

REDDING SENTINEL

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State guidelines seek detail on exactly where new housing can be built

By Ginny Monk

Housing growth plans that municipalities must create under a housing law passed last year will have to indicate specific parcels of land and areas of town that would work for developing more housing, according to preliminary state guidelines released Monday.

The first plans are due June 1, 2028 and are required as part of House Bill 8002, which was passed during a November special session. (Editor's Note: Redding is part of the group of municipalities with a due date of June 1, 2029). The guidelines from the Office of Policy and Management explain what Connecticut's 169 towns

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Photo by Susan Clark

A stunning clear line between blue sky and cold clouds appeared over Lonetown Road on March 3, as the edge of a winter system moved south. If you have a photo you'd like to see featured here, e-mail editor@reddingsentinel.org.

State Senator Ceci Maher to retire, says it is time for next generation

By Mark Pazniokas



Photo by Shahrzad Rasekh / CT Mirror

Senator Ceci Maher, D-Wilton, speaks with Senate Majority Leader Bob Duff, D-Norwalk, during special session on November 13, 2025.

Senator Ceci Maher, D-Wilton, announced last Thursday she would not seek reelection in a statement confronting a current tension in politics: When is it time to make way for the next generation in politics?

"I believe my generation has a responsibility to mentor and support younger leaders. Now is the right time to step aside to let them take the reins and craft the

legislation that will shape Connecticut for the coming decades," Maher said.

Maier, 72, was elected in 2022, succeeding Will Haskell of Westport, who left the seat after two terms for law school and marriage. Haskell had been elected at age 22, flipping a Republican seat in 2018.

"I love this job, and I have the energy, will, and interest to keep serving," Maher said. "However, as a member of the Baby Boomer generation, I'm aware of the shifting focuses and needs of our state and county."

She represents the 26th Senate District of Darien, New Canaan, Redding, Ridgefield, Stamford, Weston, Westport, and Wilton in Fairfield County.

Maier, the Co-Chair of the Children's Committee, said she will leave proud of the gains made to serve and protect children, most notably the creation of the Early Childhood Education Endowment.

She is one of two Democrats in the Senate to announce retirements:

The other is Senator Jan Hochadel, D-Meriden, who also was elected in 2022. Democrats hold a majority of 25-11 in the Senate.

At 72, Maier is younger than four of the seven people representing Connecticut in Congress and a contemporary of Governor Ned Lamont, who is seeking a third term. "I care deeply about the future of our state, and I know new leaders will continue building upon the progress we've made," Maier said.

Haskell, now 29, married, and a public defender in New York City, praised Maier's advocacy for children, her approach to leaving office departure and message for generations to follow.

"I admire her so much and how she used her four years," Haskell said. "I also admire her decision to make way for new voices."

But that new voice would not be his. Haskell said he would not seek the open seat. ■

This article originally appeared in CT Mirror

REDDING'S BIG OUTDOORS

Stop and sit awhile

By Jessie Wright

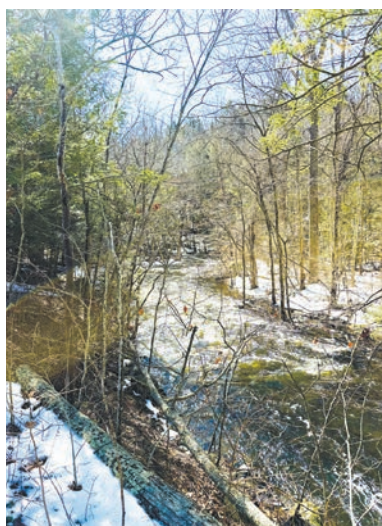


Photo by Jessie Wright

The view of the Saugatuck River from Mark Twain Library's loggia.

My entire family caught a stomach bug last weekend. Bad. By Monday, I was back to functioning, but still a bit too wobbly on my feet to undertake any sort of long hike.

But the 70-degree temperatures and sunshine beckoned, and the combination felt like the perfect antidote to a weekend I'd prefer to forget.

Despite the thaw, most trails are still covered in inches of slushy ice, and the snow piles over parking areas likely will be the last ones to recede. So, I opted for something manageable, both for my recovering constitution and the realities of open spaces still waking up from the winter. I took myself to Mark Twain Library's new loggia, or outdoor patio, and plopped down on a sunny bench right at the edge of the Saugatuck River.

The water thundered past me, released from its icy entrapment and tumbling down from the dam across Diamond Hill Road. I threw my head back and listened, letting the sunlight restore me.

There are several little spots like this to sit outdoors around town that I enjoy, adjacent to plowed parking

areas and barely a walk to get to. While we all eagerly await those first long spring hikes, consider stopping by one of the following:

Lonetown Marsh

Park at Redding Elementary School at 33 Lonetown Road and cross the street to access a short boardwalk, rebuilt a few years ago and sturdy. The boardwalk will bring you to a viewing platform with benches overlooking Lonetown Marsh. This is a perfect place for birding, meditation, reading a book, or trying out a new pair of binoculars.

New Pond at New Pond Farm

Make your way from the parking lot at 101 Marchant Road down the gravel driveway and past the maple sugar shack, currently bubbling out delicious, steamy aromas.

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A cell tower is born

By Rob Sample

Without much noise or attention, a long-proposed cellular tower in West Redding recently rose 150 feet on a hilly, forested part of the Hoyt Scout Reservation on Marchant Road.

MCM Holdings, a Hartford-based firm that builds and operates wireless-communication towers throughout the U.S., is constructing the new tower. It promises to provide people in West Redding and parts of Bethel and Danbury with reliable cell service they now lack. Though the tower is designed to ultimately accommodate four carriers, Verizon Wireless is the sole occupant thus far.

Besides the tower itself, the site consists of a 10 x 20-foot concrete pad enclosed by an eight-foot-tall fence. It also consists of an equipment cabinet, additional cabinet for backup batteries, and two propane-fueled generators.

"The site is complete," noted Virginia King, MCM's project manager for the tower. "The concrete pad is installed and the tower is up."

The contractors are now working on the installation of Verizon components, including some of the ground equipment and mounts for the cabinets housing those components. King noted that the construction was affected slightly by the weather – particularly the advent of snow in early December.

"But I was very pleased with how smoothly all of the installation work has taken place," she said. "The weather was a factor early on, but the construction crew got it all done."

King recalled visiting the site several weeks ago. Site surveys and balloon tests conducted during the proposal phase indicated the completed tower would be concealed by the woods at the Hoyt Reservation. But King's visit gave her a firsthand look at just how hidden it would be.

"As I drove in the access road, I'm looking...I'm looking... and I couldn't see the tower until I was almost upon it," King said. "That's a good thing."

Bruce Ward, a member of nearby New Pond Farm Education Center's Board of Directors who also serves as a science-education director there, also said the tower is difficult to make out. The tower is roughly in the center of the 1,700-acre Hoyt Reservation, and New Pond Farm is its nearest neighbor.

The construction project itself was largely quiet and occurred largely hidden from view. In addition, prior to the work, an Eversource crew completed the long-awaited replacement of a power pole adjacent to the site.

"Most people [at New Pond Farm] didn't know the tower was going up when this was taking place," said Ward. "I knew myself, because way back in August I took a walk on that corner of the property, and I saw them digging some trenches."

The tower site is elevated somewhat from the Farm's property, and from there, Ward could make out the chain link fence surrounding the tower pad – enabling him to determine where the tower was.

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Lucy Dathan announces candidacy for State Senate seat representing Redding

By Jessie Wright

State Representative Lucy Dathan announced her candidacy for State Senate on Monday, March 9 for the 26th State Senate District. The news comes on the heels of State Senator Ceci Maher's announcement last week that she will not seek re-election.

"I am running for the State Senate to ensure the people of our district continue to have a Senator with experience because now, more than ever, residents need legislators who can deliver," said Representative Lucy Dathan. "I helped pass the largest tax cut in Connecticut history – without sacrificing our values – expanded access to health-care, protected women's reproductive rights, ensured investments in quality education for all, enacted environmental protections, and improved the lives of seniors by eliminating their social security taxes. I've been leading the fight to lower the cost of living for every Connecticut resident while building a stronger, more equitable economy."

Dathan, a Democrat, has served eight years in the legislature, serving as a Representative for the 142nd District including Norwalk and New Canaan. The Senate District for which she is running includes Weston, Westport, Wilton, Redding, and parts of Ridgefield, New Canaan, Darien, and Stamford.

In her current legislative role, Representative Dathan is the Co-chair of the Government Oversight Committee and sits on both the Appropriations and Human Services Committees. She also co-chairs a Medicaid Oversight Committee and serves on the Finance Advisory Committee, a select body that includes the Governor and Lieutenant Governor. Beyond her legislative work, she has been a CPA and CFO for multiple start-ups. She and her husband have three children and have lived in New Canaan since 2015. ■

Land use retirements on the horizon

By Jessie Wright

Changes are coming for the Town's land use offices, with three long-standing contributors to planning, zoning, and conservation functions announcing their upcoming retirements.

