

Caucuses end with no contested Town races

By Jessie Wright

The Democratic Town Committee and Republican Town Committee held caucuses this month to endorse slates of candidates for the November municipal election.

Candidates for First Selectman, Selectman, Town Clerk, Town Treasurer, Tax Collector, Board of Finance, Redding Board of Education, Board of Assessment Appeals, Planning Commission, Zoning Commission, Zoning Board of Appeals, Zoning Board of Appeals Alternate, Constable and Region 9 Board of Education were endorsed by the Committees and certified.

As of now, there are no contested seats. (The last municipal election in 2023 also had no contested seats.)

Candidates not endorsed by a party may still file a nominating petition to appear on the ballot. The petition must include signatures from qualified electors – the lesser of either one percent of the votes cast for that office at the last election or 7,500. ■



Photo by Mercedes DeMasi

Members of the CT Entomological Society gathered in West Redding this month to set up light sheets and look for moths, beetles, and other insects that come out at night. Last week was National Moth Week – learn more at nationalmothweek.org. If you have a photo you'd like to see featured here, e-mail editor@reddingsentinel.org.

Robert Kalamaras sworn in to head Police Department

By Donna Christopher



Photo courtesy of Ginger Fiore

Town Clerk Michele Grande swears in Robert Kalamaras as Chief of Police.

Redding Police Chief Robert Kalamaras's first day on the job was July 21.

Kalamaras, 50, joins the Redding Police Department from Fairfield Police Department, where he rose through the ranks over 25 years, being named Chief in 2021. He was sworn into office last week

by Town Clerk Michele Grande.

"I am honored to serve as Chief of Police for the Town of Redding. This is a community that values trust, transparency, and partnership, and I am committed to leading a Department that reflects those values every day," Kalamaras said. "Together with the dedicated men

and women of the Redding Police Department, I look forward to building strong relationships and ensuring the continued safety and well-being of our residents."

He thanked the Board of Selectmen and recognized "the outstanding work of Captain Tim Succi for his steady leadership during this transition. The Redding Police Department has a proud legacy, and I will work hard to support our officers, honor our past, and guide us into the future with integrity and professionalism."

In addition to his 25 years in the Fairfield Police Department, Kalamaras is a U.S. military veteran and holds a Bachelor of Science in Criminal Justice from Sacred Heart University. He is a graduate of the 276th Session of the FBI National Academy and earned a master's certificate in Criminal Justice Leadership and master's degree in public safety from the University of Virginia. He has

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Following funding freeze, ER9 awaits news of restored grants

By Anne Young Albanese

On June 30, the U.S. Department of Education sent a notification to the State Departments of Education that it was reviewing Fiscal Year 2025 funding for the Title I-C, II-A, III-A, IV-A, IV-B grant programs and would not be issuing award notifications obligating funds for those programs on July 1 – the date that states expected to receive those awards – prior to that review.

"The Department remains committed to ensuring taxpayer resources are spent in accordance with the President's priorities and the Department's statutory responsibilities," the notification read.

The Connecticut Department of Education informed district superintendents of this freeze and began reviewing the potential impacts on each district as well as the implications of using State or local funds to temporarily support Department of Education program activities while the grant awards were delayed.

"We face a shortage of teachers, our students need academic supports and back-to-school programs, and adult education programs provide springboards for self-improvement and skill development. Cutting funds that support those efforts seems misguided at best and purposefully cruel at worst," said State Senator Ceci Maher.

ER9 stood to be impacted less than many other school districts in Connecticut. According to 2024-25 school year grant award calculations, the Redding School District had an expected \$21,089 under these grant programs frozen, with Region 9 an expected \$19,626. Last year, the total amount of federal grants awarded to the state of Connecticut was \$53,561,846.

When broken out by program, the Redding School District was estimated to receive \$11,089, which would have been used under Title II Part A. These funds were to be used to improve teacher and principal quality. These activities include elevating teacher and principal quality, supporting professional development, and promoting teacher leadership. Redding also had \$10,000 frozen under Title IV-A, the Student Support and Academic Enrichment (SSAE) grant program. These funds are typically used to help schools provide all students with access to a well-rounded education, improve school conditions for learning, and enhance the use of technology for academic achievement. Region 9 had \$9,626 granted under Title II Part A frozen and \$10,000 under Title IV-A.

"The Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction and I are aware that these funds have not been received at this time," said ER9 Superintendent Jason McKinnon. "While we do not have a timeline on the release of these funds, we are actively planning for different models of delivery... We are committed to do whatever we can to continue to support these

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REDDING'S BIG OUTDOORS

The Parade Path

By Jessie Wright



Photo by Jessie Wright

Even the smallest slices of the outdoors in Redding can have a big impact. For many, the Parade Path around the periphery of the Town Green is enjoyed as a colorful backdrop to the summer Concerts on the Green. Dogwalkers meander down it throughout the day, chatting with neighbors and admiring the flowers. Remote workers use it as a respite during days spent indoors in front of a computer.

"It's almost like a sidewalk," said Alice Smith, who has been helping to take care of the Path for many years. "I see people here all the time."

The Path, now celebrating its 20th anniversary, is the result of the generosity of many Redding neighbors and volunteers. It was created through donations – of people's time, money, and in many cases, plants from their own gardens – to

transform a weedy, unused patch of land into a verdant, lively public garden.

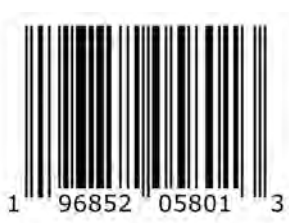
Its name is taken from the role the Town Green played in the lives of Redding's Revolutionary War-era residents. "Three centuries ago, Redding's founding fathers organized their local militia on what is now Redding Town Green. A Parade Ground, as it was known, was at the center of practically every colonial town. A portion of the original 10-acre lot is still used as a town gathering place. The Parade Path was created on the neglected periphery of this space in an effort to highlight this piece of Redding's rich history," reads the description at reddingct.gov.

The landscape design itself was created to memorialize Redding's history. The plants and flowers

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OPINION

Two-year closure is a bridge too far

By Bruce Nelson



The original bridge below Sport Hill Road.

There has been much talk about the “bridge” on Sport Hill Road that evidently cannot be repaired after last August’s flash flood weakened it enough so that it can no longer adequately support the roadway above it.

While there doesn’t appear to be any written record of when this stone structure was originally built, it is most likely at least 150 years old, built in an era when the Town provided no funding for infrastructure and local farmers pooled their labor and used their own oxen to drag the stones necessary to span this small stream and support the original gravel road above. Their engineering experience would have been limited to building barns and chicken coops. Their masonry expertise would have come from building the stone walls that separated their fields and the chimneys that served their homes. Their cost would have been limited to their willingness to donate the time it would have taken to build this structure so that they and their neighbors could cross this stream without getting their feet wet, or their wagons mired in mud when the surrounding ground was soft and muddy.

While we can only surmise how long it took to assemble these rocks, it certainly couldn’t have been months or years – those farmers couldn’t have spared that much time from their busy schedule of tending their livestock or growing and harvesting the crops they needed to feed their families. It would have likely been more a matter of days or weeks. The rocks that

support that span are thousands of years old, and they have held up the road that was once known as Jackson’s Highway for well over a century. To suggest that they are no longer capable of being used for the same purpose going forward seems unreasonable.

The engineers hired by the Town insist “bridges” such as this span can no longer be repaired. Instead, a new structure, using reinforced concrete and lots of steel, must be carefully designed over the course of several months and then constructed over several more – exceeding a full year. And surely it will be much wider, even though Town plow trucks, school buses, fire trucks, and oil delivery trucks have traversed the old structure without incident for the past 75 or more years. If the State is going to help pay for a new bridge, it must be built to their specifications even though the roadway on either side will continue to be as narrow as it was in 1875! The cost – a mere \$2.2 million to span a narrow stream. The current anticipated completion date is November of 2026, 27 months after the storm that damaged it. While this absurdity is somehow deemed acceptable by those who govern us today, I very much doubt our forefathers would agree.

