

REDDING SENTINEL

SEPTEMBER 25, 2025

REDDING, CONNECTICUT

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\$3

Vision Appraisal will conduct the next property revaluation

By Rocco Valluzzo

Acting on the recommendation of Tax Assessor John Ford, the Board of Selectmen unanimously approved \$209,000 for Vision Appraisal, a service of Vision Government Solutions, to conduct the 2027 revaluation of property in town.

Vision Appraisal also conducted the partial revaluation in 2022 and the previous full appraisal in 2017. Both went very well, according to First Selectwoman Julia Pemberton.

“That is work we would like to get underway as soon as possible,” said Pemberton. “His recommendation is that we engage Vision Appraisal to do the work.”

Redding also uses Vision

Continued on page 3



Photo by Richard Wald

A bountiful harvest of butternut squash from a garden on Redding Road. If you have a photo you'd like to see featured here, e-mail editor@reddingsentinel.org.

Usher in fall this weekend

By Jessie Wright



Photo by Jessie Wright

Residents will have their pick of Redding traditions old and new this Saturday, September 27 as community events are mounted against the backdrop of the changing fall colors.

First Church of Christ, Congregational is hosting its 43rd annual Artisan Fair from 10:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. Transforming the church's campus in Redding Center at 25 Cross Highway into a shopping and dining hub, visitors can browse wares from 45 local artisans; pick up deals at the Giant Tag Sale, Jewelry Boutique, and Barn Sale; enjoy handmade treats from apple pies to Congregational soup; and take in live music by local musicians Austin Bradford and The Kurt and Helen Band. Shuttles will be provided from the parking lots at Redding Elementary School at 33 Lonetown Road.

Later that day, Sacred Heart and St. Patrick Parish are hosting their annual Oktoberfest at St. Patrick Church at 169 Black Rock Turnpike from 3:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.

Authentic German foods and beer will be served alongside music, children's activities, a raffle, and crafts. This event is the main parish fundraiser that helps cover operating costs through the year.

Finally, the Georgetown Lions Club hopes to start a new annual tradition with their first-ever Italian Dinner fundraiser, hosted at Sacred Heart Church at 30 Church Street from 5:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m. The three-course meal will feature the cooking of Frank Lombardi of Lombardi's Trattoria and is bring-your-own beverage. Attendees can learn more about the Lions Club's service activities and how to get involved in the community. Tickets must be purchased in advance by calling Bob Mecozzi at (203) 241-0739. ■

REDDING'S BIG OUTDOORS

Sleeping under the stars

By Jessie Wright



Photo by Jessie Wright

Most of Redding's open spaces – from Land Trust property to state parks – are open to the public from sunrise to sunset. Are any of them available for camping overnight?

The answer: A few are, but it depends on if you are part of an organized group or not.

Topstone Park

Redding's only municipal park, Topstone Park, is 208 acres with wooded hiking trails, a picturesque beach and pond, a new playground, bathroom facilities, and a fenced dog park and dog beach. The Park and Recreation Department issues permits for camping at the beach area to residents, with up to two dates allowed to be held for camping. Call or visit the

Department to check date availability; campers must then visit the office at the Community Center (37 Lonetown Road) before their camping dates to fill out the permit form and pay a key deposit and camping fee. The keys give access to the Topstone Park entrance gate as well as the bathroom facilities.

Note: No swimming is permitted at Topstone Park while lifeguards are not on duty. Camping begins at 7:00 p.m. and ends at 9:00 a.m. the next morning.

Call (203) 938-2551 for more information.

Putnam Memorial State Park

The State of Connecticut allows Youth Group Camping at 19 locations in state parks and forests – one of which is Putnam Memorial State Park right here in Redding. While the camping site is not open to individual residents or adult groups, qualified youth groups can reserve up to three camping areas – the first area can accommodate 50 campers and the second and third areas can accommodate up to 100 campers each. There is a hand-pump available for water, but large groups are encouraged to bring their own portable toilets.

Note: Youth groups must be

youth-oriented and associated with a non-profit organization. Camping reservations are available from the third weekend in April through Veterans Day in November.

Contact CT DEEP's Western District Office at (860) 485-0226 or tamera.procko@ct.gov for reservations.

