach to total wellness.

Based on her "old story" of chronic pain and victim mentality followed by the journey to empowerment and health, Lisa will present how inner wellness expands into personal transformation.

About the author: LisaBeth Lent has practiced massage therapy for ten years, which evolved into her becoming a group fitness instructor, nutrition coach, speaker, wellness trainer and integrated health consultant. She blends her expertise in body awareness and holistic health to support individuals and organizations.

To register for the FREE Program: call: 860-567-7440,or visit https://morrispubliclibrary.net/library-calendar-event-registration/

Get The Car Insurance Refund You Deserve

BY MIKE PATRICK

One of the myriad ways the COVID-19 pandemic changed society was in the elimination, for many, of the drive-time commute. But as the workday landscape transformed into one of home offices and virtual meetings, and cars sat safely in driveways, insurance companies continued to make billions on policy premiums.

After outcry from a consumer advocacy organization, many of the major players—including GEICO, Progressive, Liberty Mutual, Allstate and State Farm—returned some of those gains to consumers.

But if you, like many, didn't check your monthly bill back then, you might not know whether you received a refund.

"People have so much on their plate, financially, and insurance is required by the state, so it becomes almost like a tax," said Douglas Heller, director of insurance for the California-based Consumer Federation of America (CFA). "It's important that it's built into the system, because you don't want to be driving without insurance. But it leaves room for insurance companies to exploit us."

In the 25 years he's been an advocate for insurance consumers, he said, he's seen it happen, thanks, in part, to a strong industry lobby and a lax regulatory system.

"The people that walk into the offices of the [state] insurance department every day are not regular drivers; they're insurance industry lobbyists and lawyers," he said. "Our voice is not as well heard in the Department of Insurance as it ought to be."

If you suspect you didn't receive your refund or that it wasn't enough, Heller has two suggestions.

"For people who feel that they didn't get the relief that they deserved during the pandemic, call one should be to their insurance company. But call two should be to the state Department of Insurance, asking what they should have expected, because the companies did have to file what they were doing."

In April 2020, for example, GEICO announced that it would provide a 15% credit to its auto and motorcycle customers—a total of $2.5 billion—but only to new customers and those who renew.

Progressive, meanwhile, provided personal auto customers a 20% credit off their premiums for a total of approximately $1 billion.

Liberty Mutual established a "Personal Auto Customer Relief Refund," which returned approximately $250 million to customers in the form of a 15% refund on two months of their auto premium.

Allstate's "Shelter-in-Place Payback" was similar, returning more than $600 million to its auto insurance customers. "This is fair because less driving means fewer accidents," a company statement said at the time.

In every case, insurance companies advised customers they would not need to take any action to receive the credits, that they would be applied automatically. However, that also provided a convenient incentive for insurance customers to not pay attention to their bills, Heller said. And if they're not satisfied, he said consumers should call the state Department of Insurance.

"When state regulators realize that consumers know what's going on, they will pay more attention, they will think harder about it, they will look back at the data," he said. "But if we don't let them know, they've got a lot of insurance lobbyists walking through the door that they've got to deal with."

The state Department of Insurance released this statement to the Winsted Citizen: "Consumers with questions regarding their automobile insurance premiums can contact the Connecticut Insurance Department directly by email at insurance@ct.gov or by calling the Department at 800-203-3447 or 860-297-3900." ■



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO.

Previous Laurel King & Queen winners (left to right:) Dylan Bird, Abigail Tanis, Caitlin Tucker, and Aidan Bunel.

COMBO ANNUAL PET PARADE AND LAUREL FESTIVAL PARADE RETURNS TO WINSTED MAY 20

The 85th Annual Rotary Pet Parade is set to delight hundreds of children of all ages on Saturday, May 20th at 2pm on Winsted's Main Street—rain or shine. And the excitement builds, as the oldest Pet Parade in the nation joins forces with the 89th anniversary of the Laurel Festival to make one grand parade. All children from Winsted, Torrington, Norfolk, New Hartford, Barkhamsted and Colebrook are invited to participate in this annual spring tradition organized by the Rotary Club of the Torrington—Winsted Areas. This merged Winsted spectacle will feature thirty parade units, marching bands, floats and decorated cars with Pet and Laurel Parade themes, as well as Rotary and local dignitaries; the 2022 Laurel Queen—Caitlyn Tucker and Laurel King Aidan Bunel, the 2023 Pet Parade Poster Winner and the Honorary Parade Marshal Candy Perez, Selectman.

The diverse Pet Parade Divisions make it possible for any and all children to take part, even if they don't own a pet. The parade divisions include: small floats, wagons and doll carriages that might contain a child, pet or stuffed animal; pets—carried, caged or on a lead; famous people in costume; animated/cartoon characters; super heroes and villains; fiction and fantasy from the movies/books; floats; Scouts, sports and youth/dance organizations; dogs—leashed or carried; and needing helmets to participate—bikes; rollerblades and skateboards; small self-propelled vehicles; and horses, donkeys and ponies.

To register for the Pet Parade, forms were distributed through the schools in Torrington, Winsted, Colebrook, New Hartford, Barkhamsted and Norfolk; or on the day of the Pet Parade at parade line-up, located on Meadow Street in Winsted between 1:00 – 1:30p.m. One may also view parade information on Facebook at Winsted (CT) Rotary Pet Parade. All winning parade division winners announced will receive a medal at the East End Park ceremonies following the parade's conclusion, and other prizes awarded by the judges may include a Kindle or a bicycle. ■

