

Wire Mill clean-up options presented

By Rocco Valluzzo

An Assessment of Brownfield Clean-up Alternatives (ABCA) for the former Gilbert & Bennett Wire Mill property was at a public hearing on Thursday, July 10, showing several options for remediation of the 44 acres of Town-owned land in Georgetown.

The assessment is part of a \$1.99 million Federal clean-up grant Redding received from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and evaluates different methods of soil and groundwater clean-up as well as the abatement of hazardous building materials. Over the next five years, the Town also hopes to improve site aesthetics, stabilize buildings, engage in Georgetown planning, and implement public access to the Wire Mill property.

According to James Olsen, a licensed environmental professional with the engineering firm of Tighe & Bond, the EPA grant will target the West Pond, OMS, and Gateway

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Photo by Ed Staunton

Redding Historical Society celebrates Independence Day each year with its Rock 'n Roots Music Festival and Fireworks Show at Lonetown Farm. If you have a photo you'd like to see featured here, e-mail editor@reddingsentinel.org.

Rail fares set to rise by 10%

By Janhavi Munde

Connecticut is planning to raise fares on Metro-North Railroad and CT Rail transit throughout the state later this year in order to cover the increased cost of operating rail services.

Fares are slated to rise by 5% beginning September 1, and another 5% on July 1, 2026. That means a rush-hour one-way trip between New Haven and Stamford on Metro-North, for example, would rise from \$8.75 to \$9.50 by July of next year. An off-peak one-way trip between Hartford and New Haven on CT Rail would rise from \$8.25 to \$8.75, and a one-way trip from Stamford to Grand Central Terminal on Metro-North during peak hours would rise from \$16 to \$17.75 by this time next year.

Officials with the State Department of Transportation (DOT) said the fare increase was necessary to keep the trains running.

"The cost to operate the existing level of service has increased year over year," said Dan Baker, a Transportation Supervising Planner with the Department, during a public meeting in Stamford on fare increases. "So, in order to maintain the current level of trains and rail service and account for rising costs, fares needed to increase to offset a funding gap."

DOT had requested \$327 million from the State to cover the cost of rail services in fiscal year 2026, which began July 1, but the

legislature's budget only included \$316 million. The increase in fares will make up for that gap, officials said.

Connecticut last increased fares in 2023 when the Hartford line, New Haven line, and Shore Line East faced a 4.5% increase. Before that, fares had stayed the same since 2018.

Baker said even with the planned increases this year and next, inflation will still have surpassed rail fare increases. Since 2018, inflation has driven up consumer prices by approximately 28%, whereas by 2026 rail fares will have increased by 14% to 15%, according to DOT data.

Fares account for roughly half of Metro-North's operating costs, but a far smaller slice – less than 10% – of the Hartford and Shore Line East rail lines' operating costs. Most of the rest of the funding comes from the State.

Many lines faced service and funding cuts during the Covid-19 pandemic. Ridership has rebounded unevenly across lines since then. Over that same period, Connecticut has invested in new transportation and development projects, like the WALK rail bridge spanning the Norwalk River, and the Connecticut River bridge connecting Old Saybrook and Old Lyme.

Some commuters expressed opposition to the plan to raise fares, noting problems with the

current service, including its delayed restoration after the Covid cut-backs, and general frustration about the rising cost of living throughout the state.

Susan Feaster, a frequent commuter on Shore Line East rail, said riders shouldn't be on the hook for the State not fully funding rail transit. "Fare increases are never good, and doing a complete 10% by next year is a lot," said Feaster, who also founded the Shore Line East Riders Advocacy Group in 2018.

Feaster said lawmakers boosted funding for childcare and education in the coming biennium budget, which will enable many parents to work. "But you know, they should probably put some of that money into mass transit to help the people trying to get to work to pay those taxes, right?" she said.

Jim Gildea, Chairman of the Connecticut Public Transportation Council, said, "While I recognize the necessity of increasing rail rates and the fact it's been a while since the last increase, I have serious reservations about raising bus and transit fares." (Currently, bus fares aren't slated to increase, though the Governor proposed bus fare hikes earlier this year.)

"These services are vital for many individuals facing economic challenges and now may not be

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Redding receives over \$6 million for bridge repairs

By Rocco Valluzzo

To help offset the cost of replacing four bridges in town that were destroyed by last August's rainstorm, Redding will receive \$6.065 million from the Connecticut Department of Transportation (DOT) State Local Bridge Program (SLBP).

The money is part of a larger \$17.3 million allocation for 15 projects across Connecticut; funding through the SLBP is a cost-match of 50% of necessary project costs for bridges owned by local municipalities. Towns and cities are responsible for the remaining 50% of costs. Redding will also be reimbursed 75 cents-per-dollar of the remaining costs by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

"Our bridges are necessary points of connection across our communities, and keeping them safe for traffic passing every day is a vital need," said State Senator Ceci Maher (D-Wilton). "I'm so grateful to the Department of Transportation for this significant local support, and it's relieving to know our local roads will remain safe for years to come."

The storm, which hit Redding on August 18, 2024, dropped over eight inches of rain and left more than \$19 million in damages in its wake in town. Four separate bridges will receive support, including \$1.13 million for the bridge on Sport Hill Road over an unnamed stream, \$2.453 million for the bridge on Greenbush Road over Little River, \$1.097 million for the bridge on Brookside Road over Gilbert Bennett Brook and \$1.386 million for the bridge on Long Wall Road.

"I was absolutely thrilled to receive the amount of money we did," said First Selectwoman Julia Pemberton. "I felt very good about two of our applications (Sport Hill Road and Long Wall Road). It would've been too much to hope for to get all four, but we did and it was just a tremendous amount of funding, and it will go a long way towards fixing all four of our bridges."

According to Pemberton, these bridges were not even eligible for funding from the SLBP prior to the storm because they were in good shape. However, since they were destroyed, she felt they should be eligible.

Pemberton then spoke to Andrew Shields, a project engineer at the DOT who runs the SLBP, and explained Redding's situation. Shields encouraged her to apply for the program and Tighe & Bond, the Town's engineering firm, submitted an application for reimbursement that was accepted by the DOT.

"We hired Tighe & Bond literally within a week of the flood," Pemberton said. "Then we hired them to do our applications for the Local Bridge Program. They had done our assessments working with FEMA."

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REDDING'S BIG OUTDOORS

Topstone Park Pond Trail

By Jessie Wright



Photo by Jessie Wright

A friend invited me out for coffee and a stroll a few weekends ago. We both brought our one-year-old daughters – a "girls' day out" took shape. Grabbing lattes from Quartertone Roasters at The

Georgetown Owl, we wished for the day that we could continue our outing without getting back in the car (perhaps this could be in our future – the Georgetown Revitalization planning process includes walkable recreational space at the adjacent Wire Mill site on the menu of options).

That morning, though, we did get back on the road and travel the short way up Umpawaug to Topstone Park. Leaving our cars at the interior parking area near the beach, we strapped our daughters to our chests, coffees in hand. We began a leisurely walk counterclockwise around the Pond Trail,

one of Topstone's best known trails and most level. Balancing over the cement walkway over an outlet for the pond, we came upon the small dog beach area, quiet and empty that morning.

In fact, the whole park was quiet – with summer vacation only days away, the pond and trees seemed to be holding onto their last moments of calm before the shouts of campers and splashes of swimming children filled the air. As we rounded the halfway point, we saw lifeguards across the water on the beach, hauling out equipment and

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LEGAL NOTICES

NOTICE TO TAXPAYERS, GEORGETOWN AND REDDING

THE FIRST INSTALLMENT OF REAL ESTATE, PERSONAL PROPERTY, MOTOR VEHICLE and GEORGETOWN SEWER DISTRICT TAXES, ON THE GRAND LIST OF OCTOBER 1, 2024, IS DUE AND PAYABLE JULY 1, 2025. PAYMENTS MUST BE POSTMARKED, PAID IN PERSON OR PAID BY CREDIT/DEBIT CARD ONLINE, NO LATER THAN AUGUST 1, 2025. TAXES ARE DELINQUENT AUGUST 2, 2025. FAILURE TO RECEIVE A TAX BILL DOES NOT EXEMPT YOU FROM PAYMENT OF TAX OR PENALTY. The October 1, 2024, Mill Rate for real estate, personal property and motor vehicle taxes is 29.54

Payments postmarked, Paid in Person or Online, on or after August 2, 2025, ARE DELINQUENT. Interest will be charged at the rate of eighteen (18%) percent annually or one and one-half percent per month, from the July 1, 2025, due date, as per State Statute.

Motor Vehicle Taxes are due in full between July 1, 2025, and August 1, 2025. Failure to make payment in accordance with the above will result in suspension of registration privileges in addition to interest charges. Delinquent Motor Vehicle Taxes must be paid prior to current year taxes, in cash, certified check, money order or by credit card, to obtain a registration clearance.

Taxes can be paid online beginning July 1, 2025, viewed at www.reddingct.gov or paid by calling 866-923-8245. Do NOT include Fire District Taxes with your town payment.

MAIL PAYMENTS TO: Tax Collector, P. O. Box 1061, Redding, CT 06896-1061.

The Town Hall is located at 100 Hill Rd, Redding, CT. Town Hall hours are M-W 8:30 a.m. – 5:30 p.m., Thursday 8:30 a.m. – 6:00 p.m. and closed on Fridays. ■

Patricia J. Moisio, C.C.M.C., C.C.M.O
Tax Collector, Town of Redding

NOTICE TO TAXPAYERS / REDDING FIRE DISTRICT ONE / WEST REDDING FIRE DISTRICT TWO / GEORGETOWN FIRE DISTRICT

FIRE DISTRICT TAXES ON THE GRAND LIST OF OCTOBER 1, 2024, ARE DUE AND PAYABLE ON JULY 1, 2025.

Taxes on the Grand List of October 1, 2024, are due and payable on July 1, 2025. Payments must be postmarked by August 1, 2025, to avoid a delinquency charge. Payments postmarked ON or after August 2, 2025, will be considered delinquent and will incur interest at the rate of one and one-half percent per month, eighteen (18%) percent annually, from the original July 1, 2025, due date.

FAILURE TO RECEIVE A TAX BILL DOES NOT EXEMPT YOU FROM PAYMENT OF TAX OR PENALTY. IF YOUR TAXES ARE ESCROWED, AND YOU RECEIVE A BILL, IT IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY TO NOTIFY YOUR MORTGAGE HOLDER TIMELY.