Additional excuses as to why the residents of Sport Hill Road, Bridle Road, and Spur Road need to wait another year or more until this matter is resolved are little more than empty words; it is time to repair this span and get it open. ■

Mosquitoes in Easton test positive for West Nile virus

By Jessie Wright

A pool of mosquitoes at the Sport Hill Road collection site in Easton tested positive for West Nile virus last week, according to the CT Mosquito Management Program. Mosquitoes in Bridgeport, Stamford, and Wallingford have also tested positive for the virus. The testing site in Redding is Lyons Swamp, located between Sport Hill Road and North Park Avenue. No mosquitoes at that collection site tested positive.

The Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station conducts annual mosquito testing from June to October at 108 sites to track the presence of West Nile virus and Eastern equine encephalitis. Traps are initially set on rotation at each site about once every 10 days. If either virus is identified in a mosquito sample, trapping frequency is increased to once or twice per week, to better evaluate the risk of human exposure.

While an average of six to eight cases of West Nile virus in humans are reported in Connecticut each year, there have been no reported human cases so far this season. Most cases result in no symptoms or a mild flulike illness. Severe cases can lead to serious outcomes, including encephalitis and meningitis, and approximately 10% of people with severe cases die. People over the age of 50 are most vulnerable to severe infection.

The Town of Easton and the Aspetuck Health District provided the following recommendations to

avoid mosquito bites during this time of year, when the risk of infection is greatest:

- Minimize time spent outdoors between dusk and dawn when mosquitoes are most active.
- While outdoors, use mosquito repellents containing an EPA-registered active ingredient, including DEET, Picaridin, IR3535, oil of lemon eucalyptus, para-menthane-diol (PMD), or 2-undecanone.
- Wear shoes, socks, long pants, and a long-sleeved shirt when outdoors for long periods of time, or when mosquitoes are more active. Clothing should be light-colored, loose-fitting, and made of tightly woven materials that keep mosquitoes away from the skin.
- Wear clothing and gear treated with permethrin, an insecticide that kills or repels mosquitoes and ticks.
- Be sure door and window screens are tight-fitting and in good repair.
- When sleeping outdoors, use tents or mosquito netting in an unscreened structure. Treat camping gear with permethrin when possible.
- Cover strollers and baby carriers with mosquito nets when outside. ■

For more information on the latest testing results and locations visit portal.ct.gov/mosquito/surveillance/mosquito-monitoring-and-surveillance

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

We welcome Letters to the Editor. Please be clear, civil, and concise. E-mail editor@reddingsentinel.org with submissions.

To the Editor,

Twenty-five years ago, I was President of the Farview Farm homeowners’ association in Redding. We had over 40 expensive, two-acre properties that were alongside the future Meadow Ridge, and there was strong opposition to this huge development.

Would property values be affected? Water problems, as we’d be sharing the same aquifer? (Meadow Ridge eventually agreed to take its water from the Norwalk River.) Other unforeseen consequences? But everything was eventually settled, and the largest facility of its kind in Connecticut got built – actually becoming a very good neighbor.

But now fast-forward a quarter century, because I’ve just experienced a real role reversal: From fighting to keep out Meadow Ridge, to becoming one of its rehab patients.

Well, mea culpa. I’m writing to say that my 10-day stay was a totally positive experience. The Meadow Ridge staff was caring and professional, its food and facilities top-notch, and my private room could have been lifted from a five-star resort.

So, thank you, Administrator Paul Brown. And my appreciation to Edison in social services, Will in the gym, and all those wonderful nurses and aides – you’re very special, and I’m happy to send this rave review.

But isn’t life strange?! After all, this is from a guy who was trying to block your construction so many years ago. ■

Patrick Garrard
Georgetown

LEGAL NOTICES

Certified lists of Democratic and Republican party-endorsed candidates for the Town of Redding for election as First Selectman, Selectman, Town Clerk, Town Treasurer, Tax Collector, Board of Finance, Board of Education Board of Assessment Appeals, Planning Commission, Zoning Commission, Zoning Board of Appeals, Zoning Board of Appeals Alternate, Constable and Regional Board of Education are on file in my office at Town Hall, 100 Hill Road, Redding, CT and copies thereof are available for public distribution.

The certified list of Democratic candidates as received includes fewer names of party-endorsed candidates than the party is entitled to nominate for the following offices:

Office	Number of Names Certified	Number Entitled to be Nominated
Board of Finance	1	2
Planning Commission	1	3
Zoning Commission	1	2
Zoning Board of Appeals	1	2
Zoning Board of Appeals Alternate	0	3

The certified list of Republican candidates as received includes fewer names of party-endorsed candidates than the party is entitled to nominate for the following offices:

Office	Number of Names Certified	Number Entitled to be Nominated
First Selectman	0	1
Board of Finance	1	2
Planning Commission	2	3
Zoning Commission	1	2
Zoning Board of Appeals	1	2
Zoning Board of Appeals Alternate	1	3
Constable	2	4
Regional Board of Education	0	2

A Primary will be held September 9, 2025, if, for a particular office, the number of party-endorsed candidates plus the number of candidates filing petitions pursuant to Sections 9-382 to 9-450 of the Connecticut General Statutes exceeds the maximum number which the party is entitled to nominate for that office. Petitions must be filed not later than 4:00 p.m. on August 6, 2025. Petition forms, instructions and information concerning the procedure for filing of opposing candidacies, including schedules, may be obtained from:

Democratic Registrar of Voters, Jessica Cishek or Republican Registrar of Voters, Michele Meschi, 100 Hill Road, Redding, CT 203-938-5012. ■

Michele R. Grande, Redding Town Clerk, July 24, 2025

Notice to the Taxpayers and Legal Voters of Redding Fire District No. 1.

The Annual District meeting will be held on Monday, August 4, 2025 at 7:00 p.m. at the Redding Ridge Firehouse, 186 Black Rock Turnpike Redding, CT for the purpose of:

1. Election of One Commissioner to a three-year term.
2. Election of One Commissioner to a one-year term
3. Election of One Treasurer to a one-year term.
4. Election of One Tax Collector to a one-year term.
5. Election of One Secretary to a one-year term.
6. To approve spending \$230,000 from the Capital Reserve account for 20 Air-Pak systems.

Dated at Redding, CT July 21, 2025 ■

Bennett Pardee, Phyllis Magnussen, and David Hermenze, Commissioners

William Pardee, Secretary

SENTINEL SUMMER PUBLISHING SCHEDULE

Visit reddingsentinel.org/publishing-schedule for a complete list of Volume 4 issue dates.

Contact us at publisher@reddingsentinel.org with any questions.

AUGUST:

Off Week (August 7) / August 14 / Off Week (August 21) / August 28



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What to know about organizing a local political protest

By Donna Christopher



Photo by Carol Morgan
A protestor on Route 7 on Friday, July 18.

A pop-up No Kings protest on a busy Friday last month in Branchville was held for an hour without incident on the pedestrian bridge at the Route 7/Route 102 intersection. Earlier that week, people reported seeing a person near that same location on Route 7 holding a sign that read “Jews Genocide Gaza.” Someone disturbed by the sign notified the Ridgefield Police, according to Captain Brian Durling, who noted, “Investigating officers did not observe any criminal activity, and as such, we do not have any further information to share in regard to the incident.”

Recent protests and political activity have led to questions about what is allowed, not allowed, and what guidance an average citizen needs to stage a political event.

The bottom line: protests are allowed in Connecticut and throughout the United States as they are a form of public assembly, protected under the First Amendment. The location and size of the event, however, may require specific permitting, and certain things (like impeding traffic or inciting violence) are off limits.

“Protests are a means of public assembly, which is an aspect of the First Amendment under the United

States Constitution. We acknowledge and encourage Connecticut citizens to exercise their Constitutionally protected rights; however, it is just as important those doing so understand that exercising this right must be done in compliance with the law. Public assemblies should be exercised in public areas which do not impede the free travel of others by foot or vehicle,” explained Sergeant Luke Davis, Unit Supervisor of the Media Relations Unit at Connecticut State Police.

“For example, a public roadway cannot be obstructed for purposes of a public assembly. Furthermore, most protests are peaceful in nature; however, inciting riot or violence from within creating the risk of physical injury to participants or uninvolved bystanders would constitute a violation of state law and cause for law enforcement intervention. Lastly, anyone interested in organizing a public assembly should check with the city or town in which they plan to hold their event as there may be specific local ordinances which may differ from state law.”

