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Redding Board of Education talks last day of school, capital items, and more

By Anne Young Albanese

At the April 7 Redding Board of Education meeting, several topics were discussed. Here's what you need to know.

Last day of school

For Redding Elementary School and John Read Middle School, the last day of school is scheduled for Monday, June 22.

Due to a snow-day closing on December 23, 2025, the school year was one day short of the 180-school-day requirement in Connecticut. December 23 had been scheduled to be a half-day to start the winter break. Schools were originally scheduled to be closed on June 19,

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Photo by Lisa Buckley

A flock of cedar waxwings perched above the Joel Barlow High School parking lot. If you have a photo you'd like to see featured here, e-mail editor@reddingsentinel.org.

Subdivision draft offers glimpse of Gilbert & Bennett redevelopment plans

By Rocco Valluzzo



Map courtesy of Pirie Associates
An outline of the project area for the Revitalize Georgetown planning process.

A proposed parcel subdivision draft for the former Gilbert & Bennett Wire Mill property could provide some insight concerning the location of future development.

Submitted by Pirie Associates, the proposed plan is based on feedback from the public, the Gilbert & Bennett Wire Mill Advisory Committee, and professional judgment. It uses a sectioned format to describe use, massing (the three-dimensional size of buildings), and design intent for various areas.

"They did a nice job of showing what each area would be, what

it would encompass, a general use of that property, and a description of the form and massing limits and design intent," said Committee Chair Amy Atamian at a meeting on Thursday, April 9. "Then, they provided some examples of what might be developed in those areas, so that there's a visual example of what we could see."

Member Rob Dean argued that the current plan is too "Balkanized" and highly specific to imagined projects. He advocated for larger, flexible geographic parcels that can be subdivided later by developers to avoid legal complexity and "expert workarounds."

"I see parcels being split up, where you've got parking lots on their own parcel and things like that," he said. "I think there are too many parcels, and it's going to lead to too much complexity."

First Selectwoman Julia Pemberton and Town Consulting Planner David Woods emphasized that as the municipality owns the property, the goal is to retain control via long-term land leases rather than selling underlying parcels to opportunistic developers.

"It's a working draft," said Woods.

"We need to give us opportunity to massage it and go from there."

Committee member Rich Wenning said he found the proposed draft enormously helpful. While he added that he did not know if it contained too many parcels, he thought they seemed pragmatic. As a public document, he also thought it was extremely useful.

Later in the meeting, Dean introduced a memo on the building stabilization report from Architectural Preservation Studio (APS) that the Committee received a month earlier. The focus was on securing certain structures so they could survive until they could be repurposed.

"They did a nice list of what needs to be done, very exactly on the money," he said. "But they didn't really present it in a compelling way as a priority, as a kind of triage list. So, I took it on to do that."

Dean urged the Committee to get away from final development outcomes and get to what he considered the far more down-to-earth and urgent task of "mothballing"

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REDDING'S BIG OUTDOORS

Walk back in time

Historical hike through Putnam Park draws crowd | By Jessie Wright



Photo by Silvia Erskine

On a brisk but sunny morning on April 11, several dozen hikers and history-enthusiasts met at Putnam Memorial State Park for a guided historical walk of the site of Israel Putnam's Revolutionary War encampment and the natural environment that surrounds it. The event, part of Redding's America 250 celebrations, was a collaboration of the Redding's America 250 team and the Community Hiking Club, which is a joint program of Redding Land Trust, Mark Twain Library, and Redding Neighbors & Newcomers.

The hike was led by Town of Redding Co-Historians Bruce Nelson and Brent Colley along with Park Historian Ellery Leary.

"As the town historians, Bruce and I believe history is meant to be shared so it can be passed on to future generations," Colley said. "Saturday was a great example of that, with everyone doing an outstanding job showcasing our town's open spaces and historic treasures. Programs like this help residents recognize the rich history around them and build excitement about where they live. Redding played a significant role in the American Revolution, and we hope people came away with a deeper understanding of that – and a desire to return to Putnam Park and attend

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Why is CT bottle redemption up for debate again?

By Angela Eichhorst

After years of seeing Connecticut's bottle redemption rate dip below the 50% mark, lawmakers changed the deposit to 10 cents from 5 cents in 2024 to encourage more people to redeem their used bottles and cans.

Now, that redemption rate sits at 97% in 2025 — meaning 97% of the bottles sold were returned in exchange for the deposit. But retailers and distributors argue that some of the increase in redemption rate might come from people traveling from neighboring states to redeem bottles not purchased in Connecticut, which would negate the purpose of the deposit and create revenue problems for them.

As a result, some legislators are now questioning whether the 10-cent program needs adjustment.

Why does Connecticut have bottle redemption?

Oregon was the first state to introduce bottle redemption — at the rate of 5 cents in 1971 — with the goal of controlling litter from bottles and cans that ended up in the street. Nine other states have since added bottle bills, including Connecticut, which passed its 5-cent redemption bill in 1978. That amount would equate to about 25 cents today if the deposit fee would have kept up with inflation, according to the Consumer Price Index's inflation calculator, which it did not. Still, Connecticut residents received back \$42 million from redemptions in 2023 alone.

Why the change to 10 cents?

Redemptions had been trending down in Connecticut for years, slumping south of 50% in 2020, despite a rate of well over 50% in the early 2010s. When Oregon, which had a similar problem, bumped its rate to 10 cents in 2017, the state saw its returns increase by over 15 percentage points in the following years.

So, in an effort to increase the number of bottles and cans recycled and cut down on litter, Connecticut lawmakers in 2021 voted to raise the redemption incentive to 10 cents as of January 1, 2024. Two years after increasing its own redemption amount, Connecticut's rate jumped from 50% at the end of 2023 to 97% by the end of 2025.

Isn't a 97% return rate a good thing? No, retailers and distributors argue. Retailers say that much of this increase is trucks from bordering states with low or no redemptions that have been traveling to their stores to redeem out-of-state bottles for cash in Connecticut. And distributors say they have seen returns in certain parts of the state add up to more than the total number of bottles sold, and that out-of-state returns are to blame.

Under the current redemption system, retailers buy bottles for

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EDITORIAL

Why legal notices belong in the community, not hidden on town websites

April 9 was Local News Day, a national day of action organized by journalists, non-profits, and media leaders to reconnect citizens with trusted sources of local news. The *Sentinel* was a registered participant, and we were proud to have First Selectwoman Julia Pemberton issue an official Town Proclamation recognizing April 9, 2026, as “Local News Day” and encouraging all Redding residents to recognize the importance of trusted local news and information and to engage with the local news organizations that serve our community.

The next morning, we awoke to the news that the Connecticut State House has passed a bill that would deal a blow to the *Sentinel*’s finances and remove an important independent channel for residents to be notified of municipal decision-making.

H.B. 5289 would eliminate the longstanding requirement that legal notices are published in print, shifting the requirement to post notices on a Town’s website. Official budget numbers, votes on land use decisions, notifications of upcoming public hearings and special town meetings, results of party caucuses – all would be taken off the pages of a local newspaper and onto a website run by the Town. These notices would no longer be “pushed” to residents in a widely distributed news outlet; townspeople would need to proactively seek out the notices without knowing when they might appear.

The arguments for the bill ahead of the vote seemed to focus primarily on the fact that the media landscape has shifted online in the last two decades and that lawmakers are hoping to relieve costs for municipalities. Some lawmakers mentioned wanting to avoid “propping up” print newspapers by a mandate to pay for publishing legal notices. The arguments against the bill highlighted the fact that some citizens – often seniors – may not know how to navigate an online source of information or do not have access to reliable internet.

Sure, these elements are at play and should be taken into consideration. But the discussion missed key realities about the relationship between municipalities and the sources of news that serve their communities. They are separate for a reason. Requiring municipal actions be published on an independent platform introduces a layer of accountability that posting to a Town website removes. Print is on the newsstands regardless of a power outage or a WiFi dead zone. It is not hackable and it cannot be manipulated.

