

## Residents turn out for No Kings protests

By Jessie Wright

Dozens of Redding residents attended No Kings protests around the area on Saturday, October 18. Roughly 40 protests against the Trump administration were held in Connecticut that day, with organizers reporting over 12,000 attendees in Hartford and thousands more throughout the state.

Redding’s Democratic Town Committee encouraged people to attend the protest in Ridgefield’s Veterans Park, organized by a coalition of community groups. Several hundred attended. Susan Auslander of 100 Redding Road organized a “super seniors” No Kings protest at the pedestrian bridge in Branchville, drawing over three dozen participants, many of whom are in their 80s and 90s. Others attended the protest at the Municipal Center in Bethel, where weekly protests of the Trump administration have been taking place for seven months at P.T. Barnum Square.

See page 10 for images from these local No Kings protests. ■



Photo by Faith Hsu

A colorful leaf spotted on a recent walk along Seventy Acre Road reflects one Redding resident’s love of fall. If you have a photo you’d like to see featured here, e-mail [editor@reddingsentinel.org](mailto:editor@reddingsentinel.org).

## Board of Selectmen review proposed zoning citations

Changes would introduce fines for violations | By Rocco Valluzzo

Having received a positive referral from the Zoning Commission, the Board of Selectmen discussed proposed changes to the Town’s Zoning Regulations with respect to citations, procedures, and fines at its Monday, October 20 meeting.

Connecticut statutes allow municipalities to issue fines for zoning violations provided they first have a local ordinance in place. While most area towns have such ordinances, Redding currently does not.

First Selectwoman Julia Pemberton has reviewed these changes with Town Attorney Steve Stafstrom to make sure the ordinance is in the correct and legal format. The changes also present an opportunity to include inland wetlands and water courses.

According to Zoning Enforcement Officer Mike Moran, several area municipalities make use of zoning citations. However, they are not used in a vacuum.

“It’s an additional tool in the enforcement process,” he said. “It doesn’t need to be the only solution, but it can be another solution. It can be helpful in certain circumstances, I believe.”

Moran noted that many of the violation inspections he conducts come from incoming complaints. The first step in rectifying the situation is always to write a letter informing the property owner that they have a potential violation.

“I give them a chance to prove to me that it’s not a violation,” he said. “I like to collect at least two or three inspections worth of evidence, then I will issue a first notice of

violation. If I get no action, I will issue a second notice, which will include some timelines and also include what it would take to bring the property up to compliance, which is the goal. A citation is never the goal. Compliance is always the goal.”

If the situation is not resolved, the next step is to issue a cease-and-desist order. After that comes legal action.

Should the Board of Selectmen agree to move forward on the matter, it would send the proposed ordinance to a Special Town Meeting for a vote. If the ordinance is approved and enacted, it would be included in the Zoning Regulations, and it would be up to the Zoning Enforcement Officer to carry out the citations. ■

## REDDING’S BIG OUTDOORS

### If trees could talk

Oral history of the Little River Valley | By Laurie Heiss



Photo by Laurie Heiss

I’ve been here in this for valley for 325 seasons, more or less. After a couple of dozen seasons, there were a few new willows on the edges of this marsh where the creek from the ridge meets the small river. We shared the birds, but I was taller and had more branches than

the other willows. In the beginning, only the one farm sat to the south. A lot of those cows from the three barns, with two silos, used to come and visit me. I could see a long way up the hill toward the bright star and a long way toward the big water, across the dirt road. I could hear the gushes of a waterfall from over there after heavy rains. The newer willows and I grew pretty quickly, with our nearby ground spring and the creek. I’m proud that my reddish buds are always the first sign of spring, along with the skunk cabbage tips.

After a long while, two other homes were built on the hillside, and they shared a long, new driveway; only cars now. The horses have stopped plodding down and back up the dirt road in the distance. That road is smoother, busier, and louder now. On the sunset side of the river, the tall, straight trees were eventually higher than my top branches. The

farmer in the old farmhouse built a wood fence on my side of the creek. More willows, maples, tulip trees, oaks, and beeches quietly joined me. With more trees, I could see the horses walking on the driveway only here and there between the leaves, except in wintertime. But I could always hear them. Both of the families on the hillside have horses, but the friendly cows are all gone. One of those families brought mounds of sand to make a dressage field so there were horses and riders nearby. I listened to them all, and learned. I’m surrounded by a thicket of willows, marsh flowers, grasses, cattails, and shrubs. With the tall trees on the sunset side, darkness arrives earlier, but winters are cozier since I’m better protected from the breezes.

The family on the old farm includes a young boy called Connor and a smiling golden retriever who

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## New laws taking effect this month

E-bikes, towing, Sunday hunting

By Gabby DeBenedictis

Over seven dozen Connecticut laws concerning a range of issues, from regulations around e-bikes and helmets to hunting on Sundays, wholly or partially took effect on October 1.

Connecticut laws are passed by the General Assembly during the legislative session each year – this year’s ran from January 8 to June 4 – or in a special session. They typically take effect on January 1, July 1 or October 1. Here’s a look at some of the laws that recently have been implemented.

**Towing laws overhaul**

An overhaul of Connecticut’s century-old towing statutes takes several steps to make it harder to tow vehicles from private property and easier for drivers to retrieve their vehicles after a tow.

State law allows tow companies to begin the process of selling a towed vehicle with a value of \$1,500 or less after 15 days, among the shortest windows in the country. The new law still allows towing companies to start the sales process after 15 days, but they will now have to take more steps to give the owner a chance to claim the vehicle and the actual sale couldn’t go through until 30 days after the tow.

It also requires towing companies to accept credit cards and doesn’t allow them to tow vehicles immediately just because of an expired parking permit or registration. Vehicles can’t be towed from private property without notice unless they’re blocking traffic or fire hydrants or are parked in a handicapped accessible spot.

The bill was passed following an investigation by *The Connecticut Mirror* and *ProPublica* that showed how state towing laws have come to favor tow companies at the expense of vehicle owners.

A Connecticut Department of Motor Vehicles working group is poised to examine portions of the state’s towing law that range far beyond its original mandate, potentially leading to more extensive reforms.

**Sunday hunting**

As of October 1, Connecticut will permit hunting on Sundays – with some limitations.

The new law allows Sunday hunting but limits it to private property and prohibits any hunting within 40 yards of a blue-blazed or federally designated hiking trail. The bill also prohibits the hunting of migratory birds on Sundays.

Hunters fought unsuccessfully for decades to overturn the state’s ban on Sunday hunting, which they have described as the last of Connecticut’s historic “blue laws.” In 2015, lawmakers partially repealed the ban for bow hunters.

**Helmets**

A new law raises the age under which motorcycle drivers and passengers are required to wear a helmet from 18 to 21, with a minimum \$90 fine for infractions.

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# Life-changing, in more ways than one

## Students share their experience supporting Operation Smile

By Anne Young Albanese



Photo courtesy of Joel Barlow High School

Members of the Operation Smile Club, dedicated to improving the lives of children with cleft conditions.

Operation Smile is a global non-profit bridging the gap in access to essential surgeries and health care, starting with cleft surgery and comprehensive care. It provides medical expertise, training, mentorship, research, and care through its staff and volunteers around the world, working alongside local governments, other non-profits, and health systems.

Joel Barlow High School students have supported Operation Smile through the high school’s Operation Smile Club since 2015. In 2024, Barlow’s Club won Operation Smile’s Pillar of Advocacy Award, recognizing the school’s impact on the organization. This year, the Barlow Club’s Co-Presidents are Victoria Becker and Ryan Puglio. Both students have had the opportunity to travel internationally to work with patients and their families, with Becker spending two weeks in Madagascar and Puglio traveling to Honduras for eight days.

Becker traveled with a chaperone and other student program volunteers from around the United States. “Even before arriving in Madagascar, we could feel the love and connection that Operation Smile brings from meeting other volunteers in the airport from all around the world and creating relationships with them,” she said.

Student volunteers are an important part of Operation Smile in Madagascar. They educate and entertain patients and their families. Their duties may include teaching healthy practices such as proper handwashing, proper dental hygiene, hands-only CPR, burn care and prevention, and proper nutrition. Becker shared this anecdote about a burn care and prevention program that she led: “I had one woman raise her hand, and she had asked me about a scenario from her village. A young boy had suffered terrible burns across his face and neck from what I believe was boiling water. She told me that he had had them for a while, and they were only getting worse, leading me to believe they were infected. We talked it through, and in reflecting that conversation, I realized the true impact that what I was doing had. Through these teachings, I was giving people the power to help their communities and save lives.”

Becker was also involved in entertainment for patients and their families. She collected donations such as bubbles, crayons, coloring books, toys, and games, which allowed the students to help make a stressful week a little less challenging.