Pleasant Valley Drive-In

continued from Page 1

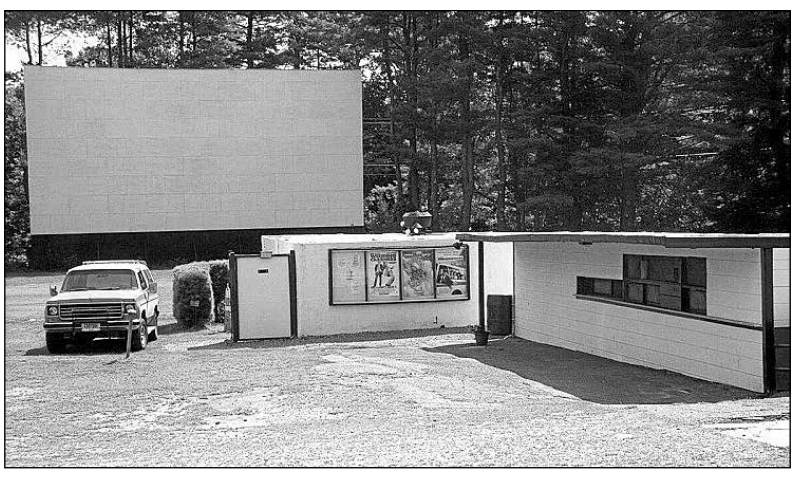
Drive-In" implies the page is managed by the new owners or someone representing them. Created in April, the page claims the property requires "much needed restoration," including electrical wiring that is "not up to code."

Posts on the page suggest the LLC plans to continue operating the drive-in. One reads, "We can't wait to get this place back up and running for you all!"

Barkhamsted First Selectman Don Stein said Pleasant Valley Properties has not filed any paperwork with the town regarding possible development of the property.

"They have not indicated exactly what they want to do," Stein said. "It's pretty much unknown at this point." He said the town would prefer the land, if developed, be done to "fit within the rural nature" of the area.

"We'd certainly like to see the drive-in preserved," he said. "That would be our first priority."



Barkhamsted Pleasant Valley Drive-In is under new ownership and management after a land deal.

McGrane, meanwhile, would rather concentrate on her fond memories of the 27 years she owned Pleasant Valley Drive-In.

There are the folks who got engaged and married there, the high school and college graduations that took place there during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, the wall her teenaged employees signed their names on every season, and the bear that occasionally emerged from the woods and walked across the parking lot during a movie.

"That's happened more times than I can even count," she said with a laugh.

But mostly, she said, she's going to miss the people.

"The customers always made it worth everything. I had the best customers of any business in the world," she said.

"I'll be sitting there, and the popcorn machine goes, and someone from the parking lot comes and says, 'I'm an electrician, want me look at it?'" she said. "You know, they don't do that anywhere else but at the drive-in."

The drive-in never made a lot of money, she said—$15,000 to $20,000 in a good season—but it was a job that she needed.

"I'm going to miss it so much," she said. "I've got to find a job. I don't know what I'm going to do with myself this summer." ■

MUSIC FESTIVAL RETURNS IN JUNE

Participant Registration Now Open



From 2022 Make Music NWCT Left: Adelaide Punkin at the Outlet for the Arts. Below: Our Culture is Beautful's "Dance Around the World" Celebration at KidsPlay. Photos by Steph Burr

The NWCT Arts Council is excited to be hosting the 6th annual Make Music NWCT, Wednesday, June 21st, 2023. Make Music Day is an international celebration of live music, taking place on the summer solstice of each year. People of all ages and skill levels are encouraged to create music at participating venues across the region. All performances are free and open to the public. The NWCT Arts Council is proud to host this event in the region again this year.

Make Music NWCT registration is now open for venues and musicians across Northwest CT, at nw-ct.makemusicday.org. Venues are strongly encouraged to register as soon as possible, and start promoting their participation in this event. Musicians can register and begin requesting to schedule at participating venues.

Rana Justice has been involved in coordinating concerts for Make Music Day in NWCT for the past four years. She says, "I look forward to Make Music Day every year. More venues have been participating and the general vibe has been an essential life force for our arts community."

Make Music NWCT is sponsored in part by the CT Office of the Arts and Make Music Alliance.

Learn More about the NWCT Arts Council at artsnwct.org.



Litchfield County's 5 Best-Kept Secrets for Hikers

STORY AND PHOTOS
BY MOLLY LEONARD

To cut down on stress throughout the past few years, I have sought to add more mindfulness practices to my life. To be clear, I have failed at most of them. But one thing that never fails to bring peace to my mind is a walk in the woods. It grounds me, literally and figuratively, and reminds me of how connected we are to nature.

My goal is to get to the woods a few times a week. Sometimes it's just a stop on the way home from work to wander for 20 minutes. Other times, I pack some snacks, lace up my boots, and head out for a more intentional journey. It might be as easy as a stroll or a more moderate hike (I leave the difficult trails to the experts.)

One thing that I have discovered by walking in nature is that no matter what trail I'm on, there is a distinctness to them, a personality. Trails can be bright or dark, full of pine or ancient oaks, full of bird song or river currents. I have discovered some less traveled hikes in the Litchfield Hills, each with its own beauty, and, with spring in full bloom, it seems like a perfect time to share them. So, here are some lesser known trails for you to go walk, explore and get mindful in the woods.



Hamlin Bear



Lover's Leap

Prospect Mountain Preserve,
223 Cathole Road, Litchfield
2.3 Miles, 1h 20 min, 420 ft elevation

This is a fun place for families with easy parking. I took the clearly marked yellow trail up and blue trail down to make it a loop.The terrain is fun, featuring several small streams to hop over on rocks, as well as some plank bridges over mud. This trail climbs to a lovely look out along a ridge and the view is worth the sweat. I enjoyed the 'cock-a-doodle-doo' of a rooster from an abutting farm.

Hamlin Bear and Red Mountain Trail,
19 Stone House Road, Sharon
4.6 Miles, 2h 30 min, 643 ft elevation

This is a beautiful place to exercise; I even passed a runner. There's great parking for this quiet trail in the hills of Sharon on a land preserve. I walked along a beautiful field, wet with April mud—but that should be dry soon. The forest is very dense and embracing, the trails are well marked and there are smaller loop options that feature different lookouts.