Chair of the Conservation Commission Dave Pattee shared with his fellow commissioners on February 17, 2026 that he plans to retire from the group in July following his 85th birthday. Pattee has served on the Commission since 1987.

Carol Keil, administrative assistant in the land use offices, plans to

retire at the end of the fiscal year, June 30, 2026. Planning Commission Chair Laurie Heiss shared the news at the Commission's February 24 meeting. Keil has been in this position for 38 years.

Heiss also shared that Toby Welles, currently an Alternate on the Planning Commission, is planning to step down from his role in the group due to increased work commitments. A resignation date had not yet been set as of publication time. ■

POLICE BLOTTER

Two stolen vehicles crashed in Redding

Police activity March 2 – 8 | By Donna Christopher

Police assisted in three emergency medical service calls, four citizen calls, and two fire department calls. They assisted three drivers with disabled vehicles and issued one firearm permit.

Stolen vehicle incidents

On Saturday, March 7 at 2:23 a.m., police responded to a report of a vehicle fire on Lonetown Road. Upon arrival, officers and firefighters located a vehicle that had struck a utility pole and was fully engulfed in flames. No occupants were located at the scene. The vehicle was later determined to have been reported stolen from Danbury approximately one hour prior to the incident. Preliminary information from the Danbury Police Department indicated the vehicle was taken by unknown suspects. There were no reported injuries. The incident remains under investigation by the Redding Police Department in coordination with the Danbury Police Department.

On Sunday, March 8 police responded at approximately 7:10 a.m. to Pinetree Road for a single-vehicle crash in which the occupants had left the scene. Officers located a vehicle that had struck a guardrail and become stuck near the roadway. The vehicle was determined to have been reported stolen out of Easton. No injuries

were reported, and the occupants were not located. The vehicle was removed from the scene, and the incident remains under investigation.

Later that morning on March 8, an attempted vehicle theft was reported from a residence on Pinetree Road. The owner of a 2011 Kia Soul discovered damage to the vehicle's ignition, consistent with an attempt to hot-wire the vehicle. Security camera footage showed two individuals entering the driveway and accessing the vehicle before leaving the area. Nothing was reported stolen. This incident occurred around the same time and in close proximity to other vehicle-related incidents on Pinetree Road earlier that morning. The matter remains under investigation.

Traffic

In 43 motor vehicle stops, police issued one summons, 23 infractions, one written warning, 17 verbal warnings, and took no action in one case. The infraction rate was 56%.

A two-car motor vehicle accident on Thursday, March 5 on Redding Road around 8:53 a.m. resulted in both vehicles being towed from the scene and one driver being transported by EMS to Danbury Hospital. ■

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,

Pardon the cliché, but the morning drop-off — and to an extent, afternoon pick-up — situation at Redding Elementary School is an accident waiting to happen. Each school day, the stretch of Lonetown Road in front of the school becomes, at minimum, four makeshift lanes of traffic. Two lanes enter the school parking lot, while two lanes of cars and buses attempt to bypass the congestion. Well-meaning drivers wave others through or into the parking lot as traffic speeds past. Add the glare of the morning sun and the impatience of commuters, and the situation becomes increasingly dangerous.

I urge drivers to slow down and to please exhibit caution in this area. Please remember these vehicles are filled with our children. The Town should consider adding traffic enforcement during peak drop-off and pick-up times. ■

Christina Faro, Orchard Drive

LEGAL NOTICES

The Redding Board of Assessment Appeals will be meeting on Monday, March 16, 2026, 4:30 p.m. in the Town Hall Hearing Room at 100 Hill Road for the scheduled hearings and deliberations of eligible appeals for tax assessments on the Grand List as of October 1, 2025. New applications for appeals will not be accepted. Applicants must appear in person for their scheduled hearing. ■

Greg Stackpole, Chairman
Redding Board of Assessment Appeals

March 12, 2026

Democrats to Select Candidates for Conventions

The Redding Democratic Town Committee will meet on Thursday, March 26, 2026, at 7:00 p.m. to select delegates to represent Redding at the **2026 Democratic Conventions**.

Delegates chosen by the DTC will participate in these conventions and vote to determine which candidates will receive the Democratic Party's official endorsement for offices such as Congress, state constitutional offices, State Senate, State House, and Judge of Probate.

Seven delegates are needed to attend each of the following conventions. The time and location, except as noted, will be announced later, but weekday conventions are generally held in the evening.

- Mon. May 11, 2026 – US Congressional House District #4 Convention
- Sat. May 16, 2026 – CT State Convention in Hartford
- Mon. May 18, 2026 – CT State Senate District #26 Convention in Westport
- Wed. May 20, 2026 – CT Assembly (House) District #135 Convention
- Thurs. May 21, 2026 – Judge of Probate Convention

Registered Democrats in Redding who are interested in serving as delegates or learning more about the process are encouraged to send a brief statement of interest to ReddingDems@gmail.com before March 20, 2026, and are welcome to attend the March 26 Democratic Town Committee meeting, held in the Town Hall Meeting Room, at 7:00 p.m. ■

Proposed bill would affect local control of housing development

By Rocco Valluzzo



Photo by Mark Pazniokas / CT Mirror

Senate Majority Leader Bob Duff holds up a copy of HB 8002 while Governor Ned Lamont looks to hand another copy to House Majority Leader Jason Rojas at ceremony in Norwalk on December 8, 2025.

A bill under consideration by the Connecticut Senate's housing committee would limit local zoning authority to increase housing density as well as affordability.

Proposed in a special session of the housing committee last month for the 2026 legislative session, Senate Bill 151 (SB 151) would

restrict municipalities from enforcing strict zoning regulations, such as minimum lot sizes larger than 5,000 square feet (for areas with access to public water and sewer), minimum home dimensions, and excessive setbacks.

Proponents argue the bill will increase housing supply and create more affordable, reasonable-sized lots. Opponents, including some local officials, argue it removes critical local oversight, ignores infrastructure constraints (like sewer and water capacity), and overrides local zoning decisions.

"It's a slap in the face to towns and cities and legislators who worked so hard to give compromise to HB 8002," said First Selectwoman Julia Pemberton, referencing the omnibus housing bill that was signed into law last November. "This is a land grab. What it does is it removes our ability to do things like require minimum setbacks."

In November, Governor Ned

Lamont signed into law Housing Bill 8002, which requires towns to create 'housing growth plans' and gives incentives for towns to allow more housing to be built. The bill is a revised version of legislation passed earlier that year by the legislature's Democratic majority that was vetoed by Lamont after outcry from leaders in the state's suburban communities, including Pemberton, who viewed the original legislation as an encroachment on local autonomy.

Pemberton said she got the impression from State Representative Anne Hughes (D-135th District), that if SB 151 was voted out of committee that it may not get a vote on the floor of the General Assembly. Even if by chance it reached the Governor's desk, Pemberton does not think he would sign it.

"I think it's a bad bill," she said. "I think it's an affront to those of us are just now working through HB 8002 in good faith." ■

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Cross your fingers for April showers Drought trigger reached for Eastern Fairfield County System

By Donna Christopher

Though snowmelt is swelling streams and producing soggy ground, the state is still grappling with abnormally dry conditions.

Aquarion is calling on its customers to voluntarily conserve water, noting that its Eastern Fairfield County System has reached its first drought trigger.

In an announcement March 2, the utility company noted the region is experiencing a “deficit of more than 13 inches of rainfall over the past year.” The system’s first drought trigger occurs at 65% of total capacity.

As a result, Aquarion Water Company is asking customers in Bethel, Bridgeport, Easton, Fairfield, Monroe, Newtown, Redding, Shelton, Stratford, Trumbull, Weston, Westport, and Wilton to voluntarily conserve water to help the system recover.

“Connecticut is currently experiencing conditions ranging from ‘abnormally dry’ to ‘moderate drought’ due to an extended dry spell. Although recent snowfalls provide some relief, substantially more precipitation is needed to offset the ongoing deficit. As a reference point, 10 inches of snow equals approximately one inch of rain,” the notice read.

Among ways to conserve water, homeowners can fix leaks promptly, take shorter showers, run full loads in their dishwasher and washing machine and turn off the tap when brushing teeth, shaving, or washing dishes by hand, and hold off on new landscaping projects until the fall. Aquarion also will be introducing its twice-weekly irrigation schedule to Eastern Fairfield County towns not already in the program.

With few properties in Redding on Aquarion water, most on private wells, it is essential homeowners understand the impact a drought can have on their water supply.

Those with shallow wells are especially at risk of running out of water. When this happens, they often need to drill deeper bedrock wells. Those who already have bedrock wells may drill even deeper or use hydro-fracturing to increase water access.