John Sherman Hoyt Scout Camp

Approximately 174 acres of wooded land, the Hoyt Scout Camp in West Redding is primarily used for Scouting activities and is typically not open to the public. However, they do issue camping permits to Scouting troops outside of the Connecticut Yankee Council, families of Scouts within the Connecticut Yankee Council, non-profit groups, and for-profit groups. Their facilities include tent camping sites, lean-to sites, pavilions, a cabin with kitchen and bathrooms, rifle and archery ranges, an amphitheater, well water, fire rings, trails, and outdoor latrines. Camping fees vary depending on size of the group and type of organization.

Visit ctyankee.org/scout-info/council-camps/hoyt/ for more information or shorttermcamping.ctyankee.org/webpay/stermccamping/new to reserve camping dates. ■

Poverty is growing outside CT cities

By Rob Sample

As a Food Bank volunteer at Bethel's Walnut Hill Community Church, Sarah Cummings is accustomed to long queues of cars snaking through the parking lot. On alternate Wednesday afternoons, Food Bank clients receive a two-week supply of meat, vegetables, breads, and other food – bridging the gap for households struggling with rising costs and stagnant wages.

Yet Cummings, a Redding resident and retired fundraiser for Save the Children, wasn't prepared to see almost a thousand cars lined up one recent Wednesday.

“I was astonished – we don't live in an area generally associated with poverty,” said Cummings. “Food is such a basic need, and for people not to have enough is sobering.”

Recent statistics illustrate that food insecurity is a concern for growing numbers of people in the Nutmeg State. The United Way of Western Connecticut recently estimated that it took \$116,000 for a family of four in Connecticut to afford basics such as housing, food, transportation, healthcare, childcare, and taxes in 2023. This is in sharp contrast to the Federal Poverty Level, which put families of four earning more than just \$30,000 that same year above the poverty line.

According to the United Way, 42% of households in Coastal and Western Connecticut earn incomes below that \$116,000 threshold. Often, such households consist of two wage earners, who must carefully balance each expenditure to guard against financial catastrophe – and the minimum income calculations do not account for savings for emergencies, college, or retirement.

The United Way uses the term ALICE – which stands for Asset Limited/Income Constrained/Employed – to describe this growing cohort of struggling wage earners. The terminology helps the United Way target areas of need and to plan effective programs to assist people in those areas.

What's more, a recent story in *Connecticut Mirror* pointed to a sharp rise in poverty and food insecurity in areas outside the larger cities usually most associated with these issues, with poverty rates in the state now growing fastest outside of urban centers.

Angelica Fontanez, Redding's Director of Social Services, pointed to another factor for increased financial insecurity: the gradual disappearance of Covid-era assistance programs. Although income-qualification levels for assistance have remained the same as they were in 2024, she has seen a slight drop in the number of people served by Social Services so far in 2025.

“In 2024, there were 159 Redding residents who were on SNAP,” Fontanez said, referring to the Federal government's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, once known as the Food Stamps program. “This year, we have 119 residents on SNAP.”

Among those 119 people are 29 senior citizens, 63 adults aged 18 to 64, 21 children aged 6 to 17, and six children five years of age or under. Additionally, 935 Redding residents are receiving HUSKY

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EDITORIAL

In a small town, there are often a few “big issues” that come up repeatedly. In Redding, one of those is speeding and traffic enforcement. We hear from readers often – both in formal correspondence like op/eds and letters to the editor and in informal conversations with our neighbors – that they are fed up with dangerous driving on our narrow roads.

On the other hand, we’ve also received feedback that people don’t want to hear the same complaints rehashed. We received an exasperated note from a reader a few months back who was growing tired of reading about speeding in the *Sentinel*. “Those who will listen have listened,” the person pointed out.

We do believe that part of a local newspaper’s job is to reflect what is of concern to the community; not everyone will pick up the phone to lodge a complaint with the First Selectwoman’s office or make a public comment at a municipal meeting, and social media sites – where grievances often are amplified – are not officially monitored by Town officials, nor are they put into any sort of public record.

But simply providing an outlet for people’s complaints is not where a newspaper’s job ends, and that reader had a fair point. Beyond being a squeaky wheel, what effects change?

We started calculating the infraction rate of traffic stops last April in our weekly Police Blotter to highlight what percentage of stops in Redding were resulting in tickets. (The first week we included, from April 21-27, the rate was 10%. Today’s issue reports a rate of 43%.) We covered the budget implications in stories last winter and spring of a Police Department short on staff and officers logging more-than-typical overtime hours. First Selectwoman Julia Pemberton has gone on the record saying that she has told the Police Department to issue more tickets.