Caleb Peak via Appalachian Trail,
Skiff Mountain, Kent
1.5 Miles, 50 min, 403 ft elevation

Considered easy, though not by my standards, this is a short hike with a breath-shortening rock staircase to start. Unfortunately, parking is minimal; along Skiff Mountain there are several small pull offs. But it's worth the struggle to find a spot. The woods were breathtaking in their openness and made me feel like I could see forever. The view is worth the trek as you meander along the peak. This short, intense walk pays off big with a must-see vista.

Lover's Leap State Park, 178 Short Woods Road, New Milford
2.5 Miles, 1h 30 min, 580 ft elevation

This small state park is incredible in its variety. Right from the parking lot there is a path to walk under a graffiti bridge down to the Housatonic River as well as an iconic 1895 Iron Bridge to cross. Both spots offer abundant photo opportunities. People of all ages can come here and feel a connection with nature. There are two short hikes that take about 30 minutes and end in incredible views and one longer hike that feels moderate. On the longer trail, you'll find some old foundations in the woods, which are perfect for kids to explore.



Rand's View

Rand's View, 108 Route 63,
Falls Village
5.3, 3h 30 min, 1395 ft elevation

Well marked as it's part of the Appalachian trail, this hike is incredible. You'll find ample parking at Upper Falls Village Recreation Center. Frankly, that alone is worth the trip as it is where the Housatonic River falls over a hydroelectric dam. It has a short trail you can walk along to enjoy the view of the falls. Rand's View trail begins across the street and is moderate, as it is steep in spots with uneven terrain. Mount Prospect summit is beautiful and a great resting spot. It's worth continuing on to Rand's View, which is a large fairytale-like field with astounding views in the middle of a forest. ■



LEGAL NOTICE: SCHOOL RECORDS DISPOSAL

In keeping with state and federal regulations on records retention and disposal, school officials plan to destroy records of Special Education and 504 students who left or graduated from Regional School District No. 7, Barkhamsted Elementary School, Colebrook Consolidated School, Botelle School in Norfolk or Hartland School on or before June 30, 2017 or were born before July 1, 1999.

Please be advised that records may be needed for Social Security benefits or other purposes. The destruction is scheduled to take place after June 30, 2023.

Anyone wishing to review his/her records or obtain the original may do so by calling Quentin Rueckert, Director of Shared Services, at 860-379-8583, before June 2, 2023.

Dog Park Proposal

continued from Page 1

Still, some neighbors in the Westside Road area have concerns. Many of the letters and public comments focused on predictable complaints, such as noise, parking, or tree removal.

Ian Miller wrote in to offer some calculations, which he said show that noise concerns were overblown. He said that any noise reaching houses would be in the 20 decibel range—making it much quieter than a refrigerator. The FNCDP has said several times it aims to minimize the number of trees that need to be cut, and hopes to focus on dead or dying trees and invasives.

Opponents also expressed concern over the idea that the area is a common corridor for wildlife—including the spotted salamander, which was of special concern for several letter writers.

Many also pointed out that, as a rural town, there are plenty of trails to walk dogs on—and that dog parks are hallmarks of more urban or suburban communities. However, that does not account for accessibility issues. Not every person or dog is able to walk long distances, and they often rely on dog parks as a source of exercise. Furthermore, the residentially zoned lot could, under current regulations, accommodate multiple houses; the development of which would also impact the character and environment of the surrounding area.

Safety risks were top of mind for many who pointed out that parking areas at the nearby ball fields are regularly patrolled by police for drug activity. For instance, a letter submitted for the April 11 meeting by one of the closest neighbors to the dog park, George Mawicke, said, "Creating a spot for drug dealing from which vandalism, robbery, and arson can easily proceed is foolish." Another from George Cronin expressed concern that "a parking lot set back from the road, obscured by trees could easily become a nexus for drug dealing and other criminal behavior."

Similarly, many wondered if access would be limited to town residents and how that would be enforced. Some suggested the use of a tag like those required to access Tobey Pond.

Even the town's animal control officer weighed in, suggesting that the commission place some conditions on an approval, most of which are standard dog park guidelines: dogs must be leashed upon entering and exiting, owners are responsible for any injuries their dogs cause, and all dogs must be healthy, vaccinated, and collared.

On the other hand, those in support of the park often focused on the community dog parks can provide. For instance, in a letter, Sloane Klevin pointed out that as a single woman who lives in a rural area and works from home, making new friends is a challenge. Despite hiking with her dog regularly, she hardly ever sees others on the trail. "Not only am I in need of community and social interaction, but my dog is too," wrote Klevin.

Philip Carr-Harris echoed that sentiment: "Because there are few informal opportunities for Norfolkians to gather and meet, I believe the Park will enhance the quality of our communal life."

At the end of the last meeting, a motion was made to accept the proposal with conditions. Though those conditions have not been solidified, Halloran said they may include smaller parking spaces more in line with town requirements (thereby reducing the amount of ground coverage), and set operating hours rather than being open from dawn to dusk. The Planning and Zoning Commission expects to deliver a decision at the May 9, 2023 meeting. ■

On the Job With Carissa Monroe and Katie Vaill

Carissa Monroe is the owner and director of DBA Dance studio in New Hartford CT.

People who know me would say I'm very energetic, outgoing and I'm always there to help out friends and family. I enjoy my quiet time, but I do like being around people. I do better in situations where there's a lot going on, whereas most people may think chaos is stressful.

The craziest thing I've done is taking the leap and going for my dream.

I have a tendency to be spontaneous. One time, I booked flight tickets to take off down south for four days… the night before. At one point in my life, I danced with a company called Catapult Entertainment. They had an ad to shoot the next day and one of their dancers got injured, so they called me to ask if I could be there within an hour to rehearse and be in the ad.