She helped in the patient village, pre-op, post-op, in the operating

room, and the room where patients wait for their procedures. When summing up her experience, Becker said, “On my program, there were 101 patients who received this life-changing surgery, and I know for certain that every single volunteer’s life was changed after an experience like the one I had.”

Puglio’s role in Honduras began with screening patients. With 300 patients traveling to Tegucigalpa, where Puglio was based, and only enough personnel to care for 100 patients per week, screening was necessary to determine who needed care first. Once the patients were screened, Puglio prepared patients for surgery and helped to relieve some of the patients’ and their families’ stress. He even had the opportunity to enter the operating room to watch procedures performed in real time.

“The experience was absolutely incredible and is truthfully hard to express with words. It opened my eyes to the gratitude and love and struggles of families in developing countries,” said Puglio. “While patients return to their home completely changed with a beautiful smile and hearts beaming with hope, I (also) returned home entirely anew. The program further extended my appreciation for the organization and enhanced my desire to become a surgeon in the future. It also taught me countless skills to possess and utilize throughout life.”

The Operation Smile club at Joel Barlow High School runs a variety of fundraisers throughout the year. In the past, the Club has hosted bake sales at sporting events and the Touch Down for Smiles event, where the Club raises money for every touchdown scored at football games. The Club is hoping to expand its fundraising activities into Redding this year. Becker and Puglio are exploring hosting a Bingo event at the Heritage Center as well as a benefit concert in the spring. Redding residents who are interested in supporting the Operation Smile Club can reach out to the Joel Barlow High School office at (203) 938-2508 ■

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# Five new courses added at Joel Barlow High School

By Anne Young Albanese



Though the “back-to-school” season has drawn to a close, some students at Joel Barlow High School are still covering fresh ground in five new courses that were added to the school’s offerings this year.

The first class was added to the Art Department. Art Experience is a one-credit class that runs for one semester, either in the fall or the spring. It introduces students to various art-making approaches, media, and skill-building exercises and projects. Students can create both two-dimensional and three-dimensional work. Areas explored include drawing, painting, printmaking, sculpture, and mixed media. An emphasis is placed on understanding how the art elements and design principles can be incorporated successfully into works of art. Self-reflection and art history are integrated throughout the semester.

The second class is Algebra Foundations. This course emphasizes pre-requisite Algebra skills, such as signed numbers, evaluating expressions using the order of operations, simplifying algebraic expressions, solving equations, and fundamental arithmetic skills involving percents, fractions, and decimals. It also covers algebraic topics such as multi-step equations, systems of linear equations, exponents, and polynomials. The course emphasizes the study skills that students will use in subsequent math courses. Note-taking skills and study techniques also are developed.

Another STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) course was added, Introduction to Data Science. It introduces students to the principles

associated with analyzing big data. Students use technology tools to learn basic data organization and manipulation along with appropriate visualization techniques, such as charts, maps, and dashboards. Students focus on hands-on practice as they develop the skills needed to interact with large data sets. The course highlights the practical and applicable math skills used in a real-world context that students can use beyond their school years.

Two science classes have also been added. Human Biology is available in the second semester in 2026. In future years, it can be taken as a one-semester or two-semester class. The class offers a foundational exploration of the human body’s inner workings, focusing on anatomical and medical terminology. This year, the spring semester will have students studying the circulatory, immune, digestive, respiratory, urinary, and endocrine systems. Next fall, students will study human anatomy and physiology, studying major tissue and organ systems. Students will use case studies, supplemental materials, and dissections to learn the material.

Scientific Research is the second new science class. It is an elective that is taken in addition to a student’s regular science class. The course can be taken as a one- or two-semester class. The first semester teaches students about scientific literature and methodology. The first semester is dedicated to developing a hypothesis; designing and defending a straightforward, logical procedure; and providing methods of analysis for interpreting findings. During the second semester, students implement their designed methodology from the previous semester’s research questions and evaluate their findings. Students demonstrate and explain their results through various methods, including a formal paper, poster pre-presentation, and oral presentation. Students will present their results to an audience and participate in a peer review of their research. ■

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# Curtains up on Almost, Maine

By Anne Young Albanese



The Joel Barlow High School theater program’s production of *Almost, Maine* will take place November 6 – 8 and promises a mix of laughs, tears, and reflection.

“Getting to direct this special show has been incredibly rewarding,” said Director Marcelle Morrisey. “Mr. Pohlen (Technical Director) and I left the readthrough with the biggest smiles on our faces. It captures the quiet magic of human connection... those small and unforgettable moments of love, loss, and hope. Watching the students bring these stories to

life with such a passion has been a really special experience. One of the things I love most about this play is how welcoming it is to audiences of all ages. It’s funny, heartfelt, and deeply relatable. I cannot wait until the community sees it and falls in love with this show, too.”

*Almost, Maine* is a comedy-drama, taking place in the mythical town of Almost in Maine. The show tells a story through nine short vignettes, all taking place in one evening under the aurora borealis. The play explores the joys and sorrows of love, loss, connection, and hope.

“[It] is a whimsical and heart-felt play,” said Morrisey. “The story takes place over a single winter night and unfolds through a series of loosely connected scenes where ordinary people find themselves in extraordinary moments, falling in, and out of, and back into love. It is for audiences of all ages.”

Ten students are performing in the show. Eso Ahiokhai will play East and Dave. Finn Bermingham will play Pete, Lendall, and Daniel (man). Lucia Ferrari will play Shelly and Rhonda. Grey Krois will be playing Jimmy and Phil. Saira Menon will play Deena and Hope. Annie Peters will play Glory, Marvalyn, and Suzette. Andrew Spindel-Smith will play Steve. Sassy Wood will play Gayle, Marci, and a waitress. Avery Young will play Ginette and Sandrine. Alexander Funk will be Pete’s understudy and part of the ensemble. Technical Director Pohlen works with a crew of 23 students on the technical aspects of the show.

Performances will take place in the Barlow auditorium at 100 Black Rock Turnpike on Thursday, November 6 at 7:00 p.m., Friday, November 7 at 7:00 p.m., and Saturday, November 8 at 2:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m. Tickets can be purchased online at [jbhs.booktix.com](http://jbhs.booktix.com) ■

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# ELECTION 2025

## Jill Cilo – Zoning Board of Appeals

Endorsed by Republican Town Committee | By Jessie Wright



Jill Cilo has held a number of roles in Redding throughout her more than three decades as a resident. She has served as both Vice

Chair and Chair of the Republican Town Committee, as a Justice of the Peace, and as either an alternate or member of the Zoning Board of Appeals for nine years.

**How long have you lived in Redding?**

I moved to Redding in 1993, having been attracted to its natural beauty and historic charm.

**What are some of the things you enjoy about living here?**

I enjoy its gorgeous terrain, open spaces, trails, reservoirs, abundant wildlife, and sense of community.

**Why would you be a good fit for this role in public office? What experiences or expertise will you draw from?**

I have been on the Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) for nine years, first as an appointed alternate and then as an elected official. Having worked with this team of intelligent ZBA Commissioners as well as my experience as a real estate paralegal for the last five-and-a-half years enables me to understand and interpret zoning ordinances to make decisions that are aligned with Redding’s current Zoning Regulations.

**Why are you hoping to serve another term?**

I moved to Redding for its open spaces, wooded areas, and peaceful environment, and I am committed to maintaining the integrity of our town’s natural beauty. The ZBA grants me the opportunity to hear appeals from residents and to consider authorizing variances, when warranted, without altering the look or charm of our town.

**What do you see as the top priorities facing the ZBA in the next three years?**

Questioning State-imposed zon-

ing and building mandates. Maintaining open space. Preserving Redding’s natural beauty and charm.

**What do you hope to accomplish in the upcoming term, and why?**

Redding’s abundance of mixed terrain can present unique challenges to homeowners when planning construction projects. As a ZBA Commissioner, I will apply Redding’s zoning ordinances and regulations to best address an individual’s appeal for a variance while preserving the integrity of Redding. ■

## Jonathan Hopkins – Zoning Board of Appeals

Endorsed by Democratic Town Committee | By Jessie Wright



One of the few non-incumbents in this year’s election, Jonathan Hopkins is bringing his years of professional experience in acoustics

and civic planning to his candidacy for the Zoning Board of Appeals. He also has conducted environmental noise studies and zoning reviews and provided *pro bono* support for non-profits opposing development projects.

**How long have you lived in Redding?**

I have lived in Redding for 16 years.

**What are some of the things you enjoy about living here?**

I love the quiet, the woods, the fresh air, the slow pace, and the other residents who moved here for similar reasons.