Local protests and assemblies are allowed in Redding, as long as they don’t impede on traffic or roads. Planned events that may do so require a permit, according to Ginger Fiore, Town of Redding.

In nearby Newtown, a series of large protests and rallies on Main Street this year prompted a request by the Police Chief that the Town’s Legislative Council consider a draft ordinance that would grant him the authority to permit parades and rallies organized within the Town and to charge organizers for police overtime. (The Chief noted that the regular occurrence of the protests is depleting the police overtime budget.) The ordinance was not adopted.

Earlier this year, a small group of Redding residents gathered at Weir Farm National Historical Park in Wilton to protest mass layoffs

at the National Park Service. Organizer Rebecca Dunn said that she reached out to Weir Farm staff ahead of the gathering and was told that any group larger than 25 people at the park would require a permit.

There was no need to obtain a permit, however, for a July 17 protest at Putnam Memorial State Park, said Celeste Cobb who organized the event and founded a grassroots group called REBs (Redding, Easton, Bethel) last year. The date of the protest was picked to commemorate the death of Congressman John Lewis who coined the phrase “Make Good Trouble”. The location was picked, Cobb said, because of its history as the site of a Revolutionary War encampment where “people fought for our freedom.” The event drew 50 people to Putnam Park with the purpose to “raise awareness and try to get people to think about or maybe question what is happening in our country, attacks on our freedom, what’s going on with immigrants,” said Cobb.

The event was held by the entrance of the park but didn’t impede access or traffic on the road, so there was no need to consult the Town for a permit. Cobb said that the organizers had conversations with the state park ranger ahead of the protest to discuss details and identify any potential issues.

A day later, on Friday, July 18 another protest was staged on the pedestrian bridge in Branchville.

With regards to holding a political sign and whether hateful or disparaging messages are protected, Sergeant Davis said local ordinances may come into effect, but there are no specific state laws reflective of something this specific.

“Messages on signs typically fall within First Amendment rights, however it is really circumstance dependent as to if a particular message is violating state law,” he explained. ■

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Redding’s Big Outdoors: The Parade Path / continued from page 1



Photo by Alice Smith

along the Path are all native species, and were initially organized into sections reflecting the plants that would have been found in the area during different eras following the colonists’ arrival in Connecticut. Though years of growth have shifted some of the original design, visitors can still enjoy finding the rocks carved with date markers along the Path, denoting a botanical journey back through time.

“A garden is an evolution – it doesn’t stay the same,” said Smith, who moves certain plants as trees and shrubs grow and create more shade.

The Parade Path stretches from Town Hall to the Police Department building. Smith and volunteers also tend to the plantings around the Gazebo and several landscaped islands that dot the opposite side of the Green. Plaques and memorials for many Redding leaders and family members of donors who made the creation of the Path possible are nestled among the plants, stones, and structural components, like a stone “wishing well” and a gate crafted from beautiful, twisted wood.

Looking ahead as the 20th anniversary of the Path is celebrated,

Smith said she hopes to be able to facilitate more educational opportunities on the site, envisioning workshops on weeding, gardening, and biodiversity; community service opportunities; updated signage and plant identification cards; and even partnership programs with other local organizations.

Also to mark the anniversary, residents can purchase drinking glasses with “Redding 1767” – the year Redding was incorporated as a town – etched into them. Glasses are at Town Hall in the Office of the First Selectwoman – make sure to call ahead to (203) 938-2002 extension 1 before visiting to confirm there are glasses still available.

As Smith and I walked along the Path together last week, the vibrant colors of mid-summer were just beginning to fade, with the captivating textures of stalks, leaves, and fronds taking center stage. Smith pulled a stem of tansy toward us. “This is my fave,” she said, encouraging me to rub its pungent leaves between my fingers. “It’s anti-mosquito. It’s beautiful. I love, love, love it.”

New volunteers are needed and welcome to tend the Path and to maintain it as an asset for all residents.

“Everybody loves it when they are able to come – you don’t have to go to the woods to get a little nature,” Smith said. “It’s right in the heart of the center of town.” ■

To learn more or volunteer, visit reddingct.gov/community/civic-organizations/parade-path

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Robert Kalamaras sworn in to head Police Department / continued from page 1

served on numerous statewide advisory committees, contributing to the development and enhancement of public safety practices across Connecticut. In September 2024, he received the Distinguished Chiefs Award from the Police Commissioners Association of Connecticut.

“We are fortunate to have a person of Robert Kalamaras’s character, professionalism, and experience, to serve as Redding’s Chief of Police. His leadership skills, credentials, and awards speak to his professional qualifications but there are other factors that make him uniquely suited for this role,” said First Selectwoman Julia Pemberton

in a statement to the *Sentinel*. “As a person, and as a resident of the town, Chief Kalamaras is deeply invested in the success of the Redding Police Department and positive outcomes for the community. I am looking forward to having him out in the community so people can get to know him.”

In an interview, Kalamaras described having a very rewarding career in which he’s gained much experience working with a large population of about 65,000 in Fairfield with two universities and a large student body population.

From routine calls to serious and crisis events, it all falls under a typical day in law enforcement. As

an administrator, Kalamaras said his job is to manage the agency, Department personnel, and the ideas and vision of the organization. He also will handle public information requests and requirements as he did in Fairfield.

“We have a responsibility to report information to the public,” he said.

In Redding, he noted, he will be more of an operational working chief than in Fairfield, because the Department is smaller.

He talked about “a sense of calm” that responding police officers should bring to every situation, whether helping someone worried about a loved one or on domestic,

crisis, or routine calls. Their presence can let people know they are safe, are going to be safe, and if they need it, reassurance they can go on with their lives, he said.

“Every police officer should take this position as being an ambassador for the town where they represent the Police Department,” he said.

Kalamaras started his lengthy career at age 21. He remembers some of the early calls he responded to, including a domestic incident and asks himself, “What can I do for these people?” when attending to calls. Reflecting on his career thus far, he said he’s tried to bring a reasonableness to people’s lives

at times of crisis. “Sometimes the emotion part takes precedence (for people) and takes over the common sense,” he said.

Kalamaras grew up in Brooklyn and Port Jefferson on Long Island. A happily married father of two daughters, he has lived in Redding since 2021.

“Based on my short experience here in Redding, the administration is extremely welcoming and supportive of the Police Department,” he said. “In my few days, I’ve heard people say it’s a small family, and I feel like I’ve been accepted to the family.” ■

Come, chat awhile

Scout’s handiwork aims to build social connection | By Rob Sample



Photo by Ginger Smith
(From left to right): Cathryn Mills, Catherine Thompson, Nevah Suman, and Maggie Fitelson work to make two chatty benches in Redding.

The park bench has often been associated with isolation and lonely people – but a local Eagle Scout candidate aims to turn that image on its head.

Cathryn Mills, a six-year Scout who belongs to Troop 19 in Ridgefield, constructed two chatty benches for placement in Redding. One will be installed on Main Street in Georgetown, adjacent to the “Welcome to Georgetown” mural and Uncle Leo’s. The other bench will be on the grounds of the Boys & Girls Club of Redding-Easton on Cross Highway.

In selecting this project, Mills drew inspiration from the work of Redding resident Ginger Mills, whose SOAR Together non-profit aims to foster engagement and

connection in communities among people who might otherwise become isolated, withdrawn, and lonely. A similar chatty bench was constructed and installed in Bridgeport recently by a teen there who is also an Eagle Scout candidate.

Chatty benches are part of an international mental-health initiative that had its beginnings in Great Britain. PBS Newshour ran a story in December 2023 on how such benches have caught on throughout the U.K. and have spread to other parts of Europe and the U.S.