However, I can also be a homebody. There's a part of me that really likes to be home by myself in a quiet space.

My childhood dream was to do exactly what I'm doing now: own a dance studio and teach kids how to dance. Kids I went to high school with bring their kids to dance at DBA and say how cool it is to see me live my childhood dream. I still pinch myself sometimes because I can't believe it came true.

I look up to my students, which sounds crazy. They're a huge part of my life and are the ones who inspire me and give me energy. I aspire to be like my mom. She's such a selfless person and so caring and giving; she's my best friend.

My happiest place is somewhere really warm on a beach with my toes in the sand, listening to the water and the waves. I feel the calmest and most at ease there. I love to read when I have the time to, and I love traveling and hiking with my dog Nova.

–Ella Gannon



ELLA GANNON

Carissa Monroe at the annual DBA Dedication Awards Gala in April.



KATHY MEGAN

Katie Vaill, at work in her office in April 2023. Last year, she helped over 200 individuals.

Katie Vaill's interest in human services work started early: She was in high school when she began work part time at a residential center for children with severe multiple disabilities. She went on to work with adults and children with a variety of intellectual disabilities and behavioral problems in schools and group home settings.

In Nov. 2021, she was hired to direct Winchester's social services department, a position that had been vacant for many years. Last year, she helped 202 people; as of mid-April she had already assisted 107 this year. Most come for housing-related issues but the needs are wide-ranging, including help with substance abuse, heating bills, and obtaining identification.



I think the clients that I work with would say that I'm a very strong advocate. I've seen so many people fall through the cracks. And I've seen so many systems fail that I don't drop the ball. I just keep on going. A lot of people don't feel like there's anybody in their corner. I think the people that I assist know I'm in there.

I love chaos. That's why I've been doing this for so long. I thrive in it. I'm very good in a crisis and a very good problem solver. At this point in my career, it's a reflex. I just know what to do. I say what I mean and I follow through. I'm honest and kids respond to that, especially when they've been lied to or they feel like they've been lied to. A lot of people who've been marginalized in some way, shape or form—they don't believe anything anybody says to them, whether they're eight or 88.

We just had someone in here yesterday saying, 'Every door I tried to open closes and nobody will help me,' and it isn't that it is true. It's just the way they feel.

The craziest thing I ever did? I think part of me wants to say going back to college and getting a master's degree in human services leadership at 58-years-old. I think a lot of people thought I was pretty crazy to do that, but I loved every minute of it.

In my last year, I did a research project on unsheltered homelessness in Winsted because, you know, it was a big issue … That's how I ended up here.

In the last four days, I've had four calls from people who are homeless. It isn't the only thing I do, but it's most of what I do: anything relating to housing. I don't think it would have been if it weren't for the pandemic.

We just had someone in here yesterday saying, 'Every door I tried to open closes

don't think it would have been if it weren't for the pandemic.

They put a moratorium on evictions. I think quite frankly that was taken advantage of by some people. And, of course, the moment that moratorium was lifted, landlords went after all their lost money. There were a lot of evictions. The housing stock is very low.

There's also the fact that the real estate market prompted a lot of people who own multi-family houses to sell. And when they purchased those multi-family houses, many evicted the current residents and increased the rent or increased the rent enough that the current residents couldn't afford it.

I can't wait until the studies come out about what this pandemic really did to people.

They [elderly people] got so isolated. And little kids not having all that experience that's so valuable during important developmental years. There's a lot of substance use disorder. And that leads to unstable housing. There's no doubt about it. I think that the substance abuse was amplified. I just think, in the pandemic—people drank more and they used more substances. ■

–Kathy Megan

Winchester Police Chief Chris Ciuci, a veteran officer who rose from patrolman to deputy chief in Berlin, gets his badge pinned by wife Tammy as Sgt Kevin Kinahan looks on. In right photo Ciuci reaches out to Officers Joshua Blass (left) and Rudy David after being sworn in at Town Hall on April 3.





PHOTOS BY SAVAGE FRIEZE

MAD RIVER Music
EST. 2018
502 Main St, Winsted, CT
(860) 480-6777





Over 50 electric and acoustic guitars in stock!
Ernie Ball, Martin, D'addario and other Brand name strings and accessories!
Contact Us today for Lessons on Guitar, Bass, Piano, Drums, and more!

Winsted's Wandering Youth Find their Way Back Home

BY KATHY MEGAN

WINSTED – They have crisscrossed the states, traveled the world and lived in cities from Brooklyn to San Diego. But when it came time for these young people to find a place to call home, they went home. To Winsted.

It wasn't something they ever planned on doing. In fact, most say they thought they would never return when they graduated from The Gilbert School a decade or so ago.

Sean Simmons, who graduated from Gilbert in 2009, said he and his friends had a joke about Winsted: "We said the town was all bars and gas stations, so you either have to drink or leave."

For Simmons, that meant taking off for college at Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts in North Adams then migrating down to Brooklyn. There, he and his hometown friend, Alan Nero, performed with their band and recorded their music.

Katelyn Bailey also knew she was going to leave when she graduated from Gilbert in 2011. She was also sure she'd never go back and live in Winsted.

"It felt small, and I wanted bigger," said Bailey. "I didn't want to walk down the street and have people know who I was."

Bailey headed to college in Erie, Pennsylvania where she pursued a degree in cybersecurity while also finding the time to travel around the world. By the time she'd graduated, she'd been to 20 countries. She got a job in cybersecurity with the Department of Homeland Security and later with Google. She lived for a time in Albany, Philadelphia and Washington, DC.

Yet, for a variety of reasons, Simmons, Bailey and other young people have made their way back to Winsted, where they discovered that their perspectives have changed. They also discovered that Winsted has changed—for the better.

JoAnn Ryan, president of the Northwest Connecticut Chamber of Commerce, said she's definitely seen an increase in the number of younger people moving into the Northwest region, particularly during the pandemic years.