As of March 3, 2026, approximately 35% of Connecticut is under drought conditions and 54% is classified as “abnormally dry.”

“The fact that Aquarion is putting out voluntary water conservation now is telling me they’re recognizing this has the potential of being problematic,” said Michael Dietz, the Director of the Connecticut Institute of Water Resources at the Department of Natural Resources & the Environment at the University of Connecticut.

The two recent snowstorms helped, though as noted by Aquarion, 10 inches of snow is equal to an inch of rain, a “pretty good estimate,” according to Dietz.

The Norwalk River currently is running at 44 cubic feet per second. The median flow in the Norwalk River, based on 63 years of data, is 70 cubic feet per second. “That’s the middle of the road,” said Dietz. “The 25th percentile is 40, and we’re just over the 25th percentile on the low end of the flow for this time of year.”

“We are 13 inches behind for the year, so to get to normal, we would need to get above our four inches per month average rainfall for the next several months,” Dietz said.

He noted that one of the major worries if conditions persist is for farmers and this year’s agricultural yield.

“If it continues to be low through the winter, then we go into a growing season when all the vegetation pulls water out of the ground,” he continued. “As far as impacts, it is hard to say what types of agriculture will be affected. It really depends on how things go. If we continue to get below normal rainfall, any farmer who is not using irrigation will likely see some kind of impact,” he said.

University of Connecticut Extension Educator Richard Meinert of Dairy and Livestock Nutrient Management said if there is a thaw accompanied by rain, the surface water reservoirs will get the water. If the thaw is more gradual and the soil thaws to allow surface snow to melt and infiltrate, then the spring planting season could be fairly normal.

“Even in droughty springs, soil moisture early is usually enough to get the plants started. A prolonged drought period with below average rainfall then takes its toll on the developing plant,” Meinert explained.

Meinert pointed out that most annual plants focus on developing their roots first. If the soil has enough moisture, roots can grow deeply and access groundwater, helping the plants survive. However, if the topsoil dries out too quickly, seeds may not germinate until moisture returns.

Farmers can take steps to preserve soil moisture, such as reducing tillage, because plowing exposes more soil and increases

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After student’s proposal, Region 9 begins exploring solar power

By Anne Young Albanese

At the February 24 Region 9 Board of Education meeting, the Board voted to begin the process of exploring the installation of solar panel canopies above the upper parking lot and possibly the junior parking lot at Joel Barlow High School.

The project was originally proposed to the Board by Alexandra Humphrey, a sophomore at Joel Barlow High School. She researched schools in the area and the amount of money they are saving with their solar programs. According to her presentation, Ridgefield High School will save \$4 million over 20 years. Stratford High School will save \$4 million over 15 years. Holy Cross High School’s panels provide 80% of the school’s energy needs. Humphrey has been mentored by Susan Auslander, who spearheaded the addition of solar arrays at Meadow Ridge.

The first step in exploring the feasibility of the project is for the Finance and Operations Committee to invite a representative from CT Green Bank to evaluate the property. The Committee met with a representative from CT Green Bank over Zoom and was provided with many projections. The Committee approved the idea for a CT Green Bank representative to come to Joel Barlow High School to conduct a site visit to analyze the location, review energy demands, and develop system designs. The Region 9 Board of Education then voted

unanimously to form a partnership with CT Green Bank on the solar canopy project. There is no commitment or obligation from the Board to move forward until it has received actual numbers.

CT Green Bank will then solicit proposals from qualified solar contractors on behalf of the Board and will help the Finance and Operations Committee review proposals and negotiate the best terms. If approved by the Committee, a proposal will then be brought to the full Board for a vote.

The project would need to be contracted, and the school would need to purchase at least 5% of the total materials to qualify for the State’s investment tax credit. In addition, the materials may not be obtained from a prohibited foreign entity of concern, which include any entity owned, controlled, or subject to the governments of China, Russia, Iran, or North Korea.

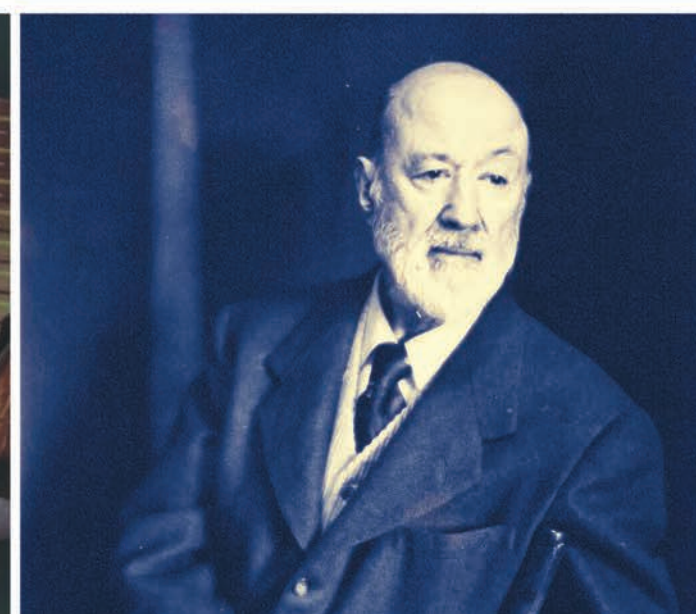
The Connecticut General Assembly established CT Green Bank on July 1, 2011. It was the country’s first full-scale green bank. It leverages public and private funds to support renewable energy deployment and energy efficiency projects across the state. Solar energy is especially beneficial as electricity prices continue to rise and choices between companies that deliver energy to customers are limited. ■



Celebrate America’s 250th Birthday with a concert of patriotic music featuring the Greater Bridgeport Symphony performing the music of Redding’s own Charles Ives. The Symphony will also play popular American music with the students of Joel Barlow High School.

HELP MAKE THIS CELEBRATION HAPPEN
Become a sponsor and bring the Greater Bridgeport Symphony to Redding

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SPORTS

Senior slam dunk!

Mia Tartaglia reaches 1,000 career points for Barlow

By Rocco Valluzzo



Photo by Kri Tartaglia

Mia Tartaglia became the seventh player in Joel Barlow High girls basketball history to break the 1,000-point mark in scoring for her high school career when her team defeated Stratford 55-29 on February 17.

It had been on Mia Tartaglia's mind for some time.

Not long after she started to play basketball, she had thought about scoring 1,000 points for her high school career. Now a senior at Joel Barlow High, such an accomplishment was finally within reach.

On February 17, she became the seventh player in Barlow girls basketball history to score 1,000 or more points when her team defeated Stratford 55-29 in the final game of the regular season. She is also the first to reach it since Jennifer Edwards (née Shinall) in 2008.

"It's actually kind of been a goal of mine since I was really young playing basketball," said Tartaglia. "But it really came into my main goal for my four years at Barlow."

Getting her start in basketball while in the third grade, Tartaglia played in a recreational league at the Redding Community Center and later played in a travel league at the Boys & Girls Club of Redding-Easton. She continued to play in both while in middle school before moving up to Barlow.

Tartaglia earned a spot on Barlow's varsity team as a freshman. She would score more than 120 points that season.

"We knew coming in Mia was committed to basketball as a freshman, and obviously much before that as well, but we knew she was a team-first kid," said Barlow Head Coach Joe Carollo. "Mia, being the type of person she is, she thinks about team first, not individual accolades."

This season, Barlow not only qualified for the South-West Conference playoffs, but also captured its first win in many years when it defeated Pomperaug in the quarterfinals. The number two seed, the Falcons then lost to Bethel in the semifinals.

"It was definitely a tough loss but still such a great season in our conference this year," said Tartaglia. "Being the second seed, that's just something as a team we were really, really proud of."

Although the state Division III tournament will be the final stop of the season for Barlow, Tartaglia

will begin the next chapter of her basketball career at the collegiate level in the fall. Last October, she committed to play for St. Lawrence University, a Division III program in Canton, NY, where she plans to major in physics and minor in exercise sciences and sports studies.

"I've already talked to the coaches a little bit about what my role will be," she said. "I'm definitely working my hardest to get up to the best playing time I can get."

Tartaglia had also considered going to Springfield, Gettysburg, or Union. After visiting St. Lawrence, attending some classes, and meeting the team, she felt it would be a good fit.

"Interacting with the team was really beneficial to me, because it showed me what kind of people I would be surrounding myself with," said Tartaglia. "The opportunity to go to some classes that I would probably be taking based on my intended major really helped me to see what it would be like if I was actually a student there. That was really important to me as well, not just the basketball aspect."

As a senior in high school, Tartaglia cannot play Amateur Athletic Union basketball in the off-season this year, but she can still train year-round. She also plans to join a women's basketball league in Connecticut that many college players take part in so she can keep her skills sharp.

