

# REDDING SENTINEL

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## CT affordable housing bill passes committee with some funding removed

By Ginny Monk

Democrats on the Housing Committee passed a bill Thursday that aims to increase affordable housing supply in the state, although the measure saw significant amendments since a public hearing earlier in the week.

The amendments included the removal of millions of dollars targeted at homelessness response and rental assistance, and a change to a proposal regarding housing authority jurisdiction that some people had raised concerns about at the public hearing. Committee leadership said they wanted to put the funding in another bill.

Senate Bill 6, the Democrats' housing priority bill, would create a housing growth fund, allow housing authorities to build in other towns, and offer certain tax incentives to turn former commercial properties into residential dwellings, among other measures.

The Housing Committee heard public testimony on the proposal Tuesday and passed the measure along party lines Thursday. The meeting was the last for the committee this session, its leadership said.

Supporters spoke during the public hearing about Connecticut's need for more housing for families with low incomes and the need for more apartments and homes so that employees can move to the state.

Republicans opposed various pieces of the bill, including certain tax changes, saying additional costs would be passed down to renters.

The bill initially allowed housing authorities to act as developers and propose building new housing in towns outside their own in a similar process to private developers.

Opponents during the public hearing said they didn't want other housing authorities building in their towns, particularly not without an agreement. Housing Co-chair Senator Marilyn Moore, D-Bridgeport, said the bill had been amended in part to address those concerns.

Since Tuesday's public hearing, lawmakers added a provision that requires housing authorities that opt to expand their jurisdiction to enter into agreements with towns before developing any housing. Measures to give additional funds to the state's homeless response system and Rental Assistance Program have also been removed.

Moore said she plans to push for the funding to go separately into the state budget but wanted to

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Photo by Jessie Wright

Two male turkeys vie for the attention of nearby females in a combative show of springtime activity at New Pond Farm. If you have a photo you'd like to see featured here, with credit of course, please e-mail editor@reddingsentinel.org

## Public hearing on the 2024-25 budget Wednesday, March 20

By Jessie Wright

Residents are encouraged to attend the Board of Finance public hearing on Wednesday, March 20 at 7:30 p.m., which will review the proposed operating budgets for the Board of Selectmen, Redding Board of Education, and Redding's share of the Region 9 Board of Education's 2024-25 fiscal year. The public hearing will be held at the Redding Community Center at 37 Lonetown Road and offer opportunities for public comment. If cancelled due to weather, the hearing will take place on Thursday, March 21 at the same

time and location.

This is one of the final opportunities for community feedback before the Board of Finance finalizes the budget numbers that will be sent to the annual Town Meeting this spring, after which the Budget Referendum will be scheduled to put the budget before voters.

The current budget projections show a 3.6% increase in the Redding Board of Education budget, a 3.64% increase in Redding's share of the Region 9 Board of Education budget, and

a 3.95% increase in the Town government/Board of Selectmen budget, for a total increase of 3.72% from the current fiscal year. Last year, voters approved an increase of just over 1.3%.

These numbers are not final and may be adjusted before the combined budget is sent to the Town Meeting. To review the proposed operating budgets, visit townofreddingct.org and er9.org or visit the Town Clerk's office at Town Hall at 100 Hill Road. ■

## REDDING'S BIG OUTDOORS

### Turkington Falls and Reeve Biggers Trail

By Cole Tucker-Walton



Photo by Cole Tucker-Walton

I'm thinking about the bears I saw in a video last night, somewhere on the other edge of this forest, but when I step onto the trail, I'm the one who scares a red-shouldered hawk. The hulking bird screams and wheezes and takes off into the trees.

There's a little swampy pool under red oaks (one of them four

whole feet in diameter). I follow an old stone wall, while an out-of-sight white-breasted nuthatch hyperventilates. A mourning cloak butterfly drifts down to the sunny leaf litter.

Silhouettes of white oaks and tulip trees crisscross the sky to my left, the sun at perfect noon. Everything is bright golden tan,

motionless. Just out of reach, hornbeams hold leaves like amber pendants.

The sun is warm on my face, the air just a little chilly through my sweatshirt. I turn right on the loop, hawk still screaming behind me. At a gap in the high stone wall, I watch another mourning cloak dance around me, lilt away, and spiral around a partner. Past the green, green branches of young sassafras saplings, I cross into a forest with more hemlocks and a gap ahead of me, before the horizon. I hear cars rushing by – am I that close to Gallows Hill Road?

I walk, weighing a heavy decision: what song can I sing that will scare off bears, but not embarrass me if a hiker overhears? Through another stone wall, the canopy opens to my right, younger tulip trees and birches spaced out along a stream. The traffic I heard was waterfalls.

The creek is dappled with sun as it flows under hemlocks, white oaks, and black birches

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## Plan for new Topstone playground takes shape

By Jessie Wright

At the meeting of the Park and Recreation Commission on Monday, March 4, funding and building recommendations were reviewed for a \$150,000 project to build a new playground and add recreational enhancements at Topstone Park.

The Commission received two responses to their Request for Proposal for the project, which was approved in November 2023. The Commission will be recommending to the Board of Selectmen a three-part improvement plan and project funding breakdown, incorporating elements of both bidding vendors' proposals.

The undertaking, which will be funded by a \$150,000 American Rescue Plan Act grant that was approved by voters in October 2022, aims to replace a removed three-part play structure, improve multi-age recreational use of Topstone, and provide consistent shade and rain coverage during summer programming.

"This was an improvement plan that started with the concept that we had removed a three-part play structure, and it needed to be replaced," said Park and Recreation Commission Co-Chair Angela Caes. "And in those improvements, there were a lot of other opportunities."

Part one of the improvement plan, at a cost of \$113,084, will create an integrated play structure with the same footprint as the prior playground. It will include multi-purpose and active sets of equipment for ages three-to-five and five-to-twelve. A consistent border, walkway, and safety area compliant with safety standards will be added near the new structure. Caes noted that the structure will have a "wooden, rustic" feel, with woodchips as the ground material and with a similar aesthetic to the playground at the Redding Community Center.

Part two, at a cost of \$12,475, will replace some of the old or broken recreational materials around Topstone Park, like the basketball headboards and toy chest, as well as provide bench seating along the entrance walkway and at the new play structures. Improvements may also include the addition of play opportunities that utilize the natural landscape, including cornhole sets, table tennis, and a natural water table structure. A "Free Little Library" will also be installed and additional activities for users 14-and-older, like paddleboarding, considered.

Part three, at a cost of \$24,449, would be the addition of a semi-permanent structure for shade on

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## EDITORIAL

# Fond farewell to February

The spring equinox arrives on March 19 this year, and March 20 will be our first day of spring. With the mild winter we've had, it feels like spring has been in Redding for weeks. The hallmark of winter, though, is short days and long nights and these don't change with a warming climate. The amount of darkness – in the morning, in the late afternoon – is the largest part of the loathing many people have for winter.

Some people who suffer from Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) get depressed in the winter months. Even for those who do not have SAD, the winter can just feel long and dreary. December has bright lights and tinsel and the holidays. January and February seem to have nothing to recommend them. They get no respect. Few people love these cold, dark months.

But as you dream about the lightness of spring and summer to come, spare a few minutes to think fondly of the cold winter days and long nights we're leaving. Drive around Redding and see the maple trees tapped for syrup. Think of the cozy fires and quiet times with friends. Reflect on those long weeks with fewer obligations as social and school activities dropped to a low level. Remember sleeping in on a dark winter's morning. And winding down for bed early in the chill of the dark night.

Soon, life will be bustling again as the longer days energize us and we cram as much into each day as we can. Daylight Saving hours extend the sunlight even farther into the evening to be sure we have more time to do more. We feel it already in the Sentinel as the Calendar gets fuller and fuller and events are set well into summer. This is all good, and energizing.

But we wouldn't have the energy for spring without having had the quiet times in January and February to rest up. After these dark and quiet months, we're ready for anything. ■

## Head-on collision results in injuries

### Driver without a license charged

By Donna Christopher

Emergency crews responded Wednesday, March 6 to a two-vehicle head-on collision at a sharp curve at the intersection of Route 107 and Cross Highway with injuries.

Redding Police said a driver that was traveling southbound on Route 107 lost control while rounding the curve at Cross Highway, then crossed the center line and hit a second vehicle that was traveling northbound in the opposite direction, rounding the same curve.

The southbound driver, Gibhran Najera age 31 of New York City, was charged with traveling too fast, failure to drive right on a curve, and operating without a license, according to Redding Police.

The driver and a passenger in the second vehicle were taken by EMS to the hospital with minor and moderate injuries, police said. Najera was also treated for serious leg injuries. ■

## Time to change your smoke detector batteries



Redding's fire departments are urging residents to use the Daylight Saving Time clock change as a reminder to also test their smoke and carbon monoxide detectors and change any reusable batteries. Monitors should be checked and batteries changed every six months. Georgetown Fire Department recommends a bare minimum of one detector in each bedroom, one in the hall outside of any bedrooms, and one on each level of the house. More is always better. Check with your district's fire department to see if they have any free detectors available for pick up.

## LEGAL NOTICE

At a meeting of the Redding Conservation Commission on 3/05/2024, the following action was voted:

App'l #24-01, Brett & Karen Stafford (owners), Michael Mazzucco (agent), 614 Redding Road. **Approved with conditions** an application for regulated

activities associated with a proposed two-lot subdivision.

The above-referenced file is available for inspection at the Redding Land Use Office. ■

David R. Pattee, Chairman,  
Conservation Commission

## A CT proposal would eliminate tipped minimum wage *Here's what to know*

Reporting by Erica E. Phillips and Mark Pazniokas / Compiled by Gabby DeBenedictis



Photo by Yehyum Kim / ctmirror.org

L'escal restaurant at Delamar Hotel in Greenwich in September 2021. Servers in Connecticut would make the state's minimum wage under a bill in the legislature.

A bill under consideration in the Connecticut General Assembly would eliminate the lower minimum wage assigned to hourly employees who earn tips, like servers and bartenders, and would establish instead a single minimum wage that would apply to all workers.

The legislature's Labor and Public Employees Committee approved a similar bill, S.B. 1177, during the 2023 legislative session, but it didn't come up for a vote in either chamber.

Here's what to know about the proposal, known as "One Fair Wage," which legislators have raised again this year.

### How much are Connecticut tipped workers currently paid?

Connecticut's minimums for tipped workers remain where they've been since 2017: \$6.38 for wait staff and \$8.23 for bartenders.

Tips are expected to bring those wages up to at least the full \$15.69 minimum wage, and in cases where they don't, employers are required by law to pay the difference — known as a tip credit. The bill would phase out those lower minimum wages by July 1, 2027.

### What have supporters said about the bill?

Senator Julie Kushner, D-Danbury, and other advocates

have said restaurant workers are often reluctant to raise the issue of tip credits — let alone seek legal recourse in cases where employers don't pay it.

"What we don't do in other industries is allow employers to pay less than the minimum wage, and that's where we really run into trouble here," Kushner said. "If we guarantee one fair wage, then we are actually lifting the bottom, we're closing that crack, and we're making it possible for people to have a more stable existence."

Advocates for eliminating the tipped minimum wage also often point to the historical origins of the system.

"The subminimum wage for tipped workers was a direct legacy of slavery," Saru Jayaraman, President of the national One Fair Wage campaign, said at a 2022 press conference. "It was created after Emancipation to allow restaurants to hire newly freed Black people — Black women in particular — not pay them, and force them to live entirely on this new idea ... called tips."

### What have opponents said about the bill?

Representatives from the restaurant industry argued that servers prefer the tipped-wage model as it is. A recent survey of servers and bartenders conducted by the Connecticut Restaurant

Association found the average hourly wages for these positions, including tips, came out to more than twice the statewide minimum wage.

In a previous emailed statement, Scott Dolch, President of the Connecticut Restaurant Association, said, "If passed, this legislation would completely change how servers in Connecticut are paid, putting at risk a system that currently benefits thousands of servers, small business restaurant owners, and Connecticut's local economy." Dolch went on to say that if restaurants paid servers the full minimum wage, that could discourage patrons from tipping. "It would also give an inherent advantage to large national chains, harming Connecticut small businesses and resulting in less local choice for Connecticut consumers."