Legal notices in a local newspaper

often also run adjacent to editorial content and reporting on the very meetings and updates the notices reference. Additional context, historical explanations, and independent reporting on the details of a legal notice give residents and voters a clearer picture of what the notice means and refers to. By separating the two, residents are now required to go hunting for more information when they see a legal notice posted to the Town website, if indeed they stumble upon it.

It is important to note that the cost of many of the legal notices published in the *Sentinel* is not actually paid by the Town of Redding – about half, by our calculation. Land use public hearing and decision notices are billed to the applicant. Town political parties pay for their notices, as do the three individual fire districts. Notices for things like liquor license applications and projects like construction of the new cell tower are paid for by private entities or the State. The Town pays for notices about taxes, budgets, and special town meetings. But is that really such a burden to require that they communicate this essential information in more ways than on their own website?

On the flip side, removing legal notices from the *Sentinel*’s revenue stream would be a difficult loss for a hyperlocal newspaper like ours to offset. The *Sentinel* earns on average about 9% of our total income from legal notice fees.

Even more disappointing is that one of the bill’s co-sponsors – and votes in the affirmative – is Redding’s own Representative Anne Hughes. Hughes is probably one of the few representatives of small-town districts in Connecticut today who has an active hyperlocal print newspaper serving her constituents and another that is set to launch in a matter of weeks.

So often, we hear people bemoan the loss of local newspapers. People decry the degradation in the quality of information that unmoderated social media sites and online news sources have introduced in community discourse. But changes like those in H.B. 5289, if it is enacted into law, make operating an independent, local source of news like the ones celebrated across the country last week even more difficult. Ultimately, you get what you pay for. ■

We urge our readers to contact State Senator Ceci Maher at ceci.maher@cga.ct.gov or (860) 240-0068 as the bill heads to the Senate for consideration and Representative Anne Hughes at anne.hughes@cga.ct.gov or (860) 240-8585

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

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

To the Editor,

A recent letter questioned the choice of screening the film *Glory* at our April 23 fundraiser for *Redding Celebrates America 250*. The connection is both musical and deeply meaningful.

Our May 30 concert, performed by the Greater Bridgeport Symphony together with talented student musicians from Joel Barlow High School, features Charles Ives’s *Three Places in New England*. Ives, one of America’s greatest composers and a longtime Redding resident, drew inspiration for the first movement from the 54th Massachusetts Regiment – the heroic African American soldiers portrayed in the award-winning film *Glory*, starring Matthew Broderick, Morgan Freeman, and Denzel Washington in his Oscar-winning role. The second movement, “Putnam’s Camp, Redding, Connecticut,” was inspired by the Revolutionary War winter encampment right here in our own Putnam Park. Screening *Glory* gives our community a chance to reflect on this chapter of American history before experiencing Ives’s powerful music live.

The writer described the Civil War as one of our nation’s worst embarrassments and nothing to be proud of. While it was undeniably a terrible catastrophe, more than 365,000 Americans on the Union side – including at least 10 men from Redding – laid down their lives to end the institution of slavery, an evil that had existed on this continent long before our nation’s founding. With victory secured and just a month after his re-election, as he worked to bind up the nation’s wounds, Abraham Lincoln was assassinated on Good Friday, paying the final price for the sin of slavery. That is why we will also perform Aaron Copland’s *Lincoln Portrait* at the concert.

Though our country is not perfect, we are truly blessed to live in America – a nation founded on the principles of self-government and liberty. Celebrating the 250th anniversary of our founding offers a meaningful opportunity to reflect on the many blessings bestowed by that founding generation, and by all those who have since fought to form a more perfect union. It is important that we pass these ideals on to the next generation.

If you have never seen *Glory*, I warmly invite you to join us on April 23 at Greenwood Features for cocktails, refreshments, and the film. And please come to the May 30 concert at Joel Barlow High School to hear our students perform patriotic music alongside the Greater Bridgeport Symphony. It will be a moving celebration of America.

Tickets to both events can be purchased at Redding250.com ■

Sean McNamara, Great Oak Lane

Scientists seeing unseasonably high, “disconcerting” tick activity

By Chris Polansky

Scientists at the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station say ticks are off to a fast start this year.

“On Monday, we received over 100 tick submissions,” said Dr. Goudarz Molaei, a research scientist and medical entomologist who runs the Experiment Station’s Tick Testing Program, last week.

Molaei’s lab receives ticks that were found attached to Connecticut residents and submitted via local health departments and then tests them for pathogens. The service is free of charge.

“Usually when we receive over 100 tick submissions per day, that indicates that we are at peak tick activity,” he said. “That usually occurs in the months of October and November or in May and June.”

“Despite our expectation, or public expectation, that the past rather cold winter would put some dent on tick populations, we are not seeing that,” Molaei said. “This time of the year, considering this is just the beginning of higher

tick activity and we haven’t reached the peak, this number is quite disconcerting.”

Molaei said the tick samples are also testing positive for Lyme disease at a higher-than-average rate of 40%.

“We are comparing that 40% to the average prevalence of infection in ticks for the past couple of decades, or longer than that, which is about 32%,” Molaei said.

Molaei said the reasons for the upticks in activity and infection rates are complex, but that climate change is playing a role.

“Temperature, humidity, vegetation, habitat type: all of these are changing as the result of climate change,” Molaei said. “We do see the impact of, or influence of, all these factors in tick population, and, further, in the prevalence of infection.”

Molaei said the most common species of tick around the state are black-legged “deer” ticks and American dog ticks, but that invasive lone star ticks, Gulf Coast ticks, and longhorned ticks are also

present, particularly in the coastal areas of Fairfield and New Haven counties.

“These ticks are capable of transmitting their own suite of pathogens,” Molaei said.

Dr. Jason White, Director of the Experiment Station, said Connecticut residents who spend time outdoors should be sure to take precautions.

“Using tick repellents when hiking or camping and conducting tick checks remain the best ways to reduce the risk of contracting tick-borne diseases,” White said.

“Connecticut residents are also encouraged to submit ticks they have removed from their bodies to our laboratory for species identification and testing,” he said. “This allows them to make informed decisions concerning diagnosis and treatment in consultation with their healthcare providers.” ■

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Subdivision draft offers glimpse of Gilbert & Bennett redevelopment plans / continued from page 1

these buildings sufficiently to have them survive to the point of later being recapitalized and redeveloped.

“We should not be prefiguring the developers’ task,” he said. “It may be years before we have the money or the opportunity, even the legal opportunity, to decide on specific development outcomes. In the near term, we have to be mindful of the expert guidance we’re

supposedly following, and the acknowledged limits to our resources.”

Pirie Associates will present a finalized Georgetown Revitalization plan to the public on Sunday, May 3, from 2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. at the Redding Community Center. Free childcare is available with pre-registration. The team will also deliver a financial analysis of the plan and draft land use amendments. ■



Review materials from the Revitalize Georgetown planning project at reddingct.gov/revitalize-georgetown-project



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SPORTS

Errors hurt Barlow's chances

Baseball | By Rocco Valluzzo



Photo by Rocco Valluzzo

Joel Barlow High's Cassius Kady fields a ground ball at second base during a varsity baseball game at New Milford on Saturday, April 11. Barlow lost a close 5-6 decision.

While its offense remained persistent in erasing a couple of deficits, defensive errors proved to be the undoing of the Joel Barlow High varsity baseball team in its game at New Milford.

The Falcons committed four errors in the game, some coming at crucial times. The host Green Wave's ability to capitalize on those mistakes, combined with a steady pitching performance, allowed it to walk away with a narrow 5-6 victory on Saturday, April 11.

Without the benefit on a hit, the Falcons scored in the top of the first inning. Gavin Maryott walked, stole second, and advanced to third

before coming home on a passed ball.