The mailing addresses for the Fire Districts are as follows:

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P O BOX 1130
REDDING, CT 06875-1130

WEST REDDING FIRE DISTRICT TWO
P O BOX 266
WEST REDDING, CT 06896-0266

GEORGETOWN FIRE DISTRICT
P O BOX 518
GEORGETOWN, CT 06829-0518

FIRE DISTRICT TAXES CANNOT BE PAID AT THE REDDING TOWN HALL. Fire District Taxes can be viewed online at www.reddingct.gov. We continue to promote contactless Payments. Please mail your payments as indicated above. ■

Patricia J Moisio, CCMC, Redding Fire District One
Christine J Quigley, CCMC, Redding Fire District Two
Wanda Cardozo, CCMC, Georgetown Fire District

TOWN OF REDDING ANALYSIS OF BROWNFIELD CLEANUP ALTERNATIVES

The Town of Redding held a public meeting at the Redding Community Center on Thursday, July 10, 2025, at 7:30 p.m., seeking public comment on the Analysis of Brownfield Cleanup Alternatives (ABCA) report which is available on the Town Website at <https://reddingct.gov/revitalize-georgetown-project/>. We will accept comments via e-mail at gfiore@reddingct.gov until August 15, 2025. ■

Rollover on Black Rock Turnpike injures driver and child

By Jessie Wright

A rollover crash on the morning of Wednesday, July 9, left a driver injured and child passenger seriously injured, Redding Police said. The Communications Center received several reports of a motor vehicle crash on Black Rock Turnpike near Pignone’s Redding Ridge Market on July 9 around 10:00 a.m. Upon arrival, police found the operator and a juvenile passenger in the rear seat trapped in a rolled over vehicle. The operator and passenger

were extricated by the fire department and transported to Danbury Hospital. The operator sustained injuries; police said the child was transferred to New York-Presbyterian Morgan Stanley Children’s Hospital to be treated for serious injuries. The initial on-scene investigation showed the vehicle was traveling southbound on Black Rock Turnpike when it traveled across the northbound lane and struck

a tree, causing it to roll onto its passenger side. The investigation remains ongoing, with assistance from the Fairfield Police Department’s Accident Reconstruction Team. Any witnesses of the crash should contact Officer Lopiano at (203) 938-3400. As of press time, the Redding Police Department did not have any updates on the operator of the vehicle or the child passenger. ■

Zoners extend hearing on earth moving project

By Rocco Valluzzo

Citing the need for additional information as well as a site walk, the Zoning Commission decided to keep open a Wednesday, July 9 public hearing on a plan for restoration of property at 203 Redding Road. Owners Michael and Amy Bloom had requested a special use permit for earth moving in excess of 300 cubic yards for restoration of property as resolution of a cease-and-desist order. A previous request was denied by the Commission in November, and the Blooms were allowed to re-submit their application without prejudice. Jeremy Moyler, an abutting property owner, contended that if approved, the current application for a special permit would allow

the Blooms to flatten their backyard, presumably to make it more functional as a wildlife sanctuary. He added the original appearance of the property (prior to the earth-moving activities) was undulating and not flat, as the property is now. Commission Chair Matt Lecher said that the contour lines on the map are not marked to indicate which are current and which are original contours, so it is difficult to distinguish between the two. Zoning Officer Michael Moran stated that an estimated 40 to 45 yards of fill needs to be brought in. “I believe that map is crucial to this application, and without it this application has no merit,” argued Moyler. “If this special permit process is to allow more than

300 yards of fill to be brought in, then I would reiterate that this application is meant to deceive the Board. Three hundred yards of fill is enough to fill in and flatten every natural contour of the property that has existed since a glacier passed through 10,000 years ago.” He added that if it is the intent of the Blooms to restore the original appearance of the property, they do not have to bring in any additional fill. He contended that all the earth that is on the property when they purchased it is still there, and they should be asking to restore elevation changes to the property, not asking the Commission to further flatten the property. The Commission will continue the hearing on July 23. ■

Wire Mill clean-up options presented / continued from page 1

areas of the site. The Gateway area contains the Main Office and the former Machine Shop buildings which frame the main entrance into the former Wire Mill. These buildings are in disrepair and currently a blight for the community. Hazardous building material abatement would be needed to rejuvenate these buildings for beneficial use. The former cafeteria building, which is also within the Gateway area, is severely dilapidated and would not be a benefit if rehabilitated; as such, this building is slated for demolition. “We felt these parcels were the best to use this money on,” said Olsen. “They didn’t have the extensive, heavy filling that occurred on the Central and South Mill areas.” During an environmental site assessment of the property, Tighe & Bond found a number of contaminants in subsurface soils such as lead, petroleum, polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) and semi-volatile organic compounds (SVOCs) that were above safety standards. Olsen noted these were very typical contaminants for Brownfield sites. The conceptual remedial plan for the site is anticipated to include a combination of hot spot soil excavations and capping. Capping

would likely be needed in the core of the site where manufacturing operations were concentrated, and significant filling occurred. “Every single Brownfield site I have worked on, there’s some sort of capping,” said Olsen. “And you then integrate the capping with the future development.” The buildings were found to contain paints, caulk, and glazing that contain PCBs at concentrations above clean-up criteria. Asbestos-containing materials were found in each of these buildings, including pipe insulation, roofing, flooring, boiler systems, and cement boards. Lead-based paint was found on the windows of the Machine Shop building. Several clean-up alternatives are available for subsurface soil contamination. Tighe & Bond recommended hot spot excavations and groundwater monitoring, which would prevent direct contact with contaminated materials and achieves compliance with Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection standards and groundwater standards with an estimated cost of \$1,140,000. For hazardous building material abatement, Tighe & Bond

recommended full abatement to restore the Main Office building and former Machine Shop to beneficial use and demolish the former cafeteria building at an estimated cost of \$760,000. “It’s an important first step of the process,” said Olsen. “It’s the first clean-up effort that’s happened out here in a number of years.” The firm did not recommend taking no action, nor did it recommend a full excavation of fill up to eight feet deep (which would cost an estimated \$40 million). Olsen hopes to get the abatement and demolition done this year. The abatement design for the demolition material should be going to bid in the next couple of months and the abatement demolition can be done this fall. Redding will provide a public comment period on the assessment from now August 15, 2025. Comments can be e-mailed to gingerfiore@reddingct.gov ■

Read the report and learn more at reddingct.gov/revitalize-georgetown-project

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GEORGETOWN REVITALIZATION PROJECT:
NEW SURVEY

On June 25, the Town hosted a public discovery session, facilitated by our consultant planning firm Pirie Associates, to inform, prompt, and inspire a vision for Georgetown Village. We are now seeking public input via a new survey that is a digital adaptation of the content of that session.

The survey is organized into **three parts**: **INFORM**, **PROMPT**, and **VISION**.

Please engage with as much or as a little of the content as you wish.

TIME FOR FULL SURVEY: Approximately 20-30 minutes
reddingct.gov/revitalize-georgetown-project

The survey closes Friday, July 25. Thank you for bringing your voice to this important project! ■

Julia Pemberton, Redding First Selectwoman

Georgetown Revitalization focuses on engagement, design actions

By Rocco Valluzzo



Photo by Robert Moran
Laura Pirie presenting at a community engagement forum in June.

With the assessment and research phase of the Georgetown Revitalization project basically complete, a New Haven-based architectural and landscape firm is now focusing on engagement and design options for a master plan for Georgetown, including the former Gilbert & Bennett Wire Mill property.

Last month, Pirie Associates conducted a community engagement forum to gain initial input on the master plan for the area. This planning project is funded by a \$200,000 Brownfield Area Revitalization (BAR) Grant awarded by the State of Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD) and is expected to take between 15 and 18 months to complete.

According to Laura Pirie, principal, a second community meeting in September will highlight three design options based on market information, vision and character discovery information, constraints, and recommendations. The third and final public meeting in December will present a final solution in more depth and look at phasing or recommended phasing for the project.

In recapping the June community forum, Pirie noted that that historical adaptive reuse of the area received the strongest support from the public. Right-scaled housing for Georgetown, a distinct identity, nature forward response, multimodal connected, and a sustainable development strategy were also listed as important.

“The goals are established,” said Pirie at the Gilbert & Bennett Wire Mill Advisory Committee meeting on Thursday, July 10. “They determined our scope of work. But it was great to engage the public on the project goals, engage them on discussion, and begin to prepare their interest and their knowledge base for the community engagement sessions.”

Several clear preferences for certain areas emerged from the community engagement forum. Main Street North could feature storefronts and public spaces along the street. Portland Avenue could be a multimodal (meaning allowing multiple types of transportation) street. The Factory Pond area was by and large identified as a potential recreational space, according to Pirie.

“We have a very diverse project area,” said Pirie. “We not only wanted to think about character and scale, but we wanted to think about asking people where they thought different things belonged.”

The forum also looked at different landscapes such as woodlands, pastoral meadows, mowed lawns, manicured public spaces, naturalized river edges, occupied river edges, and different types of paved spaces. Residential types ranged from attached accessory dwelling units (ADUs), standalone ADUs, two- to three-family townhouses, apartments over a commercial component, and the different kinds of multifamily housing from low density to medium to high density.

There were fairly clear preferences in several of the neighborhoods. In the Wire Mill core there was a preference for mixed use, medium density housing, while the Main Street area had mixed use, lower density housing. Church Street featured a preference for mostly ADUs and combination of ADUs. Housing in the Factory Pond area was split between townhouses and apartments.

A range of preferences for uses included residential, commercial services, arts and cultural, recreation, agriculture, anchor industry, parking, regenerative and sustainable uses, and leave alone and do nothing.

An online survey for the planning project can be found on the Town website at reddingct.gov/revitalize-georgetown-project. The survey will close on July 25.

“This is a work in progress,” said Pirie. “We’re going to be continuing to populate this once the survey closes... and we will be using this with other indicators to begin to formulate the design options.” ■

Cemetery committee delivers on upgrades, looks ahead to America250

By Donna Christopher



Photo by Donna Christopher
The Redding Historic Cemetery Committee meets every three months at Town Hall.

The Redding Historic Cemetery Committee has several significant projects underway in the town’s cemeteries, and provided notable updates at its meeting on July 10.

Among the initiatives is the replacement of a dilapidated fence at Lonetown Cemetery, where 10 granite posts with decorative plastic chains will enhance the site’s appearance and security. Plastic chains, rather than metal, were selected to prevent theft, as suggested by Robert Paradise who maintains the cemeteries. The posts will be placed to leave room for maintenance equipment to access the cemetery. The granite posts are being supplied by Swenson Stone Works in Newtown at a cost of just over \$6,000 and will be installed by Town crews once delivered. Funds for the project came from unexpended funds in the 2024-25 budget.

“This is a major upgrade from the broken-down fence we had,” said Committee Member Sean McNamara. “We were worried about people driving in there. This will be a great improvement.”

Work is also underway at Reed Sanford Cemetery, thanks to a grant

secured by Louise Wagner to fund wall restoration and tree work. Exteriors Inc. has been contracted for this project and is expected to complete more work than initially planned.

The Committee is working with the Veterans Association to install a military grave marker for Sergeant Thomas, a Civil War veteran, at Isaac Hamilton Cemetery, known as the Lonetown Cemetery. Work proposals at the Sport Hill Cemetery also are being reviewed.

Looking ahead, the Committee will participate in Redding’s celebration of America250, marking the country’s 250th anniversary. Committee Member Janice Dimon proposed a town-wide initiative to identify and honor veterans buried in Redding’s cemeteries. The last full inventory of veterans was completed in 1934, she said, noting that historical research would need to be done to complete a list.

She emphasized having Putnam Memorial State Park as a unique historic site in the town and suggested it might be an appropriate place for a celebration for America250.