“Chatty benches are meant to inspire connection and conversation,” said Mills, a rising junior at Ridgefield High School. “Instead

Continued on page 5

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SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 13TH
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Garden Friend – \$350 2 tickets to the event Name in printed program	Seedling Donor – \$150 (non-attending) Name listed in printed program Thank-you postcard from the farm

Call to reserve your table: 203-938-2117 or register at newpondfarm.org/harvestdinner/

Summer in photos

From beach days to bike rides, residents take advantage of all Redding has to offer



(From top left, clockwise): Photo by Miles Prusa - Children enjoy “Ride and Roll” hosted weekly by the Redding Elementary School PTA at the Community Center; Photo by Jessie Wright - The Girl Scouts sell refreshments at a Concert on the Green; Photo by Elizabeth Jensen - Community Garden gardeners donate an abundance of produce to the Redding Grange’s weekly produce drive; Photo by Jessie Wright - Friends and neighbors gather to celebrate Anonymous Society art gallery’s one-year anniversary; Photo by Jessie Wright - A lifeguard looks on at Topstone Beach; Photo by Miles Prusa - A gardener tends to her plot at the Community Garden; Photo by Jessie Wright - Brian Matzke and Sessionflo entertain diners at The Redding Roadhouse; (Center): Photo by Danielle Dimston - Fireworks at Redding Historical Society’s Rock ‘n Roots Music Festival.

Community service, camaraderie, and a chance to shop early

Volunteering at the Mark Twain Library Book Fair offers a host of benefits | By Pamela Brown



Photo courtesy of Mark Twain Library

Sheila Corr has been volunteering and involved with Mark Twain Library for over two decades.

The 64th Annual Mark Twain Library Book Fair, held each year over Labor Day weekend, is one of Redding’s busiest, go-to events for book lovers. But, with over 60,000 books to organize and thousands of shoppers to assist over the four days of the sale, it takes an army of volunteers to execute.

“Volunteers are needed for set-up before the Fair during the last week of August, for sale days over Labor Day weekend, and for clean-up the day after Labor Day,” said Catherine Riordan, who co-chairs the event with Midge Loery.

The Fair will be held at the Community Center from August 29 – September 1 this year, but preparation for the event is a year-round

effort. Riordan, Loery, Library staff, and a team of volunteers work all year sorting books, incorporating new ideas, and smoothing out the processes for future Book Fairs. “Donations for the Fair begin September 15!” said Riordan.

Volunteers at the Book Fair will have scheduled shifts, with most lasting three hours. A volunteer online registration form is open now and posted at marktwainlibrary.org/book-fair.

“Shift confirmation e-mails go out mid-August. We accept registrations until the Fair begins, but people who wait may find that some shifts are already full,” noted Riordan, who said the Library needs to fill almost 600 shifts. “Many people work more than one shift,

and it comes out to about 275 individual people.” Volunteers are of all ages, with many school-age volunteers signing up to fulfill some of their required public service hours. Volunteers do not need to be Redding residents.

Responsibilities for the volunteers vary according to each day. “Set-up is moving boxes of books, unboxing the books, and arranging them attractively in their category. On sale days, we need cashiers, people to count the books and add up the prices, people to keep the selling floor neat, and some to help get books out to the customers’ cars. Clean-up is our exit from the Community Center – tearing down displays, moving boards and boxes, consolidating tables, and so on,” Riordan explained.

A special perk for volunteers who help to set-up is the opportunity to shop on the day that they work, before the sale opens to the public. Lunch is provided on both set-up and clean-up days.

Riordan shared that the event not only brings the community together to support Mark Twain Library, but it also offers a bonding experience for the volunteers. “The camaraderie of the set-up and sale really can’t be equaled. People catch up, see others that they have missed all summer, and come across books that they didn’t even know they needed,” she said. “The Book Fair is a cherished Redding tradition, and it is a wonderful experience to be part of it.” ■

For more information and to register as a volunteer, visit marktwainlibrary.org/book-fair



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Come, chat awhile
Scout's handiwork aims to build social connection / continued from page 4

of being a lonely spot, these benches become a place for people to gather, talk, and get to know each other. And their colors and design will provide a bright spot in the community.”

The benches are constructed of sturdy, heavy wood, ensuring they’ll remain securely in their chosen spots. Ridgefield Supply Company donated the lumber, while Ace Hardware provided hardware and other parts.

Mills estimated that the two benches took approximately four hours to build: two hours for cutting the timber, and another two for assembling the parts. But she didn’t go it alone: Mills recruited several other Troop members to assist her in building the benches.

“An Eagle Scout project is less about making something and more about leading others in achieving that final result,” Mills said.

Mills also recruited Redding artist Robert Mars, a member of Georgetown Village Restoration, Inc., to give the benches splashes of color. The bench at the Boys & Girls Club will have a blue-green paint scheme, while the one in Georgetown will be yellow, to match the nearby mural.

For both, Mars has invited local parents and kids to help provide a custom touch. “The parents will

roll paint onto the kids’ hands, who will then press their handprints onto the benches,” said Mars. “The handprints will be royal blue on the Club bench, and carrot orange on the Georgetown bench.”

Mars is the father of 11- and 15-year-old boys who are both Scouts in Redding’s Troop 15. So, he was happy to help.

“I’m a big supporter of the Scouts, and I love helping out in the community as a whole,” said Mars. “That’s what makes Redding such a special place.”

Mills said building benches that would bring people together proved especially heartwarming. “I’m thankful that we have an organization like SOAR Together in our local area,” she said.

And as part of its focus on connection and community, SOAR Together plans to introduce several new programs in the coming months. “We are launching the Let’s Chat program in the Ridgefield and Redding/Easton middle schools this coming year, which will encompass decks of conversation-sparking cards,” said Smith. “It will be among the proactive, anti-bullying measures being taken in Connecticut schools.” ■





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REDDING'S OWN

Meteorologist Jack Drake

A childhood in the woods sparked a lifelong passion for weather | By Donna Christopher



Jack Drake provides local weather forecasting on several social media platform for his neighbors in Western Connecticut.

Jack Drake always knew that he wanted to be a meteorologist.

He grew up in Redding on a property that backed up to Devil's Den Preserve, where playing outside until dinnertime was a safe option. (Drake, 30, and now a father of two, says he probably is

of the last generation to enjoy that kind of freedom.) His love of weather started at an early age; it was a challenge for his parents to get him to come in from playing in the woods around his house, particularly during dramatic weather. He has loved snowstorms for as far back as he can remember. Even today, Drake gets excited the night before one and has trouble sleeping, usually staying up to follow the weather pattern.

A graduate of Western Connecticut State University's meteorology program, Drake has a full-time career at Entegris in Danbury as a quality engineer. Pursuing his passion for meteorology, he works part-time (mostly weekends) at the CT Weather Center (ctweather.com) and forecasts Western Connecticut weather on several social media platforms.

His goal, along with a full-time career and raising a family, is to deliver accurate and timely weather information forecasts for many area residents who have come to rely on the information.

Drake, who provides his hyper-local forecasts as a public service, has amassed a dedicated following – many refer to him as “Danbury Weather Guy”.

"I look at it like I have a responsibility," he said. "The larger the audience, you do that. I always feel obligated, especially if the weather's bad, to make sure I'm updating, make sure I'm putting stuff out, because people rely on messaging."

The week of our interview, he'd been forecasting extreme heat,

which he noted can be more dangerous and kills more people each year than tornadoes.

Among his posts on the topic, he showed a graphic illustrating the temperature differences in Miami (90 degrees) and Danbury (99 degrees). “Sun angle differences amount to much less between us and Florida in June,” Drake wrote. “Even so, it’s impressive to beat out most of the South!”

Drake played an important role in getting news out about the deadly floods last August on his social media platforms, with dramatic photos, many provided by his followers.

"If you're in the Redding area, there is significant damage that rivals the worst flood events on record. Parts of Route 53 and Route 107 are GONE. I grew up there and never saw anything close to this. A radar estimated 10 inches of rain fell on the town," one of his reports said.

Drake emphasizes the importance of accurate and timely weather information, especially via the social sites. The advantage of social media, he said, is that it can create a lot of informed content. Not limited by words counts or broadcasting slots, he writes as many paragraphs as he wants to give full information, and readers take what information they want from that. His social media audience's average age demographic is between 30 and 54 years old. According to Facebook's analytics, his audience is 74% women.

Continued on page 9

Notes from a neighbor

Making nice

By Carter Wiseman



“Hi, my name’s Lucy. How’re you doin’ today?”