As we reported on the front page of last week’s issue, the Department is close to fully staffed, and traffic stops are up nearly six times what they were at this time last year. We applaud the Department for their efforts.

For those drivers who don’t read op/eds or have paid no mind to residents’ complaints – that is their choice. The flashing blue and red lights seen much more frequently along Redding’s thoroughways may finally get their attention. ■

POLICE BLOTTER

Police activity September 15 – 21

By Donna Christopher

Officers assisted two operators of disabled motor vehicles. They assisted in four emergency medical calls and one fire emergency call.

Traffic

In 108 traffic stops, police issued 46 tickets, 34 written warnings, and 28 verbal warnings to drivers for an infraction rate of 43%.

On September 16, a two-vehicle accident on Cross Highway caused property damage but no injuries.

On September 17, tire tracks were reported to have damaged a freshly seeded area on Whortleberry Road.

Fraud

Someone’s information was disseminated online in a fraud reported on September 16 on Peaceable Street.

Two cases of unemployment fraud were reported – one from a person on Peacable Street, the other from a person on Sport Hill Road.

Disputes

Responding to a September 19 disturbance on Woodland Drive Extension, officers settled a neighbor dispute.

Officers also assisted in a landlord and tenant dispute on September 20 on Marchant Road. ■

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LEGAL NOTICES

At a meeting of the Redding Conservation Commission on 9/16/2025, the following action was voted:

App'l #25-10, Michael Pellegrini, 340 Newtown Tpke. Approved with conditions an application to construct a one-bedroom detached apartment within the regulated area.

The above-referenced file is available for inspection at the Redding Land Use Office. ■

David R. Pattee, Chairman
Redding Conservation Commission

The Redding Zoning Commission has scheduled a Public Hearing for October 8, 2025 at 7:30 p.m. in person at the Town Hall Hearing Room, 100 Hill Road, Redding CT. The purpose of the hearing is to consider the following application.

1. Application #25-10 - 7 Long Meadow Lane (Assessor’s Map and Lot #23-91) Owner Tomas & Katrina Rusin: Agent: Kathleen Poirier, Architects LLC, 40 Twin Lane, Wilton CT 06897. In accordance with Redding Zoning Regulations Section 5.1.2 request for a Special Use Permit for accessory apartment. ■

Matt Lecher, Chairman
Redding Zoning Commission

Local Charlie Kirk memorial draws crowd

By Donna Christopher and Jessie Wright



Photo by Donna Christopher

David Bohn speaks at the memorial for Charlie Kirk he organized on September 20, 2025.

Redding evangelist David Bohn created and led the event We Are Charlie: Celebration of his Life and Legacy on Saturday, September 20 in the nearly full 100-person capacity auditorium at Calvary Independent Baptist Church.

Bohn was prompted to hold the gathering after his experience preaching the previous week at an event in Easton honoring Charlie Kirk. He recalled how several attendees that day expressed their desire for more opportunities to hear preaching like Bohn’s. “They asked, ‘Where can I go to hear preaching like that?... Not just one, but many,’” Bohn said. “I don’t think any of us have every had to ask that question,” he said to his Redding audience, many of whom are members of Calvary Independent Baptist Church, a church Bohn founded with his wife in 1995 and of which he is a member.

He went to his car, where he had flyers for church events and gave them out to those who were interested. “I was handing out men’s breakfast invitations to women,” he recalled.

Recounting this experience later to his son, Bohn said he asked his son to help come up with a way to process Kirk’s death with local citizens.

“He said, ‘I think we should have something at our church. I think people need to work through something. I think there’s been hunger for a long time for the things that Americans used to have as part of their life, but we’ve been told over and over again that if they are a part of our life, we’re really weird and out-of-step and old-fashioned, or something, not modern,’” Bohn said in his introduction at the September 20 event.

The memorial was promoted starting on Tuesday, September 16 as a family-friendly gathering via word-of-mouth, on social media, and on signs that Bohn posted throughout town. There were two large tents and outdoor speakers erected outside of the church building, with toys for children in the outside tents. Bohn himself sponsored the event and Preferred Utilities Manufacturing Corporation sponsored the signs and programs. It was not an official church function, but the church provided the facilities for the community event, according to Calvary Independent Baptist Church pastor Ken Brooks.

Before the memorial program, which included music ahead of Bohn’s speaking, attendees spoke to the *Sentinel*. Some were members of the church and lived locally, while others came from Bethel, Ridgefield, and other parts of the region.