“This town has something truly special in Putnam Park,” said Dimon. “With only one other Revolutionary War site like it in the U.S., we have an opportunity to make this celebration meaningful – especially by recognizing the veterans who helped build this nation.”

The Committee hopes to coordinate with the Town to set up a planning meeting for the public to participate. Publicity and a planning committee, along with volunteers, are all needed for Redding’s participation in America250, Dimon said. ■



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ER9 hires Assistant Superintendent of Special Education and Student Services

By Anne Young Albanese



Meghan Pogonelski

On July 1, Dr. Meghan Pogonelski, Ed.D., joined Easton, Redding, and Region 9 (ER9) as the new Assistant Superintendent of Special Education and Student Services. She will be responsible for establishing policies and regulations to coordinate the operation of all special education and student services within the three school districts.

Pogonelski will work directly under the supervision of Dr. Jason McKinnon, Superintendent of ER9. She has replaced Katherine Matz, the prior Director of Special Education who left ER9 to join the State Department of Education.

“We are thrilled to welcome Dr. Pogonelski to our leadership team,” said McKinnon. “Her breadth of experience and her unwavering focus on student success make her an outstanding fit for our district. We look forward to the positive impact her leadership will have on our students, families, and staff.”

Pogonelski joins ER9 from the Oxford Public Schools where she served as Assistant Superintendent of Student and Staff Support for the last three years. She earned a Bachelor of Science in special education, a Master of Science in remedial reading, and a Doctorate with a focus on learning disability identification, all from Southern

Connecticut State University.

Pogonelski will oversee the special education supervisors from each district in ER9 and will designate responsibilities for evaluation and supervision of staff. She will design curriculum for each school and provide professional development opportunities within the districts and other programs throughout the country and state.

One of her key responsibilities will be monitoring contract assessment and services in speech services, occupational therapy, physical therapy, psychiatric evaluations, psychological counseling, special transportation, and outplacement in public or private facilities.

She will also be responsible for interactions with the State of Connecticut. This includes meeting deadlines for various reports and identifying and submitting applications for special services programs and subsidies. ■

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Modern moderation Why more people are drinking less

By Jillian Fontana

There is a powerful cultural shift underway. As wellness moves from trend to lifestyle for many, more consumers are adopting habits that support balance, clarity, and long-term vitality. One of the clearest signs of this transformation is the growing movement toward alcohol moderation – or complete abstinence.

Toe-dipping stints like Dry January began as a response to the alcohol-soaked holidays. What started as a month-long reset has become a catalyst for deeper change. Once some people experience the clarity and energy that comes with abstaining, many begin to reimagine their relationship with alcohol altogether.

What was once a curiosity is now a movement. In 2023, global alcohol consumption declined by 1% – the largest year-over-year drop in a decade. Meanwhile, sales in the United States of no- and low-alcohol beverages surged by more than 20%, according to the IWSR (a data analytics firm specializing in the drinks market), with continued growth projected through 2028.

Importantly, this shift isn’t just driven by those who abstain entirely. In fact, 90% of people who purchase non-alcoholic beverages also drink alcohol. The rise of this category isn’t about rejecting alcohol altogether – it’s about having options. Today’s consumers are looking to moderate and be intentional without always defaulting to a buzz.

As a sommelier who hosts both wine and non-alcoholic tastings, I see this shift firsthand. I regularly speak with individuals who want to drink less but aren’t sure what to reach for instead. They’re looking for something more intentional than a club soda with lime, and they’ve grown tired of the cloying, off-menu “mocktails” that feel like an afterthought.

When I began truly exploring the non-alcoholic category in 2021, the commercial offerings were still in their infancy, limited in both flavor and variety. In just a few short years, the landscape has evolved dramatically and continues to expand. Today’s options include not only beer and wine alternatives, but also spirits, ready-to-drink cocktails, aromatic bitters, and entirely new formats that defy traditional categories – yet deliver flavor, complexity, and a satisfying sense of ritual.

Those in the wellness industry are observing a broader cultural shift toward holistic health, and the rise of non-alcoholic trends is a clear reflection of that movement. Whitney Coccaro, Owner of Yoga Station and Wellness in Georgetown, shares: “During our Galentine’s event in February, many attendees chose mocktails over wine. It showed that people are embracing new ways to connect and celebrate without alcohol. Having a drink in hand – even a non-alcoholic one – can help people feel more at ease in social settings.”

Connecticut has been quietly leading the charge. One of the most influential names in the non-alcoholic space, Athletic Brewing Company, is headquartered in Milford. Since launching in 2017, the company has redefined the category, crafting brews that – according to many – rival their alcoholic counterparts in flavor and nuance. Athletic now accounts for nearly 50% of the non-alcoholic craft beer market, pioneering both the technology and cultural legitimacy behind the movement.

Also based in Connecticut is Better Rhodes, an e-commerce marketplace founded in Madison by Chris Becker and Daniel Stiller. They saw a gap: there was no easy way for curious consumers to sample a wide variety of non-alcoholic drinks in one place. The company quickly gained recognition for its curated bundles and broad selection, making it easier for newcomers to explore and find what suits their palate.

If you’re looking to saddle up to a bar sans booze, the Georgetown Owl Saloon offers a thoughtful selection of mocktails – now more often called zero-proof cocktails. And on your way out, their attached Market features an even broader range of alcohol-free libations to bring home.

Daniel Stiller of Better Rhodes offers a compelling perspective: “Drinking a great glass of wine is 80% about the environment, the occasion, the conviviality. Only 20% is the liquid in the glass, and of that, 14% is alcohol – so just 2.8% of the total experience. And yet, that’s all we ever focus on.”

Well, maybe it’s time we shift the focus. ■

Jillian Fontana is a Ridgefield-based certified sommelier and founder of Mod Elixirs, an alcohol-free beverage company

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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/

Redding’s Big Outdoors: Topstone Park Pond Trail / continued from page 1

brushing off the sand and grime from last year’s fun.

The trail undulated gently up and down, with a few spots of shifting larger rocks and gravel to navigate. Not keen to fall forward with my toddler in her carrier to break my fall, I shifted my empty coffee cup to my pocket and kept both hands out for balance. The smell of water and wet sand brought me back to my childhood summers on the lakes of Minneapolis.

My daughter’s patience with being contained began to wear thin. With about an eighth-of-a-mile to go until the parking lot, she demanded with ever-increasing volume that she walk the rest of the way herself. Our little group’s stroll took on an even more leisurely pace as I held her tiny hand while she determinedly stepped over the

rocky terrain. Making sure she stayed in the middle of the path to avoid the poison ivy not far off the edge of the trail, I followed her lead as we finally made it around the loop and back to the parking area.

We weren’t feeling ready to go back home, though. Getting out of the house and into the sunshine with friends felt too good. We walked past our cars and down the path to the new playground, installed last summer by the Park and Recreation Commission with grant funding from the American Rescue Plan Act. When my family moved to town five years ago, there was no playground. The girls crawled and toddled over the fresh woodchips, as my friend and I contemplated the progress of so many aspects of our lives – slow, often uneven, but always forward. ■

Schools use summer break to assess indoor air quality | *By Anne Young Albanese*

While students swim, play with friends, and take vacations this summer, Mike D’Agostino, Director of Facilities and Operations for Easton, Redding, and Region 9 school districts, will be at work, touring each school with a checklist from the State of Connecticut to ensure that the schools are following the requirements for safe internal air quality (IAQ).

These schoolwide examinations, called the “Tools for Schools” program, allow the Connecticut Department of Education to confirm that schools statewide have clean air throughout the school year. The full battery of tests and examinations is required annually to prevent potential issues before they happen and make sure that schools with smaller custodial staff can protect their students. While it is an annual requirement, D’Agostino and his crew monitor air quality and any other potential concerns constantly.

“I visit our schools daily and meet regularly with our custodial leads to ensure we’re maintaining safe, healthy learning environments in all of our buildings,” said D’Agostino. The ‘Tools for Schools’ checklist helps us document the thoughtful oversight required to support exceptional

indoor air quality for our students and staff.”

To comply with state law, D’Agostino accompanies the head custodian at each school, checking off each item after completion. The annual results will be posted on the websites of each school and each Board of Education’s website. Parents and community members will be able to see the results once the checklists have been completed and submitted to the State.

The IAQ report requires each school to use six checklists created by the Environmental Protection Agency. These checklists cover six areas that can impact school air quality and students’ health.

Walkthrough Inspection

The examination requires a walkthrough to look for any visual concerns. All ventilation units must be clean and clear of debris. The roof and its air handling equipment must be in good condition without leaking. The attics and bathrooms will also be examined.

Building and Grounds Maintenance

Building and grounds maintenance includes using, storing, and disposing of building and grounds

maintenance supplies to keep administrators, teachers, other staff, and students safe. Dust control is essential. Water management is another key aspect of building maintenance. Moisture leaks and spills are a concern. Schools must be checked for moldy odors. Ceiling tiles, floors, walls, kitchens, locker rooms, and bathrooms should be checked for signs of potential leaks, and windows should be examined for condensation. Finally, combustible appliances should be handled with care. They should be checked for odors, back drafting, leaks, corrosion, and soot.

Waste Management

The State protects students with waste management regulations, particularly regarding food waste. Containers must have lids. They must be lined to remove all waste when emptying containers. The schools must have enough bins and dumpsters to keep food waste enclosed, not near air intakes, doors, or windows. If trash is indoors, it must be stored in a well-ventilated room. The custodial staff must empty bins. Finally, waste storage areas need to be checked for odors, contaminants, or signs of vermin.

Ventilation

In all weather conditions, air intakes and outputs must be free of obstructions and away from pollutant sources. Air filters must be replaced per their regular maintenance schedule, and the filter area must be cleaned. Drain pans must also be cleaned and positioned correctly.

Each school has an exhaust system that must be maintained. Fans must be checked, since they must work while the school is occupied. Bathrooms, kitchens, and labs are under negative pressure to prevent contaminants from dispersing through the school. The last step involves ensuring that the amount of outdoor air entering the building is sufficient for the number of people there.

Food Service

Food safety is essential for keeping students safe. The cooking, preparation, eating, and washing areas must be kept clean, and exhaust fans must allow the air from these areas to be removed rather than linger. Gas appliances must be checked to ensure they function, vent correctly, and do not leak.

Food preparation, cooking, and storage areas must be clear of

vermin and insects. Food must be well sealed, and food prep areas must be sanitary with no sign of crumbs. Finally, delivery people should not idle their engines in the receiving areas, and any doors or air barriers must be closed to keep exhaust out of the kitchen.

Integrated Pest Management

Each school must have an official policy for integrated pest management, which includes a qualified pest manager. Students, staff, and families should be educated about pest management. D’Agostino and the pest manager inspect each building and school grounds for any signs of pests. In addition, preventive strategies exist for all indoor and outdoor sites on school grounds. If the exam identifies any pests, they must be managed with the least dangerous method while the schools are empty. Each school also has a logbook to record any pest-related activity.