Two walks and a single in the bottom of the frame allowed the Green Wave to load the bases before it tied things at 1-1 on an error, but in the top of the second a two-run double by Kenny Esposito put Barlow up 3-1.

After loading the bases in its next turn, the Green Wave evened things up on a two-run single by Naim Elezi. Things remained tied until the bottom of the fourth.

Victor Aria led off with a double but was later picked off at second on a throw by catcher Drew Gutowski to Maryott at shortstop.

However, two walks, an error, and a fielder's choice helped the Green Wave take the lead at 3-5.

Gavin Maryott led off the top of the fifth with a double and later scored on an RBI single by Brennan Maryott. Barlow tied it up when Esposito, who was hit by a pitch, eventually scored on a fielder's choice.

Ethan Goldstein tripled for the Falcons to lead off the top of the sixth but was later thrown out at home after a fly to center field. Despite having the bases loaded with two outs in their next turn, the Falcons could not break the tie.

Following a lead-off double in its last turn, New Milford scored the winning run on an error.

Gavin Maryott led Barlow's offense with two hits, one walk, and three runs scored. Esposito had one hit with two runs batted in (RBI), and a run scored. Brennan Maryott (one hit) and Gutowski also drove in a run apiece. Ryan Kelly scored a run.

Barlow starting pitcher Desmond Kady went three innings, surrendering four runs (two of which were earned) on four hits with three strikeouts and five walks. Reliever Grayson LaPine took the loss, also going three innings with two runs on three hits and one walk.

The Falcons, now 0-3 overall, visit Ridgefield on Saturday, April 18 at 2:00 p.m., host Bassick of Bridgeport on Monday, April 20 at 4:15 p.m., and host Harding of Bridgeport on Wednesday, April 22 also at 4:15 p.m. ■

More points needed in field events to get the job done

Girls track and field | By Rocco Valluzzo

Victories in several events would only go so far for the Joel Barlow High girls varsity track team in the opening meet of the season.

While the Falcons captured eight victories, only one came in the field events when they visited Bethel on Monday, April 6. Without the depth they needed in these events, they came up short 56-94 against the host Wildcats and also lost to New Fairfield (65-77) and to Pomperaug (56-89).

"We are working to progress in our field events for the next meet," said Head Coach Ryan Swift. "We didn't feel that we had enough time in the two weeks of training leading up to the first meet to really home in on the technical aspects of these events, so unfortunately, we sacrificed a lot of points at this week's meet."

Things started well enough for the Falcons, who began the meet with first place in the 4x800 meter relay. Olivia Kotula, Clara Mehner, Stephanie Bardani, and freshman Kate Duggan combined for a victory in 10 minutes 30.58 seconds.

Although the Falcons did not compete in the 4x100 relay, they captured another victory in the following event. A time of 15.98 got Phoebe Cora Smith the win in the 100-meter high hurdles. Vika Abukhovich followed with a win in the 100 meters in 13.12, beating Pomperaug's Jenna Thoennessen by 0.2 seconds.

Bardani and Mehner also represented Barlow in the 1,600 meters, getting back-to-back finishes. The former was fourth overall in 5:55.19 and the latter followed 0.57 seconds later.

While the Falcons did not score in the 400, they notched another win in the 300 intermediate hurdles. Smith picked up her second win, this one coming in 47.84, nearly five seconds ahead of her closest challenger.

Two more wins followed, one in the 800 with Duggan leading the way in 2:27.42. It was a one-two finish for the Falcons in the 200 with Olivia Taylor winning in 26.54 and Abukhovich taking second in 27.40.

Scoring in their third event, Bardani (sixth) and Mehner (seventh) also competed in the 3,200 with times of 16:41.42 and 16:41.56 in another close finish. Two of the three relays were wins for Barlow, which also took first in the 4x400 with Abukhovich, Duggan, Smith, and Taylor finishing in 4:11.86.

In the field events, Pomperaug dominated the javelin with a sweep of the top three places. Taylor would take fifth overall with a throw of 74 feet, five inches.

Barlow did not score in the discus or shot put but won in the pole vault with Vivian D'Amico clearing 7' 6". In the long jump, freshman Hannah O'Brien went 14' 4.5", taking fifth.

"We definitely have exceptional top-end talent," said Swift. "There are a handful of girls that should be competing for top honors in both the SWC and state championship meets at the end of the season."

Barlow hosts New Milford, Kolbe Cathedral, and Bunnell on Tuesday, April 21 at 4:00 p.m. ■

Joel Barlow sports results and schedules



Baseball

Results:

April 6: Greenwich 10 / Joel Barlow 1
April 9: Fairfield Ludlowe 7 / Joel Barlow 2
April 11: New Milford 6 / Joel Barlow 5

Record:

Joel Barlow 0-3

Next games:

April 18: away at Ridgefield at 2:00 p.m.
April 20: home versus Bassick at 4:15 p.m.
April 22: home versus Harding at 4:15 p.m.

Softball

Results:

April 6: Westhill 13 / Joel Barlow 0
April 8: Joel Barlow 14 / Kolbe Cathedral 7
April 10: Weston 10 / Joel Barlow 9

Record:

Joel Barlow 1-2

Next games:

April 16: home versus Lauralton Hall at 4:00 p.m.
April 20: home versus Bassick at 4:15 p.m.
April 22: home versus Harding at 4:15 p.m.

Girls golf

Results:

April 9: Joel Barlow 229 / Pomperaug 267

Record:

Joel Barlow 1-1

Next matches:

April 20: away at Notre Dame Prep at 3:00 p.m.
April 21: away at Masuk at 3:00 p.m.

Boys lacrosse

Results:

April 9: Mahopac 6 / Joel Barlow 5
April 11: Conard 14 / Joel Barlow 10

Record:

Joel Barlow: 0-3

Next games:

April 16: home versus Masuk at 5:00 p.m.
April 18: home versus Pleasantville at 12:00 p.m.
April 21: away at Immaculate at 4:00 p.m.

Girls lacrosse

Results:

April 7: Joel Barlow 11 / Brookfield 8
April 9: Joel Barlow 18 / Pomperaug 8

Record:

Joel Barlow 2-1

Next games:

April 16: away at Masuk at 6:00 p.m.

April 18: away at Branford at 11:00 a.m.

April 21: home versus Immaculate at 5:00 p.m.

Boys tennis

Results:

April 8: Weston 7 / Joel Barlow 0
April 10: Joel Barlow 4 / Masuk 3

Record:

Joel Barlow 1-1

Next matches:

April 20: away at Pomperaug at 4:00 p.m.
April 22: home versus Newtown at 3:45 p.m.

Girls tennis

Results:

April 8: Weston 6 / Joel Barlow 1
April 10: Joel Barlow 5 / Masuk 2

Record:

Joel Barlow 1-1

Next matches:

April 20: home versus Immaculate at 3:45 p.m.
April 22: away at Newtown at 3:45 p.m.

Boys track and field

Results:

April 6: Bethel 132 / Joel Barlow 18, Joel Barlow 87 / New Fairfield 55, Pomperaug 98 / Joel Barlow 52

Record:

Joel Barlow 1-2

Next meet:

April 21: home versus Bunnell, Kolbe Cathedral, New Milford at 4:00 p.m.

Girls track and field

Results:

April 6: Bethel 94 / Joel Barlow 56, New Fairfield 77 / Joel Barlow 65, Pomperaug 89 / Joel Barlow 56

Record:

Joel Barlow 0-3

Next meet:

April 21: home versus Bunnell, Kolbe Cathedral, New Milford at 4:00 p.m.

Boys volleyball

Results:

April 6: Stamford 3 / Joel Barlow 1
April 7: Joel Barlow 3 / Staples 0
April 8: New Canaan 3 / Joel Barlow 0

April 10: Joel Barlow 3 / Ridgefield 0

Record:

Joel Barlow 3-2

Next match:

April 21: away at Kolbe Cathedral at 4:00 p.m.