"We really feel St. Lawrence is getting a perfect program kid," said Carollo. "She's gonna be team first, she's very fundamental, she's a fantastic athlete, and she's passionate about the game, and she has a terrific basketball IQ. She really brings everything to the table that a college coach would want." ■



Barlow defense

holds back Law

Girls basketball

By Rocco Valluzzo



Photo by Rocco Valluzzo

Emma Ogden goes up for a shot against Jonathan Law of Milford in the first round of the state Division III tournament on Friday, March 6. Barlow won 42-37.

All season long, the Joel Barlow High girls varsity basketball team's defense has kept opponents under wraps. The trend would continue as the state Division III tournament got underway last week.

The seventh-seeded Falcons have held opponents to less than 40 points in 17 games so far, the latest example coming in the first round of the tournament against 26th-seeded Jonathan Law of Milford. Holding their opponent to single-digit scoring in each of the first three quarters, the seventh-seeded Falcons won 42-37 at home on Friday, March 6.

"Law was seeded 26th, yeah, but they're better than that," said Barlow Head Coach Joe Carollo. "They play in the SCC (Southern Connecticut Conference), which is a very tough conference."

Layups by Emma Ogden, Gwen Miller, and Mia Tartaglia were instrumental in building a lead for Barlow in the first quarter. The latter also sank a pair of free throws in the last minute as the hosts were up 10-5 after one frame.

Law, however, caught up in the next frame, which included a six-point run at the start to take a 10-11 lead. While the Falcons had numerous second-chance shots, they missed the vast majority of them, scoring only four points.

A three-pointer and a free throw by Paige Jarvis put the Falcons back on top, but the half ended when Law's Gabby Rodriguez hit a trey of her own with 1:10 to go, and it was a 14-14 tie.

Both teams battled for supremacy as the second half got underway. The lead changed hands early in the third quarter before a 10-0 run gave Barlow some breathing room. Tartaglia netted six straight before frequently getting double teamed, but Ava Gillon and Sara Fenzel also scored to complete the run, which was stopped by another three-pointer by Reodriguez. Barlow led 30-23 after three frames.

Miller's field goal put Barlow up by 11 (36-25) in the fourth quarter, but Law came storming back, getting as close as 38-37 with 2:19 left to play. Despite getting open shots from the perimeter, Barlow missed each time.

"We were 1-for-28 from three-point land," said Carollo. "We're not supposed to win games like that."

It remained a one-point game with less than a minute to go when Law was forced to foul to stop the clock. Barlow responded with Tartaglia sinking five of six free throws to preserve the lead.

"We're all playing for each other," said Gillon, one of four seniors on the team. "I just feel like it's really important to just try our best, work as hard as we can, especially since it could be our last game, and just give it all for each other."

Tartaglia led Barlow with 24 points. Jarvis (one three pointer) and Miller each scored six with Fenzel netting two, as did Ogden and Gillon, who also helped hold Rodriguez (15 points) scoreless in the fourth quarter.

"All year, Ava has anchored our defense," said Carollo. "She's guarded the biggest kid on the other team."

Should Barlow (16-7) win its second-round game, it will face the winner of the Coventry-Brookfield game on Thursday, March 12 at 6:00 p.m. at the home of the higher seed. ■

Barlow opens state tournament with win

Boys basketball

By Rocco Valluzzo

The bus ride back from the Southeastern corner of the state seemed a lot shorter than the one going there for the Joel Barlow High boys varsity basketball team after the first round of the state Division IV tournament.

The 18th-seeded Falcons had to go to Ledyard to open the tournament on Friday, March 6. It turned out to be worth the trip as they upset their 15th-seeded host 54-41.

It was Barlow's first appearance in the tournament since 2020 and its first victory since 2022.

"It's been awhile," said Barlow Head Coach Corey Stevens, who took over the team last year. "I'm really happy for them that they got to experience this and see some reward for all the hard work that they've been putting in."

In a close contest at first, both sides matched each other in scoring, finishing the first quarter tied at 9-9. Barlow's defense stepped up a bit in the next frame, holding the Colonels to even fewer points while its offense improved enough to take a 22-17 lead going into half-time.

"They were similar to us," said Stevens, noting Ledyard's center Sebastian Holloway was as tall as Barlow center Ben Noome. "They had a bunch of size."

Each side matched the other point-for-point in the third frame as the Falcons held onto a 35-30 lead going into the last quarter. A good performance at the foul line helped, as the Falcons protected their lead.

Defensively, Barlow forced 24 turnovers in the game, converting a number of those into layups in transition. On offense, it got the ball inside to Noome in particular and was patient with its shot selection.

Three Barlow players scored in the double digits. Noome and Sean Gabriel led Barlow, each with 13 points, while Tyler Stark sank 12. Chase Bonanno scored eight. Erik Kiernan, Ryan Kelly, Charlie Cruz, and Eli Kress all had two points apiece.

"It's a credit to the whole team," said Stevens. "I'm extremely proud of everybody and how they performed."

Should the Falcons prevail against second-seeded Lyme/Old Lyme in the next round, they face the winner of the Abbott Tech-Berlin game on Thursday, March 12 at 6:00 p.m. at a location to be determined.

"There's nothing better than being able to play basketball in March," said Stevens. "We're going to embrace the moment and go have fun and see how we do." ■

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Redding's Big Outdoors: Stop and sit awhile / continued from page 1

Pass the vegetable garden and you will see the Farm's namesake pond, which features a number of benches and a bridge to linger on. With its recent wetland restoration, this is a great area to try and spot spring plants and creatures coming to life. (Note: New Pond Farm's property is typically open only for members, but they are hosting an Open Day

from 11:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m. this Saturday, March 14).

Gilbert-Miller Park

Take a tiny but serene little walk tucked behind Georgetown's Main Street buildings to Gilbert-Miller Park. It has lovely places to sit and listen to nature (made even better with a hot cup of coffee or pastry

from one of the many businesses next door). Park on Main Street and enter the park just beyond the GTown Arts building at 5 Main Street. The Gilbert Bennett Brook, which runs into the Norwalk River, is sure to provide a boisterous soundtrack this time of year. ■

John Read Middle School holds annual Poetry Slam

By Anne Young Albanese



Photo by Anne Young-Albanese

The eighth-grade poetry slam participants receive kudos from their peers.

As part of John Read Middle School's integrated language arts (ILA) curriculum, eighth-grade teacher Danielle Lingo holds an annual poetry slam competition. This year, Micah Frimpong won with his poem "Cloud 9 or 8." Second place went to Maebh Rinaldi for her poem "Stuffed Animals." The third-place winner was Neil Juncadella for his poem "Wild Fire." All of Lingo's students wrote a poem and then performed it in front of their classes. Students selected the top poems from each class to move on to the eight-grade Poetry Slam finals. Other students participating in the final Poetry Slam competition were James Schmitt and Alex Parkin with their poem "Sloth." Valentine Benitez shared her poem

"Ode to Ale." Hadley MacDonald shared her poem "Is Perfect Really Perfect." "Ice Out" was written and read by Alex Solis. Amelia Gerbracht and Hadley Schuchard read their poem "Our Masks." The judges for the competition were Meg Rooney, Kara Flockhart, Lanny Ball, Maria Frederick, and Lee Skalkos. The poems were all judged on a scale from 1 to 10. Frimpong took the top spot with scores of 10, 10, 9.9, 10, 9.9. Students who shared their poems aloud received a journal for their participation. Frimpong also received a bookstore gift card. The Poetry Slam was developed about a decade ago by Lingo to make the exploration of poetry more interesting. ■

Region 9 looks to trim 2026-27 budget to lessen Redding's increase

By Anne Young Albanese

At the March 5 Region 9 Board of Education meeting, school district administrators addressed questions from Board members about the proposed 2026-27 budget. Topics included the exploration of different options for debt service and ways to lower the budget due to the high percentage increase in Redding. (While the proposed budget shows a 3.6% total increase, due to student population shares next year, Redding is looking at an increase of 8.8%.) Debt service consists of the payments for interest, principal, and any fees involved with borrowing. The original proposal included a reduction in debt service of \$483,951 for the 2026-27 fiscal year due to an issued bond completing. The administration placed \$200,000 to a capital fund for future improvements to Joel Barlow High School. After next year's significant debt servicing drop, future drops will be between \$10,000 and \$20,000 until the 2035-36 school year.