**Why would you be a good fit for this role in public office? What experiences or expertise will you draw from?**

I spend significant time in my job at an architecture/engineering design firm working with local zoning codes and boards all over the country for developments of various scales. I have worked with clients to seek approvals from various boards as well as appeal decisions. I believe this experience, tied with my shared love of small-town Redding, allows be to be great fit for this board.

**What got you interested in the Zoning Board of Appeals?**

I saw there was an opening and have been looking for a way I can give back to the town. I felt that this opportunity presented a good fit where I can utilize my professional experience for service of the community.

**What do you see as the top priorities facing the ZBA in the next three years?**

With ongoing studies for development in Georgetown, along Route 7, and elsewhere, along with surrounding towns seeing developer use of Connecticut’s 8-30g Land Use Statute, I could envision the possibility of unprecedented zoning appeals being possible in

the next three years. I believe my experience working on similar projects of scale allows me to work with others on the Board to help the town navigate these challenges.

**What do you hope to accomplish in the upcoming term, and why?**

I would hope to be able to continue to allow the Town to maintain the environment that many residents moved here to enjoy, as well as work effectively with others on the Board with shared goals. ■

## Roger E. Van Ausdal – Board of Finance

Endorsed by Democratic Town Committee | By Donna Christopher



Roger E. Van Ausdal is running as an incumbent on the Board of Finance. He moved to Redding over 30 years ago with his late wife, Sandra. They raised their family here, with their three children attending Redding schools. Sandra taught at Joel Barlow High School

for 20 years. Roger is active at First Church of Christ, Congregational, where he serves as Controllor and is the Treasurer of the Democratic Town Committee.

**How long have you lived in Redding?**

Since 1993.

**What are some of the things you enjoy about living here?**

I grew up in a small New England town a bit north of Boston. It had some of the same benefits. I enjoy the rural beauty. I enjoy biking. And at the same time, you’re close to busier areas, Ridgefield, Wilton. Two of my children live in New York City. I like the small-town feel and the combination.

**Why would you be a good fit for this role in public office? What experiences or expertise will you draw from?**

I have a degree in chemical engineering and an MBA from Rutgers. I mostly worked in sales and marketing and have a solid analytical background. I was on the Planning Commission. It was interesting, but it didn’t utilize my analytics background. I draw from my management expertise in my career. I worked primarily in the micro electronic business. I worked in sales for many years and have interpersonal skills.

**Why are you hoping to serve another term?**

I like it. I want to maintain what

we’ve done. We’ve been in a financially very good period, so that always makes things easier for a Board of Finance. We’ve had a very collegial group on the Board. The biggest expense is education, and I have a very strong interest in education. We have an excellent relationship with the Region 9 Board of Education and the Redding Board of Education. They communicate with us very well, take us on school tours. I want to maintain that.

**What do you see as the top priorities facing the Board of Finance in the next three years?**

The Wire Mill is a huge issue. I hope we as a Board of Finance can help facilitate the Wire Mill project

and keep that moving ahead. I’d like to play a key role in that. We also have a pretty significant Unassigned Fund Balance. We keep being cautioned by Rob Dean that we may have some expenses in the coming year associated with the Wire Mill. We will hold our powder here for upcoming expenses. Also, for the roads. As a biker, I think the roads in Redding are in decent shape.

**What do you hope to accomplish in the upcoming term, and why?**

Keep Redding’s healthy financial situation continuing. I don’t know what the future will bring in terms of the economy. ■

## Jenifer Wyss – Board of Finance

Endorsed by Republican Town Committee | By Donna Christopher



Jenifer Wyss was elected to the Board of Finance in 2019 and is seeking her second, six-year term. She has previously served on the Zoning Board of Appeals, has been a volunteer for the Mark Twain Library Book Fair, and is a past Board Member of Redding Neighbors & Newcomers. She is the Supervising Project Manager at the Financial Accounting Standards Board based in Norwalk.

**How long have you lived in Redding?**

I have lived in Redding since December 2013.

**What are some of the things you enjoy about living here?**

There are many enjoyable things about living in Redding – open space, natural beauty, the quietness and tranquility especially after a busy day at work, small-town charm, and sense of community among residents.

**Why would you be a good fit for this role in public office? What experiences or expertise will you draw from?**

I am a Certified Public Accountant (CPA) and have significant experience in accounting, which is an important skill set for a Board of Finance member. At my job, I spend a substantial amount of time

identifying and solving accounting and financial reporting problems, which starts by listening to and understanding the views of various types of stakeholders. These skills translate well for a role in public office.

**What got you interested in this role? Why are you hoping to serve another term?**

I became interested in the Board of Finance because I wanted to make a positive impact on my hometown. I love Redding, the beauty, the charm and most importantly, the community. Being a CPA, I was naturally drawn to a role on the Board of Finance.

There is still work to be done to make Redding an even better place to live. I really enjoyed my first term and want to continue to serve Redding.

**What do you see as the top priorities facing the Board of Finance in the next three years?**

As a Board of Finance member, one of our key issues is to balance the community’s needs and wants in a financially responsible manner. No matter what, we need to ensure long-term financial stability for the Town and the schools. A primary factor in ensuring long-term financial stability is planning for capital projects in the near and long-term and balancing those long-term capital projects with operating expenditures. That balance involves determining a prudent approach to maintaining a proper cash reserve, paying for the operating expenses and capital projects, yet keeping taxes as low as possible while continuing the services and offerings for the community.

Additionally, I would be remiss

not to mention the elephant in the room: the Wire Mill. The Wire Mill is a significant development opportunity, and at the same time, there are significant hurdles to overcome with the outstanding debt before meaningful development can occur. The Wire Mill is a top priority facing the Board of Finance, the Board of Selectmen, the Planning Commission, and others, for many years to come.

**What do you hope to accomplish in the upcoming term, and why?**

I hope (and expect) to continue working in an effective manner with my fellow Board of Finance members to balance the ever-increasing operating and capital needs of the Town and the schools, while minimizing the increase in taxes. ■



# ELECTION 2025

## Julia Pemberton – First Selectwoman

Endorsed by Democratic Town Committee | By Donna Christopher



Julia Pemberton has served as First Selectwoman since 2013, and is seeking her seventh two-year term. She spent a decade working in publishing and non-profit communications before her years of elected public service. She has three daughters who were raised in Redding and recently welcomed her first grandchild.

**How long have you lived in Redding?**  
I’ve been a Redding resident for 37 years.

**What are some of the things you enjoy about living here?**  
We found Redding when we

were looking for our first home and a place to raise a family. Redding had a reputation for good schools, and that’s what was most important to us then. It didn’t take long to really appreciate what made Redding special and unique among Fairfield County towns: open space, calm, and a small-town vibe. Those are the same things that I think continue to attract families to Redding today.

**Why would you be a good fit for this role in public office? What experiences or expertise will you draw from?**

My interest in government was formed early on. I was raised in a household that valued public service and where discussions of public policy were routine. By the time I got to college, I knew that I wanted to serve the public in some capacity. In Redding, with children in elementary school, the Board of Education was the place I could be most impactful. I served on the Region 9 Board of Education for Joel Barlow High School for eight years and then on the Board of Selectmen. With that experience, I decided to run for First Selectman in 2013. The First Selectman is a municipal CEO and, as with any business, experience and knowledge matter. But to govern

effectively, a person also needs to be able to connect with people and to listen, to maintain an open mind, and work with people you may not necessarily agree with to get to the heart of the issues that need resolving.

While in office, we’ve made improvements to virtually every aspect of Redding’s small-town government, and the Town is in excellent fiscal health. I am always looking to better meet the needs of the public. The knowledge and experience gained over my years in office, and as a 37-year resident, inform how I will continue to approach the role of First Selectwoman.

**Why are you hoping to serve another term?**

It is a great honor to serve the public, and I am grateful that I will have an opportunity to serve two more years in office. As I mentioned before, during my time in office we’ve made improvements in every aspect of local government, always seeking to provide excellent and efficient services. I continue to do this work because I believe that public service is the best way I can contribute to the quality of life we have here, planning wisely and with vision, to ensure that Redding’s future is built on solid ground.

**What do you see as the top priorities facing the Board of Selectmen in the next three years?**

The Board of Selectmen’s role is to superintend the concerns of the Town. The most impactful action we take as a Board is the development of the annual operating budget that supports government services and minimizes, as much as possible, the annual tax burden on citizens.