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Falcons take one of three in opener Boys track and field | By Rocco Valluzzo

A taste of the competition came right off the bat for the Joel Barlow High boys track and field team. Visiting Bethel on Monday, April 6, the Falcons had their hands full in the season opener. The two-time defending South-West Conference champion Wildcats dominated most of the events, winning 132-18.

"Bethel has become a powerhouse in the last one to two years," said Barlow Head Coach Ryan Paola, noting the Wildcats have an indoor facility that has helped their program grow. "This was no

surprise at all. With their depth, the boys team will most likely be untouchable this season."

The Falcons fared much better against New Fairfield, getting an 87-55 win, but lost 52-98 to Pomperaug.

Bethel's dominance started early with wins in the first two relay events. The Falcons were second in the 4x100 with Waldy Vasquez, newcomer Kaelen Kunar, Lucas Jandura, and Ethan Peters finishing in 45.76 seconds.

Both the Wildcats and the Pan-

thers were tough in the 110-meter high hurdles. Barlow's Chris Caldwell (seventh) and Nathan Duque (eighth) each posted times of 21.08, good for first and second against the Rebels.

Two top-three finishes went Barlow's way in the 100 meters. Kunar was second only to Bethel's Adrian Vasquez in 11.40, and Peters was third in 11.59. Kunar was also second in the 200 in 23.45, just 0.02 seconds behind Vasquez.

Max Mehner scored Barlow's points in the 1,600 with a

sixth-place time of 5:13.91. Ryan Whealey's 12:32.51 took fourth in the 3,200, and Logan Seo was seventh in 15:05.07.

In the field events, two javelin throwers scored for the Falcons. Noah Beninati had a throw of 151 feet, seven inches to take second and Sam Walker was right behind with 144 feet 9 inches.

"We have a strong javelin group, which will make for an interesting post-season," said Paola.

Securing his fourth second-place finish, Kunar cleared 5 feet 10 inches

in the high jump, as did Bethel's Marcus Graham, but took second based on number of attempts. Bauer Heres went 10 feet in the pole vault for fourth and Mehner placed eighth with a vault of nine feet.

For the long jump, the Falcons had Peters leap 18 feet 7.5 inches to take fifth. Sean Connolly totaled 29 feet 1.75 inches in the triple jump for seventh overall.

Barlow resumes the season on Tuesday, April 21 when it hosts Bunnell, Kolbe Cathedral, and New Milford at 4:00 p.m. ■

Future business leaders to travel to San Antonio

By Anne Young Albanese

On Friday, April 10, the Region 9 Board of Education held a brief special meeting to determine if the Barlow Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA) club could travel to San Antonio, Texas, from June 29 to July 2 for the 2026 National Leadership Conference. The Board approved the trip.

The National Leadership Conference invites students who achieve top scores at competitions during the spring Connecticut Leadership Conference. This year, seven Barlow students qualified. Along with competitions and workshops, the National Leadership Conference

provides students with the opportunity to network with other FBLA students from across the country. The chaperones will be Dr. Mario Almeida, Head of School and Assistant Superintendent, and Julie McTague, the STEM Department Chair.

The Easton Educational Foundation covered registration costs for the event. Students will be fundraising to cover other expenses.

Participation in the event required Board of Education approval due to policy 5080, which states that all student field trips that are scheduled to last more than one

day require written approval from ER9 Superintendent Dr. Jason McKinnon and the Board.

The Barlow FBLA chapter is for Redding and Easton students who are interested in pursuing a business or business-related career. The goal is to train and prepare students for future roles in the American business system. The club also performs community service projects and fundraising events. As a nationwide organization, students participate and compete in the Connecticut Leadership Conference, and if successful, the National Leadership Conference. ■

A love of history prompts prospective Eagle Scout to honor the dead

By Rob Sample



Eddie Chiamonte was all smiles upon finding a missing piece of a gravestone belonging to Seth Osborn, circa 1818, which had split into five pieces. "Finding that one piece meant Osborn's headstone could be preserved," Chiamonte said.



Eddie Chiamonte and Max Mehner clear brush and weeds away from the historic Osborn Cemetery in Weston.

Photos by Ed Chiamonte Sr.

They occupy the fringes of suburbia: ancient cemeteries in woods and on vacant lots behind backyard fences, providing lasting reminders of the past and the people who once lived where we do now.

Eddie Chiamonte, a junior at Joel Barlow High School and a member of Scouting Troop 15 in Redding, is a self-described history buff as well as an avid explorer of old cemeteries. So, when it came time to plan for a community-support project as part of his achieving the Eagle Scout designation, the small, abandoned Osborn Cemetery in Weston was a perfect choice.

The cemetery sits at the corner of Old Farm and Osborn Farm Roads in Weston, adjacent to Route 57 (Georgetown Road). As cemeteries go, it is small with a total of 30 headstones and other grave markers. Despite its small size, it has some significance in Weston history with its oldest stone dating to 1795 and the newest to 1859, Chiamonte pointed out.

"For the most part, the stones mark the graves of members of the Osborn family – but there are a couple of Bennett gravestones there as well," noted Chiamonte. This is the same Bennett family that became the namesake of Georgetown's Gilbert & Bennett Wire Mill – which operated for more than a century and was shuttered in 1989.

Cleaning up this historic cemetery involved a lot of challenges for Chiamonte. "It's right at the beginning of a residential neighborhood but had become completely overgrown with weeds that were as tall as trees," Chiamonte said. "Many of the stones had fallen over – so we had to put them back upright and refasten them to their foundations. We also fixed the gate that forms the entrance."

In addition to history, Chiamonte credits his love of genealogy for sparking his interest in the project. Osborn cemetery was not his first project of this kind: he also helped restore Union Cemetery, which sits at the crossroads of Routes 139 and 59 in Easton. That 18th-century cemetery was made famous by tales of a ghostly "White Lady" who ostensibly made nighttime appearances as well as the exploits of late "ghost hunters" Ed and Lorraine Warren.

"The difference with Osborn was that we couldn't even get close enough to the graves to clean them up," Chiamonte noted. After obtaining a green light for the Osborn project in May of 2025, Chiamonte began the work in July and completed it in September. He returned to the site in November to do some finishing touches.

"I'm now working on the paperwork as part of my Eagle Scout submission," he said.

Chiamonte had about 28 people assisting him at different stages of the project – a group that included his parents and a grandparent as well as peers from scouting and his school. He credits old maps of Fairfield County with helping to get the project started and to speed things along. "I'd overlay present-day maps with the old maps, which helped a lot," he said.

It was also tricky to remove the overgrown weeds and little trees without disturbing the historic graves. He's especially grateful that the Town of Weston sent a truck to the site when they were engaged in brush removal to haul away the debris – which was quite extensive.

For Chiamonte, the work hasn't ended. "Another cemetery in Weston needs work, and I'm coordinating with the Town and the Historical Society there to help out," he said.

Despite his love for history, Chiamonte is unsure of what he'll study after finishing high school. He also plans to remain involved with Troop 15 after he achieves his Eagle designation. Unlike many Scouts, his involvement is relatively recent.

"I joined Troop 15 when I was in sixth grade," Chiamonte said, "and plan to stay involved as long as I can, to help the troop. I love those guys!" ■

Redding's Big Outdoors: Walk back in time / continued from page 1

more Redding Land Trust events in the future."

Attendees were immersed in the details of the 1778-1779 winter encampment, with the true costs of the struggle for independence illustrated.

"It is important to understand the incredible suffering the soldiers encamped there were forced to endure. General Samuel Parsons wrote to General Washington on December 23, 1778, that the 800 men in the Connecticut 1st Brigade were 'destitute' and that many of them hadn't been issued a blanket since their enlistment," Nelson explained. "Colonel Moses Hazen reported that 165 of the men in his 2nd Canadian Regiment at Camp

Putnam were deemed unfit for duty because of their lack of shoes. The irony of the situation was that the Continental Army supply depot at Danbury had many of these items, but the snows were so bad that December that teamsters were unable to get their wagons through to deliver them."