The conversations revolved around the reasons why they had chosen to gather to memorialize Charlie Kirk, a prominent young conservative activist and influencer who was killed on September 10 while addressing an audience on the campus of Utah Valley University in Orem, Utah. It was the first stop of the season for the American Comeback Tour, a speaking and debate series planned by Turning Point USA,

a conservative organization Kirk co-founded. Kirk was known for his outspoken support of many ideas central to the MAGA movement, and his views on abortion, diversity programs, transgender rights, and immigration often elicited fierce criticism from the left.

Attendees expressed their admiration for Kirk’s dedication to free speech and conservatism. Others were there to advocate for his legacy, and some touched on the significance of Kirk’s commitment to faith and Christianity.

“It’s a gigantic loss to our country, and a gigantic loss to the promotion of Jesus, which he did very quietly, not very frequently, only when it was promoted. And people don’t like that,” David Paddock, David Bohn’s cousin, said.

“Charlie Kirk spoke his voice. I’m a Christian and an Episcopalian. I’m here to be with my brothers or sisters,” said an attendee who did not want to give his name. “I went to one in Easton at the public library. I went to one in Brookfield at the Republican Town Committee headquarters. And then this one.”

“No one should die because of their viewpoint,” said Michael of Ridgefield, who declined to give his last name. “If one side doesn’t defend the other side’s right to speak – like Kimmel, even though I don’t agree with (Jimmy) Kimmel. I think they’re giving Democrats ammunition by taking him off.”

Anthony Orrico of Bethel said he was there to “celebrate the memory of Charlie Kirk. He was for God, family, and country. That’s as good as it gets for a 31-year-old fella.”

“Charlie had a bright future. He had an incredible mind. He was an incredible human being. And

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Selectmen choose firms for design and engineering of two more destroyed bridges

By Rocco Valluzzo

By unanimous decision, the Board of Selectmen awarded two firms the engineering and design work for two bridges to replace those destroyed by the August 2024 storm at its Monday, September 15 meeting.

Tighe & Bond was awarded the contract for the bridge on Brookside Road over the Gilbert & Bennett Brook at a cost of \$180,000. The Middletown-based firm, which conducted the Town's emergency evaluation after the storm, also was awarded the design and engineering work for bridges on Sport Hill Road and Long Wall Road in May and June.

A town meeting last year had authorized \$675,000 originally designated for the repaving of the northern part of Umpawaug Road to be reallocated for the engineering and design of these projects. Redding now, however, has money for engineering and design work thanks to Connecticut's State Local Bridge Program, as well as \$110,000 it has received so far from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

According to First Selectwoman Julia Pemberton, Redding will be

able to provide input with respect to the design of the bridge. She added the Town would like a bridge that is in keeping with the surrounding neighborhood as much as possible.

Following some research, Pemberton found the Town may be able to discuss with the State Department of Transportation the possibility of building a new bridge that is not as wide. However, she noted the rebuilt bridge on Stepney Road appears to be larger than the previous one, creating a precedent for new bridges being larger to accommodate water flow.

The Selectmen also approved contracting with the Newington-based firm of Wengell, McDonnell and Costello (WMC) for the design and engineering for the bridge on Greenbush Road at a cost of \$169,016. Previously, WMC did work and construction management for the bridges on Stepney Road, Station Road, and Poverty Hollow Road. If the Town requests it, WMC will also manage the Greenbush project and provide a separate proposal for those services.

"We have two firms here that we are familiar with," said Pemberton.

"WMC has done work for the Town before. The remaining firms were significantly higher in cost."

There is currently an application to the Planning Commission that would designate a section of Greenbush Road from Huckleberry Road to Newtown Turnpike as a scenic road. But the petitioner is shy of the 51% of the road frontage ownership needed for approval.

Pemberton said there was much concern about what this bridge would do to the neighborhood because the pre-application for the State Local Bridge Program had a one-page concept design from Tighe & Bond that was significantly larger than what was there before the storm, increasing the width an additional 10 feet to 29 feet.

"And then you have a two-foot shoulder on either side," she said. "Then, we've got the bridge abutment itself, so it ends up being a considerably larger bridge and that's what got people concerned. There is also a 60 foot 'runway' if you will. And that's really throwing a lot of folks off about that, understandably." ■

Vision Appraisal will conduct the next property revaluation / continued from page 1

Government Solutions to maintain all its assessment records. This creates a natural fit between the revaluation process and how the Town stores, maintains, and accesses those records, according to Finance Director Jim Sanders.