In some cases, Ryan said, "their schools closed or shut down, everything was online, or they felt they wanted to be closer to home during a time that was pretty challenging for everybody."

Now, she says that they've "found jobs. They've found places to live and a much more cost-effective way to live here, even than in other parts of Connecticut."



BOB THIESFIELD

Shannon and Shane Centrella (pictured with baby Summer) returned to Winsted from San Diego when they were thinking about marriage and starting a family.



BOB THIESFIELD

Katelyn Bailey says she "never thought Winsted would be a place that I would be able to put down roots and have a career."



BOB THIESFIELD

Alan Nero and Sean Simmons did a stint in Brooklyn, where they performed with their band and recorded their music. Now, both have returned to Winsted.

Town manager Josh Kelly said that young people returning in the past few years are finding a new Winsted. "Over 20 businesses have opened in the last two years," Kelly said. He added the number of jobs in Winsted has also also risen significantly in the past couple of years.

A combination of factors brought Simmons back to town. It wasn't easy trying to pursue a music career while also working long hours for low pay at Barnes & Noble. Rehearsals got squeezed in at studios at 11 p.m. and he'd return home on the subway from Manhattan to Brooklyn at 1 a.m.

"I never had a savings account there," Simmons said. "You were just happy when you could pay all of your bills."

So, after three years, he made his way north, and worked jobs in Holyoke and in Worcester. When neither worked out, he returned to Winsted, where he grew up. He decided to finish his music degree, which he did online during the pandemic. Now he is teaching lessons in guitar, bass, piano and music theory at ABC Music School in Litchfield.

"It's nice to be in a stable environment doing something I wanted to do," said Simmons. "I'm thankful to my family for giving me the opportunity to finish my degree and start working in the field I wanted to be in."

Alan Nero, Simmons' friend and communications coordinator for the town of Winchester, moved to New York for college. He stayed for almost a decade as he pursued his college degree and music, while working a series of full-time jobs to pay the bills.

"It's really a double-edged sword being down there," he said. "There are a lot of opportunities if you can get the money. But it's so expensive and difficult to live there that a lot of the time, it's a real juggling act."

Nero, 31, and his girlfriend came back to Winsted to live with his father at the start of the pandemic. It was supposed to be a sojourn of a month or two. However, as time—and the pandemic—went on, Nero began to see advantages to staying in town. He was able to finish his college degree while at home, eventually got the part-time job with the town, and has had time to form his own media production company. Meanwhile, his fiancée built a thriving virtual therapy practice that took off, while also offering equine-assisted therapy.

When he left the town as a teenager, Nero said the town was struggling. But on his return, he saw many signs that it was coming back to life. When he got his job with the town, he saw this even more clearly.

"People here are fighting to make it better, to help it to grow," he said. "That's the part that's exciting for me, to be a part of that, to help it grow and come through those struggles to come back stronger."

Among the new places in town that Nero says attract younger people are: The Little Red Barn Brewers, River Eatery, and Railway Cafe. The American Mural Project and Whiting Mills art studios also lend a vibrancy to the area, he said. And, according to Kelly, an axe throwing business and a bookstore will also soon set up shop in Winsted.

Nero believes his story is like others who have returned to Winsted. "You know, coming back for family and finding this seed of hope here."

Katelyn Bailey, 29, said the pandemic "as terrible as it was" had a "silver lining for Winsted because it did allow an influx of remote and tech workers who want that small town feel or, like my case, come back home."

"I never thought Winsted would be a place that I would be able to put down roots and have a career," said Bailey, who bought a house on Highland Lake. "It's really telling when you can live anywhere in the world and pick Winsted."

With the new bars and restaurants and the "gorgeous lake," Bailey said Winsted has the "vibe of a true destination town with the prices, people and traffic of a small town."