The hike was only one part of Redding's America 250 programming, much of which is leading up to a May 30 concert at Joel Barlow High School featuring Charles Ives's *Three Places in New England* (in which Putnam's Redding encampment is featured) and other patriotic music performed by the Greater Bridgeport Symphony Orchestra and Barlow student musicians.

"Bruce, Brent, and Ellery did an excellent job sharing the rich history of the park with everyone," said Sean McNamara, a Redding's America 250 organizer. "The hike was a perfect way to kick off our 'Redding250' celebrations and connect people with our town's deep Revolutionary War roots. We wanted participants to experience the actual historic landscape while learning how Charles Ives captured that spirit in his music."

To learn about upcoming local America 250 events, see the Sentinel's weekly Calendar of Events, or visit redding250.com or marktwainlibrary.org/250amntl. ■

Minerals and crystals dazzle at Library

By Lisa Goldstein



Photo by Lisa Goldstein

The gallery in the Mark Twain Library rotunda is sparkling with a vast array of stones and crystals – from the pink hues of rose quartz and the twinkling of rainbow amethyst to the swirls of agate and the marbles of jasper. The exhibit, "Art from the Earth: A Collection," is on loan from Jennifer Pagan, who has been fascinated by colorful rocks and minerals since she was a child. "Garden quartz literally look like tiny landscapes trapped inside a crystalline prison," Pagan said. "I could literally look into each piece, studying them over and over again, each time finding something new."

Pagan's collection fills the glass cases that line the rotunda with detailed descriptions of the different minerals, the patterns specific to each stone as well as where they can be found. The display is as much a geography lesson as a science one, with a little history thrown in as well.

Pagan amassed her collection over many years, collecting here

and there, keeping only enough to pack away each time she moved on to other hobbies or obligations as she became an adult. Then Covid hit and she rediscovered her childhood passion, adding to her collection by connecting with an online community of collectors and vendors.

"At first, I collected a little of everything, always looking for new materials, new shapes, and carvings. After a few years, I became more cognizant of quality and the minerals I gravitated towards more. Now, I can say that I have come to have a focus on what I collect."

Her favorites are sea jasper and ocean jasper, which feature many different colors, as well as inclusion quartz and the agates. Pagan teaches preschool and art classes and works as a behavior technician for children with special needs. She is thrilled to be able to share her collection with the Redding community.

"Our Earth has produced the most beautiful, colorful, and glittery creations beyond what we may have imagined as being possible. Earth is a master artist, and it is worth admiring what it has created over millions and billions of years!" she said.

"Art from the Earth: A Collection," will be on display at the Library through the end of May during Library hours. ■

Learn more at marktwainlibrary.org



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Redding Board of Education talks last day of school, capital items, and more continued from page 1

2026 to recognize Juneteenth. The district has opted to reschedule June 19 as a half-day and include Juneteenth programming, similar to the way the schools recognize Veterans Day. This adjustment will allow the last day of school to remain on Monday, June 22.

Capital plan adjustments

At the Board of Finance meeting on March 23, the Board of Finance asked the Redding Board of Education to remove or lower the cost of two capital plan projects. One was the refurbishing of the fifth-grade bathrooms at John Read Middle School. The other was replacing the student lockers at John Read Middle School.

The Board of Education removed \$80,778 from its 2026-27 capital improvement plan by removing the fifth-grade bathroom refurbishment. In addition, the Board was able to lower the cost of the locker replacements from \$88,774 to \$70,000 by shelving the replacement of the section of the blue lockers in the far hallway and on the second floor. Laura Worsz, Chair of the Redding Board of Education, and Superintendent Dr. Jason McKinnon went to the middle school and counted lockers

to ensure that every student would have one.

Odyssey of the Mind financial support

The Redding Park and Recreation Odyssey of the Mind team is made up of Redding Elementary School and John Read Middle School students. The team recently came in second place in its division, which secured them a place in the World Finals at Iowa State University in Ames, IA next month. The Board of Education will cover the registration costs for each student, which is \$775 and includes room, board, and participation. For the team of six, the total will be \$4,650.

The team will still need to raise a significant amount of money through fundraising, however. Additional costs will include travel expenses, coaches' registration, and chaperones (since the children are younger students, one parent must attend for each student). To lower costs, the adults will stay in the on-campus housing with the students. For community members interested in supporting the team, a GoFundMe page has been set up: gofundme.com/f/odyssey-of-the-mind-team-to-world-finals. ■

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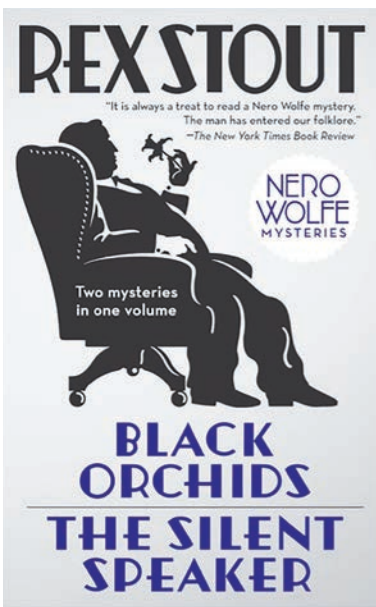
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BOOK REVIEW

Black Orchids *By Rex Stout / 496 pages / Bantam / \$16.00*



Rex Stout wrote 33 novels and 39 novellas or short stories between 1934 and 1975 (the year he died, at 88 years old). Stout was nominated as best mystery writer of the 20th century. Each volume of the Bantam Rex Stout series presents two complete novels. All are worth remembering if you are looking for a proven noir detective series. In this case, the brilliant detective mind belongs to Stout's creation, Nero Wolfe, who rarely leaves his Manhattan townhouse. Rather, he colorfully dispatches a facilitator, Archie Goodwin (also the narrator), to do Wolfe's legwork and write reports about what he senses and sees in these encounters. Meanwhile, intellectually importunate Wolfe remains at home, living the curated life of an epicurean.

Reading any of Rex Stout's Nero Wolfe novels and stories, you enter a 20th-century world of crime, cops, dames, creeps, roadsters, and

the vernacular of the street: sentences like: "...[she was] the most successful party-arranger for the upper brackets that New York had ever had..." Eventually murdered, of course. And, as in most detective/crime fiction, the police investigator is presented as a force of crude inquiry, who must be circumvented when possible, and enlightened in the end (to his chagrin and amazement). *Black Orchids* tells a story of separate murders that don't quite overlap, though Rex Stout brings it all together. Here, murder at a flower show (of all improbable locations), and the killing of a high-end party-arranger by extravagant means, highlight challenges to the instincts and intellect of Nero Wolfe.

In detective/crime novels, the narrator is frequently of the street or neighborhood, and reflects those attitudes and speech. As narrator in this series, Archie Goodwin provides familiar attitudes of detective fiction. Goodwin reacts humanly to his boss's ample and nearly comic profile. Rex Stout, as author, made an end run around convention by highlighting Nero Wolfe's intellectual superiority using Archie Goodwin's narrative voice. Archie lives in Wolfe's townhouse and does the legwork. Nero Wolfe remains inaccessible and housebound as a petulant genius. It is a winning formula. The reader ignores social objections as quaint to the time (in the way actual living circumstances of film comedians of the day were ignored, like Abbot and Costello or Hope and Crosby). Today's reader believes in these social

constructions without criticism; Stout's success with Nero Wolfe allows it. And so, in addition to bringing reading pleasure, older established detective fiction brings historical zeitgeist into focus (and not without a certain, sometimes alarming charm).