In addition to the indoor air quality checklists, the schools will undergo major cleaning this summer and some capital projects, to be reported on in future issues. ■

Six school district employees opt for early retirement | *By Anne Young Albanese*

During the 2024-25 school year, the Redding Board of Education and the Redding Education Association (the teachers’ union) approved a Voluntary Early Retirement Incentive Program (VERIP). The administration, including Easton-Redding-Region 9 Superintendent Dr. Jason McKinnon and Human Resources Manager Amy DeMunda, implemented the program.

Six certified staff members accepted the offer of early retirement and retired following the 2024-25 school year. Citing employees’ privacy, DeMunda declined to identify which teachers opted to participate.

These teachers will be paid \$40,000 in installments: \$25,000 this month, \$10,000 in July 2026, and \$5,000 in July 2027.

“The Voluntary Early Retirement Incentive Program was

designed to create a fiscally responsible opportunity for eligible teachers to retire, while allowing the district to hire qualified educators at a lower salary,” explained McKinnon. “When a veteran teacher earning \$110,000 retires and we are able to hire a talented replacement at \$65,000 (as an example), it results in meaningful savings for our education budget – savings that

can be reinvested to support students, staff, and programs across the district.”

The agreements between the Board of Education and teachers’ union specified the requirements for teachers who qualified for the program. A teacher accepting the program must retire from public education and have worked in Redding public schools for at least 15 years. For the program to occur, at

least five teachers had to participate.

This particular VERIP was a one-time offer. The Redding Board of Education does not plan to offer a retirement incentive in 2026, 2027, or 2028. All Board decisions under this plan are final and are not subject to the collective bargaining agreement between the Redding Board of Education and Redding Education Association. ■



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REAL ESTATE

June 2025 real estate report *A look at trends in the local housing market* | By Bill Whitehead and John Talley

Sales of 11 properties closed in June in Redding, reflecting the results of the very strong spring selling season; on average in June, houses sold above asking by 7%. There are still 26 properties currently under contract in Redding, which portends well for sales through the balance of the spring and summer seasons.

Presently, activity is quieter with the spring market effectively over and the pool of potential buyers reduced as attentions turn away from house shopping to summer activities such as travel and vacations. The inventory of homes for sale continues to hover around 30 plus, which is slightly higher than 2024 by six properties; all-in-all, available inventories remain tight, which bodes well for sellers. ■

Bill Whitehead and John Talley are realtors with Berkshire Hathaway Home Services

June 2025													
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 July 14	June	2025	June	2025	June	2025	June	2025	June	2025	June	2025
Redding	33	11	44	72	108	\$906,800	\$1,045,130	\$969,909	\$1,029,395	7%	-2%	\$388	\$357
Ridgefield	41	40	99	67	80	\$1,217,373	\$1,218,467	\$1,345,848	\$1,295,455	11%	6%	\$468	\$456
Weston	32	23	64	83	106	\$1,608,561	\$1,498,089	\$1,654,696	\$1,548,045	3%	3%	\$417	\$425
Wilton	41	25	87	73	83	\$1,281,352	\$1,325,662	\$1,370,444	\$1,412,956	7%	7%	\$450	\$434
Easton	20	15	43	62	101	\$1,189,060	\$1,087,228	\$1,202,733	\$1,103,721	1%	2%	\$355	\$337
Bethel	24	17	64	62	77	\$587,912	\$581,494	\$598,832	\$583,021	2%	0%	\$287	\$277
Newtown	56	37	128	68	90	\$759,854	\$696,139	\$777,765	\$704,334	2%	1%	\$284	\$288
Average	35	24	76	70	92	\$1,078,702	\$1,064,601	\$1,131,461	\$1,096,704	5%	3%	\$378	\$368

REDDING SOLD - June	Sale Price	List Price	%/ List Price	Price/Sqft	Days on Market
87 Picketts Ridge Rd	\$549,999	\$549,999	0%	\$428	38
30 Pine Mountain Rd	\$601,000	\$499,900	20%	\$467	41
3 Apple Ln	\$730,000	\$679,900	7%	\$413	47
15 Packer Brook Rd	\$791,000	\$815,000	-3%	\$289	31
33 Great Meadow Rd	\$925,000	\$949,000	-3%	\$354	84
11 Limekiln Rd	\$1,025,000	\$995,000	3%	\$325	131
89 Limekiln Rd	\$1,049,000	\$1,049,000	0%	\$375	90
58 Deacon Abbott Rd	\$1,075,000	\$949,000	13%	\$416	55
28 Wayside Ln	\$1,150,000	\$1,049,000	10%	\$381	53
158 Old Redding Rd	\$1,248,000	\$1,189,000	5%	\$390	140
3 Guardhouse Dr	\$1,525,000	\$1,250,000	22%	\$430	83
Average	\$969,909	\$906,800	7%	\$388	72

REDDING CURRENTLY FOR SALE	List Price	Price/Sqft	Days on Market	REDDING CURRENTLY FOR SALE	List Price	Price/Sqft	Days on Market
296 Black Rock Tpke	\$529,000	\$557	30	11 Ledgewood Rd	\$1,149,000	\$364	51
219 Redding Rd	\$589,000	\$477	33	28 Sunnyview Dr	\$1,299,000	\$353	6
18 Great Meadow Rd	\$694,000	\$501	46	118 Sanfordtown Rd	\$1,299,000	\$418	54
16 Howes Ln	\$745,000	\$308	20	16 Black Rock Tpke	\$1,300,000	\$314	55
12 Granite Ridge Rd	\$749,000	\$248	46	23 Goodsell Hill Rd	\$1,350,000	\$523	33
731 N. Park Ave	\$799,000	\$242	5	56 Cross Hwy	\$1,625,000	\$464	90
22 Lonetown Rd	\$799,000	\$325	21	171 Cross Hwy	\$1,695,000	\$471	39
45 Wayside Ln	\$799,000	\$270	83	34 Fox Run Rd	\$1,700,000	\$217	227
181 Picketts Ridge Rd	\$799,000	\$453	90	279 Black Rock Tpke	\$1,750,000	\$389	233
86 Pocahontas Rd	\$825,000	\$375	23	37 Giles Hill Rd	\$1,849,000	\$343	5
471 Newtown Tpke	\$835,000	\$471	63	65 Umpawaug Rd	\$1,895,000	\$474	1071
9 Brick School Dr	\$880,000	\$334	63	22 Limekiln Rd	\$2,245,000	\$499	40
33 Great Pasture Rd	\$950,000	\$417	25	32 Beeholm Rd	\$2,750,000	\$1,122	54
76 Farview Farm Rd	\$995,000	\$304	33	241 Black Rock Tpke	\$4,650,000	\$313	784
22 Ledgewood Rd	\$1,035,000	\$289	3	229 Umpawaug Rd	\$7,495,000	\$1,116	63
7 Tunxis Trl	\$1,045,000	\$372	73	63 Turney Rd	\$10,750,000	\$1,141	14
15 Tunxis Trl	\$1,085,000	\$352	52	Average	\$1,786,455	\$449	107
Listings continue on right side of table							

Building on your property? *Get a permit first* | By Justin Reynolds



Thinking about adding a detached garage, barn, or accessory dwelling unit to your property? It’s easy to get caught up in the vision. But before the saws buzz and hammers swing, you need to make sure your paperwork is squared away.

“There isn’t much that doesn’t need a permit,” said Shaun Donnelly, Redding’s Chief Building Official and Facilities Director.

A quick glance at the Town’s EPermit portal (accessible via tinyurl.com/mthsjs37) shows that, aside from things like one-story sheds no bigger than 200 square feet and uninhabitable tree houses, permits are indeed needed for most everything.

“A quick phone call or e-mail to the Building, Zoning, Planning, and Health Departments asking if there are any special requirements for the work you want to do is a good idea,” Donnelly continued. “As you can imagine, a new structure is quite different from a renovated bathroom, so requirements can differ greatly.”

Before building a new structure, first check whether your property’s zoning allows it; Donnelly suggests calling the Town’s Zoning Enforcement Officer, Michael Moran, at (203) 938-8517 for that purpose.

“Generally, we will need a statement that the owner or their agent is the applicant, an insurance certificate, a valid Connecticut trade license, some plans, and a plot plan of the property,” Donnelly explained. “However, specific document requirements will be listed at the top of all EPermit applications, and a lack of required documents being attached to the application will prevent submission.”

The length of the permitting process varies depending on the project in question. While a small gas stove installation might be resolved within a week because it only involves one department, larger projects may take longer, Donnelly said.

“For more complicated permits, such as a new dwelling, the submission will be directed through all of the Land Use Departments and the Health Department before it gets to the Building Department for review,” he said. “This may also involve visits to the Zoning, Planning, or Conservation Commissions, which can further delay the submission. If all of the pertinent information is in the submission, obviously it’s more likely to have a

smooth passage and quicker resolution to permit issuance.”

Are there common reasons applications get delayed or denied? In other words, what should Redding residents not do if they’re trying to build on their properties?

“Plans on napkins are always a bad idea,” Donnelly said. “Missing or incomplete documentation is also quite common, along with expired trade licenses. Always read the instructions at the beginning of the application form for exact requirements. The more information submitted, the fewer questions each department will have. You can always contact the departments to make sure that the information you’re submitting is sufficient.”

After you turn in your application, you’ll be able to track its progress via the Town’s EPermit page, where you can also send messages to relevant departments and pay fees using a credit card or eCheck.

Once your permit is issued – and the relevant fees are paid either online or in person – you’ll still have to pass a preliminary inspection, periodic inspections during construction, potential special inspections depending on the project, and a final inspection (see the full inspection schedule at tinyurl.com/56sjjy7d) before

Continued on page 7

Rail fares set to rise by 10% / continued from page 1

the right time to impose additional financial burdens on them,” he said.

DOT officials said they performed a service and fare equity analysis to assess the effects fare increases would have on low-income and minority customers. “We found that the proposed fare increases for 2025 and 2026 for Hartford line, Shoreline East, and New Haven line do not have a disparate impact on minority customers, nor a disproportionate burden on low-income customers, whether analyzed individually or in aggregate,” Baker said.

DOT held several public meetings to hear concerns from riders about the fare increases, but turnout was low. In Stamford last Monday, two residents attended. In New Haven last Tuesday, only one resident was there. And in Hartford last Thursday, only a small handful of residents were present.

Jon Bonci, a CT Rail passenger who attended the Hartford event, said he wasn’t confident his presence would change the State’s plans. “We’re gonna have to pay it, so what can you do? It doesn’t matter what we say in the public hearing,” he said.

Stamford resident Nicole Howerton expressed concern at the DOT’s public meeting at the Ferguson Public Library there.

“As a resident of Stamford and a sole [commuter] for my family, it plays a major role in being

able to get around and enjoy the community,” Howerton said. “When we’re presenting an increase of some nature, we need to look at the schedule and see if and how that’s meeting the community.”

A frequent commuter through the Metro-North’s West Haven station, she added that when rail service is down, she has to take Ubers, which is another additional cost.

Chris Irby, the only registered speaker at the New Haven public meeting, pointed to Bridgeport as an urban area that would be significantly affected by the fare hikes. As a Bridgeport resident and a frequent commuter, he said that Bridgeport residents already struggle to find money for the fares.

“Bridgeport is not a business city like New Haven is,” Irby said. “Everybody has to take the train to go to other towns, to go to work.”