"We have a long history with them," he said. "We worked very well with Vision in the past. And

we don't have any issues with getting the work done and having it done on a timely basis and limiting the number of claims against that data."

He added that several years ago, the Town had received reimbursement from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) for Tropical Storm Isaias. The Board

of Finance at that point took the \$150,000 reimbursement and set it aside in capital non-recurring specifically for the 2027 revaluation. The Town has also budgeted \$15,000 on top of that each year since, so by 2027 it will have \$210,000 set aside for this purpose. ■

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Region 9 closes 2024-25 fiscal year with series of transfers

By Anne Young Albanese

As the Redding Board of Education did this month, Region 9 also has closed out its 2024-25 fiscal year budget.

The Region 9 Board of Education (which oversees Joel Barlow High School) authorized a series of transfers at the end of the fiscal year. It transferred \$20,000 to the Central Office – along with the Redding and Easton Boards of Education – to cover higher-than-anticipated health claims from Central Office staff. The Region 9 Board of Education also transferred \$508,140 of unexpended funds to its Capital Reserve, which is used for larger projects. The Board also transferred funds from the operating account to cover overages in professional services, legal audit, tuition for private schools, special education transportation, unemployment compensation, and technology.

Finally, all remaining unexpended funds will be transferred to the Health Benefits account.

"Really, the Health Benefits account is supported through a combination of the beginning of the year cash balance, the end of

the year Board of Ed transfers, and the current year budgeted appropriation, giving us total allocated resources for the year," explained Assistant Superintendent for Finance, Operations, and Technology Sara Scrofani at the Tuesday, September 16 Region 9 Board of Education meeting.

The 2025-26 fiscal year (which began July 1, 2025) beginning cash balance was \$1,017,293. A transfer of \$1,082,683 was made to the account at the end of the 2024-25 fiscal year, and Scrofani noted that an additional \$41,003 had been identified to be transferred. The 2025-26 operating budget appropriation for the Health Benefits account is \$2,108,741. Of that, \$500,000 has already been requested to be withdrawn in the month of July.

There is also designated non-Board of Education revenue that goes toward Health Benefits, which includes employee premium contributions, retire/TRB (Teacher Retirement Board) contributions, state contributions to Para HSAs, and interest. ■

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SPORTS

Falcons, Bears battle to stalemate

Field hockey | By Rocco Valluzzo



Photo by Rocco Valluzzo

Olivia Crawford (right) scored the lone goal for the Joel Barlow High girls varsity field hockey team in its game against Norwalk on Saturday, September 20.

Close games have been the norm for the Joel Barlow High varsity field hockey team in the early part of the season.

In five of the Falcons' six contests, the outcome has been decided by just one goal, with the most recent coming against Norwalk at home.

Down by just a goal in the second quarter, the host Falcons battled back to tie it. Unfortunately, the game remained deadlocked the rest of the way for a 1-1 tie in overtime on Saturday, September 20.

"We've had pretty much all close games," said Falcon Head

Coach Nora Curley. "It's really just like one play that we're missing in those games."

Coming off their first win of the season three days earlier, the host Falcons hoped to make it two in a row when they took on the Bears. They controlled the action for much of the first quarter. Later, Hanna Kurtz's shot went wide to the right and one by Olivia Crawford was stopped by Norwalk goalie Delany O'Brien to preserve the 0-0 tie.

"Overall, I think we had a lot of opportunities offensively," said Curley.

The Bears broke the stalemate

with 10:39 left to play in the half, coming on a penalty corner. A shot by Stella Talisse was redirected into the cage by Caitlin Dudek and the Bears went up 0-1.

Not wasting much time in responding, the Falcons took advantage of a corner of their own with just over 7 minutes left in the half. Crawford scored the equalizer with Mila Baker assisting to put the Falcons back into contention before the half ended.

Barlow relied on its defense for much of the third frame, as the Bears were awarded several corners, and goalie Rachel Smith was called on to make a couple of saves. Norwalk also threatened in the last few seconds, moving the ball into the circle before the quarter ended.

"Our defense held it down in the back," said Curley. "I was super proud of what we did today."

Neither side had much luck for the rest of regulation time. Each was awarded a corner penalty only to be denied, bringing on overtime. The additional 10 minutes did little to decide the outcome, and the contest ended in a draw.