Who among us has not been inundated daily by phone calls generated by such phony-familiar algorithms?

To be sure, many of the folks who complain about today's relentless robo-calls are the old-timers who lament the loss of "mom 'n' pop" stores on local main streets. I get that. I once patronized a Westport tobacconist who mixed me a special blend of Virginia and Latakia when I still smoked a pipe. But there are always people who will pine for a rosy past, whether it was rosy or not. And since I no longer smoke a pipe, and don't want to become prematurely curmudgeonly, it seemed sensible to make an anecdotal survey of local retail behavior.

Not surprisingly, the big-box stores with large staffs that turn over quickly are not likely to have people at the check-out counters greeting you with a familiar grin. But once school lets out, even some of the smaller shops now seem to be staffed by surly high schoolers more interested in what's on their phones than whether you got the ground beef you needed for the weekend cook-out.

Nevertheless, it turns out there are still a lot of really helpful people behind the counters out there. A postmaster whom I had dealt with only once before greeted me by name on my second visit when

I brought in a package that needed special handling. When I went looking for some drain cleaner at a local hardware store, the salesman told me that I could avoid an \$80 house call from a plumber with an \$8.95 mechanical snake, which he then showed me how to use. When I discovered that I could no longer button the old tuxedo I needed for a formal affair, the owner of a local dry cleaners converted what had been a double-breasted jacket to a single-breasted model that actually made me look slimmer.

Were these people just displaying old-fashioned good manners, or were they trained to be nice? As a naturally skeptical person, I imagined a sinister H.R. seminar in which employees are advised to look customers in the eye, ask about their day, and pretend to compliment their appearance (without risking charges of sexual harassment). But the people I'd been dealing with didn't have the forced smile of a headwaiter waiting for a tip for getting me a good table. They actually seemed to care. It was like walking down a virtual Main Street lined with stores run by moms and pops, physically separate as they might be.

Some time back, a local store owner brought his new puppy into the shop for the day. Within a week, the dog started greeting the customers so warmly that when he wasn't there, they asked if he was okay. The store now has a website so they can send good wishes if the hound is out sick or inventorying his bones.

A cynic would say that's good marketing. But I bet it starts in the heart. It's the kind of connection that makes you want to come back, even tell your friends. But not Lucy. ■

The image is a promotional flyer for Agriventures Agway, celebrating their 25th anniversary. At the top left is the company logo, which includes the word "AGRIVENTURES" in green, stylized letters above a blue oval containing the word "AGWAY" in white. Below the oval is a blue banner that reads "Celebrating 25 Years!". To the right of the logo, there's a list of products offered: "Pool Supplies - Propane Refills - Pet Food & Supplies - Annuals - Perennials - Fertilizer - Soil - Pottery - Tools - Farm Feed & Supplies - Wild Bird Seed, Suet, & Feeders - And More!". Below this list, it states "We are proud to be locally owned and operated." The central part of the flyer features a large "\$10 OFF" in bold black font. Various farm-related illustrations are placed around the discount: a potted plant with a trellis on the left, a red cardinal perched on the dollar sign, a black and white cat lying down on the first "F", a brown hen with three yellow chicks below the "10", and a golden retriever sitting on the second "F". Below the discount, it says "your first purchase of \$50 or more!" in bold black font. A small disclaimer follows: "Valid at all Agriventures Agway locations. Cannot be combined with any other offer. Not valid on delivered items, feed, hay, shavings, or wood pellets. Cashiers please use code PAPER. Expires 8/31/25." The bottom section lists two store locations: "New Milford • 126 Housatonic Avenue • 860-354-5673" and "Danbury • 92 Mill Plain Road • 203-743-7500". Below the locations, it lists services: "Shop 24/7 at agwayct.com - In-Store Shopping - Curbside Pickup - Delivery - Ship to Home". The entire flyer has a light wood-grain background and is framed by a dashed black border. At the very bottom, there is a decorative border of various colorful flowers.

“Never Forget 9/11” mobile exhibit coming to Easton

By Bruce Nelson



Photo courtesy of the Tunnel to Towers Foundation
A mobile, interactive exhibit will come to Easton on August 8 and 9.

The Staples Academy Foundation and the Congregational Church of Easton are proud to announce that the “Never Forget 9/11” mobile exhibit will be at the Congregational Church of Easton at 336 Westport Road on Friday, August 8 and Saturday, August 9.

The exhibit was created by the Tunnel to Towers Foundation, which was formed by the family of FDNY firefighter Stephen Siller, who lost his life while trying to save those trapped in the Twin Towers on September 11, 2001. It is meant to honor his memory and carry on his legacy. Siller died after strapping 60 pounds of gear on his back and rushing on foot through the Brooklyn Battery Tunnel to access the World Trade Center Towers.

In 2013, the Tunnel to Towers Foundation launched the “9/11 Never Forget” mobile exhibit. The high-tech exhibition venue is carried within an 83-foot tractor-trailer unit that, when parked, transforms into an 1,100-square-foot museum that commemorates the sacrifices

of the 343 members of the FDNY who lost their lives on that day, as well as those who continue to suffer and die from their exposure to the toxic atmosphere created by the fire and collapse of the towers. This exhibit serves as a tool to help educate people about the tragic results of that fateful Tuesday morning in New York.

“This memorial provides interactive education, including artifacts such as steel beams from the towers, documentary videos, and recordings of first responder radio transmissions. Interactive guided tours are carried out by FDNY firefighters who provide firsthand accounts of the day and its aftermath. The 9/11 Never Forget Mobile Exhibit, which has traveled to nearly 50 states and Canada, has welcomed in over 600,000 people to date,” describes the Tunnel to Towers Foundation.

Nine-hundred free tickets are available for timed access to the exhibit. Each patron can reserve a maximum of four timed-tickets. Tickets and details are currently

available at staplesacademyfoundation.org.

People without tickets will be allowed entry on a first-come, first-served basis as room and time permits, but those with tickets will be accommodated at the time printed on their ticket. Times are set at 30-minute intervals. It is highly suggested that tickets be reserved to avoid what are traditionally long lines for entry.

Entry hours for the exhibit are August 8 from 3:00 p.m. – 5:30 p.m., and on August 9 from 12:00 p.m. – 5:30 p.m. Free, continuous shuttle service provided by the Easton Senior Center will be available from the Senior Center parking lot at 650 Morehouse Road.

Local sponsors include the Staples Academy Foundation, the Congregational Church of Easton, the Easton Volunteer Fire Company, the Historical Society of Easton, Hi-Ho Energy Services, the Shaughnessey Banks Funeral Home, and the Senior Center of Easton. ■

OBITUARY

Edith Wald Passed away July 19, 2025



During the course of her life, Edith traveled as far as China, India, Israel, and Russia. She spent time in Ethiopia as a volunteer nurse during the 1984 famine. She was a social activist, accompanying her family to Washington, D.C., many times to protest the Vietnam War. Later in life, she was a member of the singing protest group, The Raging Grannies.

Edith installed a love of music, travel, the arts, and social justice in all her children, and she took great pride in their achievements. She was preceded in death by her daughter, Elizabeth. She is survived by six children – Cathy, Adrienne, Richard, Lois, Dan, and David; a son-in-law, Mike Barnow; daughters-in-law, Lisa Wald and Louise Anselmo; eight grandchildren, Aaron Wald, Benjamin Cole, Emma Kvaale, Emme H Wald, Jason Wald, Jeremy Bauman, Nina Cole, Samara Wald; and one great-grandchild, Ida Lubeck.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to Cancer Support Team or the Metropolitan Opera. ■

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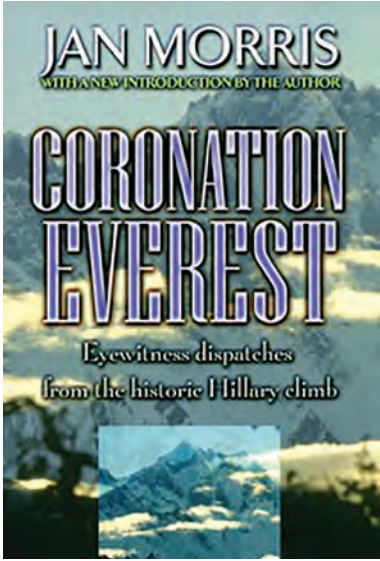
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Book Review

Coronation Everest *Eyewitness Dispatches from the Historic Hillary Climb*

By Jan Morris

160 Pages / Burford Books / (Amazon) From \$6.50



Coronation Everest, by Jan Morris, was published in 1954, the year following Sir Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay’s successful climb of the world’s tallest mountain on May 29, 1953, and the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth four days later, on June 2. Author Morris (1926 – 2020) agreed to be a journalist on the expedition. As a semi-participant witness, Morris details the physical and spiritual aspects of the successful climb, and the competition to communicate success timely to the Coronation ceremony half-a-world-away, in London. Indeed, author Morris calls the book “a work of historical romanticism.”