Preserve what we value, and plan for the future. The next two to three years could be challenging. Tip O’Neill, a larger-than-life figure of his time and Speaker of the House, said, “All politics is local.” However, government actions outside of Redding can have a local impact. Redding receives funding from the Federal and State governments to, for example, supplement our road maintenance budget, provide for residents who need support (heating oil comes to mind), aid in disaster recovery, and support public education. If these funding sources are reduced or eliminated, how we continue to fund these programs are issues the Selectmen will have to address in budget deliberations. The Board of Selectmen will continue to focus on a broad spectrum of quality-of-life issues.  
In addition, continued progress

at the Wire Mill, planning in Georgetown to improve our small business environment, developing a community vision for a walkable downtown, protecting the Town from mandates that don’t make sense for our community, advocating to reduce unfunded mandates that drive up costs at the local level with little benefit, public safety strategic planning, and a space needs study for the Redding Community Center, are among the many tasks and projects the Board will superintend during its next term.

**What do you hope to accomplish in the upcoming term, and why?**

All of the above. The Board of Selectmen has a regular meeting once a month, sometimes more if special meetings are required. The First Selectwoman is on the job every day, as the Town’s CEO, and I am accountable for progress and completion of the goals we establish as a Board, as well as attending to the everyday needs of citizens who visit Town Hall. It’s the most rewarding job I’ve ever had. Whether your family has been here for generations or you are new to Redding, I promise to listen and to incorporate your voices into a shared vision for a stronger Redding. We are all in this together. ■

## Diana Carlino – Selectwoman

Endorsed by Democratic Town Committee | By Donna Christopher



Diana Carlino was unanimously appointed to the Board of Selectmen in January 2025 to serve the rest of Peg O’Donnell’s term after O’Donnell stepped down due to a relocation to Bethel. Carlino is an attorney with experience in municipal governance, including elected positions for both the Town of Redding and Town of Bethel.

**How long have you lived in Redding?**  
I moved to Redding in 2016 from Bethel.

**What are some of the things you enjoy about living here?**  
Having grown up in North Salem, NY and attending the

University of Vermont, Redding appealed to me as a small town with historic roots, open spaces, commitment to education, and a vibrant sense of community and volunteerism.

**Why would you be a good fit for this role in public office? What experiences or expertise will you draw from?**

The responsibilities of a Selectman include carrying out the acts, policies, and ordinances of the Town, making recommendations on financial and budgetary matters, settling claims against the Town, and appointing members to Boards and Commissions. As an attorney and Partner in a law firm, I am a small business owner, I have experience balancing budgets, managing a team, problem-solving, and advocating for solutions.

I was elected by attorneys in Stamford, Darien, and New Canaan as a Delegate to the Connecticut Bar Association, and serve as a Mock Trial Judge for middle school students. I have served as a member of the Zoning Commission, Board

of Assessment Appeals (Bethel), Chair of the Redding Democratic Town Committee, on the Insurance and Pension Commission (Bethel), as a Trail Tender, and on the programming committee of the Mark Twain Library.

I also volunteer as a ski coach with Vermont Adaptive, teaching people with disabilities how to ski. These experiences have taught me to listen, keep an open mind, build consensus, and work with people who have different backgrounds and priorities.

**What got you interested in this role? Why are you hoping to serve another term?**

For as long as I can remember, I have valued public service and good governance. Growing up, I wanted to be President of the United States. When Peg O’Donnell resigned after many years of distinguished service to the Town, I saw an opportunity to bring a new perspective to Town leadership. Redding is a special place. I have the expertise and training to safeguard its future, manage resources, and

the personal integrity to lead with transparency and fairness.

**What do you see as the top priorities facing the Board of Selectmen in the next three years?**

Divisiveness in state and national politics threatens our community. We have largely been fortunate to have volunteers on Redding’s boards and commissions who put political affiliations aside and do what is best for the future of Redding. However, we risk divisiveness trickling down to Redding in the way we communicate with each other, and in a reduction in funding from the Federal and State government which could combine with rising costs and present fiscal challenges for the Town and the schools.

Development of the Gilbert & Bennett Wire Mill and the revitalization of Georgetown presents an exciting opportunity for Redding. Resolution of the Georgetown Special Taxing District bonds needs to be tackled before private development of the Wire Mill property can begin. Public safety will continue

to be a priority. This year, the Board of Selectmen authorized a study to look at the Town’s future Emergency Services needs and adopted a Zero Roadway Fatalities and Serious Injuries Policy resolution to obtain a state grant to support the development of a Comprehensive Safety Action Plan to improve road safety.

**What do you hope to accomplish in the upcoming term, and why?**

Climate change has and will continue to impact Redding. We had historic flooding last year. Revision of flood plain maps and new design requirements may result in changes to the appearance of some roads and bridges. We have had forest fires which impact our first responders. Disease impacting trees along roadways result in road closures and electric outages. While the Board of Selectmen cannot solve climate change, we can be mindful of the environmental impact of our decisions. I would like to explore opportunities for the Town to act more sustainably. ■

## Michael Thompson – Selectman

Endorsed by Republican Town Committee | By Donna Christopher



Michael Thompson is seeking his seventh term on the Board of Selectmen. He has been an active member of the Republican Town Committee and Zoning Board of Appeals and has chaired the Connecticut Judicial Selection Commission and served as Vice Chair

of the Connecticut Lottery Corporation Board of Directors. He is a Partner at law firm Gordon Rees Scully Mansukhani.

**How long have you lived in Redding?**  
We have lived in Redding since the spring of 2003.

**What are some of the things you enjoy about living here?**

Redding is a unique place. It is a great small town with a real sense of community. We have strong schools, easy access to open space, a fantastic library, a variety of recreational and civic activities occurring throughout the year, and many opportunities for people of all ages to get involved and contribute to the strength and well-being of our town.

**Why would you be a good fit for this role in public office? What experiences or expertise will you draw from?**

I have served as a Redding Selectman for 12 years. I believe my knowledge of local town issues, my understanding of how the State of Connecticut and municipalities interact, and my experience as a commercial litigation attorney provide a useful skill set to continue to serve in this role.

**What got you interested in this role? Why are you hoping to serve another term?**

I originally became interested in serving as a Selectman after volunteering on the Republican Town Committee and chairing the Zoning Board of Appeals. I am interested in returning to my role on the

Board of Selectmen to continue to contribute positively to our community.

**What do you see as the top priorities facing the Board of Selectmen in the next three years?**

Over the next three years, I believe the Board of Selectmen’s priorities should be:  
1. To maintain Redding’s stable fiscal health and keep taxes affordable by prudently balancing long and short-term capital spending needs with annual operating expenditures.  
2. To provide high-quality municipal services to taxpayers, including an effective, well-managed police department, recreational activities for citizens of all ages, and well-maintained local roads.  
3. To address the debt issues hindering development opportunities of the Wire Mill project in Georgetown.

**What do you hope to accomplish in the upcoming term, and why?**

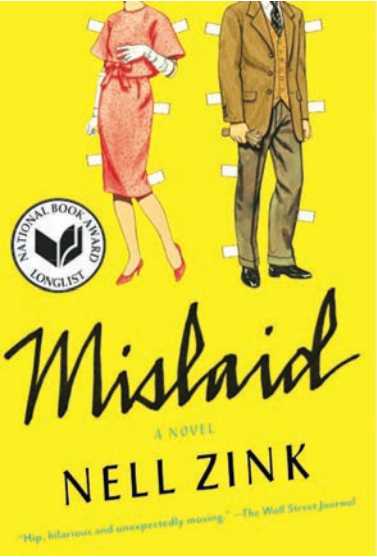
I hope to use my experience on the Board of Selectmen and my ability to work with others in Town government and beyond to find a realistic path forward in the development of the Wire Mill project. As I understand it, the State of Connecticut still considers it one of the premier Brownfield redevelopment sites in Fairfield County. That designation should help us access State resources to overcome the debt-related issues currently restraining development opportunities. ■



# Book Review

## Mislaid

By Nell Zink  
256 pages / \$10.99 / Amazon Prime



*Mislaid* is the second published novel by Nell Zink, and it was a runner-up selection for the 2015 National Book Award. In this novel, the author explores the individual struggling against toxic social convention and change, and how phobia, bad communications, and strong character can lead to wrong conclusions, obduracy, and ethical contradiction. The title refers to the life of a chief character. Is *Mislaid*, the novel, successful in its aspiration? Somewhat.

Zink seems to have excavated this novel with difficulty from a deep desire to write it. That honest impulse, dictated by talent, goes into source material presented with a tension that can be as excruciating to read as the writing of it must have been for Zink. But there is authorial desire for recognition also present in the narrative, and this is a corrupting impulse. It peeks through narrative the way an actor is caught sometimes acting. This is obvious in the ending, for example, which fails to convince because its resolution seems altogether implausible. But Zink's strength as a writer defeats harm done. This is a grueling but frequent path for a first-rate novelist. After reading *Mislaid*, with appreciation for dedication to art where it exists magnificently, this reader gives the writer a provisional thumbs-up.