Irby also called on DOT to do a better job of advertising the events, stating that he would like to see more of DOT’s presence and advertising in downtown New Haven.

The Department held additional public hearings virtually on June 30 and July 1. Commissioner Garrett Eucalitto considered public comments through July 6. DOT will take all comments into consideration before finalizing the proposed fare changes, officials said. ■

This article originally appeared in CT Mirror

Browse Bethel businesses at Shop & Stroll

By Pamela Brown

Downtown Bethel will be brimming with activity as the Bethel Chamber of Commerce hosts its fifth annual Shop & Stroll on Saturday, July 19.

“It’s a lively day to discover and explore the charming streets of downtown Bethel and all that we have to offer. Or, if you’re already familiar with us, come and enjoy a day of shopping and strolling,” said Janice Chrzescijanek, Director of Economic Development, Town of Bethel, and a member of the Chamber’s Board of Directors. “Once again, Greenwood Avenue will be filled with a welcoming community spirit. Many people return year after year because it’s like a tradition. It’s a special town event that brings everyone together.”

The Shop & Stroll will take place from 11:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. on and around Greenwood Avenue. Held rain or shine, the event will feature sidewalk sales, in-store specials, raffles and giveaways, delicious food, and more. “There’s always something to enjoy – live music, friendly faces, and the chance to discover something new from our local shops and makers,” said Chrzescijanek. “We encourage

people to come because it’s a great way to connect with others and to support the small businesses that make our community special, and while they’re here, they can enjoy local food and drink.”

Some of this year’s participating businesses include Patricia’s Presents, Byrd’s Books, The Cave, and more, along with local crafters and artists. “It’s a day to immerse yourself in a shopper’s paradise as you browse through unique stores to discover hidden gems, incredible deals, and irresistible finds. From trendy fashion to one-of-a-kind treasures, there’s something to suit every taste and style,” said Chrzescijanek. In addition, non-profits and business that don’t have brick-and-mortar locations on Greenwood Avenue will be on hand including Bethel Education Foundation, Bethel High School’s Student Government Club, Bethel Toastmasters, and Bethel Historical Society.

The Friends of the Bethel Public Library will be in front of Bethel Public Library selling gently used books, DVDs, and CDs. The Book Cellar, located in the basement of the Library, will also be open for

anyone who wants to browse the entire inventory of gently used books, audio books, CDs, DVDs, vinyl albums, and puzzles. Sales support Library programs such as cultural passes, summer reading, and more. To celebrate local creativity, Bethel Arts will have a special Artist Corner showcasing and selling artwork from local artists.

Restaurants will be offering special menus. A local DJ will be spinning tunes along Greenwood Avenue. For kids, there will be face painting and games along with other engaging activities.

“We’re happy this event has been successful for so long, and that it helps our local businesses and economy. Shopping local is important because it keeps money in the community, supports local jobs, and helps our small businesses thrive here in town,” said Chrzescijanek. “Shop & Stroll is for all ages. It’s an easy way to enjoy everything that makes our community special.” ■

Learn more at bethelchamberofcommerce.com/shop-stroll

Downtown Ridgefield to come alive at SummerFest

By Pamela Brown



Photo by Jessie Wright

Summer vibes, shopping, music, fun activities for kids – that’s what Ridgefield SummerFest 2025 promises, plus much more.

Presented by the Ridgefield Chamber of Commerce, the annual event will take place on Saturday, July 26 from 10:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. “It’s Ridgefield’s ultimate summer block party for all ages and one of the town’s biggest days. Every year, thousands of people come downtown to enjoy the energy, explore the vendors, and take in everything happening along our beautiful Main Street in the heart of Ridgefield,” said Diana Spence, the Chamber’s Executive Director. “It’s organized and run by a team of tireless volunteers and supported by generous local businesses. It’s a fun day out for everyone to celebrate the start of summer and support local businesses at the same time, and it’s also a great way for businesses to introduce themselves to the wider community.”

Spence noted SummerFest is a rain or shine event. “Whatever the weather, people always come out and make the most of the day,” she said. “Last year’s event was electric with amazing vendors and all the

summer vibes, but this year, we’re turning it up a notch.”

The family-friendly event is featuring new vendors spanning a wide range of items ranging from handmade jewelry and gifts to home goods, art, clothing, and small-batch food items. SummerFest has grown in recent years, now showcasing over 100 vendors along Main Street.

“It has been rewarding to see SummerFest grow over the past few years. Each year it draws more people, and it’s great to see the community come together and really enjoy what downtown Ridgefield has to offer,” said Spence.

Local shops will be featuring sidewalk sales and special offers and restaurants will be open and offering delicious menu options. Kona Ice, a snow cone and shaved ice truck, will be at Lounsbury House, and music by a live DJ will fill the air all day. There also will be numerous activities just for kids, including Touch-a-Truck and trackless train at Lounsbury House and face painters, jugglers, and a stilt walker along Main Street.

“Whether you’re walking around with your kids, meeting up with friends, or grabbing a snack and browsing, the whole day has a great community feel to it,” said Spence. “I’m there every year, and I love seeing the street filled with people supporting local businesses and enjoying the moment. It’s one of those days that really shows what Ridgefield is all about.” ■

For more information, visit ridgefieldchamber.org or follow on Instagram @ridgefieldchamber

Building on your property? / continued from page 6

receiving a certificate of occupancy. Information about all of this can be found on the Town’s website, reddingct.gov. Donnelly also recommends calling the Building Department at (203) 938-2558, Zoning Department at (203) 938-8517, Planning Department (203) 938-2185, and Health Department at (203) 938-2559 if you have any questions throughout the process.

If you’re thinking you might be able to ignore the process and build

without a permit, proceed with caution. Violations range from being issued a stop work order to civil and criminal penalties that stretch as high as a \$1,000 fine and up to six months in jail, or both, according to state law.

Should you make unpermitted improvements on your home and try to sell it or refinance your mortgage, title search professionals will find out – which could throw a wrench into your plans.

“When these things crop up, they can delay or even crash a sale,” Donnelly said. “It happens quite often. People don’t realize that there are open permits in their property files or outstanding violations with one of the Town departments and, suddenly, the day before closing, we get a call asking about solving the issues. Things don’t move that quickly. All of a sudden, the brakes go on hard.” ■





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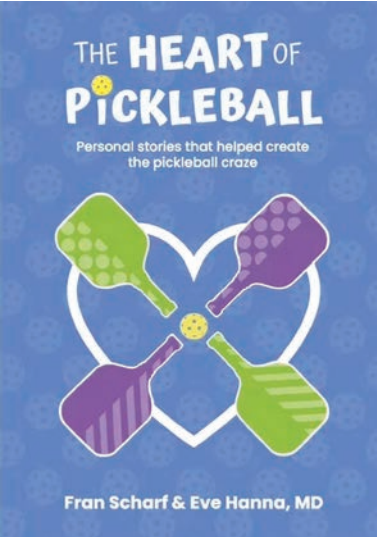
Book Review

The Heart of Pickleball

Personal stories that helped create the pickleball craze

By Fran Scharf and Eve Hanna, MD

148 pages / \$17.00 / BookBaby



In this heartwarming compilation of personal stories, Redding resident Fran Scharf and co-author Eve Hanna put names and faces to the pickleball “craze” of recent years. Scharf describes *The Heart of Pickleball* as a sort of *Chicken Soup for the Soul* for those who love or are curious about the sport. It is a lovely, easy read; most of the chapters are first-person accounts of how pickleball has changed people’s lives and gained momentum throughout the country (and, in some cases, the world). From improving physical and mental health to making lasting friendships, the collection of testimonials leaves little doubt that pickleball has been a force for good. Beyond just old-fashioned fun, the

book chronicles how the sport has become the impetus for some to travel, meet their partners, recover from injury, fight depression, and even battle chronic disease. It also clearly illuminates the strong effect pickleball has on its players. More than a few of the people contributing their stories use terms like “hooked”, “addicted”, and “obsessed”. *The Heart of Pickleball* helps explore the question – unwritten, but present throughout its pages – what is missing from modern life that so many are immediately taken with this strangely-named activity? Connection? Spontaneity? Being outdoors? The breathless enthusiasm captured in this book reminded me of an article I read recently in *The Atlantic* titled “What Adults Forget About Friendship.” The article posited that it often is more difficult to cultivate deep, intimate friendships as adults, because the activities we do together are mostly crafted around talking or simply “hanging out”. Children, however, make friends through play – active, creative, physical moments together. When did we forget how to do that? Perhaps the key to the pickleball phenomenon is play. As Scharf and Hanna demonstrate in their project together, reconnecting with that instinct can be powerful indeed. ■

Review by Jessie Wright

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Redding receives over \$6 million for bridge repairs / continued from page 1

Following a competitive bidding process, engineering and design for Sport Hill Road and Long Wall Road was awarded to Tighe & Bond. Those projects are now in the design and engineering phase. Redding is now posting requests for proposals for Brookside Road and Greenbush Road.

The Connecticut General Assembly created the SLBP in 1984

as part of addressing the needs of the over 4,200 local bridges and culverts on locally maintained roads. Construction and maintenance of these structures is the responsibility of the cities and towns who own them. Since 2016, the SLBP has provided approximately \$162 million in grants to Connecticut’s cities and towns. ■

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Library Corner

Fueling early literacy | By Erin Shea Dummeyer

This is the first year one of my kids is able to participate in summer reading as an independent reader. We are participating in the town where we live, mostly because I feel like doing it at Mark Twain Library feels a bit like cheating. But it has me thinking a lot about public libraries and how they are the great equalizer, especially for early readers. If someone in your house is reading picture books, then you already know those take five, 10 minutes tops to get through. And if you have an early independent reader...those books have like 15 words in them total. So, you’re go-

ing through a lot of books at lightning speed. And something I have learned about these elementary school students is they don’t usually like repeating books over and over again. That might have been their jam at age two, but it’s no longer en vogue at age six. They want a new picture book every night, as it’s something they can look forward to as part of their bedtime routine. Now, imagine trying to keep up with a routine like this without the public library. It would be cost prohibitive even for the most affluent families. Public libraries are

basically cost sharing mechanisms in support of early literacy, and they’re incredible. I see this firsthand when I read with my daughter every night. So, an adult who maybe only reads a book or two per year can feel comfortable about supporting their public library, as it is literally helping to teach their smaller neighbors how to read and be curious about the world around them. What a gift. ■

Erin Shea Dummeyer is Director, Mark Twain Library

Nod to the pod

The Deep Dive with Jessica St. Clair and June Diane Raphael: “Always Be Judging” | By Amy Maloof