Morris, who was Welsh, shows why it might take a British sensibility to explain the beauty and eccentricity of doing something extreme for the experience itself, writing: “In their silly efforts to prove themselves still important, [British culture] had revived the idea of sport as a medium of nationalist fervor.” And because it was a Coronation year, the press contrived to have the conquering of Mount Everest imagined as a gift to the monarchy. And it became so.

Reality differed somewhat from earlier romantic notions, however. “Inside the tent is probably a little clammy, since it has been empty since the last party went this way. Litter lies about its floor – a chocolate, a packet of breakfast food, a scrap of old newspaper. There is a smell of lemonade powder, wet leather, and chocolate.” Jan Morris, famous for travel narratives, usually delivers an uncensored taste of adventure. Here, Morris gives readers a large hint of what the big game looks like, smells like, and feels like; the discomfort, peril, and chance of death are real possibilities, news of success or failure ever important and therefore fiercely competitive. And this begs the question, What price glory? Is the idea of “conquering” a mountain the essence of romance? A larger inquiry might be: How is this in any way wonderful? Morris wrote for

the 2000 edition introduction, “Its excitements are those of long ago, and so are many of its attitudes.” It was a different world in 1953.

Mount Everest stood as the last great natural challenge, until the Moon. Man must have contests, evidently. This deserves thought. The human creature is driven to overcome obstacles and rewards even effort with encouraging, if self-aggrandizing, praise. The simultaneous Coronation of Elizabeth II and the submitting achievement of Edmund Hillary, re-established the British imprimatur after World War II. Deftly avoiding comparison to George Mallory’s famous, “Because it is there,” explanation of mountain climbing, Edmund Hillary of himself said quite simply, “I climb because it is fun.” Not everyone’s idea of frolic, perhaps, but who can gainsay any individual on that matter?

Achieving the summit is an encapsulation summarizing the punishing toil that holds all the meaning and purpose of the expedition. But the successful expedition itself stands as an analogue to ambition and achievement. Presumably great effort and risk are components that register “sport.” The Swiss failed in 1952, and the French were scheduled for 1954.

And this was celebrated nationally in Britain the same week: victory of modern aspiration as a way to frame the post-war British future in the 20th century as a coronation. It was a summary of effort as harbinger of new beginnings. Hillary and Norgay achieved the Everest summit on May 29, 1953. Queen Elizabeth II was crowned on June 2, 1953; the Coronation and the conquering of Mount Everest achieved a post-war reconciliation with historical presence greatly wished-for.

Jan Morris was a British journalist who published the *Pax Britannica* (1968), *Heaven’s Command* (1973), and *Farewell the Trumpets* (1978), the three books known as the *Pax Britannia* series. *Coronation Everest* is a book about men of confidence and capability scratching a romantic itch. It was an itch felt by many climbers in many countries. English gentlemen pursue such things as climbing mountains or sharing tea on ice flows. They did both, in victory. Queen Elizabeth II held the throne for 70 years, 214 days, the longest British reign in history. Sir Edmund Hillary died in 2008 at age 88. The ascent of Mount Everest has taken its place, in the words of Jan Morris, “Among the triumphs of the human spirit, shared by all.” ■

Review by Tom Casey,
author of *Human Error*,
Strangers’ Gate, and
Unsettled States

Following funding freeze, ER9 awaits news of restored grants / continued from page 1

important initiatives tied directly to students, educators, and leaders.”

On Friday, July 25, the *Washington Post* published an article announcing the release of the above-mentioned grant funding. When the Connecticut Department of Education was reached for comment, Matthew Cerrone, Director of Communications, responded, “Having met with superintendents this past Wednesday to discuss Federal funding, the Connecticut State Department of Education is pleased that the U.S. Department of Education has announced the release of previously approved funding for K–12 school programs. These resources are essential to sustaining the programs and ser-

vices on which our districts rely to support students. The Department is reviewing the Federal guidance and will share additional details with superintendents and grantees as they become available during the week of July 28.”

“We haven’t yet heard if this funding is universal for all of the country, and if it restores funds due to Redding and Easton, but it is a welcome turn of events for all of the impacted regions,” said Senator Maher. “I’m glad that the Federal government has opted to continue funding education in our communities.”

The *Sentinel* will continue to report on grant disbursements as more details are known. ■

Library Corner

A job with many hats | By Erin Shea Dummeyer

In the library world, a common refrain we use with each other to describe the minutiae that finds its way into our job descriptions is, “things you didn’t learn in library school.” We say this when we have to watch a YouTube video to figure out how to fold a coat rack, or when a lost dog wanders into the library and we have to find the owners.

Being a library director also means managing a facility. And while I’m not the one actually climbing onto our roof to examine a leak, I am required to learn the quirks of the building and keep a mental checklist of where things are located and who to call when there’s an issue. I have learned so

much about facility maintenance during my 15-ish years working in libraries that I thought it may be fun to share some of the “where the rubber meets the road” stories of working in libraries.

I have assembled a telescope for an astronomy program, plunged many clogged toilets, put together a pop-up tent to do outreach at the beach, put air in the tires of a “book bike,” troubleshooted many HVAC systems, and once helped a patron dig their car out of the snow. At a previous job, I even helped identify someone in a police line-up who had committed a crime at the library.

I have found that these small

challenges keep the job interesting and give me confidence to figure things out on my own. Our volunteer board members like getting in on the action as well. I would guess at least half of them have climbed a ladder to inspect something on the library’s roof. And while some of these tasks might not seem glamorous, they are all important and help keep things running smoothly for the public, which is the library’s main purpose. All in a day’s work. ■

Erin Shea Dummeyer is
Director, Mark Twain Library

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Good books for good readers | By Margi Esten



I have talked about this book to almost anyone who will listen, so I guess it’s time I wrote about it here:

The Wedding People by Alison Espach. I don’t want to give too much away, but this cleverly written novel opens in Newport, Rhode Island when Phoebe arrives at the exorbitantly grand and expensive hotel she has just booked. She is mourning the unfaithfulness, and subsequent loss, of her husband and has now decided to end her life in this spectacular setting – with her recently deceased cat’s pain pills! – but much to her dismay she appears to be the only guest who is not part of an extravagantly

planned “wedding week”. The premise alone gives you an idea of how Espach is able to co-mingle the darkest of themes with quick-witted, artful humor. It is so moving and so much fun, I think I read it in almost one sitting. “Wickedly Funny”, “A Perfect Novel”, and “Hilarious and Witty” are just a sampling of what reviewers thought of it. Espach is a 40-year-old novelist and the author of two other novels – *The Adults* and *Notes on Your Sudden Disappearance*. She is a professor of English at Providence College in Rhode Island.

It is July – and this is the perfect summer read! ■

Nod to the pod *A Very British Cult: Lighthouse* | By Amy Maloof

A one-episode recommendation from a podcast you might love.

Maybe because my grandmother was English, or maybe because I was born in Scotland and hold dear my UK citizenship (and the thought of whisking away my family to the Highlands, dressing them in matching tartan), I’m immediately drawn to British pods – especially when there’s something spooky afoot. These days, I continue to dodge most true crime shows, but brainwashing without a body count, plus some English accents? In.