Rex Stout is primary among a group of well-regarded American writers from the 1930s through the 1970s that includes familiar names like Raymond Chandler, Dashiell Hammett, J.D. MacDonald, and others. These writers come from all backgrounds and their lives were unique to the times. But their characters were strong and their novels are familiar adventures. Even new readers can approach these stories with familiarity and expectations they know will be met.

And so, Rex Stout created enduring characters in Nero Wolfe, a housebound and rather epicene gourmand, and Archie Goodwin, who carries the burden of the street with him. Wolfe is the mind and Goodwin sets the tone. Archie Goodwin speaks and writes in a genre-defining manner: "My nose is good and I knew that odor," or "I was leaving on an errand, and walked to the garage on Tenth Avenue and got the roadster...then I went to a telephone booth in a drugstore at the corner..."

Rex Stout lived until his death at his home, High Meadow, in Danbury, Connecticut. His sister, Ruth Stout, renowned for her gardening books, lived in Redding. ■

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

LIBRARY CORNER

Balancing access and sustainability

By Erin Shea Dummeyer

Hoopla is a streaming platform that allows anyone with a library card and a WiFi connection instant free access to digital media. But our savviest Hoopla users will have noticed that at Mark Twain Library, we recently reduced our monthly borrowing limit from 10 borrows per month to four. This change reflects a careful effort to balance access, sustainability, and service for the entire Redding community.

Unlike some other digital resources, Hoopla operates on a pay-per-use model. This means the Library is charged each time an item is borrowed – whether it's listened to or watched or not. As Hoopla has grown in popularity (which is wonderful to see!), these costs have risen significantly. Simply put, the more it's used, the more it costs.

While we are committed to offering a wide range of digital content, we also have a responsibility to manage our budget thoughtfully. Library funding must stretch across many services: maintaining our physical collections, supporting programs for all ages, providing technology access, and keeping the building in tip-top shape. Without adjusting Hoopla limits, the increasing costs could impact these other essential services.

By reducing the monthly borrowing limit, we can continue to offer Hoopla as part of our digital collection without risking cuts elsewhere. It's a way of sharing resources more equitably, ensuring

that access remains available to as many patrons as possible throughout the month. As it currently stands, we spend about the same amount of money on our physical collection as we do on our digital collection, which feels like the right path given that our users read in both formats.

So, what can a Hoopla user do to cope with this change? I recommend being discerning before tapping that "borrow" button. You can see how many stars a book has been rated by other Hoopla users, read its synopsis, or look up the book separately in your Amazon app and read a sample. Hoopla also offers a "Bonus Borrows" program that is a curated collection released during the last seven days of each month featuring items that don't count toward your monthly limit. Make sure to also look at the "Binge-Pass" section which has featured collections that will count only as one borrow. I also recommend checking out Libby, Kanopy, or the Palace Project to see if there is content on those apps that you may be interested in. Good luck, and happy digital reading. ■

Erin Shea Dummeyer is Director, Mark Twain Library



Celebrate America's 250th Birthday

Join us for cocktails and a screening of the Academy Award-winning film, *Glory* (1989), the heroic true story of the Massachusetts 54th Regiment, whose courage inspired the powerful first movement of Charles Ives's *Three Places in New England*.

WHEN:
April 23 at 7:00 PM

WHERE
Greenwood Features, 269 Greenwood Avenue, Bethel, CT
7:00 PM – Cocktails & Conversation
8:00 PM – Film screening

TICKET PRICE: \$30
Includes cocktail hour & movie screening; drink and snack included!

All proceeds benefit the Redding Celebrates America 250 Concert on May 30, featuring Charles Ives's music performed by the Greater Bridgeport Symphony — joined by talented students from Joel Barlow High School — in a special educational and community celebration of our nation's 250th anniversary right here in Connecticut!

Please support this inspiring local event that brings professional musicians and students together. Donations appreciated — join us for history, heroism, and American music!

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MUSIC NOTE

Need a way to keep your toddler entertained in the car?

A music teacher from Redding has an award-winning podcast that may do the trick | By Justin Reynolds



Photo courtesy of Carly Bickoff

A Redding native's music-themed podcast for toddlers and preschoolers is now a Webby honoree.

Earlier this month, *Miss Carly's Car Rides* earned the accolade in the Kids & Family category at the 30th Annual Webby Awards, which recognize "excellence on the internet."

The brainchild of Carly Bickoff (née Kulawitz), *Miss Carly's Car Rides* is the only independently produced podcast to earn the honoree distinction. Bickoff is in great company; the other honoree in her category was Paw Patrol.

"I'm a music teacher by trade," Bickoff said. "I've been doing it for almost 20 years. It's all I've ever done. I went to college and grad school for it."

Bickoff owns and operates Saddle River Song, a Bergen County,

New Jersey-based business that teaches music and movement to babies, toddlers, and preschoolers. She travels across the county, holding classes where she usually plays guitar while the little ones keep time with egg shakers, maracas, and tambourines.

During the pandemic, Bickoff had just had her second child and wanted to pivot to engage an audience in the digital world.

"The kids still wanted to hang out with me," she said. "They'd say, 'We miss your music classes.'"

And lo, *Miss Carly's Car Rides* was born.

The podcast — which includes songs, stories, and seasonal topics — aims to keep toddlers and preschoolers engaged and relaxed during car trips. Episodes come out once a month and are available on major streaming platforms. While

most podcast listeners live in the United States, Bickoff also has fans in Canada and, as of just recently, Australia.

"Apple shows you where people are listening in from," she said. "I just got a subscription from Australia the other day, which is great."

Bickoff now lives in New Jersey with her husband and two kids; her parents, Carrie and Harvey Kulawitz, still live in Redding and are actively involved in the community.

Bickoff developed a lifelong love of music growing up in Redding. For her, teachers Tom Cruciani at John Read Middle School, Chris Breault at Joel Barlow High School, and private clarinet instructor Kathryn Taylor Kloss left a lasting impression. But her father, a jazz pianist, has had the most influence on her musical journey.

"Music is just so good for the soul," Bickoff said. "It makes you feel good. It provides such a connection between people as the universal language. Especially being a parent — I just love the way that my kids light up when they hear music. It's just so calming for them, a true source of joy."

With the Webby recognition in her pocket, Bickoff has her sights set on getting her podcast licensed by a media company.

"Right now, I'm in the early stages of pitching to companies like Audible Kids, Pinna, and Tinkercast," she said. ■

For more information, visit misscarlyscarrides.com

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WHY REDDING?

Golf pro finds a perfect fit

By Pamela Brown



Photos courtesy Ian Orr

Ian Orr, who moved to Redding in 2021, is the new head golf pro at Redding Country Club.

Ian Orr felt like he made a hole-in-one when he decided to move to Redding.

"We couldn't be happier with our choice to move to Redding, the community, and the friends we have made," said Orr, who was recently named the new PGA Head Golf Professional at Redding Country Club.

For Orr and his family — Jennifer, his wife of 11 years whom he met in college, and their son and daughter — their move from Norwalk to Redding in 2021 has offered them a rewarding quality of life.

"Norwalk didn't have the small-town feel like Redding does. You never ran into your neighbors at the grocery store or out to dinner. I grew up in a smaller town, so I like the feel of Redding much better. My wife and I were attracted to Redding because it is spaced out, it has great schools, and we live in a tight-knit community."

Orr said his family has made several new meaningful connections since moving to town. "Our neighborhood has wonderful families. We made friends shortly after moving and socialize frequently with a lot of the families around us who have children around a similar age as ours," he said. "Any time we have had to rely on our friends and neighbors they have been there for us no questions asked and we try to do the same."

Orr's home is located on two acres. "That's just enough space for a little bit of privacy without feeling secluded. We can play ball in the yard or we can sit around a fire. The amount of land we have allows the kids to run around outside and affords us some tranquility at the end of a busy day," said Orr, adding he's come to accept many of the furry visitors on his land. "The amount and diversity of wild-life have been something we have learned to love."