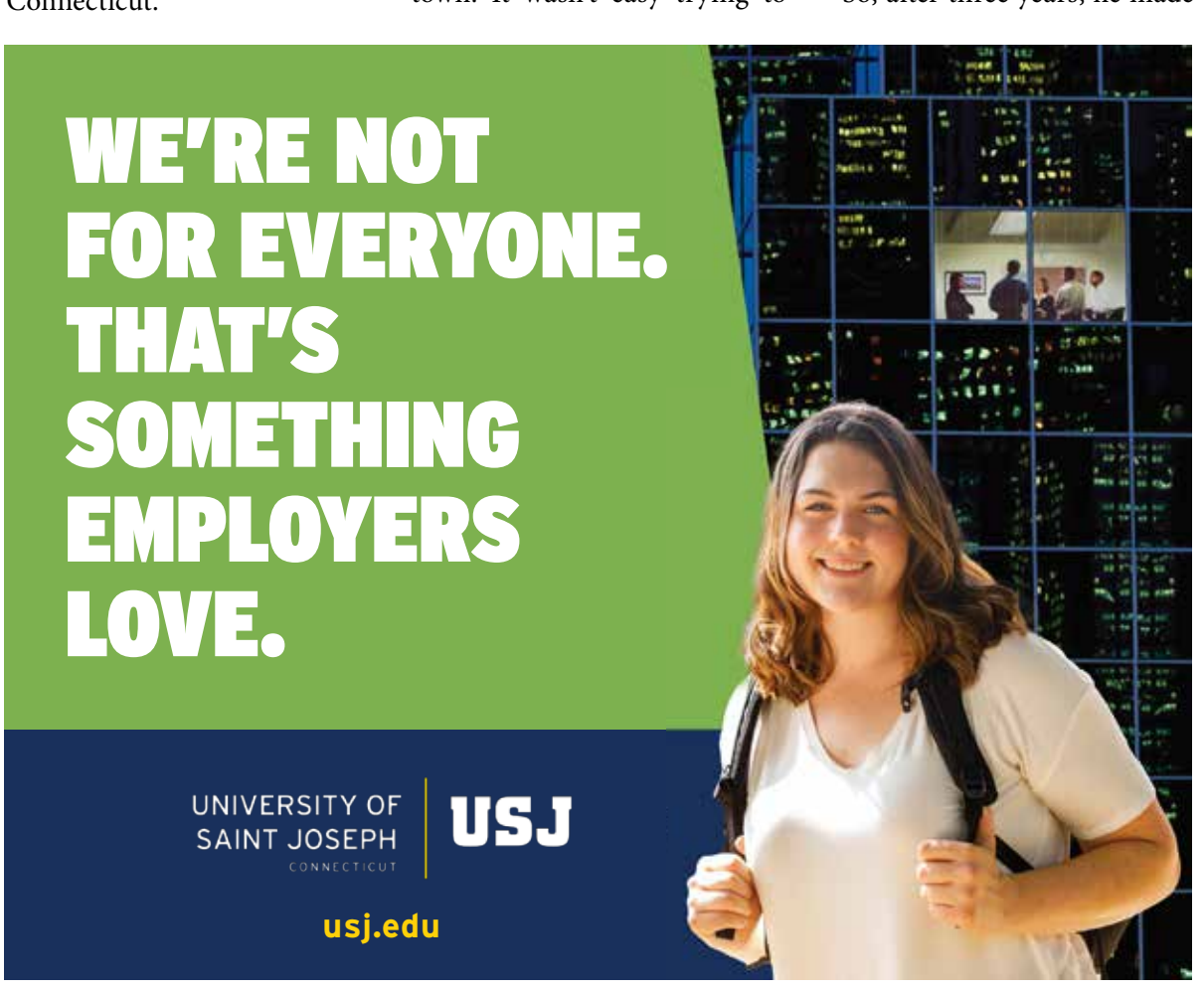
Bailey's sister and brother-in-law, Shannon and Shane Centrella, made a similar decision several years ago to return to Winsted from San Diego when they were thinking about marriage and starting a family. But instead of working remotely, three years ago the couple bought Shannon's parents' health food store on Main Street, called Health Food Corner. They renamed it Rooted Market and expanded the offerings.

In addition Shane opened a golf store and practice center nearby on Main Street and called Be Under Par.

Shane, 36, said that years ago, as a younger man he "tried to get out of town as fast as I could," but after living in New York and California and traveling extensively through-out the U.S., he appreciates more about Winsted.

What has made it exciting for him was "the possibility to effect some changes. I wanted to be an addition to the town instead of someone who lives in town."

For the sisters, having family nearby is key to their decisions. "No other location gives me what I get here, which is being able to drive two miles down the road and see my sister and my niece," Bailey said, "and then another mile and see my parents. As everybody gets older, you realize that time is fleeting. We have a finite amount of time with the ones we love, so I'm choosing to spend it with them as much as I can." ■



NCCC's Third Annual Comm-Con Provides a Place for Fantasy, Fans and Fun

BY MELANIE OLLETT

Photos by Logan Grousclaude

WINSTED – Fans of comic books, video games, and fantasy from northwest Connecticut gathered on April 27 at Northwest Connecticut Community College's third Comm Con. There was something to satisfy a wide range of interests, including: discussions from local artists and animators, video game competitions, a human costume contest, small business vendors from around the state, and a goat costume contest with baby goats. Admission was free for college staff and students as well as children 12 and under, and $5 for adult community members and the event attracted people of all ages. Comm-Con also provided an opportunity for local artisans and small businesses to make personal connections with customers in the community. A full list of events, vendors, and speakers can be found at www.nwcc.edu/comm-con.



Penelope the goat is dressed as the Cowardly Lion from *The Wizard of Oz*. Baby goats for the goat costume contest were provided by vendor That's Cool I Need It. Comm-Con attendees enjoyed petting the more docile of the kids. To vote for the cutest goat, participants donated one dollar to the Northwest Connecticut Community College emergency student relief fund.



Local small businesses display their wares as Comm-Con participants browse and chat. Northwest Connecticut Community College's Greenwoods Hall served as the venue for the event. The space was decked out with banners representing books, comic books, and movies.



Vendor Andrew King selling plush toys, many shaped like popular characters such as Yoshi and Pikachu. King said he was accustomed to helping parents FaceTime children back home in order to pick out a new favorite toy.



Dan Santorso selling a wide range of collectibles, including limited edition dolls, trading cards, jewelry, and accessories.



JaVon O. Stokes of Windsor, CT writes, illustrates, and publishes his comics himself. He has two comic series, *Heat* and *Storm*. He was selling personalized, signed copies of his wares to attendees.

The Winsted Citizen

Local correspondents wanted to provide coverage of local news and events.

Interested? Contact: winstedcitizen@gmail.com

DENTAL Insurance

Get help paying big dental bills



It doesn't matter what dentist you see, we can help pay the bill.
Get **dental insurance** from Physicians Mutual Insurance Company.

Get your FREE Information Kit
from Physicians Mutual Insurance Company.

SCAN ME!