The author has created a character in Peggy, aka Meg, who projects consternation with respect to sexual identity, confusion, and anger. While Peggy eventually falls in love with a woman, for most of the novel she lives apart from her husband with her kidnapped

daughter (a son stays with his father). She lives in grinding poverty that manifests fear of disclosure.

These self-created privations guarantee a lifestyle of avoidance, which in turn create an allegory of self-abnegation. Peggy's strategy for survival through anonymity includes changing her race, along with her blonde daughter's, from white to black. Peggy changes her name to Meg and her daughter's name from Mireille to Karen Brown, after forging her daughter's identity from a dead girl's records. This seems dubious and perhaps just beyond the threshold of credible. Or perhaps not. There is an episode of holding illegal drugs for desperately needed cash. These episodes do not serve moral continuity necessary at the end.

We are given reason to believe that Peggy's extreme personality verges into "insane" behavior. This is how Zink lures the reader into intellectual confrontation with what might or might not lie behind status in America. Among factors that determine status and identity are race, money, gender, sexual identification, and education. The author's deeper probe shows how these issues affect certain characters when they are made to betray issues important to other contexts.

All of this suggests Zink's deeper exploration of actions in light of adult duties and responsibilities to family and self and, by extension, to the larger community in matters that relate to sexual identity. It is not a choice. On the personal level, the unevenness of life and reward is fair game for criticism in a narrative of complaint, which so much of *Mislaid* embodies. But this approach obviates the *deus ex machina* of happy ending. An insistence of broad understanding and reunion at the end does not wash. It does damage to narrative integrity and characters of *Mislaid*. Credibility falls, but the reader has enjoyed the uneven ride to this point, and *Mislaid* shows why Nell Zink is a writer to read. ■

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

## Nod to the pod

### The Magnus Archives, Episode 1: Anglerfish

By Harper Cowan

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

Columnist's note: Like last October, I've asked my eldest to guest-star in this space and write about spooky season, her specialty. Take it away, kid.

It is assumedly sometime in the vicinity of Halloween, the time when my power is at its strongest. Therefore, I have graciously been given domain over this column for a brief moment in our fragile lifespans. Come, take my hand, and let me introduce you to one of the biggest obsessions I've ever had.

*The Magnus Archives* is, on the surface, a perfectly spooky and attention-gripping horror anthology. Every episode tells a new fictional story from a victim of some sinister happening or another. The victim's "statement" is read aloud by our protagonist, Jonathan Sims, (which also happens to be the name of the podcast's writer,) and then swiftly denied by him to have ever happened. (Surely the victim was on some sort of hallucinogens, right?) From vampires, to man-eating pigs, to... (shudder) mosquitos, if you have a fear that

could justifiably be called reasonable, there is a *Magnus Archives* episode about it.

Now, I am of course cheating a little bit by recommending the first episode. However, this is my column now, and I get to do what I want. Besides that, I have a good reason for it! Any episode you listen to works well as a standalone because of its one-off stories, but if you continue to listen to the podcast, you really do want to start from the beginning. As you start to meet more of our strange, wonderful cast of characters, you will begin to see the overarching plot unravel, but it's really something you have to experience for yourself. Anglerfish, true to its name, will hook you and reel you all the way in... and listening to the whole thing really is worth it.

This podcast is one of the few pieces of media to have truly, permanently altered my brain chemistry. Once you listen to this show, you kind of can't stop thinking about it. Even though it's a bit of a strange one, I really do hope you give it a try. Maybe you'll even love it as much as I do. ■

# Library Corner

## Bookseller shake-up

By Erin Shea Dummeyer



Last week, librarians received news that we had been concerned about for months: Baker & Taylor, a nearly 200-year-old company and the primary wholesaler of books to libraries, would shut down by the end of this year. The writing had been on the wall for some time. During and after the pandemic, we experienced shipment delays that we blamed on supply chain issues. Around this same time, the company was sold to a private equity firm, and its future seemed tenuous. Then, a major cyberattack hit the company in 2022. Their customer service has been noticeably lacking for some time, and their employees have not been able to explain the book delays.

Up until March of this year, Baker & Taylor was where we purchased almost all our books, with

a few exceptions through Amazon. Around this time, Baker & Taylor changed their contract with our consortium, and we learned that we would not be receiving the deep discount we had come to expect on all of their books. This is when I started to panic a little. I was told that, "Gone are the days when libraries can work with just one book vendor," and that was all I needed to hear to get us set up with a different one. So, off to Brodart I went! And so far, so good.

Only time will tell how the closing of Baker & Taylor will affect how our users experience Mark Twain Library. So far, Brodart has been speedy and responsive, but with many other libraries flocking to them, I wonder how this will affect their customer service. We are also going to do more business

with Amazon. They now offer the same deep discount that we missed from Baker & Taylor. They only ship books "unprocessed," meaning we will have to cover them and add barcodes and spine labels ourselves. And, any consumer knows that it's impossible to compete with Amazon's shipping speeds. All in all, I feel a bit bummed to be channeling more of our funds to Amazon, a company that has been viewed as a threat to libraries since the '90s. But we will always work hard to get the best price on books on behalf of the Redding community, so our dollars can stretch as far as possible. ■

Erin Shea Dummeyer is  
Director, Mark Twain Library



### Enjoy the season at New Pond Farm!

There's something for everyone this Fall at New Pond Farm - nature themed afterschool programs , seasonal baking series, art workshops, family stargazing, early dismissal adventures, and so much more!

For more information, visit our website: [newpondfarm.org](http://newpondfarm.org) or call 203-938-2117



## Middle school book club starts new chapter

By Anne Young Albanese



John Read Middle School (JRMS) has a new club: the Tome Student Literacy Society. The group joins chapters across the country that are dedicated to reading and discussing books, participating in literary-based competitions, and attending virtual and in-person literary events. The JRMS chapter currently has 12 members, but it is expected to grow as more students learn about it. It meets twice a month before school.

According to Maria Frederick, Library Learning Commons Specialist at JRMS, she started the club to encourage students to read outside of their class assignments.

"I am always looking for new ways to encourage reading and put great titles in the hands of kids. I was very impressed with the

Tome Book Award List and decided to start a book club for any interested student to join. I am hoping to build excitement around reading that includes discussion and low-pressure competition while exposing students to a wide variety of genres by amazing authors," she said.

One aspect of the Tome Literary Society is its "Reading Bowls," a series of three online exams. Students take a quiz based on a specific book, and each team's top five scores are averaged to determine the score for the team.

The first Reading Bowl took place between September 24 and October 10. The JRMS team took the exam on October 9. The books covered in the first exam were *Slugfest* by Gordon Korman, *Impossible Creature* by Katherine Rundell, and *The Legend of the Last Library* by Frank L. Cole.

The second Reading Bowl will take place between December 3 and December 12. The books covered are *Westfallen* by Ann Brashares, *One Wrong Step* by Jennifer A. Nielsen, *Perry Homer Ruins Everything* by Beth Vrabel, and *Not If You Break Up with Me First* by G.F. Miller.

The third Reading Bowl will take place between January 28 and

February 6, covering books *The Bletchley Riddle* by Ruta Sepetys, *Will's Race for Home* by Jewell Parker Rhodes, and *Wild Poppies* by Haya Saleh and Marcia Lynx Qualey.

Students can also create and submit items for competition throughout the year, including book trailers, fan fiction, promotional book flyers, theme essays, library video commercials, and more.

The year culminates with TOMECON, a day-long event on March 10 in Athens, Georgia. Students choose sessions with authors in their age group throughout the day. The top four teams in each age group will compete in person during TOMECON. If the JRMS team is in the top four, Frederick hopes to be able to attend. In addition, she hopes to take students in future years, whether they qualify to compete or just to attend the author sessions. The team will need to raise the money to attend. In addition, Frederick has registered as a volunteer reader to help select the Tome Book Award List for the 2026-27 school year. JRMS students who are interested in joining the club should reach out to Frederick at [mfrederick@er9.org](mailto:mfrederick@er9.org) ■



BUSINESS SPOTLIGHT

A five-star morning at The Number One café | By Justin Reynolds



Photo by Justin Reynolds

John Szyszka opened The Number One in Georgetown in mid-September.

There’s a new café in Georgetown with high-end food, a cozy atmosphere, and an appropriately confident name: The Number One.

Owner John Szyszka had a successful career in construction but was forced to change paths after hurting his back. He decided to try his hand as a restaurateur, opening Sandy Hook Cafe in Newtown. That business racked up more than 200 reviews on Google over three years, earning an impeccable 5-star rating. But Szyszka couldn’t renew his lease when the time came, so he needed a new spot.