### What has Governor Ned Lamont said about the bill?

Lamont has discussed the bill with Dolch. He said, "Scott makes a pretty strong case that the vast majority of servers get a lot more with tips than they do with just a guaranteed minimum wage."

The governor said he will be meeting with advocates of the bill, who say tips should be income that restaurant workers get on top of the \$15.69 minimum wage.

Have other states eliminated tipped minimum wage?

All but seven states exempt tipped restaurant workers from their standard minimum wage, so long as the tips at least bring it up to the minimum wage. With tips, restaurants say wait staff can make more than \$30 an hour.

But the One Fair Wage movement is gaining momentum nationally. Lawmakers in at least half-a-dozen states are considering legislation similar to Connecticut's proposal, and several other states could see the issue come before voters on the ballot this year. ■

*This article originally appeared in CT Mirror*

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remove them from S.B. 6 so the bill wouldn't need to go through the Appropriations Committee. The bill could face an uphill battle during the budget debate, as lawmakers grapple with numerous requests for increases in aid from social service providers, higher education institutions and others while trying to remain within the state's fiscal guardrails.

S.B. 6 initially included \$20 million from the general fund to support the strained homeless response system and \$25 million to the state Rental Assistance Program to expand the number of vouchers and keep up with rising rents.

The proposal is one of a few ideas lawmakers are debating this session in an attempt to address Connecticut's affordable housing crisis. The state lacks about 92,500 units of housing that are affordable and available to its lowest income renters. Thousands are paying too much in rent, homelessness is increasing, and the state has a low apartment vacancy rate.

"There's no doubt that housing costs and availability in Connecticut are front and center on everyone's mind. Our recent public hearing on this and other hous-

ing bills went 12 hours, and we heard from more than 200 people, Moore said in a statement.

"I think the Housing Committee has done more work in the past four years — since the Covid-19 pandemic turned housing prices and availability upside-down in Connecticut — than we've done over the past decade," she said. "But it's a gradual process."

Housing has garnered more political attention both at the state level and nationally over the past couple of years. Ahead of this legislative session, state lawmakers said they planned to chip away at the problem rather than propose sweeping reforms.

S.B. 6 is a wide-ranging bill, although it doesn't include some of the broad statewide zoning reforms pushed last legislative session. The bill establishes a housing growth fund to towns that create affordable housing, offers tax credits to property owners who convert commercial buildings into residential developments, and creates an additional 1% conveyance tax fee when institutions rather than individuals purchase property. It also decreases sales tax on supplies used to build more residential developments with at least

50 units.

Republicans objected to the bill, saying that it would primarily benefit larger towns and that the housing growth fund didn't offer incentives for towns to encourage homeownership. They also opposed the conveyance fee, saying the additional cost would be passed down to renters.

"If the taxes go up, it's my fear that the people we're trying to help ... we certainly could make it more difficult for a renter or resident coming in to pick up that additional tab that you know, the taxes collected, that's going to be passed on to the consumer," said Representative Steve Weir, R-Hebron.

Moore said the bill is another push to take steps to solve the housing crisis, but not the complete solution.

"This program is not one to fit all sizes, but it's another program that we put in place for growth in the housing market," she said.

S.B. 6 next heads to the Senate floor for consideration. ■

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# Weir Farm receives 410k federal funding for two conservation projects

By Donna Christopher

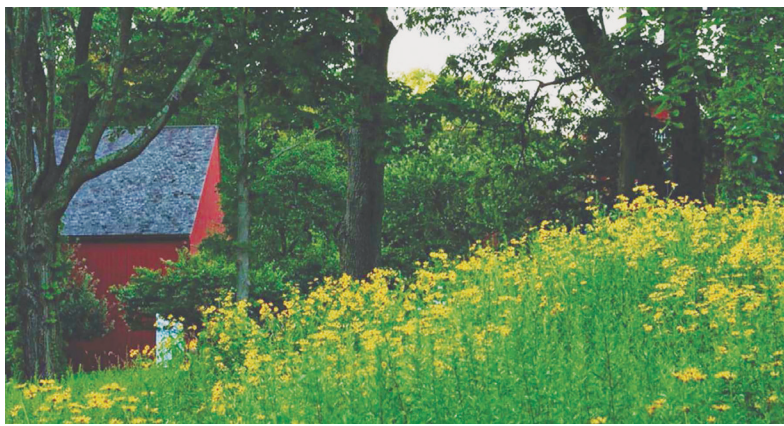


Photo courtesy of National Park Service

Weir Farm National Historical Park will use Inflation Reduction Act funding for two conservation projects at the 68-acre park on Nod Hill Road in Ridgefield and Wilton.

The federal funding of \$410,000 will go toward controlling invasive species and restoring eastern grasslands, Weir Farm recently announced. The funding is part of a \$195 million investment from President Joe Biden's "Investing in America" agenda for climate restoration and resilience projects over the next decade.

Inflation Reduction Act funds are being used to support the Resilient Forest Initiative through restoration efforts to sustain native forests for future generations. This project will "reverse trends in forest loss and restore resilience to forest ecosystems of high ecological and cultural value in Weir Farm National Historical Park, as well as 18 other Northeast national parks," stated the announcement.

As part of the project, plants and groupings of plants that allow for regeneration of the forest will be tested.

Linda Cook, the Superintendent at Weir Farm National Historic Park, noted that forest lands in the area do not have a lot of young trees coming up, blaming invasive species that have "gobbled up the land mass underneath the trees. What's exciting about the

tree project is we're going to experiment with several different species to see what will thrive in the Park's forest."

"It's a great pilot to look at all our legacy native tree species being attacked by invasives. A lot of this is climate-change driven," said State Representative Anne Hughes, D-135 (Easton, Redding, Weston).

"Weir Farm is located within a rural ecosystem, where we can be very thoughtful about studying and mitigating invasive species that are threatening our natural ecosystem, our natural soils, and the root system, because we're trying to mitigate against erosion, storms, and water runoff which all goes into our lakes and rivers and into the Sound...all that runoff goes directly into the Sound and affects the water quality. We're trying to map our green space and our migratory bird protection so we can be a resilient state....Weir Farm is like an open classroom. I'm happy that it's anchored in our district," Hughes continued.

The funding will also support an initiative to restore and rehabilitate 35 acres of native grasslands across the eastern United States, of which Weir Farm is a part.

This project, in collaboration with the Southeastern Grasslands Institute and working with local contractors, will remove invasive species and plant native

and climate-adapted species to revitalize and preserve grasslands.

Each park will have its own custom seed mix based on historical research, local conditions, pollinators, bird species, and climate threats. The restored grasslands will promote biodiversity, ecological resilience, and cultural landscape integrity.

Paintings by artist J. Alden Weir, who along with American Impressionists painted the landscape at Weir Farm in the 1880s, will inform the project at Weir Farm.

The paintings "could provide the key to the color palettes for seed and plant choices" to "ensure the fields retain their historic look as well as plant composition," Weir Farm's announcement said.

"Thirty-five acres of the Park's fields are going to be completely roto-tilled, mowed under, cut close," explained Cook. "Then, (we'll) turn the dirt and start over, analyze the soil, come up with a custom designer seed mix that will then meet several pre-requisites, which means they will appeal to pollinators, birds, and also there's a color aspect to the thinking about what the plants will be in the meadows and field."

Leaders hope both the forest project and the grasslands restoration initiative can be a piece of making Connecticut a more climate-resilient state. "The two projects interconnect but are very different," Cook said.

Weir Farm National Historic Park is open to the public from dawn to dusk. The buildings are open from May to October. ■

To learn more, visit [nps.gov/wefal/index.htm](https://nps.gov/wefal/index.htm)

# Battery storage plan draws initial concerns

By Rocco Valluzzo



Photo by Ingeteam

Hecate Energy LLC is interested in purchasing land around the Peaceable Street substation for the purpose of building a battery storage facility. Pictured is a facility the company operates in Santa Ana, CA.

An energy company's plan for a battery storage area near the Peaceable Street substation in Georgetown has raised some concern among residents as well as town officials.

Hecate Energy LLC, a Chicago-based developer, owner, and operator of renewable power projects and storage solutions, has made offers to property owners on Peaceable Street to buy the land around the substation far above market value to construct the storage facility. It is one of more than 30 similar projects the company currently has in development nation-wide.

"They're basically huge containers that are side-by-side," said First Selectwoman Julia Pemberton in describing these facilities. "They're just massive. It looks like a train yard."

According to Pemberton, Hecate Energy has interest in the Peaceable Street substation for the purpose of getting hydroelectric power from Canada and providing power to Long Island. Although a battery storage facility would be a large generator of tax revenue for the Town, Peaceable Street is a residential neighborhood on a small quiet road.

"This would be a multi-million dollar, if not billion-dollar project," said Pemberton. "This would be a massive facility, like 200 megawatts."

Based on what Pemberton has heard from residents, two property owners have signed on for a period of 33 to 37 months and will receive payment for the use of their properties. If the properties are sold, it would be for three to four times their market value.

"This is a really big deal," she said. "This company is using their website ([hecateenergy.com](https://hecateenergy.com)) to raise money, and in order to build their site, they have to get permission at the federal level."

Pemberton was also concerned about the Town's ability to respond if there was an emergency situation at such a facility. She noted Redding's fire departments are not at the capacity to fight a fire at a battery storage facility.

"From the Town's perspective, I would be unlikely to support this because there would be neighborhood opposition," she said. "I need to understand what the full impacts are to the Town." ■

# Barlow introduces new college planning platform

By Anne Young Albanese

After extensive research, the school counselors at Joel Barlow High School (JBHS) have decided to switch college search and planning platforms. JBHS students have been using a platform called Naviance since it was introduced in 2005. At that point, it was the only option and made college research and applications much easier for students and the counselors. The guidance department will be switching to Scoir, a platform that is less expensive than Naviance while offering more functionality.

Prior to Naviance, college applications needed to be printed and mailed. While Naviance was the first platform introduced, about four years ago, other companies started to enter the market. This year seemed like a good opportunity for JBHS to switch, given John Read Middle School had chosen to discontinue its use of

Naviance, since it didn't meet its students' and counselors' needs.

Counselors Henry DelAngelo and Scott Reimold were tasked with exploring the multiple options available. They attended a conference of college admissions counselors and guidance counselors where they were able to see the different platforms in action. They also spoke with schools in the area that are using different platforms to get feedback on what they are using and why they changed. The feedback was unanimous for everybody involved. According to Paula Panos, JBHS's Director of School Counseling, "There is a trend of schools leaving Naviance because there are so many problems."

JBHS will not lose functionality with the switch, the counselors noted, and Scoir will make it easier for students and parents to nav-

igate and find useful information. Students are also able to submit the Common Application directly from Scoir rather than having to enter it themselves on another form. Scoir also offers an app which will allow students to use it on their mobile devices.

According to the counselors, Naviance has created an app just recently and has not kept up with updates, allowing the other platforms to pull ahead. In addition, getting customer support with Naviance is a challenge that can take a week or more without an answer. Meanwhile, parents and students are waiting to hear the response.

Like Naviance, Scoir can track data over the years to evaluate trends in college admissions. Both platforms are able to create scattergrams that show students' grades, SAT scores, and how many JBHS

students with similar information had been accepted to each college. Scoir also offers what they call an "acceptance heat map" on which the platform will estimate the likelihood that an individual student will get into each college of interest.

Scoir offers additional functionality to analyze student data and has a much friendlier interface. It also helps students build their resumes through their four years at JBHS. As things change, Scoir will be able to update the resumes in real time. Scoir also offers interest inventories, which can help students to determine which academic track they should follow and give them ideas of college majors to consider.