"Our defense was super solid today," said Curley. "We've been working on some things and practice that I think they put into motion today."

Barlow, now 1-4-1 overall, hosts Fairfield Warde on Friday, September 26 at 7:00 p.m. and is home against Immaculate on Monday, September 29 at 4:30 p.m. ■

Goals come early and often

Girls soccer | By Rocco Valluzzo



Photo by Rocco Valluzzo

Neonila Somko (left) scored three goals for the Joel Barlow High girls soccer team in a game against Kolbe Cathedral on Tuesday, September 16. Barlow won 7-0.

While the Joel Barlow High girls varsity soccer team will face tougher competition later this season, it has had little difficulty in several of its early contests.

The Falcons have amassed 26 goals in their first six games, resulting in several lopsided wins. The most recent came when they hosted Kolbe Cathedral of Bridgeport last week. With five different players finding the net, the hosts cruised to a 7-0 shutout on Tuesday, September 16.

Kolbe, which is rebuilding after graduating six seniors since last season, had a tough time keeping up with the Falcons' quick offense, which beat its defenders on a few occasions. Less than 10 minutes into the action, Barlow's Manuela Mejia stole an attempted clear and sent a shot into the right side of the net for a 1-0 Falcon lead.

With the Cougars often not contesting 50/50 balls in the mid-field, the Falcons dominated possession and created quite a few scoring opportunities. However, they were drawn offsides on a number of occasions in the first half.

"We were trying to play through balls the way we normally do," said Falcon Head Coach Ben Weiss. "So, you get caught a few times."

Barlow struck again with just under 24 minutes left in the half, coming when Amelia Winter took a pass from Mejia for a shot into the upper right corner. Less than four minutes later, Neonila Somko got past the defense to go one-on-one with the keeper for the score. Mejia got the assist.

Continuing to dominate the action, the Falcons scored once more in the half. Cecelia Rahner's cross from the middle to Alya Poliscuk-Strazdas ended in a shot to the right side of the net for a 4-0 Barlow lead with 6:06 to go.

When play resumed, Barlow eased up on offense and made frequent substitutions but still managed to put the ball in the net. Somko scored her second tally near the midway point of the half off an assist by Christina June.

Only four minutes passed before Mia Muscarele scored on a break-away from 20 yards out as Mejia assisted. The job was finished with 12:22 left to play when June went down the left side before sending a cross to Brooke Cameron in the middle to finalize the score at 7-0.

Somko led Barlow with two goals. Mejia (three assists), Poliscuk-Strazdas, Muscarele, Winter, and Cameron each netted one. Rahner had one assist. Barlow keeper Sophia Bianco had a quiet day in goal to preserve the shutout.

The Falcons, now 3-1-1, visit Brookfield on Thursday, September 25 at 6:00 p.m., are home against Ansonia on Saturday, September 27 at 10:30 a.m. and go to Newtown on Tuesday, September 30 at 6:00 p.m. ■

Turnovers hold Barlow back

Football | By Rocco Valluzzo



Keeping control of the ball proved tricky for the Joel Barlow High varsity football team in its game last week against Notre Dame Prep of Fairfield.

The Falcons committed several turnovers last Friday, September 19. When they did keep possession, moving the ball was difficult in a 7-28 loss at Sacred Heart University.

While the Falcons made use of a number of rushers, they totaled less than 170 yards. The host Lancers had better luck in this

respect, with two getting more than 100 yards apiece.

Behind a pair of first-quarter touchdowns, the Lancers took the lead early in the night. Barlow's defense would not allow another point for the remainder of the half, but the visitors had difficulty finding the end zone themselves, trailing 0-14 at halftime.

Both sides put points on the board in the third frame, with Barlow scoring on Kaden Holub's touchdown run and Joey Comis kicking the extra point. The Lancers would match this, however, and still led by two scores (7-21) going into the fourth quarter. Notre Dame added one more touchdown in the time remaining to put things out of reach.

The Lancers relied on the ground game of Ja'cari Harris in particular. The freshman running back amassed 148 yards for three

touchdowns. Jeremiah James also ran for more than 100 yards with one touchdown.

A good part of Barlow's yardage came courtesy of Holub, who had 80 yards in addition to his team's lone touchdown. Jack Hall netted 35 yards, and quarterback Tyler Young totaled 29.