A realtor friend heard about his predicament and told Szyszka about an opening in Georgetown in the former home of PopUp Bagels at 8 Main Street, Suite B. After seeing the space, Szyszka was sold, and The Number One – named after his former spot’s flawless reviews – opened its doors last month.

After a morning meeting my editor at The Georgetown Owl, grabbing some Quartertone coffee, and talking shop, I walked back up Main Street to The Number One on what, to me, felt like the first real day of autumn (Thursday, October 16 for anyone keeping score). I opened the door to the café;

stepping inside, it almost felt like home.

A gracious host, Szyszka appeared, said hello, shook my hand, and asked whether I wanted coffee.

Sure, I’ll take it with a little milk, no sugar. Something to eat? Maybe a bacon, egg, and cheese, I shrug. “It’s best with potatoes,” Szyszka said, before disappearing into the kitchen.

“I’ve been cooking all my life for myself and my family,” he said when he returned, joining me at a table. “Anyone who comes here always comes back. Everyone is always happy when they leave. In my life, I’ve been everywhere, and our menu has food from all over the world – German, Hungarian, Portuguese, Polish, Thai. Everything here is made from scratch.”

Szyszka hails from Poland and has been stateside for more than 30 years, the last 20 in Trumbull. His menu is eclectic, featuring everything from muffins, stuffed French toast, and country fried chicken with gravy to shepherd’s pie, pork and veal schnitzel, and linguini and clams – Portuguese style. He also offers an array of fresh-squeezed fruit juices, coffee

drinks, tea, and desserts.

When my food arrived, the meal I was presented with was unreal – great presentation, generous in portion, and incredibly delicious. I told Szyszka the same, and he smiled and nodded because he knows.

After finishing the feast, Rich Wenning, Executive Director of The Granite, opened the door, coming in to talk with Szyszka about food he had ordered for an upcoming event, the Stone Free Arts Harvest, which took place October 19. Everything was all set. Wenning and I chatted about the event, the Gilbert & Bennett project, and the Sentinel – “you guys are great” – before he bid adieu to continue his Thursday.

Szyszka is proud of his entire menu, but in his mind, there’s one dish that stands out among the rest.

“My clams are the best,” he said. “They’re always fresh from the Sound. When I run out, I run out until the next batch comes in.”

Okay, maybe two. “We have very, very good pierogies.”

The Number One is open from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Monday through Thursday, and 9:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. on Friday and Saturday; it’s closed on Sundays. Szyszka said the establishment is seeking a liquor license and, once obtained, will stay open later.

Though new to our community, Szyszka already said he feels right at home.

“I love it here, I love the people, everyone is so nice,” he said. “People here like fresh food, and nobody around here has the mix of food we do. Please come say hello.” ■

For more information, visit [theonect.com](http://theonect.com), [facebook.com/theonect](https://facebook.com/theonect), or [instagram.com/thenumberonect](https://instagram.com/thenumberonect)

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our special issue is November 13

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Holiday cards for a community cause Georgetown Community Foundation to host Santa photo sessions next month

By Pamela Brown



Photo courtesy of Georgetown Community Association

Georgetown Community Association will be hosting a holiday photo opportunity in November that will not only create memorable holiday cards, but will also allow participants to give back to the community.

Holiday Photo Fundraiser with Santa on Saturday, November 15 is a festive holiday photo shoot that will take place at Rising Starr Horse Rescue, a non-profit organization in Wilton that saves, rehabilitates, retrains, and rehomes abandoned, neglected, or abused horses. “This is our second year hosting this event. It gives families time to get some amazing photos and make holiday cards with them in time for up-and-coming holidays. It’s a way to give back to local families in need within the community, and it also serves as a prelude to the annual Georgetown Holiday Parade and Festival charity fundraiser that will be held on December 21,” explained Bonnie Sassano-Troy, local businesswoman representing the Georgetown Community Foundation.

Photo sessions will take place from 8:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. at 15-minute intervals. An appointment is required; walk-ins cannot be accommodated. All proceeds of the sessions will go to the Georgetown Community Fund, which is used to enhance the overall well-being and community life of residents through fundraising and grants, partnerships, and other initiatives and events.

“Last year, everybody loved it – who doesn’t love horses? And add

Santa to the mix!” said Sassano-Troy. “It’s a magical opportunity for families to get professional photos to make holiday cards and forever memories. Plus, it makes them feel good knowing they’re giving back to the community.” Rising Starr Horse Rescue is a past grant recipient of the Fund. Their property will be open during the photo shoot sessions for families to explore the stables, horses, and other areas.

Photographs will be taken by professional photographer Charles Unitas of Unitas Photography located in Shelton. Sessions will take place indoors in a barn with a rustic wood sleigh. Santa and his head elf, Marty, from the North Pole will be there along with Army, Navy, and Mayday, miniatures horses from Rising Starr Horse Rescue. “It’s super-sweet. Bill Dexter is, by far, the most authentic Santa ever. People really think he is Santa,” Sassano-Troy said. Families will receive four professional digital images.

“The Photo Fundraiser along with the Parade and Festival brings the community together,” continued Sassano-Troy. “It’s a beautiful way to celebrate the holidays and spend time together. With so much going on in the world, it’s even more important this year.” ■

For more information and to schedule a photo sitting, visit: <https://bit.ly/GCAphotos2025>

Celebrate the holidays with a side of history Ridgefield’s Holiday House tour tickets on sale | By Pamela Brown



Photo courtesy of Ridgefield Historical Society The Book Barn

With decked halls and rich history, six properties will shine this December during the 2025 Ridgefield Holiday House Tour. The Ridgefield Historical Society is teaming up for a second time with Tiger Hollow Inc., a private non-profit, to put on this event combining architecture, local history, and seasonal cheer.

“The Holiday House Tour connects our community to Ridgefield’s rich architectural and cultural heritage while raising vital support for our two local non-profits. It’s also a way to celebrate the season together and showcase the generosity of the homeowners who open their doors,” said Stephen Bartkus, Executive Director

of Ridgefield Historical Society.

The tour includes six private homes and takes place Saturday, December 6 from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. It will feature an eclectic mix of the town’s architecture, all seasonally decorated. Ridgefield’s Lounsbury House, the former mansion of Governor Phineas C. Lounsbury now maintained by a non-profit, will serve as the tour’s headquarters, where guests can pick up their tickets and shop at a festive indoor Holiday Market showcasing gifts, décor, and other unique finds (the Market is also open to the public).

Tickets are now available in three, two-hour time slots: 9:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m., 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m., and 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. Bus service to the houses will be provided, and two locations are a short walk from Lounsbury House.

“All of the homes were selected by the Ridgefield Historical Society’s Co-Chairman for the

tour, Llewellyn Cheng, an architect and interior designer, and Stephen Bartkus. Mr. Cheng and Mr. Bartkus were most concerned with finding homes that had both architectural and historical significance, with a mix of styles and eras,” said Sally Sanders, a marketing volunteer for Ridgefield Historical Society. The tour program will offer informative details on each home.

The residences range from the 18th to the 21st centuries. One of the homes is newer, from 2011, built on a prominent estate on the Ridgefield/Lewisboro, NY border. Also included is the 1916 rectory of St. Stephen’s Church, which is celebrating its 300th anniversary this year. The church, built in 1915, will also be open during the tour so guests can appreciate its colonial revival interior that was designed by W. Kerr Rainsford of Allen & Collins of Boston, who also designed the structure.

The other homes include The Book Barn, a book shop that

opened in 1925 when Emmy Sloan purchased a dilapidated barn believed to date back to the late 1700s; The William Jones House, an early 19th-century Greek Revival home, later expanded with a 21st-century addition designed by architect Peter Coffin; The Lewis Bailey House, built in 1860, that the Connecticut Historical Commission calls “the most distinct example of early-Victorian domestic architecture in Ridgefield”; and The Edwin Benedict House, on the land believed to be the location where General William Tryon and his British troops camped for the night following the Battle of Ridgefield.

During the tour, homeowners will be present to offer an introduction to their home. “They’ll greet guests and share insights about the history, architecture, and character of their homes,” said Bartkus. ■

For more information, visit [ridgefieldholidayhousetour.org](http://ridgefieldholidayhousetour.org)



# Happy harvest at New Pond Farm



Photos by Jessie Wright

Families flocked to New Pond Farm on Saturday, October 18 for its Annual Harvest Festival, where animal encounters, crafts and games, fiber spinning, blacksmithing, hay rides, and autumn treats were plentiful.