As an added benefit, not only do the counselors feel that Scoir is a better program, but it is less expensive than Naviance. The JBHS

counselors had initially wanted to keep Naviance for one more year for the upcoming senior class. Unfortunately, Naviance wanted to charge more for the senior class than Scoir is charging for the entire school. Naviance has continued to raise its prices while requiring the school district to pay more for additional modules of functionality.

The platform change will take place over the summer. JBHS uses college platforms to help students sort colleges by specific information such as size, location, and major. This helps students to identify schools by specific desires. Students can also determine how likely they are to be accepted based upon grades and standardized test scores. ■




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## SPORTS

## Knights exit state tournament

Hockey | By Rocco Valluzzo



Photo by Rocco Valluzzo

Joel Barlow/Weston/Abbott Tech's (JBWA) Henry Hoeffner, left, battles Masuk's Christian LaBella for the puck during the first round of the state Division III hockey tournament on Monday, March 4. JBWA lost 0-7 to end the season.

The final game of the season turned out to be the most frustrating for the Joel Barlow/Weston/Abbott Tech (JBWA) hockey team as it entered the state Division III tournament last week.

The 13th-seeded Knights were in for a rough time when they faced fourth-seeded Masuk in the opening round on Monday, March 4. Despite having beaten the same opponent in a 2-1 decision earlier in the season, they struggled at both ends of the ice in a 0-7 loss at the Sports Center of Connecticut in Shelton.

It was JBWA's most lopsided loss of the season and only the third time it had been shut out.

"They just wheeled, and we couldn't do anything about it," said JBWA Head Coach Bob Stearns. "(Masuk) was on fire tonight, and it was impressive to watch them play."

The defending Division III champs, the Panthers wasted little time in taking control of the

action. Less than three minutes into the first period, Masuk center Nick Kondub got his team on the board, taking a pass from his brother Luke from behind the goal and sending it past Knights goalie Connor Thomas for a 1-0 lead.

The Kondub brothers struck again with 5:22 left in the frame with Nick scoring and Luke getting the assist. The former was a menace on the ice the whole night, scoring four more goals and getting one assist before the game was done.

"They're quality hockey players, and they're good kids," said Stearns. "I'm glad one of them is graduating. We won't have to deal with him next year."

Just 37 seconds later, Nick Kondub completed his first hat trick, this time scoring off a pass from Christian LaBella to make it 3-0. While the Knights then called a time-out in an attempt to settle down and regroup, it did little to stop the onslaught, as Masuk

scored once again before the period ended.

With 3:31 to go, a save by Thomas denied Nick Kondub the goal, but he was credited with the assist when Chase DeSanto took the rebound of the initial shot and scored to give the Panthers a four-goal lead.

"It was a tough night for Connor," said Stearns. "They were going hard at him, because they know they have to in order to beat him. They got a couple of good goals by him, and it all unraveled."

The Knights managed a number of shots as the second period got underway but were denied by Panthers goalie Maddex LaFountain. Masuk, however, made it 5-0 with 7:37 left when Nick Kondub scored with LaBella again getting the assist.

Due to penalties, the Panthers were down two players for a brief time in the second period but still kept the Knights from scoring. Penalties for tripping and hooking also put the Knights down two players with less than two minutes to go, and Nick Kondub again scored, this time with Ryan Ewald assisting.

Three-and-a-half minutes into the third period, Kondub netted his team's final goal. After getting the puck from LaBella, he went one-on-one with Tyler Warcik, who was now in goal for the Knights, and slipped it past him to finalize the score.

Masuk was called for several penalties in the time remaining but killed off each to preserve the shutout.

Despite the lopsided score, Masuk just held a 25-21 advantage in shots on goal.

JBWA finishes the season at 8-13 overall. ■

## Robotics team recognized for aesthetic design



Photo courtesy of Bill Kinahan

The Joel Barlow Robotics team was an early selection for the playoffs at a competition at Wilby High School in Waterbury this month, before being eliminated after three matches. The team won the Imagery Award, which celebrates attractiveness in engineering and outstanding visual aesthetic integration of machine and team appearance. Kneeling (left to right): Abby Becker, Giulia Dos Santos, Christopher Alvaro, Bauer Heres, and Sam Stinson. Standing (left to right): Melissa Ploss, Iris LaMastro, Yu-Min Cho, Randy Rivera, Daniel Marin, Angela Humphry, Brian Weiss, Emily Ploss, Noah Beninati, Addison Vanderburg, Alex Weiss, Brady Decker, and Austin Lehberger.

Redding's Big Outdoors: Turkington Falls and Reeve Biggers Trail / continued from page 1

and around flat wedges of rock. Taking pictures, ears filled with the sound—I'm perfect bear bait. I try to respond the same way I respond to roller coasters or any other terror: If I die, I die.

In fact, the trail is peaceful. The loop curves back, uphill, into the sun. White oak seedlings, a tangle of greenbrier, a chickadee with his warm-weather whistle. On the dark top of a gentle hill, I see dark blue mountains across Route 53.

Above a little brook, I follow a sign to Reeve Biggers Trail. Down I go, over the oak leaves, past the Christmas ferns, into a crease between short and tightly packed hills – but only for a moment, before the trail lifts me back among hemlocks. Here's a young mountain laurel struggling to stretch his inches past the deer; there's his family to the left, a whole stand of mountain laurel, leaves shining in the sun. Here's a bed of white oak saplings to my right, their little paper leaves held through the winter.

Across a flat of land between streams and ghosts of streams, I hear rushing water again. I find myself on the shore of the same creek, which tumbles more wildly here. Seems I must walk upstream to find a shallow spot. Phone in my pocket. I pick up sticks to test and stabilize, gingerly step into the water, and cross. On the other side, I follow a sign for The Cricket, because Hiking Project describes the spur as a hidden gem. The little path leads me up mountain laurel and rolling rocks. I reach the promised bench – where last year's *Sentinel* reporter stopped for a snack – and take in the scene from the cliff.

The river, wide and shallow, is interrupted by piled rocks and boulders that divide it in three and braid it back together, until the three strands fall down a single, wide-faced stone to a churning chute at the bottom. The earth smells lovely. I say so to my phone, and my voice startles a huge pileated woodpecker not 30 feet away.

Back on Reeve Biggers, there's another intimidating creek. I head upstream again, farther and farther up, until finally, I risk it. Only five steps across, but one of them is a quarter inch misjudged, and water fills my boot. Well, splashes into it.

As the trail climbs, I start to feel like I'm exercising; however, I do quickly acclimate to my one wet sock. Punctuated by breaths, my dictation sounds way hip: Crimson. Leaves. And vines. Of Dewberry. Poke. Through. The Leaves. Period.

I reach the power lines just as I might be about to start sweating. Frogs sing, and I step from the sun into a 10-foot-high corridor of mountain laurel. Out the other end, saplings are tied with orange surveyor's tape; looks like Eversource will be cutting this back, part of their new, post-

Isaiah enforcement along central transmission lines.

The frogs quiet down as I approach their discreet pond full of summersweet. A cardinal hops into a shrub, and another swoops down to join her. I pass behind a house and realize I picked up a frame there a couple months ago; my friends live nearby too. Then, ta-da, a short gravel drive shows me Gallows Hill Road.

I head back, unsure if I'll be up for Dan Beard Trail. I bounce down the steep stretch of Reeve Biggers (much pleasanter in reverse) and find myself whistling. Aha! A way to announce myself to black bears without another human hearing any lyrics! But I furrow my brow, remembering how humans feel about whistling.

I pick up my sticks from where I left them and look for a crossing closer to the actual trail. This could work – the wide stone isn't slippery as expected – behind it is shallow – and here's the shore. And a black dog! Two hikers! (It's becoming a theme.) I panic, trying to calculate when they might have noticed me. They know I'm a whistler. I throw myself in the river.

One with a nice walking stick, one with bright dyed hair, friendly both, they make no mention of the whistling, but tell me they live nearby. We're all heading in the same direction, so we chat. I follow them over a much easier crossing of the first stream and ask if they've been to Little River Preserve, near me; "On Monday!" they say. All smiles, I leave them at Turkington Loop, intending to let them finish their walk in peace.

I set out for an opposite hill, and four whitetail deer bound away in unison. I'm their black bear, I guess. I hear yapping, yowling, honestly think it's coyotes – but in the early afternoon? I squint through the trees at some sort of field, look at a map – it's recess at John Read Middle School. High up on a hill, in Redding Land Trust's McMurray Preserve, there's a cooling breeze. I can see all the mountains around, I can hear the period bell.

I'm tired, so I turn around. A blue-blazed connector leads me back to Turkington Loop. Alas, the shortcut is really a shortcut, and I am now the most awkward distance possible behind the hikers and their dog. I keep walking, but stay silent as I get closer, because they're listening to the frogs; the dog hears me, so I figure the people must too; finally, near the end of the trail, I close the gap. "Well," I say, and the man just about jumps out of his jacket. Here's one more apology, and thanks again for the conversation. Next time, I'll be wearing bells. ■

Cole Tucker-Walton is a member of the Redding Land Trust Board of Trustees

## Fifteen Barlow debaters qualify for state finals

By Randy Smith



Members of the Barlow Debate team at a competition in Stamford on Saturday, March 2. Fifteen team members have qualified for the state finals on Saturday, March 23.

On Saturday, March 2 at Stamford High School, Barlow junior Co-captain Zac Colangelo

and Griffin Speck won the varsity team award at the last regular-season state open in the Connecticut Debate Association season. The topic of the day was immigration and whether asylum seekers should have to have their claims processed prior to entry into the United States. Colangelo and Speck won the award by going 4-0, defeating teams from the King School, Stamford High, Staples-Westport, and New Canaan.

Concurrently on the same day at the Connecticut Police Academy in Meriden, Barlow Co-captain Cade Fravel placed second in a statewide competition against other local winners of the VFW Voice of Democracy Speakers series. Students delivered a series of prepared and impromptu speeches about various passages of the Constitution in relation to the event's theme: "What Are the Greatest Attributes of Our Democracy?"

On Saturday, March 23, Barlow will play host to state finals. Fifteen Barlow students qualified for the finals by winning team or speaker awards in one or more of the regular season events. Colangelo and Speck will be joined by senior Siddharth Gupta; juniors Fravel (Co-captain), Owen Fellows, Luis Diez, and Trevor Steinke; and sophomores Dylan Winegar, Priti Kiefer, Andrew Jortner, Kosta Nani, Maansi Tibrewal, Arianna Pereira, Brady Decker, and Yu-Min Cho.

States is an invitation-only event where award winners from the six regular-season events contend to determine who the state champions will be in varsity and novice competition. Barlow speakers have won varsity titles in 2008, 2009, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2020, and 2022 and novice state titles in 2018, 2020, and 2022. ■

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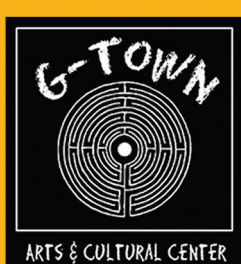
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## REMEMBERING REDDING

# The Georgetown Story – its past, present, and future

## Part six: Trouble brewing in the early 1970s | By Brent Colley



The Gilbert & Bennett Wire Mill was under new leadership in the 1970s, which caused divisions between owners and employees.



Confrontations between State Police and unionized Georgetown employees made the newspapers in the summer of 1975.

This is a multi-part series on the history of Georgetown. To read earlier installments, visit [reddingsentinel.org/archive](http://reddingsentinel.org/archive) and open the March 2, April 6, June 1, October 12, and December 14, 2023 issues.

As noted at the end of Part Five, Georgetown and all the towns connected to it were experiencing significant change entering the 1970s. This is a decade that is very difficult to simplify, because it was a very complex period, not only in Georgetown, but also in Connecticut and America as a whole. There was socio-political turmoil; food and gas shortages; inflation; new laws and regulations; new employee demands; and new ways of establishing, funding, financing, acquiring, and merging businesses on the employer side.