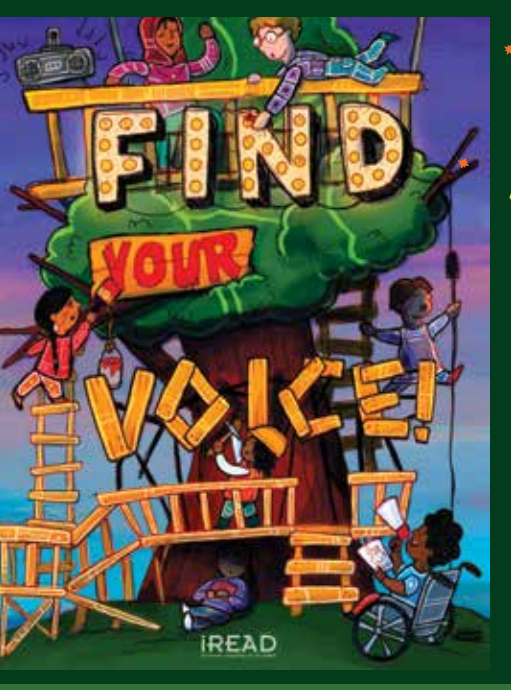
1-860-909-0325
Dental50Plus.com/Winsted

Product not available in all states. Contact us to see the coverage and offer available in your state. Contact us for complete details about this insurance solicitation including costs and limitations. This specific offer is not available in CO. Call 1-800-969-4781 or respond for a similar offer. In WV: To find a provider in the network visit us at https://www.physiciansmutual.com/web/dental/find-dentist. Certificate C250A (ID: C250E); Insurance Policy P150; Rider Kinds B438/B439. In CA, CO, ID, KY, ME, MD, MA, MI, MO, NV, NJ, NC, ND, VA: Includes Participating Providers and Preventive Benefits Rider. Certificate C254/B465 (PA: C254PA); Insurance Policy P154/B469 (GA: P154GA; OK: P154OK; TN: P154TN).
6323

Morris Public Library Presents:

KickOff

Tuesday
June 27
6 PM



WITH ICE CREAM





Morris Public Library

SUMMER READING PROGRAM
FOR ALL AGES
JUNE 27 - AUGUST 16, 2023

Today's Poets

PROMPT #3: WRITE A POEM ABOUT A MEMORY YOU WISH YOU COULD UNKNOW

BY VICTORIA NORDLUND

It is September in Room 224 and I can barely function without my seating chart.
Can just about recognize my masked students in the crowded high school hallway.

It is difficult now to fill in the gaps of faces you don't fully see.
We are writing childhood memory poems in Creative Writing I

& they are not quite comfortable with me, or each other, or themselves—
& none of us can remember normal before hybrid or remote.

A 10th grade girl shares that she can't bring up a childhood memory, that drugs have left empty spaces, that she OD'd on heroin in middle school.

A 9th grade boy writes that he tried to kill his 9-year-old self with a knife—
Bullied because he wasn't black enough.

One green-haired girl's poem is about her brother who was taken away by DCF from a house she got to stay in with nine brothers & sisters & one bathroom.

& another's dad died a few years back—she describes a memory of him & a West Virginia butterfly-filled field. & I tell her I am sorry & she says it's okay— I tell her, it's not.

& another captures a last breath. Finds his mom he lost to pancreatic cancer in every poem. Even the erasure one I assigned last week.

& the girl in the back row writes she is haunted because she ghosted her 7th grade friend who became one a few weeks later.

& another in the front shares a memory of her mom telling her only weak people cry.
Her mom has lupus and leukemia. Her dad is not in her poem.

& the one with the teal backpack sobs because their unnamed-yet puppy died yesterday.
The blond next to her gives them a hug—tells them that her Golden passed when she was six—

Finds it funny she can't recall a memory of him alive. & it is Monday & it is almost the end of Block 1 & I haven't posted attendance yet & they are all still here at these gray tables

not wanting the bell to ring & I'm not ready for Block 2, or this year & I want to give them all hugs, but I can't & no one wants to hear that I might not be strong enough

to make any edits, to write the next prompt.



Victoria Nordlund is the creative writing director at Rockville High School in Vernon, CT, an adjunct professor at the University of Connecticut, and lead master teaching artist of the The Nook Farm Writers Collaborative at The Mark Twain House & Museum. Her poetry collections Wine-Dark Sea and Binge Watching Winter on Mute are published by Main Street Rag. She is a Best of the Net and Pushcart Prize Nominee, whose work has appeared or is forthcoming in PANK Magazine, Rust+Moth, Chestnut Review, Pidgeonholes, Connecticut Literary Anthology, Maudlin House, trampset, and elsewhere.

I Imagine Her Chest Rising And Falling As

she tells me I have to see my relative's sculpture.
The Sleeping Maiden is famous, she says proudly.
So I Google search this on my cell and the statue comes
up and it doesn't disappoint. So there she is:

propped up/cheek on pillow with a week
or two old rose someone has placed on her chest—
draped in sheets that look just like my flannel ones.
I can't believe how many articles and photographs are here,

and why I haven't cared about this before,
And how beautiful she is, and how Wikipedia tells me
only marble has a translucency like human skin—
It does not bear handling well.

How Yannoulis Halepas attempted suicide
when he was told that the pedestal
was too short to allow full extension of the statue's legs,
that his grave is in that cemetery too,
that he has a museum dedicated to him on the island of Tinos.
And I think this is cool.
Want Mom to come with me to Greece.
I search a Carnival cruise for travelers with disabilities.

It is mid-afternoon July and she rests wrapped
in the folds of two gray blankets on her Lazy-Boy recliner
I bought her at Bob's Discount Furniture.
She sleeps here too—Can't feel her legs,

uses an electric scooter to get around
her assisted living. The COPD makes it difficult
to breathe and she can't operate an inhaler or apply
eyeliner or crack pistachios anymore

because her arthritis has ossified her fingers.
She still rides the van to get her nails done—
Lincoln Park After Dark—She only wears black.
Marvels that they're not chipped too.

And she tells me how she doesn't want to be a burden,
how she wants to be cremated, how the TV remote
broke, how she can't close the blinds, how she promises
to write everything down so I won't forget--How I snap

a photo of the statue this June in the 1st Cemetery
in Athens with a tour guide who offers me a Marlboro Red
as she tells me her father just died last month, as she asks
me how I am related to the artist, as I struggle to remember.