## If trees could talk / Oral history of the Little River Valley / continued from page 1

explores my rooted feet. They walk through the very tall meadow that used to be grazed flat by the cows. They stare at me and then cut the poison ivy, grape, and bittersweet vines that climbed my bark and made me stiff. Once, the mom carried the helpful clippers and a little rectangle that she put by her eyes. It’s been a bunch of seasons since the mom was last here. The deer, coyotes, and turkeys keep me company because the dressage horses are gone now, and the sand has turned to grass. The larger, bright moon that gets the closest to my highest branches was only nine days ago. It is my favorite and most special night of each cycle.

And now, here she comes with

the clippers and the eye rectangle. She rubs her gloved hands on my bark and puts her arms around me. I am not the biggest tree in my viewshed now, but I am the oldest. For all these years, I’ve loved the trickle of the nearby creek, the ever-swooshing of the river, the light and heavy breezes that ruffle my flexible branches, and all the birds that sing to me every day. I am Grandfather Willow, and this is the story of my Little River Valley. ■

If you have a favorite tree story for this column, contact [reddingtreeconservancy@gmail.com](mailto:reddingtreeconservancy@gmail.com)

Redding Grange399 Newtown Turnpike

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Sunday October 2611 am to 3pm

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Most Impressive Produce

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Jam On

In a Pickle (anything pickled)

Special Sauce

Come Out of the Woodworking

The Greatest Thing: Sliced Bread

Photography (Redding and adjacent towns subject matter)

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Seasonal Flower Arrangement

PRE-REGISTRATION for NON-perishable items: Friday 10/24 4-7pm Saturday 10/25 9:30am-12:30pm

ENTRY REGISTRATION Sunday 10/26 9:30-11am Suggested donation per entry: \$2

JUDGING STARTS 11AM — ribbons! Entries can be picked up at 3pm

Suggested admission donation: \$2 per adult, \$5 per family

For more information contact: [community@reddinggrange.org](mailto:community@reddinggrange.org)

# WHY REDDING?

## A singer “follows the yes” to her new home

By Pamela Brown



Sarah Hawkey in her enormous dahlia garden.

Sarah Hawkey’s life in Redding is blossoming in more ways than one. Not only is the former New York resident an accomplished classical soprano and owner of Blossom Voice Studio in nearby Weston, Hawkey is an avid gardener who has built an impressive 2,500-square-foot dahlia garden on her property.

“For years, I had been coming up from New York City to prepare repertoire for upcoming performance engagements with my voice teacher in Old Greenwich. Every time I left the city, I felt more alive as an artist when surrounded by nature,” said Hawkey. “In 2019, I finally made the leap and moved to Redding sight unseen, not knowing a single person here. I love the New England look of our town. I had no idea something like this existed so close to New York City. All those years I was stuck in a tiny Upper West Side studio with a four-foot-square community garden plot, and I didn’t realize I could live in New England and still sing in the city. It’s a dream come true to finally have a place to call home.”

Hawkey’s budget pushed her

farther from the city until she found a tiny cottage for rent in town. “By 2022, I was lucky enough to buy my own home next to Lonetown Farm. It’s one of the smallest houses in Redding – 978 square feet!” said Hawkey, whose street has only six houses. “I know all my neighbors. With no family nearby, those connections have been important.” It’s that community-centric feeling amidst nature that feeds Hawkey’s soul. “There’s a shared value in Redding for open land and nature conservation. I love hiking in Devil’s Den and visiting Topstone, where I walk my dog almost every day,” she said. “I love the people in Redding – they’re so friendly and easy to get to know. I love how easy it is to get involved in the community here, something I longed for in New York. I also love our proximity to farms.”

Hawkey is a familiar face around town. She enjoys taking yoga classes at Yoga Station and grabbing a coffee from her favorite coffee roasters, Quartertone. “I also love going to events at Redding Flower Farm and enjoying the vistas at New Pond Farm,” said Hawkey, who said she also is active in the Norfield Congregational Church in Weston.

“Since buying my home, my garden has exploded – it’s more than twice the size of my house. I grow mostly dahlias – 20 rows and counting – and last year I gave a lecture on them at the Redding Garden Club. I love sharing flowers with neighbors, local businesses, and even other farmers or local florists who sometimes need extra dahlias.”

Her expansive garden parallels Hawkey’s thriving professional career. Along with teaching voice lessons at her studio, Hawkey will be presenting *Behind the Notes* at The Granite starting this month, a four-part classical music appreciation program. “I still perform in New York City and

around the country. I specialize in Baroque repertoire, but I’ve sung internationally across opera, chamber music, and symphonic works,” she explained. “Some of my favorite memories are performing at the Verbier Festival in Switzerland and the Salzburg Festival in Austria. In the U.S., I’ve sung with the New York Philharmonic, Boston Early Music Festival, and countless times at Carnegie Hall. A highlight of my career was being in the original cast of Ellen Reid’s *p r i s m*, which won the 2019 Pulitzer Prize in Music.”

Currently, Hawkey is preparing to record her debut solo album featuring music by Venetian composer Barbara Strozzi. “My second album will feature English Baroque songs by G.F. Handel, Henry Purcell, and John Dowland. I also plan to record several commissioned song cycles, including ‘Surprisingly Poetic Moments’ from an *Otherwise Typical Hiking Guidebook*, inspired by my first Yosemite trip,” said Hawkey.

When needing a respite from work, Hawkey explores nature on local trails and also enjoys lapidary and silversmithing. “Lapidary, the polishing of stones and gems, has fascinated me for years. I actively study silversmithing at the Silvermine School of Art where I’ve made silver pieces with stone settings,” she said.

Hawkey’s life is guided by the mantra of “Follow the yes.”

“Instead of pushing against closed doors, I look for the ones that open,” she said. “I’ve never been married, and I don’t have children. Moving here as a young single woman, I felt like a fish out of water. In New York, I was surrounded by single artists in rehearsal rooms and performances, then suddenly I replaced that with lots of trees! I’ve allowed this new beautiful New England setting to inspire my artistry to the next level.” ■

## Scenes from local No Kings protests



(Clockwise, from top left): Photo by Jessie Wright / Hundreds gathered in Veterans Park in Ridgefield; Photo by Jessie Wright / The mood was enthusiastic at the Ridgefield Veterans Park protest; Photo by Carol Morgan / Seniors, many in their 80s and 90s, waved signs and flags at the Branchville pedestrian bridge; Photo by Tom Casey / Neighbors gathered at the Municipal Center in Bethel for a No Kings protest; Photo by Carol Morgan / Protestors smiled and showed off signs at the “super seniors” protest organized by Susan Auslander; Photo by Jessie Wright / First Selectwoman Julia Pemberton, Allison and Matt Rudary, Selectwoman Diana Carlino, and Maria Carlino at the Veterans Park protest.



CALENDAR OF EVENTS

\$ = fee applies  
R = registration required

This Week’s Featured Events

|  |   |   |  |
|--|---|---|--|
| <b>Barn Sale 2</b><br><b>Saturday, October 25</b><br>10:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.<br>Restocked antique barn with furnishings, antiques, collectibles, and art for sale<br>First Church of Christ, Congregational<br>25 Cross Highway<br>firstchurchredding.org | <b>Redding Neighbors &amp; Newcomers and The Granite’s Halloween Party</b><br><b>Saturday, October 25</b><br>7:00 p.m.<br>Adults-only party with costume contests, food, drinks, DJ, and dancing<br>The Granite, 5 North Main Street<br>reddingneighborsandnewcomers.org<br>\$, R | <b>4th Annual Redding Grange Agricultural Fair</b><br><b>Sunday, October 26</b><br>11:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.<br>Competition categories, food, games, and educational displays<br>Redding Grange #15<br>399 Newtown Turnpike<br>reddinggrange.org | <b>Make Redding Glow on Halloween</b><br><b>October 29 – 31</b><br>Bring your Jack-O-Lantern to the Town Green display on Wednesday October 29th<br>Redding Garden Club will keep your Jack-O-Lantern lit and manage the display<br>Questions: ruthmoran@gmail.com |
|--|---|---|--|

ARTS

**Thursday, October 9 – Saturday, March 28**

**Portal Open for Redding Land Trust Photography Show Submissions**  
Submit photographs of Redding’s open spaces for a chance to be exhibited at Mark Twain Library in June 2026  
reddinglandtrust.org/photoshow  
\$, R

**Saturday, October 25**

**Opening Reception: Set In Stone by Dave Gesualdi**  
4:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.  
Georgetown Arts & Cultural Center  
5 Main Street  
gtownarts.com

**Thursday, November 6 – Saturday, November 8**

**Joel Barlow High School presents *Almost, Maine***  
7:00 p.m. Thursday, Friday, Saturday  
2:00 p.m. on Saturday  
Joel Barlow High School  
100 Black Rock Turnpike  
jbhs.booktix.com  
\$