A one-episode recommendation from a podcast you might love. I’m not sure why it took me so long to finally press play on this podcast. June Diane Raphael is one of my favorite comedians and actors, and Jessica St. Clair is always my favorite guest on June’s other podcast (co-hosted with her husband, Paul Scheer, and friend Jason Mantzoukas) *How Did This Get Made?* Both women consistently make me laugh so intensely in their other work, that I should have known their best-friend-banter pod would be no different. There’s nothing novel about the format, but when you’ve got the goods, you don’t need a gimmick. They share stories from the week (like Raphael visiting a fancy physical therapist where she’s told her

mobility – “I don’t know what that is” – is that of a professional athlete and she decides she won’t reveal she’s only flexible because of theater school), making each other laugh, and offering up different worries or ideas or philosophies along the way. They’re smart and supportive and silly, the friends you wouldn’t mind having in your corner. St. Clair mentions that *Deep Dive* has a lot of younger listeners, positing she and Raphael might be giving Gen Z insight into what’s ahead for them in their 40s: managing kids and career, dealing with perimenopause, navigating the quagmire of aging parents. Topics that are coming for all of us but, when brought into the light, seem a lot less intimidating. I certainly

found solace in their meandering discussions. One of my favorite threads begins with a humorous story about Raphael’s sons criticizing her fashion choices, before winding its way to a vulnerable discussion about getting older and maybe a little (a lot) more judgmental. It hasn’t always been easy for me to find female friendships that feel supportive, easy, non-competitive, and grounding. This is becoming easier as I get older, but a podcast like this can help fill in the gaps. And it does not hurt that truly, these two women are so funny. I was sweeping the floor while I listened, and I kept stopping to wipe off tears of laughter. “Mom, are you okay?” deadpanned my oldest from the kitchen table. Yeah, girl. I think I am. ■

Notes from a neighbor

What a racquet! | By Carter Wiseman

A year or so ago, I was driving by the Redding Community Center and saw some construction going on next to the tennis courts. It turned out that the town was adding pickleball courts. Having grown up to think of tennis as the sport of refined folks who wore whites, revered the likes of Rod Laver and Billie Jean King, said “well-played” after a loss, and then shared a Tom Collins, I was alarmed. My early exposure to the new sport suggested that it was an enhanced version of ping-pong for old folks. For starters, the name (apparently honoring the inventor’s dog, Pickle), seemed silly. And the harsh sound of the strokes was nothing like the comforting thump of a Wilson coming off gut strings. But once the new courts went in, I noticed that the parking lot was backed up on the pickleball side, while the tennis courts were mostly empty. Redding was not alone in this development. The Fairfield Country Hunt Club, in Westport, facing declining membership, recently proposed adding some pickleball courts. The neighbors rose up, claiming that the noise would intrude on their prosperous calm, so the Club agreed to build an enclosed racquets building on a horse paddock with declining ridership. When the Town of Westport decided to follow the trend with courts at its public Longshore Club, the golf members also rose up and were advised to get with the program. After some grumbling about cost, Weston added courts to Bisceglie Park. I am not unbiased in this matter. I took to skiing late in life, but nevertheless thought that snowboarding was a violation of winter tradition – until my son embraced it and dazzled me with its artistry. The growing popularity of pickleball has been a boon to more than athletes. Orthopedists are reportedly seeing a surge in later-age patients who think they can still parry and thrust the way they did at 26. The sport has also sparked a growth in gear, adding dedicated pickleball skirts and shorts at stores long devoted to racks of Lululemon yoga tights.

This may soon go beyond the local level. I only began to take ping-pong as more than a rec-room pastime when it was accepted as an Olympic sport. Can pickleball be far behind? Hard as I have tried to ignore this insurgency, I realize that I, too, have to move with the times. Indeed, a neighbor for whom I have the highest respect and affection has spent a bundle on a court that is sure to outlive him. And then there is our 82-year-old neighbor, who earned a degree in physical education when the Dodgers were still in Brooklyn, but still officiates at foot races and hammer-throws at the local high school. Not content with her role in sports that date to ancient Greece, Alice has developed a new career as a teacher of – pickleball! Even more compelling, my wife, a former high school tennis champion who retired her Dunlop Maxply when she could no longer hit the overheads of her teen-age years, has taken up pickleball with a passion. My knees aren’t there, but my heart is. ■

Book Fair donation drop-off closes July 31 | By Jessie Wright



The donation sheds at Mark Twain Library will close at the end of July as volunteers gear up for the annual Mark Twain Library Book Fair hosted over Labor Day weekend.

For two more weeks, community members still can donate gently used books, DVDs, puzzles, CDs, LPs, and games for this year’s Book Fair at the sheds located in the Library’s parking lot at 439 Redding Road. Please note: Items in poor condition, condensed books (including Readers’ Digest), magazines, encyclopedias, cassettes, VHS tapes, and outdated textbooks cannot be accepted.

Volunteers and Mark Twain Library staff then will sort and prepare donations throughout the month of August for the Book Fair to be held at the Redding Community Center from Friday, August 29 – Monday, September 1. The sheds will open again for donations on September 15 for next year’s event. ■

BUSINESS SPOTLIGHT

A Redding native reimagines long-term storage

By Justin Reynolds



Photos courtesy of Fletcher Storage

The way Ryan Fletcher sees it, long-term storage facilities are typically eyesores that are boring to be in and have little-to-no architectural value.

After securing the property at 241 Ethan Allen Highway in Redding back in 2017 and closing on it in 2021, Fletcher – who grew up in town, graduated from Barlow in 2007, and lives on Fox Run Road with his wife and two young daughters – began reimagining what long-term storage facilities can look like, how they operate, and what services they can offer.

In May, Fletcher Storage – a 150,000-square-foot storage facility available to customers 24/7 – opened for business after four years of construction. With polished concrete floors and sleek industrial design, the facility is fully climatized and will offer long-term storage lockers of all shapes and sizes, a café, high-end car storage, Tesla Supercharger stations, wine lockers, and a lounge, among other things.

It’s a place where you can imagine people hanging out.

About 30,000 square feet is set aside as industrial space; Fletcher is developing a smart HVAC product designed to optimize air quality called Vibrant Air which will operate out of some of this space.

“Our building is very high-end, with 100 security cameras covering every inch and a Bluetooth locking system; we don’t have any keys. The entire building is automated,” Fletcher said, adding that the facility will have three full-time employees. “This building represents the future of construction.”

If you’ve driven by, the building’s unique design may have caught your eye; Fletcher says that people tell him that every day.

“Good architecture stands the test of time,” said Fletcher, who designed the facility. “Why not build a building that makes people feel inspired even if it’s ‘just’ for storage?”

As part of his commitment to sustainable construction, Fletcher – who, alongside brother Nick, owns Fletcher Development LLC, a high-end custom home-building and development business catering to clientele in Fairfield and Westchester Counties and the Hamptons – re-used as much of the old building as he could, working out to roughly one-quarter of the superstructure, he said.

The building is also powered by renewable energy, with 356,000 kilowatts of solar capacity.

“We’re not a burden to the environment at all,” Fletcher said. “The building is a net power provider to the grid.”

Looking ahead, Fletcher is exploring building a “world-class

data center” for cutting-edge AI use cases elsewhere on the property.

Before breaking ground on the facility, Fletcher researched the market and found that the area was underserved when it comes to long-term luxury storage – which he said is “by far the highest-yielding product with the lowest operational expenses that fits the area’s need” in commercial real estate.

Having driven by the vacant lot “a million times” over the years, Fletcher decided to purchase the property when the chance came and spruce it up.

“It was the right opportunity,” said Fletcher, who served in the United States Marine Corps from 2011 to 2019. “I grew up here; I love this town. I could build anywhere. This property had been vacant for eight years, and it’s the first thing you see when you drive into Redding on Route 7. I wanted to make sure that the first impression of our town was a great one.”

Ever since he can remember, Fletcher has been working with his hands. “Growing up, a good Saturday was going to the lumberyard,” he said. When he came back from the military one year, Fletcher started working for a homebuilder in Ridgefield before ultimately going out on his own in 2014.

Whenever Fletcher begins a new project, he thinks about how he can give back to the community; he’s currently developing a 55-acre parcel on Branchville Road in Ridgefield and is working with the Town of Ridgefield to designate some of the land as open space, giving the public access to restored seven-acre Candee’s Pond.

“All my family lives in Redding and Ridgefield; I absolutely love these towns and plan on being here the rest of my life,” Fletcher said. “I’m a community-oriented person. I’ll help anybody, and I think everybody should strive to do a little better. I’m trying to make money and be successful, but I also want to do right by society and right by my neighbors. That’s how we all win.”

While Fletcher Storage is the first long-term storage facility Fletcher and his team have built, he doesn’t expect it will be the last – far from it, in fact.

“We’re proving the concept here and then we’re going to rinse and repeat this all across the United States,” he said.

“It’s powerful when you drive into that building,” he said. “You feel better. It’s a place you want to be.” ■

For more information, visit fletcher-storage.com, fletcherdevelopmentllc.com, fletcherwakefield.com and vibrantbt.com

On the menu with... Chef Prasad Chirnomula of Gourmet United

By Pamela Brown



Gourmet food delivered to your door – what is better than that? Award-winning Chef Prasad Chirnomula, a longtime Redding resident, is the mastermind behind Gourmet United Cloud Kitchen. The unique chef-inspired, made-to-order lunch and dinner take-out and delivery service offers gourmet food from celebrated chefs. It also has a seasonal (bring-your-own-beverage) patio open at 440 Sport Hill Road in Easton seven days a week for breakfast, lunch, and dinner from 7:00 a.m. – 9:00 p.m. The grand opening was held June 30.

“We started with Indian and Mexican cuisines and will expand to create more variety with chef-inspired, hand-crafted menus sourced locally through relationships with Connecticut farms,” said Chirnomula, who co-founded the venture with Ron Berry. Chirnomula also owns and operates Chef Prasad in New Canaan. “I introduced Indian cuisine to the area through Kismet in Georgetown and Thali on Route 7,” he said, noting Berry and his wife Georgie are also Redding residents. “Ron, who is president of The Redding Country Club, and I became close friends and golf partners after catering one of Georgie’s milestone birthdays. As avid supporters of my culinary ventures, (we) brainstormed business ideas, especially as Covid shifted dining habits toward take-out. When the opportunity arose at the old Easton Village Store, Gourmet United was born.”

At its storefront in Easton, customers can watch the open kitchen prepare fresh, made-to-order food. Along with Chirnomula, the culinary team includes Chef Ivan Romero of the Rosemary Group, Executive Chef Prashant Sharma, and Chef de Cuisine Kishan Lal. “Due to the complexity of our cuisines, we source produce, meats, and spices from multiple vendors. We aim to partner with local farmers and start sourcing locally based on their availability and our menu. We encourage local farmers to contact us,” said Chirnomula, noting several trends inspired him to offer this concept, including the convenience of doorstep delivery, the rise in global cuisines in the area, and

the demand for fresh, quality ingredients.

Chirnomula is well-known in the industry, specializing in Indian food for 40 years and previously helming numerous Mexican restaurants. He received three stars from *The New York Times* for his restaurant Thali Regional Cuisine of India and was twice honored by the James Beard Foundation. He conducts tasting tours of India, hosts private dinners, teaches cooking classes, participates in charity events, and was a celebrity guest chef at Foxwoods Food & Wine Festival. Chirnomula also won the 2011 Elm City Iron Chef competition in New Haven and Food Network’s *Tournament of Champions* and has appeared on *Chopped*. He is a culinary chef consultant at The Biltmore Estate in Ashville, North Carolina.