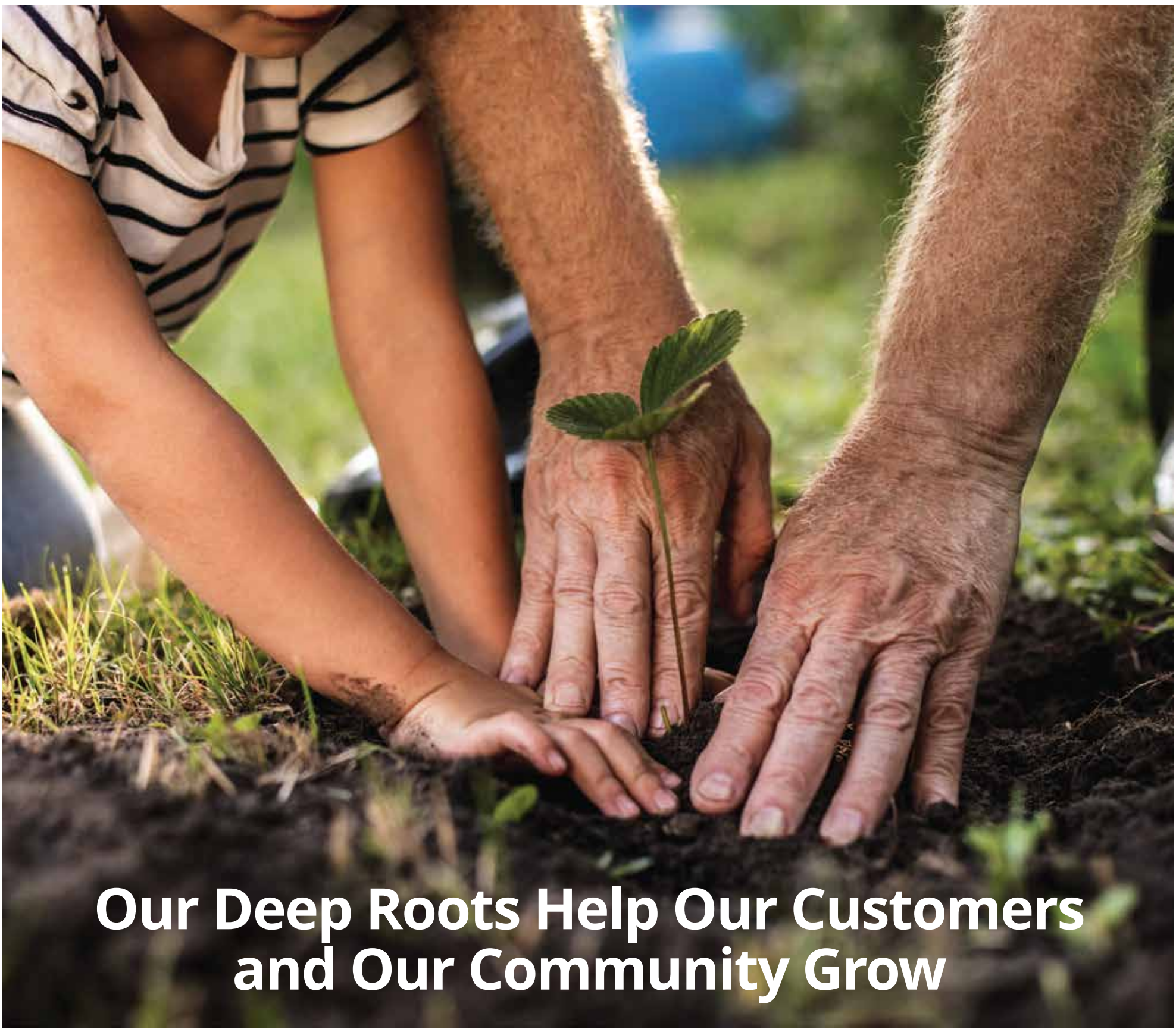
The Machine Not Taken

BY SANDRA BISHOP EBNER

This is an exercise
in the discussion of Poetry
at Planet Fitness. My first
day here. She asks
me what machines
I might be interested in.
I never thought of it that way.
I was never interested
in machines before this.
That's not entirely
true, I admit, but now
Treadmills, Ellipticals stretch
from one end of the long
gym space to the other end.
Did I want to try the circuit? She
takes notes, writes down
the names and what my
routine might be, tells me she
likes the poet Robert Frost,
and both those machines:
Overhead Press, ARC Trainer,
equally lay, and I'll keep
the Elliptical, for another
day! Yet knowing how
Torso rotation, no, Treadmill
leads on to way,
somewhere ages
and ages hence: two machines diverged
in a gym, and I—I took the
one over there, empty, and that
start has made all the difference.



Sandra Bishop Ebner of Litchfield worked as a Psychiatric Case Manager for the Visiting Nurse Services. She taught poetry to 7th graders under a grant funded program. Her first book, The Space Between, was published by Hanover Press. She was nominated for a Pushcart Prize. Her poems have appeared in various literary journals, which include, Intensive Care, and The Poetry Of Nursing, published by Kent State University Press.



Our Deep Roots Help Our Customers and Our Community Grow

Our family tree has grown along with our customers –
neighbors, families, businesses and hometowns.
Valuing our customers, we're relationship banking at its best.

We love serving our cusotmers, and helping new customers switch to us.
How can we help you?



Pam Dean
Assistant Vice President
Winsted Branch Manager
NMLS MLO#1090437

86 Main Street, Winsted
860-379-7561



Laura Murphy
Assistant Vice President
New Hartford Branch Manager
NMLS MLO#1754971

141B Main Street, New Hartford
860-693-8397

Northwest Community Bank

CollinsvilleBank
A Division of Northwest Community Bank

Litchfield Bancorp
A Division of Northwest Community Bank

nwcommunitybank.com
New Hartford | Torrington | Avon | Granby | Simsbury | Winsted
Northwestern Regional High School Academic Branch, Winsted

collinsvillebank.com
Collinsville | Canton | Farmington

litchfieldbancorp.com
Litchfield | Torrington | Lakeville | Watertown

Member FDIC

NMLS ID: 510148