Orr's children both attend Redding Elementary School, another place that has made Redding feel like home. "The teachers and staff have all been fantastic. We have been pleasantly surprised with the quality of schools here," he said.

Orr and his family appreciate the many outdoor activities Redding offers, including one of their favorite hikes at Great Ledge, and frequent many of businesses and restaurants in Georgetown.

After taking over as head golf professional at Redding Country Club in January, Orr has welcomed the opportunity to get to know even more people in town. "When I mentioned that the people and community of Redding are fantastic, which was one of the reasons we moved to town, that feeling applies to the Country Club as well. They are welcoming to families, including mine, and that is extremely important to me," said Orr, who hails from the Catskill Mountains of New York and is a graduate of Coastal Carolina University. His golf career has spanned many prestigious courses including the Monster Golf Club and Grossinger's Resort in the Catskills, as well as the Country Club of Darien, and he enjoyed a long-term tenure at Westchester Country Club in Rye, New York. He also continues to compete in local and regional tournaments. Now, he appreciates working closer to home. "It's great to be able to relate to the membership who share the community," said Orr.

Moving to Redding has given Orr and his family a fulfilling place to set down long-term roots, though they have their sights set on the horizon as well.

"I truly enjoy spending time with my family," he said, "We love to travel and have many places still on our list." ■

Middle School Programs

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Register at newpondfarm.org

Why is CT bottle redemption up for debate again? / continued from page 1

10 cents from distributors and sell them to consumers with a 10-cent deposit fee. When consumers redeem their bottles, they get the money back from retailers and redemption centers, which in turn get 10 cents back from the distributor when they return the sorted bottles.

But distributors say they are spending more money redeeming bottles than they have been paid for. According to the State's Department of Revenue Services, nearly 12% of wholesalers reported paying out more redemptions than they collected in deposits in 2025, totaling a loss of \$11.3 million. Any

bottles consumers don't redeem are considered forfeited. Distributors pay a portion of that cash to the State's general fund and a portion to retailers and redemption centers as a fee (about 3 cents per bottle) that they use to operate their recycling rooms, and in some cases turn a profit.

What are lawmakers doing now?

In the 2024 session, lawmakers made it illegal to knowingly redeem bottles from another state. And in 2025, they passed an emergency certification bill to crack down further, raising fines, allowing local police to go after out-of-state violators

and requiring redemption centers to keep track of bulk drop-offs.

In 2026, two additional bills have passed to the Senate floor, one hoping to bring the incentive back down to 5 cents if the redemption rate exceeds 100% and the other to overhaul the system by putting the burden on distributors.

In a press conference last week, House Speaker Matt Ritter, D-Hartford, said he did not want to see the redemption rate moved down to 5 cents this session.

"We'll give it some time to see where it works its way through," Ritter said.

Where do bottles go once redeemed?

Once containers are sorted and cleaned, distributors funnel them into recycling streams. Aluminum cans are shredded into scrap metal and recycled into raw aluminum to be made into cans again. Glass is crushed and made into new containers or construction materials. PET plastic can be used in new bottles and packaging.

Single stream recycling can prevent contamination from other materials, increasing the quality of the recycled materials.

Connecticut has gradually been

expanding the types of containers that are redeemable. In 2009, the legislature added bottled water to the existing list of soda and beer. And in 2021, the legislature included hard seltzers, hard ciders, juices, coffee and energy drinks.

Nips are currently not eligible for redemption, but consumers pay a 5-cent surcharge that goes towards environmental efforts in the town where they were purchased. ■

This article originally appeared in CT Mirror

THE NATURAL WORLD

Birding is more than a hobby – it's a public health tool | *By Erin Mahoney*



Photo by Erin Mahoney

A palm warbler in Avon last April.

I stood along the Platte River in central Nebraska at sunrise, watching tens of thousands of sandhill cranes lift off into the sky at once. The sound was overwhelming – loud, ancient, impossible to ignore. For a few minutes, everything else fell away. No notifications. No to-do lists. Just motion, rhythm, and sky.

It felt like stepping into something much bigger than myself.

But what stayed with me most when I returned home to Connecticut was this: you don't have to travel across the country to experience that same sense of connection. You can find it here.

In a quiet marsh at dawn. Along the shoreline at Hammonasset. In a stand of trees during spring migration, when warblers move through almost invisibly unless you stop long enough to notice them. The scale may be smaller, the moments quieter – but the effect can be just as powerful. And increasingly, that matters.

We are living in a time of constant input. Notifications,

deadlines, and a steady stream of information compete for our attention from the moment we wake up. Even outside of work, many of us struggle to fully disconnect. The result is a baseline level of stress and mental fatigue that feels almost normal.

Birding offers a simple interruption to that pattern. It shifts your attention outward. Instead of cycling through thoughts, you start listening – for a call, a rustle in the leaves, a flicker of movement overhead. It encourages patience in a way that doesn't feel forced. You're not trying to "clear your mind." You're just paying attention to something else. And that subtle shift can make a meaningful difference.

Unlike many wellness solutions, birding doesn't require a membership, a subscription, or even specialized equipment. You don't need to be an expert. You don't need to travel far. In Connecticut, access to nature is built into our communities – parks, preserves, coastlines, and even neighborhood trails offer opportunities to engage with the natural world in small but impactful ways.

That accessibility is part of what makes birding uniquely valuable. Local organizations like the Hartford Audubon Society help make that connection even easier. Through guided walks, educational programs, and community events, they create entry points for people who might not otherwise see themselves as "birders." Just as importantly, they foster a sense of shared experience – reminding people that engaging with nature doesn't have to be a solitary pursuit.

At a time when conversations around mental health often focus on treatment – which is critically important – we should also be paying attention to prevention and everyday practices that support well-being. Birding is one of those practices. It's low-cost, widely available, and adaptable to any level of interest or ability.

It also builds something that's harder to quantify but equally important: connection. Connection to place. To seasonality. To the idea that there are cycles happening around us that don't depend on our productivity or performance. Migration, in particular, is a reminder of continuity – of systems that move forward regardless of how busy or disconnected we might feel.

You don't have to be deeply knowledgeable about birds to feel that. You just have to notice.

This spring, as migration returns to Connecticut, there is an opportunity to engage with something that is both simple and profound. Whether it's pausing during a walk to listen more closely, looking up when you hear something unfamiliar, or visiting a local park with no agenda beyond being outside, the entry point is low. The benefits, however, can be meaningful.

In a moment when so much of our attention is fragmented, birding offers a rare alternative: a way to be present without pressure, engaged without expectation, and connected without needing to go far at all.

Sometimes, that's exactly what we need. ■

This opinion piece originally appeared in CT Mirror

Ask The Redding Gardener

By Sean McNamara



Dear Sean, I am worried about my holly tree. Please see the picture. – Maria

Well Maria, thanks for sending the photo – I can see why you're concerned. That big, upright evergreen standing tall in front of the house has definitely taken a beating from this past long, cold Connecticut winter. It looks a bit scorched and thin right now, like it spent too many nights outside without a proper coat.

I believe what you've got there is a Nellie R. Stevens Holly (Ilex x 'Nellie R. Stevens'). It's a popular hybrid (a cross between English holly and Chinese holly) known for its fast growth, dense pyramidal shape, glossy dark green leaves, and those classic spiny edges. A lot of folks around here plant it for a quick, handsome privacy screen or a striking focal point – and it usually looks great doing exactly that.

The brown, crispy look you're seeing is classic winter burn. These hollies are a bit better suited to milder southern climates (they're rated for zones 6–9), so when we get a tough New England winter with cold winds, bright sun, and frozen ground, the leaves keep losing moisture while the roots can't pull up enough water to replace it. The result? The foliage dries out and turns brown, especially on the

exposed sides. It's not insects or disease – it's just the plant telling us it had a rough season.