His culinary philosophy involves preserving the rich flavors and techniques of Indian cuisine while embracing modern trends and techniques. “I like to focus on fresh ingredients, creative interpretations, and a balanced approach to health to create dishes that are innovative and respectful of tradition,” he said. “I look for ways to create lighter versions of traditional dishes without sacrificing flavor, including using healthier cooking methods, such as grilling or steaming, and making conscious choices with ingredients that promote overall wellness.”

Chirnomula views food as a bridge between cultures. “I enjoy seeing people smile and be happy – food contributes to that joy. However, the title ‘Chef’ is often misunderstood; cooking excellent food is one aspect of the role. As a chef, I unify teams, create jobs, and bring people together. I’m fulfilled when my vision materializes through training and collaborating with diverse talents,” he said. “By fostering relationships with other chefs and participating in joint culinary ventures, I enjoy helping shape Connecticut’s evolving food culture and making modern Indian cuisine more accessible and respected in the broader culinary landscape.”

For summer entertaining, Chirnomula offered a recipe for Tandoori Chicken Tikka that was inspired by a chicken curry his mom makes, featuring intense spices that offer great flavor.

“It’s simple, tasty, and ideal for summer grilling,” he said. “I create a lot of recipes myself because I trust my flavor profile with bold flavors. This recipe is user-friendly with ingredients that are locally available.” When making the recipe, Chirnomula said to ensure the grill is hot; once cooked on one side, the chicken will flip easily to cook the other side. ■



Tandoori Chicken Tikka

Ingredients:

- 1.5 lbs. boneless, skinless chicken breasts
- 1 lb. boneless skinless chicken thighs
- 1 cup plain yogurt
- 1 Tablespoon lemon juice
- ½ teaspoon cayenne pepper
- ½ teaspoon Garam masala (store bought or see recipe)
- ½ teaspoon turmeric powder
- ½ teaspoon peeled and grated ginger
- 1 teaspoon garlic, finely peeled and chopped
- Salt, to taste
- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil + vegetable oil for basting
- Naan bread

Directions:

Preheat oven to 350°F or prepare a charcoal grill.
Trim the chicken and cut into 2-inch cubes.
In a bowl, mix yogurt, lemon juice, cayenne pepper, garam masala, turmeric, ginger, garlic, salt, and oil. Whisk well to create a smooth runny consistency. Rub the mixture onto the chicken thoroughly, then marinate for 30 minutes or up to 1 hour. Note: refrigerate if marinating longer than 30 minutes.

Arrange the chicken on a cooling rack over a sheet pan, spaced 1/2 inch apart. Cook the chicken in the oven for 15 minutes, turning once, then briefly broil. Alternatively, skewer and cook the chicken on the grill, turning once or twice to ensure even cooking.

Garam Masala

Chef Prasad’s unique blend of dry spices that is used extensively in Indian cuisine.

Ingredients:

- 1 teaspoon cumin seeds
- ½ teaspoon black peppercorns, optional
- 2 teaspoons coriander seeds
- 3 fresh bay leaves
- 1 teaspoon cloves
- 1 cinnamon stick, 3 to 4 inches in length
- 3 teaspoons cardamom green

Directions:

Heat a heavy-bottom pan on medium and sauté the spices for three minutes until aromatic. Blend into powder and store in an airtight container.

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The Natural World

“Neonic Vic’s” advocacy leads to pesticide legislation

By Pamela Brown



Get to know the word: Neonicotinoids. Also commonly called “neonics”, neonicotinoids are a class of nicotine-like, neurotoxic insecticides commonly used on residential lawns and golf courses in the United States. They also are used on non-organic coated corn seed. Neonics are harmful to birds, various pollinators such as butterflies and bees, insects, and other types of wildlife, causing massive declines in those populations.

“Neonics have a negative impact on not just pollinators, but our entire ecosystem. Neonics are not even very effective. Unlike DDT, neonics are water soluble. When these pesticides are applied to your lawn, in the next rainstorm they’re now in your well, so usage leads to water and soil contamination,” said Victor DeMasi, a lepidopterist, Redding environmental activist, and Co-Founder of Connecticut Pesticide Reform (CPR), who is often called “Neonic Vic” for his advocacy for legislation banning neonics. “Homeowners have a fixation on having perfect lawns, but fertilizers are polluting our water. Studies found neonic counts in the

Norwalk River are five times the allowed recommended amount for the state.”

In response to diligent lobbying by environmental groups, the Connecticut legislature recently passed a bill, introduced by the Senate Environment Committee, that addresses the usage of neonics. According to the Connecticut General Assembly, State Senate Bill 9 was “an act that focused on the environment, climate, and sustainable municipal and state planning, in addition to the use of neonicotinoids and second-generation anticoagulant rodenticides.” The legislation provides municipalities with certain authorities concerning climate resiliency efforts and restrict the use of neonicotinoids and second-generation rodenticides. Starting October 2027, the bill prohibits the use of neonicotinoids on turf grass such as lawns and golf courses – CT Audubon estimates this applies to about 300,000 acres across the state. However, use can continue in some instances, including: in agriculture, trees, ornamental shrubbery, and seeds; to control invasive invertebrate pests; products not

labeled for plant use, such as indoor pest control or pet treatments.

“It’s a good start. I’m happy to get something – but only 40% happy. It’s disappointing that our neighboring states have all passed more comprehensive laws,” said DeMasi whose commitment toward environmentalism led him to co-found CPR in 2022 with Louise Washer, fellow activist and President of the Board of Directors at Norwalk River Watershed Association. CPR is a grassroots coalition of individuals and conservation organizations in Connecticut united in advocacy for organic land management policy in Connecticut, including the reduction and elimination of the use of neonic pesticides.

Throughout 2023 and 2024, CPR advocated for bills to restrict the use of neonics on lawns and gardens, along with banning the use of chlorpyrifos, an organophosphate pesticide used on golf courses that can permanently damage the developing brains of children as well as cause devastating harms to pollinators and other wildlife. “A lot of environmental groups are supporting us. We’ve become a force for eliminating and reducing the use of pesticides in Connecticut,” said DeMasi who often lobbies at the Capitol dressed in a bee outfit.

Going forward, DeMasi will continue, along with CPR, to raise awareness about the dangers of pesticides and advocate for pesticide policy reforms and get more inclusion in the coming years, said DeMasi, “People need to become more aware of the issue and the impact these harmful pesticides have on their environment,” he said. ■

Learn more about CPR’s efforts at ctpesticidereform.org

Ode to a pheasant

By Katherine Simmons



Photo by Katherine Simmons

I cannot say for certain when I first made his acquaintance or tell you the exact day he stole my heart. We had just moved to a small town in Connecticut from New York City following the 9/11 tragedy. Our new home’s family room sported an enormous glass window which overlooked the back yard, a spectacular bucolic setting of manicured jade green grass, magnolia trees and a pond, all bordering a 200-acre nature preserve. I was growing accustomed to the ubiquitous deer and red fox sightings but had never before encountered a pheasant and was not prepared for the effect his physical appearance bestowed, both in brilliance and beauty.

His presence, generally either early morning or late afternoon, was always announced by a loud and strange-sounding squawk, echoing eerily through the landscape. I grew to love this sound. Emerging from the tall hedges of the nature preserve, he would strut and bob in all his splendor, slowly cruising the yard, pecking and flapping his great wings in a display of cockiness and valor.

I often pondered from where this lovely creature came. Was he an exotic pet from some grand estate

who had fled to explore new pastures? Or perhaps a restless migrant in search of a mate? I researched the presence of pheasants in Fairfield County and discovered that these fascinating birds were indeed not native to this area and rarely seen. My research further revealed that wild pheasants only live approximately five years in the wild unlike raised pheasants which can live up to 12 years in captivity. Our pheasant was chasing the years.

Sadly, the pheasant never did find a partner but instead took up with a group of wild turkeys who also frequented our property. I would often see him among the pack, his brilliance a gem among the other gray birds. The turkeys were a friendly lot and took him in with little fanfare. I loved them for that. I was pleased he had found companions though daydreamed about finding him a soul mate of his own, perhaps from some pheasant farm if that sort of thing existed. I imagined visiting, picking out a female pheasant and bringing it home. And like in a fairy tale, they would live happily ever after and create for our town a whole new flock of pheasants for all to enjoy.

I longed to see him daily but, as if sensing his importance, he arrived only once or twice a week. In an attempt to lure him closer, I bought a bag of wild bird seed and scattered it in a line, starting at the opening of the preserve from which he emerged and ending just inches from my bedroom window. The very next morning, I heard him, louder than usual and realized with glee that the seed trail had worked. He stood majestically, so close to my window that I could reach out

and touch him and, in that brief moment, snapped his photograph which still hangs on my refrigerator and atop this story.

There was something about the beauty of the pheasant and his calm demeanor that somehow made everything so right, even on those days that were not. He became a fixture in the neighborhood and neighbors became possessive. They began referring to him as “our pheasant” if he spent any amount of time on their property. He became somewhat of a celebrity in our small town.

When he went missing for sometimes weeks at a time, he became a topic of concern. I would see a friend in the local market and ask “Have you seen the pheasant”? I imagined putting posters on trees in the area with his photo and the simple word “Missing.” No explanation necessary.

The pheasant enchanted us with his presence for over seven years, surviving hurricanes, snow storms, and numerous predators. After one particularly fierce winter storm, I fancied making up a T-shirt for him stating “I survived the blizzard of 2010” and sending his photo to our local newspaper to feature in their wildlife section.

Then one day, as magically as he had appeared, the pheasant returned no more. It has been over a year now. We no longer ask each other “Have you seen him?” There is an unsaid understanding among us. Nothing gold can stay.

Yet I still stare hard when I see the wild turkeys trotting by my window, hoping, praying for that glint of brilliant color amid the backdrop of the woods. ■

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Help Fido find home

July is Lost Pet Prevention Month

By Pamela Brown



Photo courtesy of Connecticut Humane Society
“Brando” is one of the residents at Connecticut Humane Society

The Humane Society estimates that one in three pets will go missing in their lifetime, equaling about 10 million missing pets each year in the United States. To raise awareness and empower pet owners to keep their pets safe, July is designated National Lost Pet Prevention Month.

Members of online local message boards and social media groups often see posts about lost pets in and around Redding. And while there doesn’t seem to be an upward trend in the issue, for many pet owners, one lost pet is one too many.

“There hasn’t been a huge influx of lost dogs in Redding. The most common animal we have missing are cats, because there are no laws for them,” noted Mike DeLuca, the Town’s Animal Control Officer whose office keeps records of all missing animals and who found them. “Most of the time, people call us when they lose a pet. When we get those calls, we try to be in the area of where the pet was last seen and try to do the best we can to locate the lost animal. People also notify us if they find a dog or cat, because many people take them in themselves.”

DeLuca stressed the importance of having pets wear an identification tag and obtaining a dog license through Town Hall. State statute requires all dogs over the age of six months be licensed by the Town Clerk annually on or before June 30. After July 1, a late fee is assessed. For more information, e-mail townclerk@reddingct.gov or call (203) 938-2377 extension 2.