Georgetown checks all the boxes above – it faced them all. I was born in September 1970, and I don't remember much until I was about four, but around that age, I do remember sitting in long lines just above Billy Darragh's gas station on Main Street waiting for our turn to get gas. Once we got gas, we'd see Jasper and Mondo at the Georgetown Market, Danny at the Package Store, and then we'd head over the Route 107 Bridge and make a right turn to visit my great-aunt's house on Smith Street. Once there, most of the adults were smoking cigarettes, and talking in

heated tones about this and that. It seemed pretty stressful, but I was four or five, and all I cared about was where Aunt Florence's cat was. Hanging out with her cat White Cloud up on the second floor was all that mattered to me – from there, she'd purr in my lap while I watched the tracks below for a passing train or kids setting coins to be flattened by the next one. But most memorable was the sound of the Gilbert & Bennett Factory whistle blowing, because that meant we'd be heading back to Peaceable Street for dinner.

Georgetown was changing in the early 1970s for several reasons, the main reasons were the threat of a new Route 7 coming through town, "Super 7" as it was called; the recent closure of Gilbert & Bennett School; and the fact that Gilbert & Bennett, the town's largest employer, had grown into a conglomerate with new leaders no longer living in Georgetown with an agenda that wasn't appearing to be locally-minded nor focused. These were all very significant issues, but for the roughly 900 families that called Georgetown home, the most important issue was that they didn't have representation or a political voice and often had to accept what was decided by either the State or one or all of the four towns Georgetown was comprised of.

1971 was the year that Georgetown residents officially pulled together and made it publicly clear that they had had enough. In an August 1971 Sunday News article by New York News, Inc. with the headline "Village Without a Town Seeks Its Own Identity", the newly formed Georgetown Community Association (GCA) announced that residents wanted a representative or representatives to attend and speak for them at important meetings in the four towns to which they paid taxes. Yes, Georgetown had shopping areas, restaurants, businesses, a volunteer fire department, a post office, but no mayor, no board of selectmen, no town official, and now no school. Residents were concerned about their future.

That is why the GCA was established, to step up and attempt to provide its community with a means to lobby for the best interests of Georgetown residents and taxpayers. In the interview for the article, Fred Miller, a Georgetown resident, Norwalk police officer, and the Association President stated: "It's just a mess, many of us are not in the high-income stratum of these four communities, and yet we pay high taxes to the towns we're attached to. We have overlapping police and fire protection on some occasions, and we're just plain fed up with

being the runt of the litter." In creating the GCA, residents were giving fair warning that they might attempt to incorporate as their own town if things didn't improve.

That attempt at incorporation came in the spring of 1975, when GCA's continued efforts triggered the introduction of a bill in the Connecticut General Assembly to establish Georgetown as Connecticut's 170th town. Much had taken place locally between 1971 and 1975, especially at the Gilbert & Bennett factory where new leadership had been making decisions that were quickly causing deep division between owners and employees. Even worse, there were deepening disagreements at the governance level too; the board room was fast becoming a hornet's nest. The 1970s version of Gilbert & Bennett was quite a bit different from the 1940s, '50s, and '60s versions. It had grown to include wire plants in Illinois, Georgia, and Virginia; plastic coating plants in two Massachusetts townships; and wood fencing plants in North Carolina and Michigan.

In the early '70s, Gilbert & Bennett began hedge-buying raw materials, implemented what they labeled "phase one" wage freezes, and encouraged the "old timers" at the Georgetown plant to consider retirement. All this was to address the increasing competition and operational costs corporate was

experiencing. Little is known about the impact of these changes in other plant locations around the country, but in Georgetown, it caused so much trouble that it eventually led to a labor strike by Georgetown members of the Local 6381 United Steelworkers Union (a union that had been in place for decades at the factory). Mid-to-late summer 1975 is when this turmoil took center stage for Georgetown's employees and residents of surrounding towns.

Confrontations between the unionized Georgetown employees and State Police from Troop A (Southbury) and Troop G (Westport) took place between July 31 and August 1, 1975, largely due to State Troopers forcefully removing striking workers from what one newspaper referred to as a "barricade of bodies." The "barricade" was about 40 union workers peacefully laying or sitting at the warehouse gate to block truckloads of wire from leaving the warehouse. The event resulted in seven arrests and lasted five or six minutes, but if you ask anyone who remembers the "strikes at the factory", this is probably what they will tell you about. It makes you wonder about what Miller had noted back in 1971, "We have overlapping police and fire protection on some occasions." Maybe if local police and not State Police had been there to intervene, things would have been different.

It's not clear if GCA's 1975 effort to incorporate Georgetown as a town was denied or dissuaded, but the effort was dropped, and Georgetown remained a "village without a voice".

In part 7, we'll explore how the Gilbert & Bennett board room turmoil came to a head in the late 1970s, how foreign money came to finance company operations, and what life was like for the families who called Georgetown home during that era. ■

*Brent Colley is Co-Historian for the Town of Redding and Co-Founder of the Redding CT History Project*

## Talking cents

### Charlie Munger: The architect of Berkshire Hathaway | By Randy Beeman



Charlie Munger, Vice Chairman of conglomerate Berkshire Hathaway, passed away last November,

just 30 days shy of his 100th birthday. At that time, there were several articles written about his

passing in (mostly) financially-related journals but, by and large, there was no significant outpouring of sentiment from the public.

And that's most likely exactly the way Charlie would have wanted it.

His life and legacy are getting a renewed focus, however, with the recent publication of Berkshire Hathaway's annual report and the shareholder letter that Chairman Warren Buffett includes each year.

We'll dive into that letter in more detail in a bit, but first, let's look back at Charlie's life.

Despite being the long-time Vice Chairman of the financial behemoth that is Berkshire Hathaway, having written at least seven books himself, and having well over a dozen written about him, most folks outside the financial world probably couldn't tell you who he was, or why his time on Earth made a difference in people's lives.

Though he was a deep thinker, philosopher, wise investor, and self-described "big brother" to his seven years younger and more famous business partner, Charlie

was content to remain in the shadows.

Born in Omaha, Nebraska on New Years Day 1924, he and Warren grew up in the same small mid-western community. Despite having both worked part-time as boys at Warren's grandfather's grocery store, they never actually met as children. Many decades later when referring to their time toiling at the store, Charlie quipped they both agreed the biggest lesson they learned following their time in that job was,

*Continued on page 7*

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# REAL ESTATE

## February 2024 real estate report

*A look at trends in the local housing market* | By Bill Whitehead and John Talley

In February, twelve properties were sold in Redding, the highest number of the towns surveyed except for sixteen in Newtown. Tight inventories continue the upward pressure on home prices, with the average sale price for properties sold in February reaching \$1,107,858, a 48% increase from February 2023. The price-per-square-foot of houses sold so far this year rose 8% to \$313 per-square-foot. There are currently eighteen properties “under-contract”. Properties are closing in an average of seventy days. ■

*Bill Whitehead and John Talley are REALTORS® with Berkshire Hathaway Home Services New England Properties*

February 2024													
Town	Current Inventory	Homes Sold		Average Days on Market		Average List Price		Average Sale Price		Percent Sale Price >/< List Price		Average Price/SqFt	
	As of 3/8/24	February	2024	February	2024	February	2024	February	2024	February	2024	February	2024
Redding	16	12	15	52	70	\$1,086,092	\$1,055,540	\$1,107,858	\$1,078,687	2%	2%	\$318	\$313
Ridgefield	28	11	27	94	84	\$705,718	\$875,105	\$680,727	\$888,626	-4%	2%	\$382	\$386
Weston	28	8	10	45	44	\$1,041,625	\$1,182,700	\$1,065,938	\$1,199,750	2%	1%	\$313	\$320
Wilton	21	8	36	38	44	\$984,375	\$1,020,206	\$1,028,313	\$1,033,376	4%	1%	\$371	\$386
Easton	13	4	10	76	75	\$968,250	\$1,005,590	\$912,500	\$955,590	-6%	-5%	\$271	\$271
Bethel	19	10	19	63	65	\$422,970	\$460,958	\$427,500	\$465,126	1%	1%	\$267	\$279
Newtown	32	16	36	39	52	\$599,075	\$682,100	\$595,734	\$670,431	-1%	-2%	\$266	\$285
<b>Average</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>\$829,729</b>	<b>\$897,457</b>	<b>\$831,224</b>	<b>\$898,798</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>\$313</b>	<b>\$320</b>

REDDING SOLD - February	Sale Price	List Price	%/ List Price	Price/Sqft	Days on Market
3 Apple Ln	\$325,000	\$274,900	18%	\$184	98
6 Silversmith Ln	\$530,000	\$550,000	-4%	\$460	62
28 Great Meadow Rd	\$570,000	\$549,000	4%	\$257	36
127 Picketts Ridge Rd	\$599,000	\$625,000	-4%	\$297	39
32 Blueberry Hill Rd	\$790,300	\$886,200	-11%	\$187	90
33 Great Meadow Rd	\$805,000	\$799,000	1%	\$268	92
79 Farview Farm Rd	\$900,000	\$899,000	0%	\$137	47
212 Lonetown Rd	\$1,065,000	\$950,000	12%	\$437	21
14 Lonetown Rd	\$1,215,000	\$1,200,000	1%	\$301	63
4 Long Wall Rd	\$1,395,000	\$1,400,000	0%	\$388	7
13 Mark Twain Ln	\$2,000,000	\$2,150,000	-7%	\$392	18
45 Sanfordtown Rd	\$3,100,000	\$2,750,000	13%	\$512	49
<b>Average</b>	<b>\$1,107,858</b>	<b>\$1,086,092</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>\$318</b>	<b>52</b>

REDDING CURRENTLY FOR SALE	List Price	Price/Sqft	Days on Market	REDDING CURRENTLY FOR SALE	List Price	Price/Sqft	Days on Market
56 Portland Ave, Unit #9	\$375,000	\$411	20	65 Umpawaug Rd	\$1,895,000	\$474	575
56 Portland Ave, Unit #17	\$380,000	\$291	9	710 Redding Rd	\$1,975,000	\$531	134
79 Cross Hwy	\$715,000	\$360	105	273 Newtown Tpke	\$2,500,000	\$449	105
45 Great Pasture Rd	\$950,000	\$239	37	45 Sidecut Rd	\$2,995,000	\$713	5
195 Umpawaug Rd	\$1,150,000	\$398	144	27 Old Hattertown Rd	\$3,900,000	\$407	8
64 Topstone Rd	\$1,595,000	\$541	8	241 Black Rock Tpke	\$6,750,000	\$454	289
66 Sanfordtown Rd	\$1,595,000	\$669	47	229 Umpawaug Rd	\$8,500,000	\$1,265	644
4 Hemlock Trl	\$1,649,999	\$358	91				
21 Deer Spring Rd	\$1,695,000	\$405	6	<b>Average</b>	<b>\$2,413,750</b>	<b>\$498</b>	<b>139</b>

### Talking cents

*Charlie Munger: The architect of Berkshire Hathaway / continued from page 6*

“We didn’t want to work in a grocery store!”

Following some time studying mathematics in college and a stint in the Army Air Corps during World War II, Charlie went on to earn a law degree from Harvard in 1948. He co-founded a law firm in Los Angeles that still bears his name, but found he preferred the enjoyment of investing better, and that eventually became his primary focus.

He and Warren met for the first time in 1959 when Charlie was in Omaha to close his late father’s legal practice. Many years later, they would both say they immediately liked each other and found they had many things in common. Buffett once commented, “We have minds that work the same way to a great degree. We find the same things humorous, and the things we deplore we agree on.” And on the occasions when they did disagree, Charlie would tell Warren, “Well, you’ll end up agreeing with me, because you’re smart and I’m right!”

Charlie returned to California, but the two stayed in touch through frequent phone calls and regular, lengthy letters (remember when people wrote letters!). Eventually, they also shared investment ideas and even occasionally bought into the same companies throughout the early 1960s. At one point they became the two largest shareholders in a trading stamp maker called Blue Chip Stamp Company, and through that acquired See’s Candy, the Buffalo

News, and Wesco Financial.