The good news is that they're tougher than they appear right now. Most Nellie R. Stevens hollies recover nicely once spring really kicks in and they start pushing fresh new growth. The burned leaves will eventually drop or can be pruned off, and the new foliage usually fills things back in and greens the plant up again by early summer.

Here's what I'd suggest to help it along:

- Once the ground thaws a bit, give it a light feeding with HollyTone (or a similar fertilizer for acid-loving evergreens). It'll provide some gentle nutrients to support that new growth.

- If winter burn shows up regularly at your place, we can talk about spraying it with an anti-transpirant in December next year. That puts a thin protective coating on the leaves to help cut down on moisture loss during the coldest months.

Bottom line, Maria: Don't start chopping away just yet. Give the tree a little time, some extra TLC, and it should bounce back looking much better once the new growth comes in. These hollies have been standing guard in landscapes for years – they just need a bit of northern-gardener support now and then. ■

*Happy (mostly green) spring,
Sean, The Redding Gardener*

P.S. Have more gardening questions, winter damage worries, or any other critter or plant puzzles? Feel free to drop me an e-mail anytime (sean@reddingnursery) or stop by Redding Nursery at 73 Hill Road – I'm always happy to chat and help figure things out together

Open Space Photography Show

FINAL WEEKEND TO ENTER!

Photos can be of any open space in Redding

Cash prizes in 3 categories: adult, high school, and young photographer



Novice or pro, submit by April 20 at reddinglandtrust.org/photoshow



Cam Gould - Winter Reflections - Saugatuck Falls Natural Area

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

\$ = fee applies
R = registration required

This Week's Featured Events

Celebrate Earth Day: Mount Trashmore on the Town Green

Saturday, April 18
9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
Town-wide roadside litter pick-up, visit Town Green for vests, bags, and road assignment
Town Green
100 Hill Road
reddingct.gov/events

Blast Off! Cub Scout Meeting

Tuesday, April 21
6:30 p.m.
Build and launch stomp rockets – all interested in Cub Scouts welcome
Redding Elementary School Cafeteria
33 Lonetown Road
facebook.com/ReddingPack118

Let Your Groove Bloom: Dance Party

Thursday, April 23
4:00 p.m. - 6:00 p.m.
First annual spring dance party, live music, light bites, BYOB
Ages 35+
Redding Community Center
37 Lonetown Road
E-mail studio06896@gmail.com
R

Cocktail Party and Screening of *Glory*

Thursday, April 23
7:00 p.m.
Fundraiser event for *Redding's America 250* concert
Greenwood Features
269 Greenwood Avenue
Bethel
redding250.com
\$, R

AMERICA 250

Wednesday, April 22

250 Years of American Music – Part II: Copland and Bernstein
7:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.
In-person and virtual event with musicologist Gil Harel
Mark Twain Library and Zoom
439 Redding Road
marktwinlibrary.org
R

Thursday, April 23

Cocktail Party and Screening of *Glory*
7:00 p.m.
Fundraiser event for *Redding's America 250* concert
Greenwood Features
269 Greenwood Avenue
Bethel
redding250.com
\$, R

Thursday, April 30

Charles Ives, His Life and Music
7:00 p.m.
Learn about Charles Ives and his musical legacy and the ties to the upcoming May 30 concert celebration put on by Redding's America 250
Mark Twain Library
439 Redding Road
redding250.com
R

ARTS

Thursday, March 19 – Monday, April 20

Submissions open for Redding Land Trust Photography Show
Submit photos of Redding's open space for a chance to be showcased in juried show in June
reddingctlandtrust.org/photoshow
\$, R

Thursday, April 16

National Poetry Month – with Ira Joe Fisher
7:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.
Hear selections from *The Birth of Snow*
Mark Twain Library
439 Redding Road
marktwinlibrary.org
R

CHILDREN | TEENS

Sunday, April 19

Take a Hike! (Grades 5-12)
1:00 p.m. – 2:30 p.m.
Outdoor adventure group
New Pond Farm Education Center
101 Marchant Road
newpondfarm.org
\$, R

Tuesday, April 21

Blast Off! Cub Scout Meeting
6:30 p.m.
Build and launch stomp rockets – all interested in Cub Scouts welcome
Redding Elementary School Cafeteria
33 Lonetown Road
facebook.com/ReddingPack118

FOOD | WINE

Thursday, April 23

A Wine & Spirits Showcase
5:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.
Presented by Redding Wine & Spirits and Redding Country Club, enjoy 80+ wines and spirits and light bites
Redding Country Club
109 Lonetown Road
E-mail frank@reddingwineandspirits.com
\$, R

Saturday, May 2

Tickets on sale now: Troop 15 Spaghetti Dinner
5:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.
West Redding Firehouse
306 Umpawaug Road
reddingtroop15.org
\$

HEALTH | WELLNESS

Saturday, April 18

Healthy Kids Day
10:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.
Community event with activities, vendors, and more
Riverbrook Regional YMCA
404 Danbury Road
Wilton
wiltonymca.org

NATURE

Saturday, April 18

Community Hiking Club: Poliak Preserve
11:00 a.m.
Visit a beaver lodge on this hike led by Kevin Tschudi
Registration closes April 16
Poliak Preserve
reddingctlandtrust.org/hikingclub
R

Saturday, April 18

Celebrate Earth Day: Mount Trashmore on the Town Green
9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
Town-wide roadside litter pick-up, visit Town Green for vests, bags, and road assignment
Town Green
100 Hill Road
reddingct.gov/events

Monday, April 20

Keep the Redding Parade Path Relevant
11:30 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.
Redding Garden Club monthly meeting with light lunch and presenter Alice Smith
Redding Community Center
37 Lonetown Road
reddinggardenclub.org/monthly-meetings
\$

SPECIAL PROGRAMS

Thursday, April 23

Let Your Groove Bloom: Dance Party
4:00 p.m. - 6:00 p.m.
First annual spring dance party, live music, light bites, BYOB
Ages 35+
Redding Community Center
37 Lonetown Road
E-mail studio06896@gmail.com
R

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
cibcredding.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, April 17
Virtual Yom Hashoah Commemoration
7:00 p.m.
templebnaichaim.org

MEETINGS

Thursday, April 16

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

Monday, April 20

Park and Recreation Commission Special Meeting
6:00 p.m.
Redding Community Center
37 Lonetown Road

Monday, April 20

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

Tuesday, April 21

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

Wednesday, April 22

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

Thursday, April 23

Annual Town Budget Meeting
3:00 p.m.
Town Hall / Hearing Room
100 Hill Road

Friday, April 24

Region 9 BoE Select Committee on Academic Rigor, Standards, and Grading
8:30 a.m.
Joel Barlow High School / Room A108
100 Black Rock Turnpike

Friday, April 27

OPEB Trust Board
6:00 p.m.
Virtual

Monday, April 27

Board of Finance
7:30 p.m.
Town Hall / Conference Room and Virtual
100 Hill Road and Zoom

Tuesday, April 28

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

*See meeting agendas and minutes at reddingct.gov/agendas-minutes



In celebration of **SPRING & EARTH DAY** at the first annual **DANCE PARTY!**

at **STUDIO 06896**

Thursday, April 23
4-6 pm

The Redding Community Center,
37 Lonetown Rd.

Celebrate Mother Earth along with other like-minded "movers and shakers" and have fun with music from the '60s to today! Age 35+

DJ; Light bites will be served; BYOB; Dress is Spring chic.

Suggested Donation is \$10
RSVP to studio06896@gmail.com



COMPASS

Join me for our, "Let Your Groove Bloom Dance Party!"

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Licensed Real Estate Salesperson
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 Debbie.Gore@cbmoves.com



268 Umpawaug Rd, Redding | \$849,000
 Listed By Marilyn Sloper | 203.770.6240
 Marilyn.Sloper@cbmoves.com



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