The story begins when Catrin Nye, an investigative journalist with the BBC, receives a phone call from Dawn, who says her boyfriend Jeff is newly out of a cult. She wants help sounding the

alarm and warning others to avoid the group. Laughing quietly, a little self-conscious, Dawn explains to Nye why she chose her.

“Someone said the line, ‘If you really want to get to the bottom of something contact a journalist, not the police.’” And so, Nye starts digging.

At first glance, the alleged cult doesn’t sound very exciting: A mentoring and life-coach group called Lighthouse that slowly demands more and more of your time and money. And requires a lot – I mean a lot – of time on the phone. It all sounds pretty benign, if not sad. But then Jeff – who may have left the group, but is still clearly, at least partially, under its spell – starts giving the full story to Nye and things

begin to sound much more sinister.

One of the wildest parts of this story are the recorded calls between Jeff and his mentors that were, unbelievably, recorded; you can hear the manipulation tactics and programming happening in real time. It highlights that the neuroplasticity of our brains is so powerful. With the right set of circumstances, we can accept some truly strange conditions, changing who we are and what we believe, seemingly overnight. I’m always morbidly fascinated to see the trouble this gets humans into. But the good news is if we’re flexible enough to get into deep water, we’re also flexible enough to get out. ■

THE NATURAL WORLD

The Outside Story: What makes blueberries blue? | By Rachel Sargent Mirus



Illustration by Adelaide Murphy Tyrol

Every summer, I go blueberry picking and I notice the many colors of blueberries, from the luminous indigo of unpicked berries on a bush, which turn nearly black after handling, to the deep red-purple stain they leave on fingers and fabric. What makes these berries so colorful?

This little fruit owes its multi-colored identity to two separate ways of generating color: a pigment and a structural effect. Like many eye-catching berries, blueberries contain pigment chemicals that selectively absorb some light wavelengths, reflecting the other colors back to our eyes for us to see. They also have a waxy layer, or bloom, that scatters and reflects blue light.

Dr. Rox Middleton, a researcher who studies the optical properties of plant-based materials, has investigated the blue of many fruits that have a wax bloom, including blueberries. Blue is an excellent advertising color for attracting fruit-eating animals, many of whom have vision that is sensitive to this hue. However, blue pigments are rarely seen in any fruit. The kinds of molecules that reflect blue light tend to be metabolically expensive, making the color impractical for many plants to produce.

Instead of blue pigment, blueberries contain pigments from the anthocyanin family, a group of

hundreds of plant-based chemicals that contribute to red, purple, or black colors in fruits. Anthocyanins can also be blue. Anthocyanins change with pH, so they can shift from red to purple to blue if the liquid they are immersed in changes from acidic to basic. These anthocyanins give blueberries their underlying dark color that is then covered by a wax bloom.

This wax layer is created when “the [wax] molecules turn up and move to where they’re energetically relaxed,” Middleton said, which means they naturally come together in a stable, organized structure, forming crystals. The wax on blueberries gives the berry its distinctive velvety blue surface, but under a microscope the crystals that compose the wax are a hodge podge of tiny tubes. “They look like rolled up cinnamon sticks – curled up but not completely,” Middleton said.

These tubular crystals create blue through a “structural color” effect. Structural colors are created by physical shapes that are tiny enough to interact with light waves, causing effects such as constructive or destructive interference or selective scattering. These types of interactions essentially sort the light waves that reach our eyes, so we see some colors but not others. They can create the impressive effects from the brilliance of green peacock feathers to the rainbow swirls on a bubble.

The blue of blueberries is the result of those tiny tubes in their wax bloom scattering light in the blue range of the visible spectrum, reflecting it back for us to see. We often see blue from a very specific set of blue wavelengths, but the waxy bloom of blueberries reflects wavelengths from blue into ultraviolet light, actually peaking in the wavelengths of “near ultraviolet,” below the range perceived by humans. It’s possible that birds,

many of whom can see ultraviolet light, use the mix of ultraviolet and blue light to recognize blueberries.

In blueberries, the colors that aren’t scattered pass through the wax layer and are absorbed by the dark anthocyanin pigment in the berries’ skin, so we can’t see them. Without that dark backdrop, the blue might not be visible: unripe blueberries look pale green because the anthocyanin pigment hasn’t accumulated, but the wax bloom is already present and scattering blue light. The blue of a blueberry wax bloom is a delicate effect: the light scattering is translucent and therefore much less visible without their pigment layer, and the wax can easily be rubbed off, so they lose their blueness entirely. Both the wax bloom and the pigment work together to create the distinctive blue of ripe blueberries.

Fully understanding the structural color mechanism is complicated and there are many future questions to pursue. “These wax shapes are beautiful, but much more confusing. It’s an invitation to ask: what’s really going on?” Middleton said.

I know that the next time I pick blueberries off our bushes, I’ll appreciate their variety of hues even more, knowing the complexity that makes them possible. But I’ll still pop them into my mouth! ■

Rachel Sargent Mirus is a teaching artist and writer

The Outside Story is assigned and edited by Northern Woodlands magazine and sponsored by the Wellborn Ecology Fund of New Hampshire Charitable Foundation: nhcf.org

Annual Butterfly Count shows some promising results | By Pamela Brown

Butterflies make our world beautiful and serve as active pollinators to help plants reproduce. Though they play an important role in our ecosystems, Redding has seen a general decline in their populations over the last three decades.

“People pay attention to butterflies,” said Victor DeMasi, Redding lepidopterist, who recently spied Monarchs fluttering by as he watched his wife in their flower garden. “That’s pretty cool.”

DeMasi led Redding’s 31st annual Butterfly Count on July 5, an event taking place each year around Independence Day to identify and track trends in the local butterfly population.

Co-sponsored by Redding Land Trust, the Count is part of the North American Butterfly Association’s (NABA) National Butterfly Count held nationwide in over 400 locations. DeMasi guided a group of community members throughout Crossfield Meadow and four other localities. “Our Count cruised to a respectable quantity – 394 total individuals and a relative high number of species, 29 in all. Count results were in the middle for our long-timed efforts,” said DeMasi, who thanked the volunteers and Michael Carpenter who compiled the data. “Notable was state endangered Northern Metalmark which registered 5. Species of concern, the Dion Skipper, came in at 12 individuals for a huge all-time high for a bug that appeared only as a few singletons over the years. Appalachian Brown, an elusive butterfly that frequents shrub margins in wetlands, enjoyed a 31-year high.”

Cole Tucker-Walton, Redding Land Trust Trustee, loves the view that’s been protected at Crossfield. “We’re lucky that someone like Victor wades into the view and tracks what he finds, translating the global story of insect loss into local, personal terms,” said Tucker-Walton. “The long view for in-

sects, and many animals, is often ominous, but every butterfly counted is a life, an instance of beauty and startling adaptation that makes our present day unique and meaningful. The world has been through extinction events before, but homo sapiens has not. We don’t know the impact on humanity if we continue to lose species at 20th and 21st-century rates.”

DeMasi established the Butterfly Count with Redding resident Fred Schroeder. “We started it to do something fun nature-wise on a Saturday. We were also concerned about insects declining, especially pollinators, and there was no long-term data,” explained DeMasi who, with his wife, Roanna, has traveled the world studying butterflies for the past 40 years and serves as a curatorial affiliate at the Peabody Museum of Natural History.

Since 1994, DeMasi noted there’s been a 50% decrease in butterflies. “In Redding’s case, it’s not habitat disappearing – invasive plants had an impact. The worst is pesticides. When neonicotinoids pesticides used on lawns came into play in the mid-’90s, there was a decline in butterflies. We saw a causal connection. Without planning, we produced the data for that conclusion.”

To help protect winged insects, DeMasi and Lukas Keras, of Redding, have been lobbying the state legislature. “Lukas is a tremendous young entomologist. We testified in Hartford and got a bill passed curtailing the use of certain pesticides, neonicotinoids, on all turf,” said DeMasi, who urged homeowners to stop using harmful pesticides. To attract butterflies in your garden, he suggested planting Bee Balm, especially *Monarda fistulosa*.

“It’s the best to attract butterflies,” he said. “Fleabane is also good. It’s weedy looking, but a great pollinator plant. You can also plant native wildflowers.” ■



Join Redding Neighbors & Newcomers for TWO festive



SUMMER PARTIES!