But aside from the investments he did with Charlie, Buffett’s investing strategy in those early days was quite different than the style he has become best known for today. As a student of the legendary Value Investor Ben Graham at Columbia University, he became enamored with the process of buying bargain basement stocks when undervalued and selling them when their prices rose to a level that reflected fair value or greater.

Following this philosophy, in 1962 Buffett started buying shares of a troubled textile manufacturing business in New Bedford, Massachusetts named Berkshire Hathaway. He would later call this his “dumbest” stock purchase ever, but eventually gained full control of the company by 1965. As the two continued to correspond, Munger eventually convinced Buffett that buying excellent companies at a fair valuation and holding onto them was a superior investing strategy to build future wealth.

Buffett has acknowledged that much of the success of Berkshire today can be attributed to the adoption of this philosophy of investing, and the decision to utilize the former textile business as a holding company for the numerous companies and shares of great businesses that make up Berkshire Hathaway today. Most of us could possibly encounter a Berkshire-owned, or partially controlled company, almost on a

regular basis as their reach extends into many facets of daily life.

The list of names we may routinely encounter without ever realizing we are patronizing a company owned by the Munger and Buffett conglomerate numbers nearly 70 and includes such familiar brands as GEICO insurance, Long & Foster Real Estate, Fruit of the Loom, Dairy Queen, Pampered Chef, Duracell, and Burlington Northern Railroad.

The exterior color of Berkshire’s annual report in years past has been used as a proxy to convey a sense of the tone of Buffett’s annual letter to the shareholders included inside. This year the cover was totally black, in memorial of the passing of its Vice Chairman, and Buffett penned a tribute to Charlie on its first page.

The complete text of the tribute is reproduced here for your benefit.

If Charlie were still with us, I am sure he would have replied to this tribute in the same manner he often did at annual meetings when Warren had finished speaking at length in answer to a shareholder’s question:

“I have nothing to add.”

### Charlie Munger – The Architect of Berkshire Hathaway

Charlie Munger died on November 28, just 33 days before his 100th birthday.

Though born and raised in Omaha, he spent 80% of his life domiciled elsewhere. Consequently, it was not until

1959 when he was 35 that I first met him. In 1962, he decided that he should take up money management.

Three years later he told me – correctly! – that I had made a dumb decision in buying control of Berkshire. But, he assured me, since I had already made the move, he would tell me how to correct my mistake.

In what I next relate, bear in mind that Charlie and his family did not have a dime invested in the small investing partnership that I was then managing and whose money I had used for the Berkshire purchase. Moreover, neither of us expected that Charlie would ever own a share of Berkshire stock.

Nevertheless, Charlie, in 1965, promptly advised me: “Warren, forget about ever buying another company like Berkshire. But now that you control Berkshire, add to it wonderful businesses purchased at fair prices and give up buying fair businesses at wonderful prices. In other words, abandon everything you learned from your hero, Ben Graham. It works but only when practiced at small scale.” With much backsliding I subsequently followed his instructions.

Many years later, Charlie became my partner in running Berkshire and, repeatedly, jerked me back to sanity when my old habits surfaced. Until his death, he continued in this role and together we, along with

those who early on invested with us, ended up far better off than Charlie and I had ever dreamed possible.

In reality, Charlie was the “architect” of the present Berkshire, and I acted as the “general contractor” to carry out the day-by-day construction of his vision. Charlie never sought to take credit for his role as creator but instead let me take the bows and receive the accolades. In a way his relationship with me was part older brother, part loving father. Even when he knew he was right, he gave me the reins, and when I blundered he never – never – reminded me of my mistake.

In the physical world, great buildings are linked to their architect while those who had poured the concrete or installed the windows are soon forgotten. Berkshire has become a great company. Though I have long been in charge of the construction crew; Charlie should forever be credited with being the architect. ■

*Randy Beeman is a Redding resident and has more than 25 years of experience managing financial assets for individuals, retirement plans, and businesses. Randy currently serves as the Director of Wealth Management for Glass Jacobson Wealth Advisors.*

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## BUSINESS SPOTLIGHT

# Cr  e   la main: Handcrafted products with a timeless feel

By Justin Reynolds



Photo courtesy of Cr  e   la main

Since moving to Redding in 2017, Ryan Offenhartz has built a lot of furniture because he and his wife, Michele, struggled to find products they wanted to decorate their home with.

“We’re redoing our bathroom, and I took an old table and remodeled it into a vanity, putting a sink and marble slab on top of it,” said Offenhartz, who has three kids ages five and under.

Offenhartz has “never had a traditional job” — he currently works as a sales and project manager for a high-end car customization company — but his life has always had an “out of control hobby vibe,” and he’s started channeling those hobbies while moonlighting as a serial entrepreneur.

In addition to a recently launched rental car business, Offenhartz and his wife just launched Cr  e   la main — created by hand in French — a new business that sells handcrafted, locally-made goods.

If you’re part of Redding’s social media groups, you might have seen his beautiful wooden coasters, the company’s inaugural products.

“In college, I studied studio arts, woodblock and silkscreen printing, and bronze sculpting,” he explained. “I have an eye for design and an aesthetic that I think appeals to many people. I’m the most critical of my own stuff and wouldn’t sell anything that I wouldn’t have at my own home. I build things that I want to build and design what I want. If people want it, that’s even better.”

After advertising his coasters on Facebook, Offenhartz was blown away by the initial feedback he received.

“We’ve already sold a lot of them in the area, and I didn’t expect to sell any of them in the first couple of weeks,” he said. “But we’ve also shipped a surprising amount of orders to people in Florida, for example — snowbirds or folks who moved there. I also have some in stores — Nancy O in Ridgefield and Greiser’s in Easton.”

Offenhartz wasn’t necessarily planning to launch this business. A couple months ago, he bought a laser-cutting etching machine

and started playing around with it. After figuring the machine out, he started using it to create coasters.

“When I made the Redding one you see today, I said to myself, ‘I would buy that,’” he explained. “I wanted something that was timeless, like it could have been made in 1920 or 2020. A lot of coasters I see are painted and laminated. They look plastic and out of place in so many old homes throughout Fairfield County. Things you find at HomeGoods or online look hokey, so we decided to just take and modify town seals and put them on coasters.”

While Offenhartz started with just a Redding coaster, he’s expanded to other towns in Fairfield County, including Easton, Greenwich, Ridgefield, Westport, and Wilton. Up next: Stamford.

“We’re also working on a private-label product for Georgetown Village Restoration,” he said, adding that he and his wife plan to expand beyond coasters to items like candles, cutting boards, charcuterie platters, and potpourri.

For now, five-packs of coasters are available for purchase and local delivery. Wait a sec: Five coasters?

“I feel like you always lose one, so ours comes with a spare,” Offenhartz said with a laugh. ■

Follow Cr  e   la main on Instagram @creebrands or visit creecalmain.com.

# Celebrate St. Patrick’s Day at The Redding Roadhouse

By Pamela Brown



You don’t have to be Irish to celebrate St. Patrick’s Day — get ready for some hearty food and Gaelic music from The Ragamuffins, a local family band, and even take home a special memento from Guinness, the famed Irish dry stout. It’s all happening at The Redding Roadhouse.

“The crowd is always super fun and excited to indulge in Irish fare and drinks,” said Kristina Ryer, Event Coordinator. “The live music brings an added bonus, especially since The Ragamuffins are a part of The Roadhouse family.”

On Saturday, March 16, celebrate St. Patrick’s Eve with a night out at The Redding Roadhouse for some live Irish music from 7:00 p.m. – 10:00 p.m. The Ragamuffins, a father, son, and daughter trio comprised of Allan, Ian, and Jessi Johnson, will be headlining for a great night of traditional and contemporary Irish songs along with sea shanties and some folk/Americana music. Ryer said many people may recognize

Ian, the farmer at Holbrook Farm up the street.

While enjoying the music, you can indulge in traditional Irish fare, including corned beef and cabbage, bangers and mash, Shepherd’s pie, and the Big Irish — a popular sandwich inspired by owner Shawn Reilly that’s filled with shredded corned beef, Swiss cheese, classic slaw, house sauce, and fries piled high on a brioche bun. The next day, Sunday brunch offers corned beef hash and an Irish breakfast along with specialty drinks. “Steve Cueva, the Bar Manager at The Redding Roadhouse for five years who retired last St. Patrick’s weekend, is now the Sales Manager for Nod Hill and will be in to sample Ridge Red Ale for guests to try and buy,” said Ryer. In addition, there will be Guinness, Harp, Guinness 0.0 (non-alcoholic), a selection of Irish whiskeys, Irish coffees, and beer plus a shot pairing.

On Sunday March 17, the restaurant will host more St. Patrick’s Day fun with Guinness

Glass Etching. From 12:00 p.m. – 2:00 p.m., a brand representative will create fun custom glassware on a special etching machine. “It’s a super fun activity that allows guests to leave with a custom Guinness glass to use anytime of the year,” she said. The 20-ounce pint glass can be engraved with a name and message; the event is first-come-first-served while supplies last. “It gives our guests a nice favor to remember a fun weekend at The Roadhouse. Everyone loves free glassware, and it’s even better when you can have your own custom message on it.”

The Roadhouse knows how to celebrate the Irish. “What’s better than celebrating St Patrick’s day in a classic pub? We love to provide a fun atmosphere for guests to enjoy the holiday weekend,” said Ryer. “Having Shawn Reilly as the owner and Stephen Alward as the head chef is a winning combination when it comes to celebrating Ireland in your own backyard.” ■

# On the (Easter) menu with... Arber Muriqi of Barn Door Restaurant

By Pamela Brown

Easter is a beautiful time to celebrate a new season of hope and the onset of spring with family and friends. A special place to do that is at Barn Door Restaurant located at 137 Ethan Allen Highway in Georgetown. “For me, Easter has a spiritual meaning. It’s a rebirth, just like nature after a long winter. Everything comes alive and so does our hope for a new start,” said Arber Muriqi, owner and manager. The restaurant is serving up a delightful brunch featuring authentic locally-sourced, organic food.

“My chef and I work on a new menu every year. We try different ingredients and put our own twist on many dishes,” said Muriqi, noting one of Barn Door’s classic holiday dishes is Leg of Lamb. “On Easter, we always had a leg of lamb. It’s a traditional Easter meal in Albania where I grew up. It’s a very easy and delicious meal to cook at home on Easter or any other occasion.” Muriqi added that the dish offers a pleasantly refreshing flavor that’s tender, juicy, and pairs well with various side dishes. He suggests roasted potatoes and saut  ed spinach.

The recipe is Muriqi’s mother’s recipe. “Early in the morning, we would go to church and pray, right before sunrise, then go home where our mother would prepare a huge feast and we would always have guests,” he said. The lamb recipe comes from his mother. “I made a few changes. My mom didn’t have as many choices of spices and herbs as we do now, so the spices and herbs are the only difference.”

Opened in spring of 2017, Barn Door Restaurant is a casual, yet elegant restaurant with a welcoming ambiance. “Our food and hospitality attract many customers,” said Muriqi, adding the restaurant’s location on Route 7 attracts many customers from Redding and he appreciates meeting all of them. “I love food, so the hospitality business was perfect for me. I enjoy taking care of our guests. Every customer is treated like a guest in our house.”

Muriqi offered insights into some of his Easter favorites.

**Favorite Easter candy?**  
 Chocolate.

**Peeps or Cadbury egg?**  
 Cadbury egg.

**Best item in your Easter basket when you were a child?**  
 Anything sweet.

**How do you celebrate Easter?**  
 With family and lots of friends.

**What are some spring activities you enjoy?**  
 I enjoy nature in spring, especially hiking.

**Favorite brunch menu item?**  
 Baked eggs with wild mushrooms and cream sauce.

Most interesting thing people don’t know about you? I am a humble guy who loves taking care of people. Their happiness gives me tremendous joy.

## Leg of Lamb

### Ingredients:

- 1 (3 pound) bone-in leg of lamb, trimmed
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1/2 tablespoon olive oil
- 1/2 tablespoon chopped fresh rosemary
- 1/2 tablespoon chopped fresh thyme leaves
- 1/2 tablespoon Dijon mustard
- 1/2 tablespoon kosher salt
- 1 teaspoon ground black pepper

### Directions:

• Preheat oven to 350-degrees Fahrenheit and line a roasting pan with aluminum foil.