The Connecticut Humane Society also sometimes receives inquiries from people who have lost or found a pet. “We recommend folks start by contacting their local animal control and animal-related businesses and local rescues. Letting local veterinarians, groomers, and neighbors know your pet is missing will enable them to reach out if your pet is found,” said Kathryn Schubert, Connecticut Humane Society’s Marketing and Communications Manager. DeLuca advises owners to post a message and photos of the lost pet immediately on social media, especially Redding 411 (a Facebook group for Redding residents). “It reaches most people quickly,” he said.

Schubert admits it’s heartbreaking for a pet parent no matter what kind of pet is missing. “Often, it’s a pet who is out of their element: whether they’re an indoor cat who slipped outside or a dog who was spooked by a sound and bolted,” she said. “When that happens, pets go into fight-or-flight mode, and even familiar sights and smells

might not register. That’s why it’s so important to take precautions like keeping cats indoors, using collars and leashes, and making sure pets are microchipped and wearing ID tags.”

Pet owners must remain proactive in safeguarding their pets. “Don’t rely on invisible fencing. Dogs will test the fence, and they do get past them. Consider having an indoor cat. If it’s outdoors, be prepared something can happen since there is the threat of wildlife,” said DeLuca.

“If an animal is missing, my biggest tip is to notify the Police Department and Animal Control. A lot of people drop off animals here, and we scan for microchips and do everything we can to help them. We temporarily hold them according to state guidelines, then bring them to the Bethel animal shelter.”

Schubert said flyers are beneficial in getting the word out along with filing a lost/found pet report on lostmypet.com or petambalert.com.

Another helpful resource is CT Dog Gone Recovery (DGR), a non-profit that assists with lost dogs (not cats). It offers consultation, collaboration, and proven recovery methods to help reunite dogs with their families. Pet owners can e-mail them at ctdgrv@gmail.com with the town their dog went missing from and phone number. They also have helpful resources on their website, including “Dog Safety Tips” to help owners avoid losing a pet, including never leaving your dog unattended, having an up-to-date photo of your dog, and checking your fence for breaches.

Schubert reminds pet owners to make sure their contact information is up to date in the microchip system. “Animal control, veterinarians, local shelters, and even other pet-related businesses are likely to have scanners on hand, which can get your pet home quickly. Collars and tags are important as well, but can fall off or be removed,” she said, adding, “If you do see your lost pet, remain calm and resist the urge to chase them. They are likely very scared. Sit down and use treats to calm them down and lure them in.”

Everyone wants a happy ending. “Microchip or attach some type of identification to your pet, even cats,” DeLuca urged. “If they get lost, we want to reunite them with their owner.” ■

For more lost pet resources, visit cthumane.org/lost-found-pets or ctdgrv.org

Contact Redding Animal Control at (203) 938-3400

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

\$ = fee applies
R = registration required

This Week’s Featured Events

Ice Cream Sundae Bash

Friday, July 18
2:00 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.
Teen event for grades 5+
Mark Twain Library
439 Redding Road
marktwainlibrary.org
R

Community Hiking Club – Lobster Pot and Stormfield

Saturday, July 26
10:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
Registration closes July 24
Location information sent to registrants
marktwainlibrary.org
R

Annual Cookout

Thursday, July 31
12:15 p.m.
Burgers, hotdogs, sides, and dessert
Heritage Center
37 Lonetown Road
E-mail mstillman@reddingct.gov or call (203) 938-9725
R

Want to feature an upcoming event?

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ARTS

Sundays, July 20 and 27

Concerts on the Green: Bone Dry (July 20) and David Morgan (July 27)
6:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.
Town Green
100 Hill Road
reddingct.gov

Tuesday, July 22

Ways of Listening: Beethoven’s Eroica
2:00 p.m.
Classical music presentation by David Stein
Heritage Center
37 Lonetown Road
E-mail mstillman@reddingct.gov
R

Thursday, July 24

Turn Towards Bright Opening Reception
6:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.
Anonymous Society
268 Simpaug Turnpike
anonymoussocietygallery.com

Sunday, July 27

The Allen and Helen Hermes Art Series presents: Cabaret Theater
5:00 p.m. – 6:30 p.m.
Mark Twain Library
439 Redding Road
marktwainlibrary.org
R

Monday, July 28

Voices from the Garden: Black Voices
7:00 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.
Renowned poets share their work in an outdoor setting
Keeler Tavern Museum and History Center
152 Main Street
Ridgefield
keelertavernmuseum.org

Wednesday, July 30

Ballroom Dancing Lessons – Step into the Rhythm!
3:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.
Mark Twain Library
439 Redding Road
marktwainlibrary.org
R

CHILDREN | TEENS

Friday, July 18

Ice Cream Sundae Bash
2:00 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.
Teen event for grades 5+
Mark Twain Library
439 Redding Road
marktwainlibrary.org
R

Saturday, July 19

Story Hike with Summer Trekking Program
2:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m.
Woodcock Nature Center
56 Deer Run Road
Wilton
woodcocknaturecenter.org
R

Thursday, July 24

Movie & Treats
4:30 p.m. – 6:30 p.m.
Mark Twain Library
439 Redding Road
marktwainlibrary.org
R

Saturday, July 26

Shark Shenanigans
11:00 a.m. – 11:45 a.m.
Mark Twain Library
439 Redding Road
marktwainlibrary.org
R

CRAFTS

Tuesday, July 22

Nature Calendar: Create Your Own Phenology Wheel
6:30 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.
Mark Twain Library
439 Redding Road
marktwainlibrary.org
R

Wednesday, July 30

Bonsai Tree Workshop
6:30 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.
Backspace at Nod Hill Brewery
137 Ethan Allen Highway
nodhillbrewery.com
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FOOD | WINE

Sunday, July 20

Nod Hill Brewery Day
1:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.
Nod Hill Brewery
137 Ethan Allen Highway
nodhillbrewery.com

Wednesday, July 30

Sunny Season Eats: Asian Inspired Dishes with Thirsty Radish
7:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.
Virtual
marktwainlibrary.org
R

Thursday, July 31

Annual Cookout
12:15 p.m.
Burgers, hotdogs, sides, and dessert
Heritage Center
37 Lonetown Road
E-mail mstillman@reddingct.gov or call (203) 938-9725
R

HEALTH | WELLNESS

Tuesday, July 22

Breathe: Summer Yoga at the Library
10:00 a.m. – 11:15 a.m.
Mark Twain Library
439 Redding Road
marktwainlibrary.org
R

Thursday, July 31

Trail Thursday with CT Run Co
6:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.
Woodcock Nature Center
56 Deer Run Road
Wilton
woodcocknaturecenter.org

NATURE

Sunday, July 20

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

Saturday, July 26

Community Hiking Club – Lobster Pot and Stormfield
10:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
Registration closes July 24
Location information sent to registrants
marktwainlibrary.org
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Tuesday, July 29

Topstone Flashlight Walk
7:30 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.
Teen event hosted by Mark Twain Library and Park and Recreation Department
Topstone Park
72 Topstone Road
marktwainlibrary.org
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SPECIAL PROGRAMS

Friday, July 18

Refreshments with Friends
12:00 p.m. - 1:00 p.m.
Breakfast goodies and conversation
Heritage Center
37 Lonetown Road

Saturday, July 19

Wilton Street Fair and Sidewalk Sale
10:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.
Wilton Town Center
wiltonchamber.com

Saturday, July 19

Bethel Summer Shop & Stroll
11:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.
In-store specials, vendors, music
Downtown Bethel
bethelchamberofcommerce.com/shop-stroll

Saturday, July 19

Old-Timey Game Night
5:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.
Scrabble, Pictionary, and more
Redding Grange #15
399 Newtown Turnpike
facebook.com/grangereddingct

Wednesday, July 23

Redding’s Annual Garden Produce Drive
8:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
Drop off extra produce for those in need
Collection coolers at Redding Grange #15 (499 Newtown Turnpike), The Granite (5 North Main Street), and Mark Twain Library (439 Redding Road)

Saturday, July 26

Ridgefield SummerFest 2025
10:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.
Vendors, family activities, live music, and more
Main Street
Ridgefield
ridgefieldchamber.org

Saturday, July 26

Wilton Historical Society July Open House
11:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.
Wilton Historical Society
224 Danbury Road
Wilton
wiltonhistorical.org

Wednesday, July 30

Long-Term Care Planning
3:00 p.m.
Informative presentation by elder law attorney
Heritage Center
37 Lonetown Road
E-mail mstillman@reddingct.gov
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RELIGIOUS SERVICES

Bethlehem Lutheran Church
Sundays at 10:00 a.m.
44 Portland Avenue
bethlehemplutheranct.org

Calvary Independent Baptist Church
Adult and Child Sunday School at 10:00 a.m. / Worship 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
cibcredning.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 11:30 a.m.
201 Long Ridge Road
Danbury
longridgeumc.com

Sacred Heart / St. Patrick Parish St. Patrick Church:
Saturday Vigil Mass: 5:00 p.m.
Sunday Mass: 8:30 a.m. and 10:30 a.m.
Monday-Friday: 8:30 a.m.
Confessions:
Saturdays 4:00 p.m. – 4:45 p.m. and Mondays and Thursdays 7:30 p.m. – 8:00 a.m. and before/after
Weekday Mass
Eucharistic Adoration:
Mondays and Thursdays 7:00 p.m.
169 Black Rock Turnpike
sacredheart-stpat.org

Georgetown Oratory of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus
Saturday Vigil Mass: 4:00 p.m.
Sunday Mass: 9:00 a.m., 10:30 a.m., and 12:00 p.m. (Latin)
Tuesday and Thursday: 8:30 a.m.
Wednesday: 6:00 pm. (Latin)
Holy Days: 8:30 a.m. and 6:00 p.m.
First Fridays and Saturdays: 8:30 a.m.
Confessions:
Saturdays 7:00 a.m. – 8:15 a.m. and Wednesdays 5:15 p.m. – 5:45 p.m.
Eucharistic Adoration: Saturdays 5:00 p.m. following Vigil Mass
30 Church Street

Temple B’nai Chaim
Friday, July 18
Shabbat with Morah Ellie
6:30 p.m.
Friday, July 25
Schmooze into Shabbat
6:30 p.m.
82 Portland Ave
templebnaichaim.org

MEETINGS

Thursday, July 17

Democratic Town Committee
7:00 p.m.
Town Hall / Hearing Room
100 Hill Road

Thursday, July 17

Democratic Caucus
7:30 p.m.
Redding Community Center
37 Lonetown Road

Tuesday, July 22

Republican Caucus
7:30 p.m.
Redding Community Center
37 Lonetown Road

Wednesday, July 23

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

Monday, July 28

OPEB Trust Board
6:00 p.m.
Town Hall / Hearing Room
100 Hill Road

Monday, July 28

Board of Finance
7:30 p.m.
Town Hall / Hearing Room
100 Hill Road

Thursday, July 31

Region 9 Finance & Operations Pension Committee
5:30 p.m.
Central Office Conference Room
654 Morehouse Road
Easton

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 Fire Department
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.
186 Black Rock Turnpike

***Town offices will be closed Monday, July 21 from 12:45 p.m. – 3:30 p.m. for ADA staff training**

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