After extensive discussion, the Board suggested keeping the \$200,000 in the capital fund. This will allow the school to make smaller improvements without having to borrow additional money. One large concern is the increase that Redding taxpayers will feel next year in Region 9 funding due to changes in student enrollment. Easton and Redding's shares of the Region 9 budget change every year, depending on the number of students enrolled from each town. Easton is expected to have 26 fewer students than the current fiscal year calculation, while Redding is expected to have seven more students than the current fiscal year calculation. This causes Redding to have a larger percentage increase, because Redding is paying 49.4% of the overall budget, compared with 47.03% last year. This leads to Redding having an intimidating increase of \$1,097,576 or 8.8%. While Easton's budget number will decrease from what it paid in the

current fiscal year, it is still paying more than Redding towards the overall budget because it will still have more students enrolled overall. Administrators were asked to attend the next meeting with more cuts to reduce the Redding increase. A final announcement before the meeting was adjourned was made by Dr. Mario Almeida, Assistant Superintendent and Head of School at Joel Barlow High School. The Special Olympics has donated \$1,000 to expand inclusion opportunities. Almeida never applied for the grant, so he believes that someone from another school may have mentioned Barlow's two successful Unified Homecoming Dances to the Special Olympics Committee. The next meeting will address the Board's suggestions for the 2026-27 budget. It will be held on Tuesday, March 17 at 7:00 pm. A public hearing on the Region 9 Budget is set for Wednesday, April 1 at 7:00 p.m. ■

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Scholarship available for high school senior women

By Karen Moraitis

Weston's Chapter P of P.E.O. (Philanthropic Educational Organization) announces that scholarships up to \$2,500 are available to college-bound women who reside in Weston, Redding, and Easton.

Candidates must exhibit excellence in academics, leadership, and extra-curricular activities, plus participation in community service and a demonstrated financial need. The deadline for applications

is March 27, 2026. More information, as well as an application, is available at www.peochapterpct.org. You may also contact the chapter by e-mail at peochapterpct@gmail.com. ■

A cell tower is born / continued from page 1



Photo by Bruce Ward

"I hadn't gone back there in quite a while, but I recently took a walk on our property line and took some photos," Ward continued. "It [the tower] is quite unobtrusive." The tower is expected to become even more hidden once leaves begin to reappear in the next month at the heavily forested site. Ward noted that the addition of a separate section of tower - for Verizon's transmitters - will boost the overall height somewhat, a point King also noted. Poor cell service has long characterized that part of town, with lack of signals and dropped calls characteristic among cell users there. With Verizon, one of Connecticut's top carriers, on board, the tower could go a long way to solving that issue. "We continue to market to other carriers," King said. "Thus far, however, I'm not aware of any additional ones yet. If anyone from that industry is interested, we welcome them to contact us." ■

Cross your fingers for April showers / continued from page 3

evaporation. They can also delay planting or select drought-tolerant crops or varieties for drier fields. Despite these strategies, farmers are largely dependent on the weather, and their success always carries some level of risk. Bill Hill of Warrup's Farm expressed concern overall for the change in climate.

"We've gotten mild winters that weren't like this 40 years ago," he said. He recollected the summer of 1966 as "really dry" during a historic period of severe drought in Connecticut and the Northeast. Hill said his family farm uses irrigation for its vegetable gardens, and while pumpkins rely on moisture, they have not always used

irrigation for their growing though they did use it last summer for pumpkins and gourds when precipitation was "below normal." If there is a wet spring farmers will be fine. "But if we continue the way it is now, a drought could come. Farmers will have a tough time," Dietz said. ■

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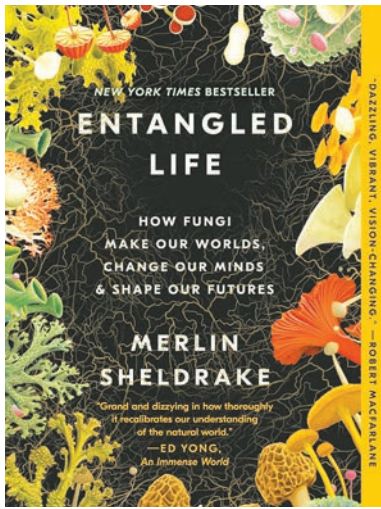
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BOOK REVIEW

Entangled Life

How fungi make our worlds, change our minds & shape our futures

By Merlin Sheldrake / Random House / 352 pp / \$30.00



If the very rapid developments now happening in machine learning, or artificial intelligence (AI), are making your brain fizz and your head hurt, here's a book that is something of an antidote. *Entangled Life* explores the unsung, miraculous world of the kingdom of fungi and will ensure you never look at a mushroom, eat sourdough, or marvel at the mycelium in your compost pile the same way again.

Merlin Sheldrake is a British biologist whose PhD work focused on fungal networks in tropical forests. He has become something of a fungi phenom. In this, his first book, he introduces us to the world of fungi as well as his personal explorations of this amazing kingdom.

The book is wide-ranging, of necessity. The yeasts that make our bread rise are fungi, as are psychedelic drugs. There are fungi that inhabit and take over

ani-mals. Fungi and their networks enable communication among trees. Mushrooms are just the deliciously edible fruiting part of a fungus.

Sheldrake sets the tone in the introduction: "They are eating rock, making soil, digesting pollutants, nourishing and killing plants, surviving in space, inducing visions, producing food, making medicines, manipulating animal behavior, and influencing the composition of the earth's atmosphere. Fungi provide a key to understanding the planet on which we live, and the ways that we think, feel and behave."

Sheldrake writes like the poet and musician he is, so *Entangled Life* is delightful to read. By focusing on how fungi behave, and why, the book is a fascinating read. What we seem not to know is *how* they do what they do. There is a series of illustrations in the book that show the foraging behavior of a wood-rotting fungus. Sheldrake writes, "The mycelium starts in an exploratory mode, proliferating in all directions. When the fungus discovers something to eat, it reinforces the links that connect it with the food and prunes back the links that don't lead anywhere." Over 48 days, a single fungus has centered itself on a block of wood to consume.

The story of fungi made me realize, yet again, how much there is still to learn about the natural world. That's refreshing in the AI era. ■

Review by Susan Clark

LIBRARY CORNER

Looking outdoors for inspiration

By Erin Shea Dummeyer

This week, I found myself at a networking event called, "Reimagining Libraries," featuring Nate Hill, Executive Director of Metropolitan New York Library Council as the keynote speaker. His organization fosters an open exchange of ideas for libraries, archives, museums, and cultural institutions in the Metropolitan New York region that are members. His keynote centered on a wild project from the council called Library Field, a literal 26-acre plot of land that the New York Library Council purchased in New Castle, New York. It sounds like Library Field is still finding its way, but during their inaugural year,

they hosted regular hikes for New York Library Council members to reflect on their work and the future of the land. Self-described as "an open air laboratory," Library Field has hikes planned for the spring as well as "stump speeches" which are exactly as they sound – opportunities for members to give speeches while standing on a stump.

As you can probably imagine, this was unlike any other library talk I've ever attended, and it certainly was true to its name of "Reimagining Libraries." And while I'm not sure that I "get it," the Library Field website does have a 41-page "Field Report" published

last year that has some more information. It did get me thinking about Redding and the value this Town puts on our open space, and how that may connect with Mark Twain Library's mission. In partnership with Redding Land Trust and Redding Neighbors & Newcomers, we host regular "community hikes" on our local trails. But I have never considered the Town's open space as an extension of the library and library work. Perhaps I should start thinking about it. ■

Erin Shea Dummeyer is
Director, Mark Twain Library



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Good books for good readers

By Margi Esten

I am almost always listening to audio books in my car, and I usually turn to detective fiction, mysteries, or psychological thrillers. I have stumbled on a few of them recently that are almost impossible to turn off!

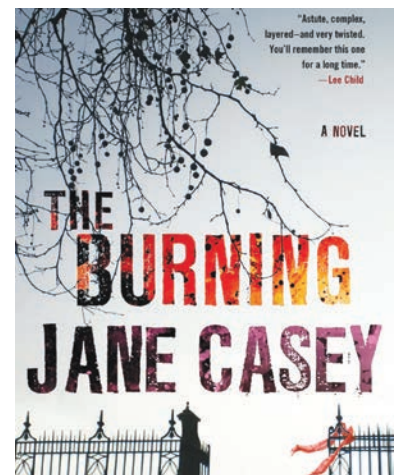
The Burning by Jane Casey. Maeve Kerrigan is a young police constable in London in this series debut. It is a police procedural with a psychological component blending a chilling serial killer case with an intimate look at the personal struggles of this young female detective.

Sometimes I Lie by Alice Feeney. A favorite thriller writer of mine, Harlan Coben, is a huge fan of

Alice Feeney and that alone got my attention. Feeney is another psychological thriller writer, and her readers are pretty much hooked from the opening lines: "I'm in a coma. My husband doesn't love me anymore. Sometimes I lie." The novel, with its unreliable narrator, plunges into a past and present scenario that is chilling and compelling.

Eye of the Beholder by Emma Bamford. This atmospheric and sinister novel follows a ghostwriter searching for answers when her lover reappears after his very mysterious death. It is also an intriguing look into the complexities of the beauty industry set in the

Scottish Highlands. There are lots of twists and turns and no real answers until the end. ■



State guidelines seek detail on exactly where new housing can be built / continued from page 1

must do to develop these plans to build more housing.