• Using paper towels, pat the lamb dry. Using a sharp knife, score the top side of the lamb by making shallow cuts in a diamond pattern.

• In a small bowl, combine garlic, olive oil, rosemary, thyme, Dijon, salt, and pepper.



• Place lamb, fat side up, on a rack in the prepared roasting pan. Spread garlic mixture evenly over the lamb, rubbing thoroughly into the scored cuts.

• Place into oven and roast until it reaches an internal temperature of 135-degrees Fahrenheit for medium, about 1 hour and 30 minutes to 1 hour and 45 minutes, or until desired doneness.

• Let the lamb rest 15 minutes before slicing. ■

# St. Baldrick’s fundraiser Monday, March 18

By Rocco Valluzzo



Photo by Chris Angell

Joel Barlow Science teacher Randy Light gets his head shaved by barber Jimmy Serra at previous fundraiser for the St. Baldrick’s Foundation, which supports research to find cures for childhood cancers.

Joel Barlow High School will host a fundraiser to benefit the St. Baldrick’s Foundation, a charity that supports research to find cures for childhood cancers, on Monday, March 18, beginning at 9:15 a.m.

in the front entry area. Participants sponsored by family, friends, and employers raise funds to shave their heads

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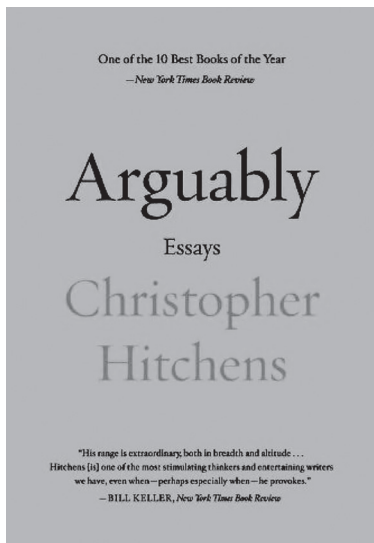


## BOOK REVIEW

### Arguably

Essays by Christopher Hitchens

Grand Central Publishing / 788 pages / \$22.99



Christopher Hitchens was a polemicist, anti-deist, political journalist, formidable debater, and writer of powerful, beautiful, incisive essays. He was a uniquely erudite public speaker, and his treatises on culture are the work of a highly articulate thinker. His is one of the few voices that must not be missed for a whole understanding of issues he addresses. A heavy smoker and drinker, he died at age 62 in 2011 of esophageal cancer, the year this collection of essays was published. His best friend, Martin Amis, died of the same affliction in 2023. It is not unfair to say that these two writers together have become the British voice of their generation.

The great virtue of a volume of essays is the variety of topics taken up. Short reviews, literary interviews, book introductions, etc., are collected into a presentation that can be accessed easily and enjoyed repeatedly. Clive James, Martin Amis, and Christopher Hitchens were friends in life, and each has produced several essay collections of great merit. For readers of literature, these are timeless and rewarding adventures. *Arguably* has a full range of subjects that a curious mind would be drawn to. Hitchens gives the reader many ironic insights and never shrinks in his response. Reviewing the novel,

*Terrorist*, by John Updike, written shortly after the 9/11 attacks, Hitchens writes, “After I had sent *Terrorist* windmilling across the room in a spasm of boredom and annoyance, I retrieved it to check my notes in its margins...Updike has produced one of the worst pieces of writing since the events he so unwisely tried to draw upon.” A reader might well disagree that his manner is arch in the extreme, but rebuttal would be a challenge in any case since Hitchens is usually correct in his literary judgements.

“It is cliché, not plagiarism, that is the problem with our stilted, room-temperature political discourse,” Hitchens writes in his essay, “Words Matter”. Disapproving of sloganeering, he wrote of one meant as inspiration: “It’s the sort of thing parents might chant encouragingly to a child slow on the potty-training uptake.” This is how a superior writer assails the limitations of bumper sticker condensations we see in politics, so often nothing pretending to be something, or the reverse.

The author himself wrote the introduction six months before the death he knew was coming. This fifth and last collection was published in his lifetime. However, a newly published collection has been released, *Hitch in Time*, subtitled “Reflections Ready for Reconsideration”, and is now available. Christopher Hitchens made an intellectual journey few will duplicate and made a copious record in video-taped debates and interviews, and essays that make enormously pleasurable reading. Agree or disagree with him (as Martin Amis often did), Hitchens is a writer that every thoughtful reader must endeavor to encounter. And, arguably, *Arguably* is a perfect place to start. ■

Review by Tom Casey  
Tom is the author of  
*Human Error* and  
*Strangers' Gate*

## Get to know Redding at Spring Open House

By Lisa Goldstein

Jess Tyson had always worked from home prior to moving to Redding in 2019, but her previous homes had been in a city or a walkable town. While the rolling hills and two-acre plots attracted her family, she found it difficult to meet people. Throw in the fact that she was eight months pregnant and moved just before the pandemic, making friends became nearly impossible. While walking her dog one day, she met a neighbor who ran the playgroup for Redding Neighbors and Newcomers (RN&N), and as soon as the world began to open up, she got involved.

“I just didn’t want anyone else to feel (so isolated), and I thought the newcomers club could be a really good resource for people,” said Tyson.

In fact, RN&N was such a good resource for Tyson, she’s now the President of the Board and is letting everyone know about the array of clubs and activities that RN&N has to offer people of all ages and interests. Since the club started as a women’s club, Tyson said there is often a bias that RN&N only offers programs that appeal to middle-aged women. She insists that is not the case and wants to break those preconceived notions by showing folks how the group has evolved to include offerings like a regular Guys Poker Night and a Cooking Club that is so well attended they are on the verge of adding a second group.

To help get the word out about its mission to connect residents of all ages with their range of activities, RN&N is partnering with the Mark Twain Library for a Spring Open House on Thursday,

March 21 from 6:30 p.m. – 8:00 p.m. at the Library.

The Library’s central location and similar mission as the town’s “hub” made it the perfect spot for such a gathering. “All the clubs we have are about bringing people together and creating lifelong friendships,” said Tyson.

The Library couldn’t agree more. “The Mark Twain Library is not just for books – it is a gathering place in our town,” said Adult Programs Coordinator Elaine Sanders. “What better place to hold a community gathering where you can meet neighbors and learn more about Redding’s special offerings and history?”

The Open House will offer an opportunity for residents to get to know their neighbors while enjoying light refreshments and talking with members of RN&N plus learn about our town’s rich history from Redding’s Co-Historians Brent Colley and Bruce Nelson, who will answer trivia questions about town history.

At the end of the evening, there will be a chance to win a free gift from one of many generous donations to RN&N by local businesses and non-profits.

For more information  
or to register for the  
Spring Open House, visit  
[marktwainlibrary.org/calendar](http://marktwainlibrary.org/calendar)

To learn more about RN&N,  
visit [reddingneighborsand-newcomers.org](http://reddingneighborsand-newcomers.org)

## LIBRARY CORNER

By Erin Shea Dummeyer

I was recently listening to a podcast when one of the hosts made an offhand comment about the state of the world and how it’s affecting philanthropy. I’m paraphrasing, but it was something to the effect of, “Everything seems insurmountable right now, so it feels like people are choosing to focus on small kindnesses.” I’ve been thinking about her comment ever since, especially as we enter election season where there will be focus on the causes that many of us regularly support. I thought about the statement on Tuesday as I took my four-year-old with me to vote in a “micro-election” in our town where the top candidate won by just four votes. Pumping my time,

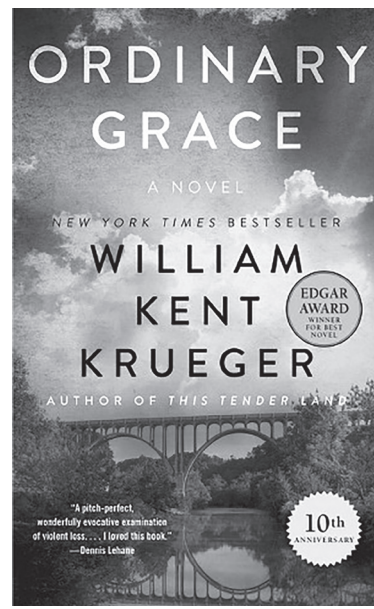
money, and voting power into local causes or economy has felt like my own way of making a difference. So of course, it also makes me think of how the Mark Twain Library is also a place where supporters can focus their time and energy in a way that hopefully feels impactful to them.

Before I applied for the role of Director here, I asked a friend who had grown up in Redding for more information about the town. She told me that many residents get involved in civic and volunteer activities as a way to meet other people, since there is no real downtown in Redding. Because of Redding’s picturesque, rural identity, it can be difficult to have

spontaneous interactions with new friends or neighbors. That’s where the Library comes in. I’ve written before about how Mark Twain Library is the cultural center of town. In fact, that’s part of our mission statement. But it’s also a fabulous place to volunteer your time or treasure, because your support directly impacts your neighbors and community. So, in a world where having an impact can feel impossible, consider the local library as the place where even the smallest investment brings smiles, books, or engaging programs right to your community. ■

Erin Shea Dummeyer is  
Director, Mark Twain Library

## Good books for good readers | By Margi Esten



It still surprises me that even with all the reading and author research I do, it’s still possible for me to stumble upon a writer I have never read, or even heard of. I picked up *Ordinary Grace* by William Kent Krueger, and now I am going to have to start working my way through some of his other books. *Ordinary Grace* was published in 2013 and won the Edgar Award for Best Novel in 2014. And, no wonder. For me, it is simply the perfect novel: beautifully written, in-depth characters you care about; plot twists and a bit of a mystery; along with much loftier themes of wisdom and the enduring grace of God.

It is the story of the Drum family living in a sleepy rural Minnesota town during the summer of 1961 and told through the eyes of 13-year-old Frankie Drum some forty years later. That summer begins with a death, with more deaths to follow, thus changing many of the lives in this small town forever, highlighting the enduring nature of our connections with loved ones who have passed away.

“The dead are never truly gone. They’re still alive in the thoughts and hearts of those left behind.” – William Kent Krueger ■

## The unlikely friendship between Twain and Reverend Twichell

Acclaimed author and historian gives talk at First Church of Christ | By Jessie Wright



Photo by Jessie Wright

Author and journalist Stephen Courtney giving a talk on Twain and Twichell at First Church of Christ, Congregational on Sunday, March 10.

Congregants at First Church of Christ, Congregational gathered after coffee and conversation on Sunday, March 10 for a talk by award-winning author and journalist Stephen Courtney.

Courtney, a veteran reporter for the Hartford Courant and Twain scholar, shared the story of a decades-long friendship between Congregational minister Joseph Hopkins Twichell and Redding’s own late-in-life hero, Mark Twain, which Courtney outlines in detailed, humorous fashion in his book, *Joseph Hopkins Twichell: The Life and Times of Mark Twain’s Closest Friend*.

For Mark Twain’s closest friend to be a minister may surprise those who know of the author’s wit and often sharp cynicism of religion and humanity. In one of the 300

letters that have survived between the two friends, Twain wrote, “Oh, the human race!— what a ridiculous invention it is.” Twichell, who Courtney describes as an “eternal optimist” wrote back, “Mark, the way you throw your rotten eggs at the human race doth greatly arride me.”

The two men met in 1868 at a party in Hartford and became almost immediate friends and confidants. As Courtney describes, they relished long walks in nature together, speaking constantly on topics from politics to religion, family life to creative musings. Their letter writing, which Courtney read extensive excerpts from at the talk on Sunday, sometimes echoes the back-and-forth cadence of John Ames and Robert Boughton’s friendship in

Marilynne Robinson’s *Gilead*.