CHILDREN | TEENS

**Thursday, October 23**

**Family Scarecrow Decorating**  
5:00 p.m.  
You bring the clothes and accessories, Park and Recreation provides hay and string  
Redding Community Center  
37 Lonetown Road  
reddingct.gov/parks-and-recreation  
R

**Friday, October 24**

**Friday Games**  
4:00 p.m. – 4:45 p.m.  
Teen program, grades 5+  
Mark Twain Library  
439 Redding Road  
marktwainlibrary.org  
R

FUNDRAISERS

**Thursday, October 23**

**Sips & Sweaters – Parents’ Night Out**  
7:00 p.m. – 10:00 p.m.  
Hosted by RES PTA, enjoy drinks, appetizers, and fundraising.  
The Redding Roadhouse  
406 Redding Road  
tinyurl.com/resPTAsips  
\$, R

**Saturday, October 25**

**DAWS Making a Difference Gala**  
6:00 p.m.  
Support Danbury Animal Welfare Society and the animals in their care  
Amber Room Colonnade  
1 Stacey Road  
Danbury  
dawsgala2025.givesmart.com  
\$, R

**Friday, November 7**

**Bright Futures Boys & Girls Club Bash**  
Light bites, open bar, live music, and silent auction to support Boys & Girls Club of Redding-Easton  
Redding Country Club  
109 Lonetown Road  
bgcre.net  
\$, R

HEALTH | WELLNESS

**Thursday, October 23**

**Halloween Soiree: Candle-Lit Restorative Yoga & Cocktail Hour**  
6:15 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.  
30-minute yoga session, cocktail hour face massages  
Yoga Station, 9 Brookside Road  
yogastationct.com/workshops-events  
\$, R

**Wednesday, October 29**

**Meditation**  
12:00 p.m.  
Virtual 40-minute session  
E-mail mpilato@reddingct.gov for link  
R

HOLIDAY | SEASONAL

**Friday, October 24**

**Pumpkin Carving at the Heritage Center**  
11:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.  
Pumpkins and utensils supplied  
Heritage Center, 37 Lonetown Road  
RSVP to mstillman@reddingct.gov or (203) 938-9725  
R

**Saturday, October 25**

**Bethel Trick or Treat Street**  
1:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.  
Trick or treat and compete in a costume contest held at 3:00 p.m.  
Greenwood Avenue and Municipal Center, Bethel  
bethelchamberofcommerce.com

**Saturday, October 25**

**Redding Neighbors & Newcomers Trunk or Treat**  
3:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.  
Trunk or treat around decorated vehicles and host stations – admission is one bag of candy per child  
Redding Community Center  
37 Lonetown Road  
reddingneighborsandnewcomers.org  
R

**Saturday, October 25**

**Redding Neighbors & Newcomers and The Granite’s Halloween Party**  
7:00 p.m.  
Adults-only party with costume contests, food, drinks, DJ, and dancing  
The Granite, 5 North Main Street  
reddingneighborsandnewcomers.org  
\$, R

**Monday, October 27**

**Tiny Tots Halloween Party & Parade (Birth – 5)**  
10:30 a.m. – 11:15 a.m.  
Wear your costumes and celebrate Halloween with books, songs, and stories  
Mark Twain Library  
439 Redding Road  
marktwainlibrary.org  
R

**Monday, October 27**

**MadScience Halloween Spook-tacular! (Ages 4+)**  
4:00 p.m. – 4:45 p.m.  
MadScience of Fairfield County puts on a science show  
Mark Twain Library  
439 Redding Road  
marktwainlibrary.org  
R

**Wednesday, October 29**

**Sweet & Savory Pumpkins: A Uniquely Curated Culinary Adventure**  
6:30 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.  
Adult cooking demonstration featuring pumpkin ale bread, pumpkin meatballs, and pumpkin spice latte cake.  
Mark Twain Library  
439 Redding Road  
marktwainlibrary.org  
R

**Friday, October 31**

**Easton Trunk or Treat and Bonfire**  
5:30 p.m.  
Samuel Staples Elementary School and Morehouse Fields  
515 Morehouse Road  
Easton  
eastonct.myrec.com

NATURE

**Saturday, October 25**

**National Reptile Day – Animal Meet and Greet**  
1:00 p.m. – 2:00 p.m.  
Free for members  
New Pond Farm Education Center  
101 Marchant Road  
newpondfarm.org  
\$, R

**Saturday, October 25**

**Evening Woodland Walk**  
5:00 p.m. – 7:30 p.m.  
Register for a 30-minute walk through woodlands with a mid-walk campfire and treats break  
New Pond Farm Education Center  
101 Marchant Road  
newpondfarm.org  
\$, R

**Sunday, October 26**

**4th Annual Redding Grange Agricultural Fair**  
11:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.  
Competition categories, food, games, and educational displays  
Redding Grange #15  
399 Newtown Turnpike  
reddinggrange.org

SPECIAL PROGRAMS

**Thursday, October 23**

**Community Conversation with Representative Anne Hughes and CT Treasurer Erick Russell**  
6:30 p.m. – 7:30 p.m.  
Weston Public Library  
56 Norfield Road, Weston

**Saturday, October 25**

**Barn Sale 2**  
10:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.  
Restocked antique barn with furnishings, antiques, collectibles, and art for sale  
First Church of Christ, Congregational  
25 Cross Highway  
firstchurchredding.org

**Wednesday, October 29**

**Spirit-Guided Tarot Reading**  
12:15 p.m. – 2:15 p.m.  
By appointment with Amy Ferrito  
Heritage Center  
RSVP to Margherita at mpilato@reddingct.gov or (203) 938-9725  
\$, R

**Saturday, November 1**

**A Celebration of Connecticut Woodland Indians**  
10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.  
Hands on, family program  
New Pond Farm Education Center  
101 Marchant Road  
newpondfarm.org  
\$, R

RELIGIOUS SERVICES

**Bethlehem Lutheran Church**  
Sundays at 10:00 a.m.  
44 Portland Avenue  
bethlehemlutheranct.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, October 24  
7:00 p.m.  
Welcome Shabbat  
82 Portland Avenue  
templebnaichaim.org

**Please check church and temple websites for holiday and special services**

MEETINGS

**Thursday, October 23**

**Early Voting and Same-Day Registration**  
10:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m.  
Redding Community Center  
37 Lonetown Road

**Friday, October 24**

**Early Voting and Same-Day Registration**  
10:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m.  
Redding Community Center  
37 Lonetown Road

**Saturday, October 25**

**Early Voting and Same-Day Registration**  
10:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m.  
Redding Community Center  
37 Lonetown Road

**Sunday, October 26**

**Early Voting and Same-Day Registration**  
10:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m.  
Redding Community Center  
37 Lonetown Road

**Monday, October 27**

**Early Voting and Same-Day Registration**  
10:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m.  
Redding Community Center  
37 Lonetown Road

**Monday, October 27**

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

**Monday, October 27**

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

**Tuesday, October 28**

**Early Voting and Same-Day Registration**  
8:00 a.m. – 8:00 p.m.  
Redding Community Center  
37 Lonetown Road

**Tuesday, October 28**

**ER9 Joint Boards of Education Meeting**  
7:00 p.m.  
Joel Barlow High School / Library Learning Commons  
100 Black Rock Turnpike

**Tuesday, October 28**

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

**Wednesday, October 29**

**Early Voting and Same-Day Registration**  
10:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m.  
Redding Community Center  
37 Lonetown Road

**Thursday, October 30**

**Early Voting and Same-Day Registration**  
8:00 a.m. – 8:00 p.m.  
Redding Community Center  
37 Lonetown Road

**Thursday, October 30**

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

**\*Sign-up to receive meeting agendas and notifications at reddingct.gov/subscribe**



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<sup>1</sup> Data based on closed and recorded buyer and/or seller transaction sides of homes sold for \$1 million or more as reported by affiliates of the U.S. Coldwell Banker franchise system for the calendar year of 2024, USD\$. <sup>2</sup> Data based on closed and recorded buyer and/or seller transaction sides of homes \$1M and over in the 2024 calendar year. The property information herein is derived from various sources that may include, but not be limited to, county records and the Multiple Listing Service, and it may include approximations. Although the information is believed to be accurate, it is not warranted and you should not rely upon it without personal verification. Affiliated real estate agents are independent contractor sales associates, not employees. ©2025 Coldwell Banker. All Rights Reserved. Coldwell Banker and the Coldwell Banker logo are trademarks of Coldwell Banker Real Estate LLC. The Coldwell Banker® System is comprised of company owned offices which are owned by a subsidiary of Anywhere Advisors LLC and franchised offices which are independently owned and operated. The Coldwell Banker System fully supports the principles of the Fair Housing Act and the Equal Opportunity Act.