H.B. 8002, which allows towns to participate in regional plans or build their own, takes several steps to push towns to increase their housing stock, particularly housing that's affordable to people with low incomes. Under the law, towns have to determine how many housing units they need and include that in their plans.

For the 20 towns with the lowest net grand lists per capita, there are some different requirements under the law. These municipalities won't have to set goals for the number of units they'll build. But they will have to explain how they'll preserve existing housing and avoid displacing residents while they develop more housing, among other

requirements.

Connecticut faces a dire shortage of housing, which means many renters are paying high percentages of their incomes to housing. Experts have also said that the cost of housing has harmed the state's economy.

The guidelines are preliminary; OPM is accepting comments on the draft until April 30.

Under H.B. 8002, towns should develop plans that work with regional, state and municipal plans of conservation and development, which are developed every few years to help the state plan for growth, infrastructure needs and ecological concerns.

The guidelines encourage a diversity of housing including duplexes, triplexes, quadplexes,

townhouses, multi-family housing, a mix of residential and commercial use and accessory dwelling units. It also says there should be a range of unit sizes and encourages towns to plan for housing for people with disabilities.

All towns will have to create an inventory of developable land and make any zoning changes necessary to allow building on that land. Towns will also report on their infrastructure needs, especially for things like sewer and water capacity.

It also says that towns must "affirmatively further fair housing," in their plans. That phrase means that governments should take meaningful action to ensure that people have equal access to housing and ensure that housing isn't segregated.

In a letter sent last month to OPM, Open Communities Alliance Executive Director Erin Boggs emphasized the importance of prioritizing fair housing and offering clear guidelines.

"Without clear expectations in the Guidelines as to what the Housing Growth Plan requires, consistent with fair housing laws, communities and COGs would draft plans dependent on their own varied interpretations of the law," Boggs wrote. "Piecemeal interpretation and inconsistent approaches to plans and reports would mean OPM would have no single yardstick to evaluate plans and reports fairly, as it must do."

Boggs said during an interview Tuesday that she hopes to see more specifics in future iterations of the

guidelines and that OPM will take public comments under advisement to revise them. There should be more specifics about fair housing, and assurance that suburban towns won't try to put all the housing needs for the region in cities, she said.

"The way in which fair housing and other equity legal obligations that actually are woven into this bill are absent from the guidelines in their current form," Boggs said. "We would like to see clarification." ■

This article originally
appeared in CT Mirror

Two John Read students advance to State Reflections competition

By Anne Young Albanese



Photo submitted by John Read Middle School PTA Grace Ray's submission "The Royal Duckling"

For over 50 years, the National Parent Teacher Association (PTA) has run a competition called Reflections, during which local PTAs implement the program across the country to allow students to explore the arts and to express themselves. Students may enter a variety of arts categories. These include Dance Choreography, Film Production, Music Composition, Photography, and of course, Literature and Visual Arts.

This year's topic was "I Belong." The topics purposely allow for a variety of interpretations to see how the students develop the subject.

This year, two John Read Middle School students advanced from the local school competition to the state competition. Out of 16 Visual Arts entries, sixth grader Grace Ray's piece moved ahead. Out of two Literature entries, fifth grader Max Mir's project advanced to the state level.

Ray's piece is called "The Royal Duckling." She described it as "turning the letters of my name into art. This relates to the theme because I wrote my name in cursive, mirrored it, and saw a picture. Also, we were supposed to make gradations and patterns, and you can see how I put them on the bill of the duck and the many patterns on the cape."

Mir's written story is called "Daniel and the Tryouts."

"My story relates to the theme 'I belong' because it explains about a kid, Daniel, who at first is nervous that he's not going to make friends at his baseball tryouts. But then, later in the story, he befriends a kid, Thomas, who is a good friend. After the tryouts, the two notice that they both make the team. At that point, Daniel realizes that he has made a friend and fits in. He invites Thomas to his house and figures out that Thomas has the same problem that he had. The story ends with Daniel helping Thomas through it," Mir explained.

Certain pieces advancing to the state level were submitted by the Connecticut PTA to the National PTA for consideration. The national results will be announced in May. ■

Girl Scouts restart a longtime tradition with a warm meal on a frigid morning

By Rob Sample



Photo by Jennine Avino-Rivera The Cadettes from Troop 31492 prepared and served a Valentine's breakfast on Sunday, February 8. (Front, left to right): Adrianna Ragbir, Ruby Rothberg, Bettina Szarvas, and Sarah Slater. (Back, left to right): Skyler Britton, Ellie Edwards, Chloe Alvarez, Iliana Eriksen, and Mackenzie Rivera.

A longtime tradition was reborn last month when the Girl Scouts of Easton-Redding held a Valentine's Breakfast. The event took place Sunday, February 8 at the West Redding Fire Department.

The event was the handiwork of the Cadettes from Troop 31492, in grades 6 through 8. Every Girl Scout in the Easton-Redding Falcon Service Unit was invited to attend along with a guest. Traditionally, the breakfast was promoted as a father-daughter event, but the Scouts and leaders kept it very open this year to be more inclusive.

Cadettes decorated and prepped food the night before, then arrived at 6:45 a.m. that Sunday to cook breakfast. The meal consisted of pancakes, eggs, bacon, and sausage, as well as cereal, coffee, and hot chocolate. The Scouts also created centerpieces for the tables and gifts for their guests.

"The last time this Valentine's Breakfast took place was in

February 2020, right before the Covid-19 pandemic," noted Kaitlyn Tagarelli, the region's current Service Unit Manager. "Initially social distancing, and then later a lack of volunteers, prevented the event from happening again until recently."

Tagarelli credited former Service Unit Manager Stephanie Gregory and longtime volunteer and leader Masako Makamuta with leading the effort to relaunch the event. "They were so very happy to be doing this again," Tagarelli said.

Everyone was initially unsure of what the response would be, and the cold weather didn't help; the low that Sunday was -2 degrees Fahrenheit and the high was 17 degrees. Nevertheless, the event drew nearly 150 attendees.

"In fact, we split the attendees into two breakfast slots because we had so much interest and couldn't fit everyone in one sitting," Tagarelli noted.

Cadette Maya Khanna helped with set up and decorating along with her mom, Kimberly Khanna - who is also the Troop's co-leader. "It was hectic the night before getting everything ready in the bitter cold, but the morning was a really nice environment for everyone to get together," said Maya, "especially for the Girl Scouts to show their guests what they've accomplished. I'm looking forward to this being reestablished as an ongoing tradition in Redding."

"We were excited to bring this event back and see such enthusiastic participation, despite lots of snow impacting our parking situation and absolutely frigid temperatures," said Tagarelli. "It's a great community-building event: a chance for the girls to get together and celebrate people who are important to them." ■

Curling ignites a passion for Meadow Ridge chef

By Pamela Brown



Photos courtesy of Jeffrey Enchura Enchura on the ice at Nutmeg Curling Club



Jeffrey Enchura, right, with gold medalist curler John Shuster

When Jeff Enchura isn't in the dining room at Meadow Ridge as the Food & Beverage Director Executive Chef, he can be found on the ice. For the past six years, Enchura has been both an avid player and coach of curling.

"I, like many others, was always fascinated when it would appear in the mainstream every four years at the Olympics, but I never pursued looking into a place to try it until my wife signed me up for a beginners/instructional league in 2018 as a Christmas present," said Enchura. "I was immediately hooked." He is now a member of the Nutmeg Curling Club in Bridgeport.

The fast-paced modern sport has become more widely recognized and, according to Enchura, this year's curling at the Milano Cortina Winter Olympics has been historic for Americans in the sport, with the first U.S. medals in mixed doubles, the first medal for an American woman, and the oldest American Winter Olympian to ever compete, when 54-year-old Rich Ruohonen took the ice against Switzerland.

While curling is growing in popularity, many people are still unsure of exactly what it is. Enchura describes it as "a cross between shuffleboard, hockey, and chess," consisting of three key pieces of equipment: the stone, special shoes, and the broom. Team players slide granite stones across the ice toward a target (House). Using the broom, they warm up the ice in front of the stone to allow it to travel farther.

"The ice for curling is made 'bumpy' by spraying droplets of water on the surface to create what we call 'pebble.' This allows the running surface of the rocks to generate enough friction to move. The ice also needs to be at a specific temperature," Enchura explained.

The shoes that curlers wear include one with a gripper sole and one with a Teflon slider sole attached to the bottom, allowing curlers to slide with the rock. "The

broom is the other piece of equipment. You'll see the sweepers sweeping in front of the rocks - that creates warmth via friction that can manipulate running channels that the rock, as it travels down the ice and spins, can either stay straight or 'curl.' It also allows the stone to travel farther when necessary to reach its intended target spot where the rock is supposed to finish." Enchura noted some curlers use a stopwatch to time the rocks going down the ice to help understand the ice conditions as they change throughout a game and what adjustments need to be made.