Twichell was one of the only people Twain wanted to hear from after his eldest daughter, Susy, died at the age of 24 from spinal meningitis. Twichell would become an integral part of Twain’s family’s life, officiating his daughter Clara’s wedding, and offering support after the tragic death of his daughter Jean on Christmas Eve 1909.

The two men were also connected to Redding – Twain building his home Stormfield here and living out the last years of his life; and Twichell, whose daughter, Harmony, became a longtime resident of Umpawaug Road as the wife of composer Charles Ives.

Courtney concluded his talk with a look at the three stages of Twain’s religious life – beginning with a more open-minded, commitment to spirituality as he courted his future wife, Livy, and ending with a skeptical, critical view of religion in general. Through it all, though, he remained deeply connected to his friend the reverend, and Twichell rarely wavered from his good-hearted sparring with Twain.

After all, as Courtney noted, “Twichell liked complicated people.” ■

Courtney’s books and writings on Twain can be found at [marktwainhousestore.org](http://marktwainhousestore.org)

St. Baldrick’s fundraiser Monday, March 18 | continued from page 8

or cut their ponytails in solidarity with children who often lose their hair during cancer treatment. This marks the tenth time Barlow has hosted the event, which was last held in 2020 and then suspended due to Covid. To date, it has raised more than \$150,000.

In addition to Barlow, students and faculty from John Read and Helen Keller Middle Schools will participate. There are currently 27 shavees with four teams and ten St. Baldrick’s League members who have participated for at least three years, with some even participating more than ten years.

Barlow English teacher and Director of Library Services Chris Angell, who first brought the event to the school in 2012, has been a participant each time, though he started raising money for St. Baldrick’s a year earlier.

“I had gone to my barber to get a haircut and he said, ‘Hey, I’m doing this event. I’m raising money to help find cures for childhood cancer,’” he recalled. “I was like – it sounds great!”

He noted that a few of the participants have been involved even longer, including John Read teachers Michael Bon Tempo (15

years), Dave Ebert (16 years), and Suzen Stewart (a team captain since 2014).

The inaugural event raised \$14,600 with 31 participants, including 23 shavees. This year’s fundraiser has already surpassed its goal of \$10,000.

“Usually the day of brings in a little bit more,” said Angell. “It would be nice to see it as high as we could get it.” ■

For more information, visit [stbaldricks.org/events/JBHS2024](http://stbaldricks.org/events/JBHS2024)

# THE NATURAL WORLD

## WCSU to host lecture series on climate change

By Pamela Brown



Photo courtesy of Dr. Mitch Wagener

Dr. Mitch Wagener giving an invited presentation at UCONN on climate in April 2023.

Warmest years on record. Wildfires. Threats to human civilization. What's going on with our climate? If you want to be informed on topics related to climate change, Western Connecticut State University (WCSU) is hosting "Climate and Human Civilization", its 8th-annual series this spring of informational lectures on climate and its effect on our lives and the future.

"Our grandchildren – the world's grandchildren – are our legacy. The decisions we make today, they will inherit tomorrow," said Dr. Mitch Wagener, Professor of Biology, who is also a presenter. "Climate change will affect us all in many ways. The more we know, the more prepared we will be to make wise choices."

"Climate and Human Civilization" will comprise five lectures, free and open to the public, from March 19 – April 16 from 7:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m. in Room 219 at the midtown science building at 181 White Street in Danbury. WCSU is presenting the event with the Jane Goodall Center for Excellence in Environmental Education, a private non-profit organization dedicated to wildlife research, education, and conservation.

In each 50-minute lecture, a

WCSU faculty member from the Biology and Chemistry departments collaborates with a current student who will offer a 15-minute presentation. A question-and-answer session closes each session. "The goal, along with providing the latest and best information to our local communities, is to provide an opportunity for our faculty to consider the impact that climate change will have on their particular expertise, and to provide students with a chance to gain experience standing in front of a live audience explaining a complex topic," said Wagener. "We rarely have trouble finding students eager for the opportunity." For the first time, this year a UCONN professor will be a co-presenter.

Wagener, a climate change educator and ecologist who teaches four courses on climate change and has given over two hundred talks on the subject, kicks off the series on Tuesday, March 19 with "Fire Climate." He is joined by student Milo Duch. "There are certain ecological conditions, such as heat and drought, that we associate with a climate where fire is common. As the world warms, wildfires will be more common in more locations," he said. Last year, Wagener spoke to residents about the smoke from Canadian

wildfires. On April 9, Wagener will be presenting "Hope" with student Abigail Adney and addressing the following questions: How do we fix this? How do we think about and discuss a topic that is so emotionally fraught? How do we give hope to the world's grandchildren? How do we talk to them about this without increasing their anxiety?

Three additional lectures will take place as part of the series: March 26, "Hot Expectations: Risk, Outcomes, & Harm Reduction in the Heat for the Physically Active" by Dr. Rebecca Stearns (UCONN), Associate Professor in Residence, Department of Kinesiology, and Dr. Jeff Schlicht, Professor of Health Promotion and Exercise Sciences; April 2, "War on the Environment" by Dr. Anna Malavisi, Associate Professor of History, Philosophy and World Perspectives, with student Jennifer Bassett; and April 16, "Tickpocalypse: Assessing Risk for Tick-Borne Diseases in a Changing Climate" by Dr. Neeta Connally Professor of Biology, with student Sandra Zapata-Ramirez.

Wagener hopes attendees will understand their role in protecting and preserving the environment. "Our parents repeatedly insisted that we must clean up our own messes," he said. "We will not be fondly remembered for piling up cash, for being famous, feared, and powerful. We will be remembered with love for making wise decisions that benefit future generations. If we choose to make selfish decisions, we will be nothing but memories the future chooses to forget. Civilization or chaos? That seems to be the choice. I choose to be an agent of civilization." ■

For more information, visit [wcsu.edu/events/calendar/climate-and-human-civilization-lecture-series](https://wcsu.edu/events/calendar/climate-and-human-civilization-lecture-series) or call (203) 837-8791

## Mary Clinton Scholarship sponsored by the Redding Garden Club

Applications for \$2,000 grant due

April 12 | By Ann Crocker



The Redding Garden Club is very proud to continue its tradition of awarding the Mary Clinton Scholarship dedicated to Mary Clinton's years of service and devotion to Redding.

The scholarship program awards up to \$2,000 to one or more applicants who are legal residents of the Town of Redding and who are high school seniors and beginning their studies in the field of agriculture, environmental

studies, landscape or floral design, conservation, or related areas.

To be considered, please submit the following:

- Completed application form
- Essay that explains how you, your interests, your activities, and your goals relate to your future field of study. (See details on application form)
- Letter of recommendation from a guidance counselor or employer

Download the application form from the Redding Garden Club website at [reddinggardenclub.org/scholarship](https://reddinggardenclub.org/scholarship)

E-mail the completed materials to Ann Crocker at [annsam@yahoo.com](mailto:annsam@yahoo.com) no later than April 12, 2024. Questions? E-mail [annsam@yahoo.com](mailto:annsam@yahoo.com) ■

## How to solve Connecticut's energy challenges? Use your imagination

19th-annual eesmarts Student Contest now accepting applications | By Jessie Wright

Students throughout the state are being challenged to get creative and to propose their best ideas for solving various energy challenges as part of the 19th-annual eesmarts Student Contest.

For nearly two decades, Energize Connecticut has invited Connecticut students in grades K-12 to answer grade-level-specific prompts on how they would promote energy efficiency, renewable energy, and sustainable solutions.

This year, students in Grades K-8 are asked to submit their entries in the form of a poster (Grades K-2), limericks (Grade 3), outdoor billboard (Grade 4), fictional story with an energy-saving character (Grade 5), persuasive letter (Grade 6), comic strip (Grade 7), or social media post (Grade 8).

Students in Grades 9-12 will produce a persuasive image in words or pictures, such as a short poem (125 words or less) or cartoon strip (12 cells or less) that advocates for an energy topic. Entries will be evaluated based on scientific validity and concise and convincing imagery.

"To see the creativity and critical thinking displayed by Con-

necticut students who participate in this annual contest is always inspiring to me," said Frank Reynolds, President & CEO of United Illuminating, Southern Connecticut Gas and Connecticut Natural Gas. "I look forward to reviewing this year's submissions and seeing these students' commitment to helping us reduce our emissions and further the clean energy transition. Our students are our future, and the products of contests like this one make me confident we're in good hands."

Contest registration is open until March 22. Project submissions are due on March 29. All work must be completed by the individual submitting the entry. No group projects are being accepted this year.

Finalists in all categories and grade levels will be honored at a special awards ceremony to be held in May 2024. Winners will receive a certificate and an Amazon gift card. ■

For more information and to register, visit [EnergizeCT.com/student-contest](https://EnergizeCT.com/student-contest)

## Third annual seed exchange at Redding Grange #15

By Susan Clark

Spring arrives March 19 and on March 24, join your fellow gardeners at this year's Redding Grange Seed Exchange to get into the swing.

There will be vegetable, herb, and flower seeds available, many saved and donated by local gardeners and therefore uniquely adapted to doing well in Redding. Look out for sunflowers and zinnias, tomatoes and squash, seed corn, and much, much more.

Thanks to the UCONN Extension Center in Bethel, we have many donated packets of seeds from Burpee's as well.

New this year will be seedlings for sale, all locally grown, organically, from heritage seed. Early cherry tomatoes, specialty peppers, and melons are among those that will be on offer.

There will also be potted-up herb plants for sale, as well as home-made organic seed-starting soil and an array of free seed-starting supplies.

Grange members and friends are baking goods to sell, in case all the browsing and contemplation of garden triumphs to come make you hungry.

While the seeds are free, the items for sale raise much-needed funds to keep the heat on at the Grange Hall during the colder months. There is no charge for entry, and you're welcome to take seeds even if you don't have any to contribute.

Mark your calendars for Sunday, March 24, 10:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. at the Grange Hall, 399 Newtown Turnpike, for this kick-off to the gardening season. You'll be joined by fellow gardeners from Redding and surrounding towns – perhaps the best part of the Seed Exchange is the opportunity to exchange tips and stories with new and old friends.

If you're able to donate seeds or supplies, please e-mail [seeds@phineus.com](mailto:seeds@phineus.com), or bring them on the day of the event. ■



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Plan for new Topstone playground takes shape / continued from page 1



Photo from Park and Recreation Commission meeting materials

An example of the look and type of materials proposed for the new Topstone Park play structures.

site to incorporate the needs of camps, evening music productions, and other programming. Park and Recreation Director Rob Blick had given feedback to the Commission that consistent shade and shelter from the elements would be a key improvement for the Park's use. The proposed shade structure, a combination of metal poles in

footings and a heavy-duty cover, would be installed at the beginning of each summer season when Topstone Pond Beach opens, and removed each fall.

The Board of Selectmen will review the Commission's recommendations before the project moves forward. Once given the go-ahead, one of the most substantial

phases of work that will need to be completed is site preparation.

"What will it take to prepare the site and how fast and how quickly can we do this, given nature and given the work?" said Caes. "Secondly, we have to set up the work orders with both of these vendors to make sure they align on the days when they can make it happen."

The Park will need to be closed at least three-to-five days for the installation of the play structures. Inspections and clean-up will follow. Still, the Commission hopes the improvements can be installed and functional for this year's summer season.

"When we spoke with both (vendors), we asked them to write their proposals so that this could all be in by Memorial Day," said Caes. ■

# CALENDAR OF EVENTS

\$ = fee applies  
R = registration required

## This Week's Featured Events

### SYNCOPATION Group Art Show Opening

**Sunday, March 17**  
3:00 p.m. - 6:00 p.m.  
With Ralph Lalama's Grammy award-winning jazz quartet  
Georgetown Arts & Cultural Center  
5 Main Street  
gtownarts.com

### Welcome Spring Open House

**Thursday, March 21**  
6:30 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.  
Learn about RN&N social clubs and the library. Meet your neighbors and enjoy light refreshments, an interactive talk with Redding historians, and a free raffle.  
Mark Twain Library  
439 Redding Road  
marktwinlibrary.org

### Redding Grange's 3rd Annual Seed Exchange and Giveaway

**Sunday, March 24**  
10:30 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.  
Free seeds and some seedlings, supplies, and baked goods for sale. E-mail seeds@phineus.com for information on how to donate.  
Redding Grange No. 15  
399 Newtown Turnpike  
reddinggrange.org

### Want to feature an upcoming event?

E-mail us at [advertise@reddingsentinel.org](mailto:advertise@reddingsentinel.org) for more information.