AUGUST 16

 family picnic

 3:00pm - 6:00pm

 Topstone Park in Redding

ice cream truck, beach, playground, and family fun



AUGUST 22

 adults-only party

 6:00pm - 9:00pm

 A private Redding residence

live music, great food, and a fun night with your neighbors!

Learn more and buy tickets at:

<http://reddingneighborsandnewcomers.org>

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

\$ = fee applies
R = registration required

This Week’s Featured Events

West Redding Fire Department Clambake and Pig Roast

Saturday, August 2
11:00 a.m. – 7:00 p.m.
Annual fundraiser and good time with the West Redding Fire Department
West Redding Firehouse
306 Umpawaug Road
\$

Redding Neighbors & Newcomers Summer Family Picnic

Saturday, August 16
3:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.
Topstone Park
72 Topstone Road
Beach, ice cream truck, playground
reddingneighborsandnewcomers.org
\$, R

Redding Land Trust Summer Celebration

Saturday, August 23
4:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.
Celebrate the Land Trust’s 60th anniversary with food, bluegrass music, and natural surroundings
Poliak Preserve
213 Simpaug Turnpike
reddinglandtrust.org
\$, R

Want to feature an upcoming event?

E-mail us at advertise@reddingsentinel.org for more information.

ARTS

Friday, August 1

Mike Milazzo
7:00 p.m. – 10:00 p.m.
The Redding Roadhouse
406 Redding Road
thereddingroadhouse.com

Sundays, August 3 and 10

Concert on the Green Series Forgotten by Friday and David Brandom
6:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.
Redding Town Green
100 Hill Road
reddingct.gov/parks-and-recreation

Tuesday, August 5

Jim Croce Tribute
7:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.
Adult concert with live music
Topstone Park
72 Topstone Road
reddingct.gov/parks-and-recreation

Wednesdays, August 6, 13, and 20

Give My Regards to Broadway
12:00 p.m. – 1:00 p.m.
Interactive and engaging presentation of Broadway’s rich history
Heritage Center
37 Lonetown Road
E-mail mstillman@reddingct.gov or call (203) 938-9725
\$, R

CHILDREN | TEENS

Friday, August 1

Face Paint Friday
4:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.
Topstone Park
72 Topstone Road
reddingct.gov/project/topstone-park

Saturday, August 2

Let’s Play Zoo Ball!
11:00 a.m. – 11:45 a.m.
Mark Twain Library
439 Redding Road
marktwainlibrary.org
R

Monday, August 4 – Friday, August 8

Summer Camp with Barlow Robotics: Learn processing
2:30 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.
For grades 5-8
Easton Library
691 Morehouse Road
Easton
eastonlibrary.org
R

Monday, August 4

Arts and Crafts Event
4:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.
Topstone Park
72 Topstone Road
reddingct.gov/project/topstone-park

Friday, August 9

Kitty Visit
1:00 p.m. – 2:00 p.m.
Find a spot and read to rescued cats
Mark Twain Library
439 Redding Road
marktwainlibrary.org
R

Saturday, August 16

Redding Neighbors & Newcomers Summer Family Picnic
3:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.
Topstone Park
72 Topstone Road
Beach, ice cream truck, playground
reddingneighborsandnewcomers.org
\$, R

Monday, August 25

Summer’s End Party
5:00 p.m. – 6:30 p.m.
Pizza, ice cream party and a movie
Mark Twain Library
439 Redding Road
marktwainlibrary.org
R

FOOD | WINE

Saturday, August 2

West Redding Fire Department Clambake and Pig Roast
11:00 a.m. – 7:00 p.m.
Annual fundraiser and good time with the West Redding Fire Department
West Redding Firehouse
306 Umpawaug Road
\$

Wednesday, August 6

Tasty Mocktails with Thirsty Radish
7:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.
Virtual
Mark Twain Library
marktwainlibrary.org
R

Friday, August 8

Food Truck Fridays
5:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.
Municipal Center Lawn
1 School Street
Fairfield
fairfieldafterdark.com

Wednesday, August 13

Oyster Shucking Class
6:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.
Nod Hill Brewery
137 Ethan Allen Highway
nodhillbrewery.com
\$, R

Thursday, August 14

You Be the Judge... on Beer with Advanced Cicerone
7:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.
Mark Twain Library
439 Redding Road
Learn how to taste beer! Must be 21 and over
marktwainlibrary.org
R

Saturday, August 16

Coed Potluck Poker Night
6:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.
Private Residence in Redding
reddingneighborsandnewcomers.org
\$, R

HEALTH | WELLNESS

Wednesday, August 6

Joy Workshop
7:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.
The Granite Church
5 North Main Street
thegranitechurch.org
R

Thursday, August 7

Pilates at the Library

10:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.
Mark Twain Library
439 Redding Road
Designed for all levels
marktwainlibrary.org
R

Thursday, August 14

Tips for Dealing with Difficult People

12:00 p.m. – 1:00 p.m.
Gain strategies for improving communication and strengthen relationships
Heritage Center
37 Lonetown Road
E-mail mstillman@reddingct.gov or call (203) 938-9725

NATURE

Friday, August 1

Family Campfire
5:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.
Woodcock Nature Center
56 Deer Run Road
Wilton
woodcocknaturecenter.org
R

Friday, August 8

Beach Sports Day
4:00 p.m. - 6:00 p.m.
Topstone Park
72 Topstone Road
reddingct.gov/project/topstone-park

Saturday, August 9

Redding Community Hiking Club
10:30 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.
Registration closes August 7
Hike Stormfield and learn about plant identification
marktwainlibrary.org
R

Sunday, August 17

Woodcock Day in Biergarten
1:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.
Nod Hill Brewery
137 Ethan Allen Highway
Ridgefield
nodhillbrewery.com

Saturday, August 23

Redding Land Trust Summer Celebration
4:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.
Celebrate the Land Trust’s 60th anniversary with food, bluegrass music, and natural surroundings
Poliak Preserve
213 Simpaug Turnpike
reddinglandtrust.org
\$, R

SPECIAL PROGRAMS

Saturday, August 9

Freyer Academy of Ballet Open House
12:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.
Freyer Academy of Ballet
12 Old Mill Road
faballet.com

Saturday, August 9

Sea Shanties with the Re-enactors
7:00 p.m. – 10:00 p.m.
The Redding Roadhouse
406 Redding Road
thereddingroadhouse.com
R

MEETINGS

Monday, August 4

Redding Fire District #1 Annual District Meeting
7:00 p.m.
Redding Ridge Firehouse
186 Black Rock Turnpike

Monday, August 4

Park and Recreation Commission
7:00 p.m.
Redding Community Center
37 Lonetown Road

Monday, August 4

Republican Town Committee
7:30 p.m.
Town Hall / Hearing Room
100 Hill Road

Tuesday, August 5

Georgetown Fire District
5:00 p.m.
Georgetown Firehouse
61 Redding Road

Tuesday, August 5

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

Tuesday, August 5

Redding Board of Education
7:00 p.m.
John Read Middle School
Community Room
486 Redding Road

Tuesday, August 12

Planning Commission
7:00 p.m.
Town Hall / Hearing Room
100 Hill Road

Tuesday, August 12

Redding Fire District 1
7:00 p.m.
Redding Ridge Firehouse
186 Black Rock Turnpike

Wednesday, August 13

Region 9 Curriculum Committee
8:30 a.m.
Joel Barlow High School / Room A108
100 Black Rock Road

Wednesday, August 13

Zoning Commission
7:30 p.m.
Town Hall / Hearing Room
100 Hill Road

Thursday, August 14

Gilbert and Bennett Wire Mill Advisory Committee
6:00 p.m.
Town Hall / Hearing Room and Virtual
100 Hill Road and Zoom

Thursday, August 14

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

Monday, August 18

Board of Selectmen
7:00 p.m.
Town Hall / Hearing Room
100 Hill Road

Tuesday, August 19

Region 9 Finance and Operations
5:30 p.m.
Joel Barlow High School / Library
Learning Commons
100 Black Rock Turnpike

Tuesday, August 19

Zoning Board of Appeals
7:00 p.m.
Virtual



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