Today, the sport is thriving. "Our club's membership has had very steady growth year over year post-pandemic, and Olympic years always generate more interest," he said. "The hub for U.S. curling is the Minnesota/Wisconsin region, but there are also a lot of clubs in New England and upstate New York." Enchura plays three nights per week at the Nutmeg Curling Club. While he lives in nearby Trumbull, some members travel as far as an hour away to play. "Monday is a men's league, Tuesday is our competitive league, and Thursday is a developmental league where I'm learning more about the skip position. There are also fun weekend events called bonspiels at either our club or away at other clubs in New England and the Mid-Atlantic areas that people travel to."

For the past four years, Enchura has been involved in the Juniors programs as a youth coach.

"I've been running a Juniors bonspiel we call 'The NEON,' mainly because for the evening entertainment on Saturday night we turn our ice into a glow-in-the-dark curling experience with black lights for the kids. We're one of the only clubs that do this, and it's very popular," he said. "This year, being an Olympic year, we were extremely fortunate to have a special visitor show up at the club." John Shuster,

a 2018 USA gold medalist curler and curling analyst for NBC sports, surprised the team. "He hung out for four hours, talked to everyone, took pictures, and stayed to watch the glow-in-the-dark curling, which he thought was the coolest thing ever. He even commented on it the next day on his Instagram and on the live broadcast of the Men's game. It was amazing and the kids (and parents) were shocked."

Enchura appreciates the competitiveness of the sport combined with the camaraderie of the players. "I always like to say most people come for the sport but stay for the community. The 'spirit of curling' is a fundamental code of conduct emphasizing sportsmanship, integrity, and respect over mere winning. There's a collective notion to have fun and enjoy each other's company, as customarily we enjoy a beverage after each game and hang out."

Interestingly, Enchura found a connection to Meadow Ridge while enjoying his active hobby. He once noticed a couple's name engraved on one of the club's stones. "It was familiar, but I couldn't put my finger on it. When I went to the dinner reservations book at Meadow Ridge that night, I saw the names that were on that stone. Small world!" He immediately sought out the couple, who'd recently moved to the community and had belonged to the same club. They now regularly bring other Meadow Ridge residents to the rink to support Enchura and his teammates. ■



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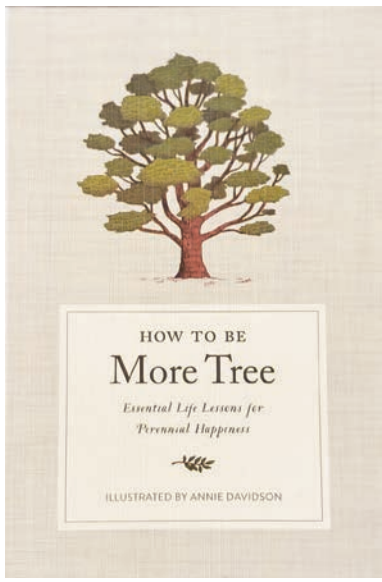
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THE NATURAL WORLD

If trees could talk “Be more tree” | By Janice Rotchstein



How to be More Tree
by Liz Marvin



Hornbeam illustration by Annie Davidson, Clarkson Potter / Publishers, 2020.

Are you OVER winter? I sure am!

But here’s the stinger. We still have to get through March: aptly nicknamed “tomboy” for its bluster, muddy, mischievous, and unpredictable shenanigans.

No wonder at this time of year, I respect the resiliency of forests. I mean, how can they stand this erratic weather? At least I have a roof over my head, and radiators.

Well, leave it to a dear friend to answer that question. She suggested I read *How to Be More Tree: Essential Life Lessons for Perennial Happiness* by Liz Marvin with whimsical drawings by Annie Davidson. Within minutes, I was inspired. Here are a few of its insights.

Ask for aid. An elm knows when to lean on a friend. If besieged by caterpillars, it secretes pheromones attracting parasitic wasps. They neutralize the intrusion by laying

eggs inside the centipede. “Sometimes you just have to call in the wasps,” wrote Marvin.

Stay strong. The black walnut’s trunk, or heartwood, is powerful. When treacherous winds and storms threaten, its inner strength — mixed with flexibility — supports the heavy canopy from being savaged. A reminder that exercising our core ensures balance, energy, and might.

Remedy roadblocks. Act as a beech when stressed. Instead of folding inward, it reflects upon the problem and responds. For example, should it sense a deer chewing at its leaves, a bitter tannin is released. If branches are severed, hormones ooze forward to close and mend the break. Lesson learned: Solving troubles through careful reflection restores calm.

Opt for optimism. No matter what winter throws at chestnuts, they explode in spring with scented “candle” blossoms. Pollinators

flock to them, and we are warmed by their beauty. Such rebirth makes you realize harsh times do pass leaving us rejuvenated.

Be bold. Sycamore maples aren’t afraid to slip away from the comfort of home. Their offspring take flight in winged samara seed pods whose helicopter blades carry them afar. The journey not only increases biodiversity but also stops birds from eating them while on the tree. “Being brave enough to try something new,” said Marvin, “can open the door to personal growth.”

Pause perfect. It appears ginkgos have it all: long life, vibrant yellow leaves come fall, the ability to thrive in pollution, and stamina to live through chaos such as the atomic bomb in Hiroshima. Yet, its fruit smells awful. Just goes to prove nobody’s perfect and striving to be so can only lead to stress and disappointment.

Remain real. Think hornbeam when you feel pressured to change who you are. The species, unlike others, doesn’t grow unusually tall, create flowers or make fruit. Yet it has been around for centuries “growing strong and solid, without expecting a round of applause,” observed Marvin.

So, be it conifer or deciduous, we can learn a lot from Redding’s woodlands. Marvin, an avid hiker and fan of trees since swinging from the backyard apple tree in childhood, believes: “if something is getting under your bark, or you’re suffering a few snapped branches....sit back, let the wind gently rustle your canopy, and discover how to be more tree.” ■

If you have a favorite tree story for this column, contact reddingtreeconservancy@gmail.com

MUSIC NOTE

Happy birthday, America!

By Pamela Brown

America’s 250th anniversary is being celebrated in many ways this year, and the Connecticut Master Chorale, under the direction of Tina Johns Heidrich, is offering the gift of patriotic music. The Chorale will be presenting its 25th Annual Spring 2026 Concert – *Happy 250th Birthday, America!* on March 15 at 3:00 p.m. at the First Congregational Church at 164 Deer Hill Avenue in Danbury.

“We will begin our celebration early with a glorious array of patriotic and distinctly American music, reflecting the exceptional spirit that is America. This concert is very special as we honor America and distinctly American Music, such as folk songs and patriotic numbers – and also acknowledging those who are currently serving or have served in the Armed Forces,” said Heidrich.

The 90-minute concert will feature a mix of classic songs along with newer compositions. “It’s a concert that will appeal to all ages,” said Heidrich. “We will start the concert with a choral version of ‘The Pledge of Allegiance,’ followed by ‘Folk Songs of America’ – containing eight unique settings of American folk songs, representing facets of the richly diverse people and places found through our country’s history. They are new, creative arrangements by acclaimed composer Dan Forrest, one of our favorite composers.”

The second half, with the exception of “A Festive Call to Freedom” by Joseph Martin, will feature new arrangements of standard patriotic songs. “Dan Forrest’s ‘My Country, ‘Tis of Thee’ is an absolutely superb and dramatic

rendition,” noted Heidrich.

In addition, the program will include “I Hear America Singing” by André Thomas, considered the master of Gospel music. Heidrich noted there will be one piece that will feature the orchestra alone – “Hoe-Down” from Aaron Copland’s ballet *Rodeo*. Patriotism will be on full display in a stunning arrangement of “America the Beautiful” and “God of Our Fathers,” a Christian hymn written to commemorate the first Centennial of Independence Day in 1876.

The concert will feature 54 singers and 26 musicians. Three Redding residents are members of the Master Chorale: Bobby Bria, Angela Caes, and Sheila Corr. The Chorale will be accompanied by the Connecticut Master Chorale Orchestra and Joseph Jacovino on piano.

A poignant part of the concert will be the recognition of veterans and currently serving members of the military. Heidrich invites all service members to wear their uniforms to this concert. Currently, there are three veterans in the Chorale – two in the Air Force and one in the Army Reserve.