## MEETINGS

**Thursday, March 14**

**Gilbert and Bennett Wire Mill Advisory Committee**  
6:00 p.m.  
Virtual  
townofreddingct.org

**Thursday, March 14**

**Region 9 Board of Education Budget Workshop**  
7:00 p.m.  
Joel Barlow High School / Library Learning Commons  
100 Black Rock Turnpike  
er9.org

**Thursday, March 14**

**Redding Fire District #2 Commissioners Meeting**  
7:00 p.m.  
West Redding Firehouse  
306 Umpawaug Road  
townofreddingct.org

**Friday, March 15**

**Voter Registration Session**  
12:00 p.m. - 2:00 p.m.  
Town Hall / Hearing Room  
100 Hill Road  
townofreddingct.org

**Monday, March 18**

**Board of Selectmen**  
7:30 p.m.  
Town Hall / Hearing Room  
100 Hill Road  
townofreddingct.org

**Tuesday, March 19**

**Region 9 Finance and Operations Committee**  
5:30 p.m.  
Joel Barlow High School / Library Media Center  
100 Black Rock Turnpike  
er9.org

**Tuesday, March 19**

**Conservation Commission**  
7:00 p.m.  
Town Hall / Hearing Room  
100 Hill Road  
townofreddingct.org

**Tuesday, March 19**

**Region 9 Board of Education**  
7:00 p.m.  
Joel Barlow High School / Library Learning Commons  
er9.org

**Wednesday, March 20**

**Water Pollution Control Commission**  
7:30 p.m.  
Virtual  
townofreddingct.org

**Wednesday, March 20**

**Board of Finance Public Hearing**  
7:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.  
Redding Community Center  
37 Lonetown Road  
townofreddingct.org

**Thursday, March 21**

**Tabulator Testing**  
5:30 p.m.  
Redding Community Center  
37 Lonetown Road  
townofreddingct.org

**Thursday, March 21**

**Historic Review Committee**  
7:00 p.m.  
Town Hall / Hearing Room (subject to change to virtual or hybrid)  
100 Hill Road  
townofreddingct.org

**Monday, March 25**

**Board of Finance**  
7:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.  
Town Hall / Hearing Room (subject to change to virtual or hybrid)  
100 Hill Road  
townofreddingct.org

## ARTS

**Saturday, February 24 - Sunday, March 24**

**The Ridgefield Guild of Artists' Focus On: 3-Dimensional**  
12:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.  
Wednesdays - Sundays  
34 Halpin Lane  
Ridgefield  
rgoa.org/focus-on-3-dimensional

**Thursday, March 14 - Saturday, March 16**

**Carrie the Musical presented by Joel Barlow High School**  
7:00 p.m. - Thursday and Friday 2:00 p.m. or 7:00 p.m. - Saturday  
Joel Barlow High School  
100 Black Rock Turnpike  
jbhs.booktix.net/seating.php  
\$

**Sunday, March 17**

**SYNCOPATION Group Art Show Opening**  
3:00 p.m. - 6:00 p.m.  
With Ralph Lalama's Grammy award-winning jazz quartet.  
Georgetown Arts & Cultural Center  
5 Main Street  
gtownarts.com

**Wednesday, March 20**

**American Impressionism: Weir Farm to Holley House with Artscapades**  
7:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.  
An evening of art history on the Impressionist movement.  
Mark Twain Library  
439 Redding Road  
marktwinlibrary.org  
R

## CHILDREN | TEENS

**Saturday, March 16**

**STEM at New Pond Farm - Egg Drop**  
10:30 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.  
Grades K-4, Waitlist only.  
New Pond Farm Education Center  
101 Marchant Road  
newpondfarm.org  
\$, R

**Monday, March 18**

**St. Baldrick's Event by Joel Barlow High School**  
9:30 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.  
Students and adults shave their heads to raise money for cancer research.  
Joel Barlow High School  
100 Black Rock Turnpike  
stbaldricks.org/events/JBHS2024  
R

**Thursday, March 21**

**Special Education College Fair**  
5:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.  
For high school students and families.  
372 Danbury Road  
Wilton  
bit.ly/WDSSPEDCollegeFair  
R

**Sunday, March 24**

**Storytime for Children Ages 1-5 with Adult**  
10:30 a.m. - 11:15 a.m.  
New Pond Farm Education Center  
101 Marchant Road  
newpondfarm.org  
\$, R

## CRAFTS

**Thursday, March 14**

**Spring Wreath Making Workshop**  
6:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.  
Danbury ReStore  
51 Austin Street  
Danbury  
housatonichabitat.org/restore-events  
\$, R

**Sunday, March 24**

**Easter Egg Trees**  
12:00 p.m. - 1:00 p.m.  
New Pond Farm Education Center  
101 Marchant Road  
newpondfarm.org  
\$, R

**Sunday, March 24**

**Needlework Drop-In**  
2:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.  
New Pond Farm Education Center  
101 Marchant Road  
newpondfarm.org

## FOOD | WINE

**Saturday, March 16**

**Dessert & Wine Tasting**  
7:30 p.m. - 10:00 p.m.  
Pair wine or tea with chocolates, babka, and pie.  
Temple B'Nai Chaim  
82 Portland Avenue  
Georgetown  
templebnaichaim.org  
R

**Saturday, March 23**

**Family Cookie Swap (grades K-4 and grown-ups)**  
11:00 a.m. - 11:45 a.m.  
Make 12-24 of your favorite cookies and swap with neighbors and friends.  
Mark Twain Library  
439 Redding Road  
marktwinlibrary.org  
R

## HEALTH | WELLNESS

**Thursday, March 21**

**Memory Tips with Dr. Wendy Hurwitz**  
1:00 p.m. - 2:00 p.m.  
Heritage Center  
37 Lonetown Road  
E-mail mstillman@townofreddingct.org or call (203) 938-9725  
R

**Tuesday, March 26**

**Yoga Nidra**  
4:00 p.m.  
Heritage Center  
37 Lonetown Road  
E-mail mpilato@townofreddingct.org or call (203) 938-9725  
R

**Wednesday, March 27**

**Meditation**  
12:00 p.m.  
Heritage Center  
37 Lonetown Road  
E-mail mpilato@townofreddingct.org or call (203) 938-9725  
\$, R

## HOLIDAY

**Saturday, March 16 - Sunday, March 17**

**St. Patrick's Day at The Redding Roadhouse**  
7:00 p.m. - 10:00 p.m. Saturday live music and eats  
12:00 p.m. - 2:00 p.m. Sunday Guinness glass etching  
The Redding Roadhouse  
406 Redding Road  
thereddingroadhouse.com  
\$, R

**Monday, March 18**

**St. Patrick's Tea and Music Celebration**  
10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.  
Drop-in Irish tea with scones, soda bread, and live folk music at 11:00 a.m.  
Heritage Center  
37 Lonetown Road  
Questions e-mail mstillman@townofreddingct.org

**Sunday, March 24**

**Purim Carnival**  
9:30 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.  
Games, inflatables, crafts, DJ, food, and more.  
Temple B'Nai Chaim  
82 Portland Avenue  
Georgetown  
templebnaichaim.org

## NATURE

**Saturday, March 16**

**Gardening Basics: Planting Cold Weather Crops**  
2:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.  
Drop-In Program  
New Pond Farm Education Center  
101 Marchant Road  
newpondfarm.org

**Saturday, March 16**

**Astronomy: Viewing the Night Sky**  
8:00 p.m.  
Outdoor program - dress for the weather  
New Pond Farm Education Center  
101 Marchant Road  
newpondfarm.org  
\$, R

**Tuesday, March 19**

**Spring Pop-Up Welcome Celebration**  
6:00 p.m. - 7:00 p.m.  
Season bell to ring at 6:30 p.m. to mark the arrival of spring.  
Redding Grange #15  
399 Newtown Turnpike  
reddinggrange.org

**Sunday, March 24**

**Redding Grange's 3rd Annual Seed Exchange and Giveaway**  
10:30 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.  
Free seeds and some seedlings, supplies, and baked goods for sale. E-mail seeds@phineus.com for information on how to donate.  
Redding Grange No. 15  
399 Newtown Turnpike  
reddinggrange.org

## RELIGIOUS SERVICES

**Bethlehem Lutheran Church**  
Sundays at 10:00 a.m. (in person) or 10:15 a.m. (Zoom)  
44 Portland Avenue  
bethlehemplutheranct.org

**Calvary Independent Baptist Church**  
Adult and Child Sunday School at 10:00 a.m. / Sundays at 11:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m.  
Wednesday prayer meeting at 7:00 p.m.  
Nursery provided for all services  
711 Redding Road  
cibredding.org

**Christ Church, Episcopal**  
Sundays at 9:00 a.m.  
184 Cross Highway  
christchurchredding.org

**First Church of Christ, Congregational**  
Sundays at 10:00 a.m.  
25 Cross Highway  
firstchurchredding.org

**Long Ridge United Methodist**  
Sundays at 11:00 a.m.  
201 Long Ridge Road, Danbury  
longridgeumc.com

**Sacred Heart / St. Patrick Parish**

**Sacred Heart Church:**  
Saturday Vigil Mass: 4:00 p.m.  
Saturday Eucharistic Adoration: 6:00 p.m.  
Sunday Mass: 9:00 a.m. & 10:30 a.m. 12:00 noon LATIN  
Weekday Mass: Tuesdays and Thursdays at 8:30 a.m.  
Wednesday 6:00 p.m. LATIN  
30 Church Street

**St. Patrick Church:**  
Fridays during Lent: 7:00 p.m. Stations of the Cross  
Saturday Vigil Mass: 5:30 p.m.  
Sunday Mass: 8:30 a.m. & 10:30 a.m., 5:00 p.m.  
Weekday Mass: Monday - Friday at 8:30 a.m.  
Mondays and Thursdays Eucharistic Adoration: 7:00 p.m.  
169 Black Rock Turnpike  
sacredheart-stpat.org

## SPECIAL PROGRAMS

**Thursday, March 14**

**Hookers, Healers & Heroines: A Tour of Her Own**  
7:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.  
A look at incredible women of the Civil War era.  
Mark Twain Library  
439 Redding Road  
marktwinlibrary.org  
R

**Saturday, March 16**

**Brunch with Benedict Arnold**  
11:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.  
Historical reenactment, presentation and brunch presented by Drum Hill NSDAR  
Redding Country Club  
109 Lonetown Road  
wiltondar.org  
\$, R

**Saturdays, March 16 and 23**

**Redding Historical Society Lonetown Farm and Museum Public Open House with Guided Tour**  
1:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.  
Members and children free; Non-members \$10.  
Lonetown Farm and Museum  
43 Lonetown Road  
Call (203) 938-9095 with questions.  
\$

**Tuesday, March 19**

**Author Talk: Mark Perlman, The Reluctant Soldier**  
3:30 p.m.  
Heritage Center  
37 Lonetown Road  
E-mail mstillman@townofreddingct.org or call (203) 938-9725  
R

**Wednesday, March 20**

**Driver Safety Class**  
9:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.  
AARP will run their in-person Driver Safety Program.  
Bring lunch if desired.  
Heritage Center  
37 Lonetown Road  
E-mail mpilato@townofreddingct.org or call (203) 938-9725  
\$, R

**Thursday, March 21**

**Welcome Spring Open House**  
6:30 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.  
Co-presented with Redding Neighbors & Newcomers  
Learn about RN&N social clubs and the library. Meet your neighbors and enjoy light refreshments, an interactive talk with Redding historians, and a free raffle.  
Mark Twain Library  
439 Redding Road  
marktwinlibrary.org



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