“During one special number, ‘Armed Forces – The Pride of America,’ each branch of the military will be called out,” said Heidrich. “We will ask them to stand and be acknowledged. This is a definitive patriotic musical presentation, with a medley of songs from the five military branches culminating in our national anthem.” ■

For more information, visit cmchorale.org



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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

\$ = fee applies
R = registration required

This Week's Featured Events

The Secret Lives of Artists – An Allen & Helen Hermes Art Series Panel Discussion

Thursday, March 12
7:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.
Get to know celebrated artists living in our community
Mark Twain Library
439 Redding Road
marktwainlibrary.org
R

Board of Finance – Budget Public Hearing

Wednesday, March 18
7:30 p.m.
Redding Community Center and Virtual
37 Lonetown Road and Zoom
reddingct.gov/financials
sites.google.com/er9.org/
redding-budget/home

CS Lewis Live on Stage - The Great Divorce

Friday, March 20 – Saturday, March 21
7:00 p.m.
Anthony Lawton brings to life Lewis's vision of the struggle within the human soul.
First Congregational Church
Ridgefield
103 Main Street
Ridgefield
firstcongregational.com

YMCA Site-Wide Easter Egg Hunt

Saturday, March 21
2:30 p.m. – 4:00 p.m. and 4:00 p.m. – 5:30 p.m.
Riverbrook Regional YMCA
404 Danbury Road
Wilton
wiltonymca.org/easter-egg-hunt
\$, R

ARTS

Thursday, March 12 – Saturday, March 14

Joel Barlow High School presents Pippin
7:00 p.m. Thursday – Saturday
2:00 p.m. Saturday
Joel Barlow High School
100 Black Rock Turnpike
jbhs.booktix.com
\$

Thursday, March 12

The Secret Lives of Artists – An Allen & Helen Hermes Art Series Panel Discussion
7:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.
Get to know celebrated artists living in our community
Mark Twain Library
439 Redding Road
marktwainlibrary.org
R

Saturday, March 14

Kathleen Parks of Twisted Pine
7:00 p.m.
Fiddler, songwriter, and singer
The Granite
5 North Main Street
thegranitechurch.org
\$

Sunday, March 15

Connecticut Master Chorale Spring Concert
3:00 p.m.
Patriotic and American music in honor of America 250
First Congregational Church
164 Deer Hill Avenue
Danbury
cmchorale.org
\$

Sunday, March 15

ClueDunnit?! Improv Performance
5:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.
Interactive murder mystery
The Granite
5 North Main Street
thegranitechurch.org
\$

Friday, March 20 – Saturday, March 21

CS Lewis Live on Stage - The Great Divorce
7:00 p.m.
Anthony Lawton brings to life Lewis's vision of the struggle within the human soul.
First Congregational Church
Ridgefield
103 Main Street
Ridgefield
firstcongregational.com

Saturday, March 21

Play Reading: Neil Simon's Rumors
7:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.
Fundraiser to support New Pond Farm
Pryor Hubbard Hall
30 Church Street
newpondfarm.org
\$, R

CHILDREN | TEENS

Friday, March 13

Lucky Bingo
6:30 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.
For grades 2-8 Redding Community Center
37 Lonetown Road
reddingct.gov
\$, R

Thursday, March 19

3rd Annual College Fair Hosted by Westport Day School
5:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.
Learn about and meet representatives from colleges that specifically offer learning supports
372 Danbury Road
Wilton
eventbrite.com/e/3rd-annual-college-fair-hosted-by-westport-day-school-tickets-1982356592933
R

FOOD | WINE

Wednesday, March 18

Meet the Brewer Happy Hour
5:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.
Free samples and tastings
Nod Hill Brewery
137 Ethan Allen Highway
nodhillbrewery.com

Sunday, March 22

5th Annual Afternoon of Casks Festival
1:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.
Pints, oysters, music, and food
Nod Hill Brewery
137 Ethan Allen Highway
nodhillbrewery.com
\$, R

HOLIDAY | SEASONAL

Tuesday, March 17

St. Patrick's Tea and Music Celebration
10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
Drop in for live Irish folk music and traditional foods
Heritage Center
37 Lonetown Road

Tuesday, March 17

St. Paddy's Day Bash
5:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.
Full dinner and entertainment, presented by Ridgefield Lions Club
First Congregational / Lund Hall
103 Main Street
Ridgefield
ridgefieldgoesirish.com
\$, R

Saturday, March 21

Hoppy Days Egg Hunt
10:00 a.m.
For children 3 to 10
Lounsbury House
316 Main Street
Ridgefield
inridgefield.com/events/hoppy-days-egg-hunt
R

Saturday, March 21

YMCA Site-Wide Easter Egg Hunt
2:30 p.m. – 4:00 p.m. and 4:00 p.m. – 5:30 p.m.
Riverbrook Regional YMCA
404 Danbury Road
Wilton
wiltonymca.org/easter-egg-hunt
\$, R

Friday, March 27

Flashlight Egg Hunt (Grades 3-5)
8:00 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.
Dress for the weather and bring your own flashlight
Ridgefield Parks & Recreation Center Fields
195 Danbury Road
Ridgefield
ridgefieldparksandrec.org/programs/events/21721
R

Saturday, March 28

5K Bunny Hop
9:15 a.m. Check-in begins
10:00 a.m. Race start
Sponsored by Joel Barlow 2027 Class Council
Joel Barlow High School / Main Entrance
100 Black Rock Turnpike
runsignup.com/race/ct/redding/5kbunnyhoprace
\$, R

Friday, April 3

2026 Torch Club Egg Hunt
11:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.
Egg hunt begins around 12:00 p.m.; for kids 8 and younger, meet the Easter Bunny
Boys & Girls Club of Redding-Easton
170 Cross Highway
bgcre.net/2026-egg-hunt
\$, R

NATURE

Saturday, March 14

Bird-Friendly Maple Walk and Talk
1:00 p.m. – 2:30 p.m.
Led by Audubon CT Forest Program Associate Rosa Goldman
New Pond Farm Education Center
101 Marchant Road
newpondfarm.org
R

Sunday, March 15

Sundays on the Farm: Family Hike
11:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
Bring the family for a morning of fun
New Pond Farm Education Center
101 Marchant Road
newpondfarm.org
\$, R

Sunday, March 22

Redding Grange 5th Annual Seed Exchange
10:30 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.
Start off your growing season with seeds from your neighbors
Redding Grange #15
399 Newtown Turnpike
reddinggrange.org

Sunday, March 22

NPF Walking Group: Celebrate the Spring Equinox
1:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.
New Pond Farm Education Center
101 Marchant Road
newpondfarm.org
R

Tuesday, March 24

Planning Your Vegetable and Cutting Flower Garden
7:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.
Learn from the experts at Homefront Farmers
Mark Twain Library
439 Redding Road
marktwainlibrary.org
R

SPECIAL PROGRAMS

Mondays – Fridays

The Breakfast Club
7:30 a.m. – 8:30 a.m.
Ongoing Alcoholics Anonymous meetings, every weekday
Christ Church Episcopal
184 Cross Highway

Wednesday, March 25

Redding Garden Club Open House and Blooming Books Floral Display
6:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.
Literary-inspired floral arrangements, refreshments, and socializing.
Deadline to sign up to create a Blooming Books floral display is Wednesday, March 18.
Mark Twain Library
439 Redding Road
marktwainlibrary.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
cibcredning.org

Christ Church, Episcopal

Sundays at 9:00 a.m.
184 Cross Highway
christchurchredding.org

First Church of Christ, Congregational

Sundays at 10:00 a.m.
25 Cross Highway
firstchurchredding.org

Long Ridge United Methodist

Sundays at 11:30 a.m.
201 Long Ridge Road
Danbury
longridgeumc.com

Sacred Heart / St. Patrick Parish St. Patrick Church:

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

Georgetown Oratory of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus

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

Temple B'nai Chaim

Friday, March 13
Shabbat at Meadow Ridge
5:00 p.m. – 6:30 p.m.
100 Redding Road
templebnaichaim.org

MEETINGS

Thursday, March 12

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

Thursday, March 12

Redding Fire District #2
West Redding Firehouse
306 Umpawaug Road

Monday, March 16

Board of Assessment Appeals
4:30 p.m.
Town Hall / Hearing Room
100 Hill Road

Tuesday, March 17

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

Tuesday, March 17

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

Wednesday, March 18

Water Pollution Control Commission
7:30 p.m.
Virtual

Wednesday, March 18

Board of Finance – Budget Public Hearing
7:30 p.m.
Redding Community Center and Virtual
37 Lonetown Road and Zoom

Thursday, March 19

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

Monday, March 23

Board of Selectmen Special Meeting
6:30 p.m.
Town Hall / Hearing Room and Virtual
100 Hill Road and Zoom

Monday, March 23

Board of Finance
7:30 p.m.
Virtual

Tuesday, March 24

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

Wednesday, March 25

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

Thursday, March 26

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

Friday, March 27

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

Monday, March 30

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



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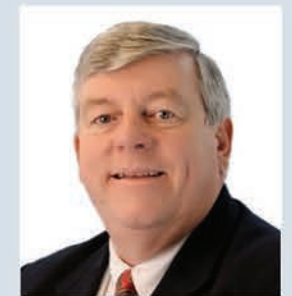
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