Barlow found the Lancers' defensive line tough to penetrate with five players credited with six or more tackles apiece.

Defensively, Ben Noome stood out for Barlow, getting four tackles and assisting on six. Hall and Ben Zirulnik each had three.

Now 1-1 overall, Barlow visits Northwest Catholic on Saturday, September 27 for an 11:00 a.m. game. ■

The Joel Barlow Homecoming football game this year will be held on Saturday, October 25 at 1:00 p.m. against New Fairfield

Local Charlie Kirk memorial draws crowd / continued from page 2

because of what he spoke, people called it hate because they don't like seeing people happy, people talking about God," Arlene Schilb of New Milford said. "When my friend told me what happened, the first thing out of my mouth was, 'They don't know what they did.' I knew that they started something big."

Bohn, in his presentation, told of an incident that occurred the day before while he put signs up promoting the event. While positioning one, he said a woman in an SUV swore and made a negative hand gesture at him. The dynamic speaker – who spoke occasionally with humor and emotion, stamping his feet at one point to emphasize his words – used the incident as an example of the importance of free speech.

"It looked like she wandered over with her SUV. And if it was

legal and I was in season, I have a feeling I might have been under those wheels," he said. "But I'm not in season," drawing light laughter. "Okay, so it's not legal. So, the thing is this: She is absolutely free to say those things to me, and I want her to be free to say those things to me, because this is America... even if it's ugly. It was hate. It was coming from an equal person."

Bohn pushed against the idea of identifying anything as hate speech or making it illegal, or "have our top legal official saying they're going to target people based on hate speech."

"Charlie Kirk was called every name in the book. He never wanted anybody targeted for hate speech," said Bohn. "Let's be clear and understand that for Charlie; Kirk was about free speech all the way down the line. We must defend it, even when we don't like it." ■

Joel Barlow High School sports results and schedules

Boys cross country

Results:
September 16: New Fairfield 18 / Joel Barlow 43, Masuk 19 / Joel Barlow 41, Pomperaug 15 / Joel Barlow 49

Record:
Joel Barlow 2-4

Next meets:
September 30 home versus Bassick, Kolbe Cathedral, Notre Dame Prep at 4:30 p.m.

Girls cross country

Results:
September 16: Pomperaug 15 / Joel Barlow 47, Joel Barlow 23 / Masuk 34, New Fairfield 20 / Joel Barlow 35

Record:
Joel Barlow 3-3

Next meets:
September 30 home versus Bassick, Kolbe Cathedral, Notre Dame Prep at 5:00 p.m.

Football

Results:
September 19: Notre Dame Prep 28 / Joel Barlow 7

Record:
Joel Barlow 1-1

Next games:
September 27: away at Northwest Catholic at 11:00 a.m.

Field hockey

Results:
September 15: New Fairfield 1 / Joel Barlow 0

September 17: Joel Barlow 4 / Masuk 3
September 20: Joel Barlow 1 / Norwalk 1

Record:
Joel Barlow 1-4-1

Next games:
September 26: home versus Fairfield Warde at 7:00 p.m.
September 29: home versus Immaculate at 4:30 p.m.

Boys soccer

Results:
September 16: Joel Barlow 2 / Kolbe Cathedral 2
September 18: Immaculate 2 / Joel Barlow 0
September 20: Joel Barlow 2 / Notre Dame Prep 0

Record:
Joel Barlow: 1-4-1

Next games:
September 25: home versus Brookfield at 5:00 p.m.
September 27: home versus Old Saybrook at 1:00 p.m.
September 30: home versus Newtown at 5:00 p.m.

Girls soccer

Results:
September 16: Joel Barlow 7 / Kolbe Cathedral 0
September 20: Notre Dame Prep 3 / Joel Barlow 0

Record:

Joel Barlow 3-2-1
Next games:
September 25: away at Brookfield at 6:00 p.m.
September 27: home versus Ansonia at 10:30 a.m.
September 30: away at Newtown at 6:00 p.m.

Girls swimming

Results:
September 16: Joel Barlow 99 / New Fairfield 82
September 19: Brookfield 93 / Joel Barlow 85

Record:
Joel Barlow 3-2

Next meets:
September 26: away at Oxford at 3:45 p.m.
September 30: away at New Milford at 7:00 p.m.

Girls volleyball

Results:
September 15: Joel Barlow 3 / Pomperaug 0
September 17: Joel Barlow 3 / New Milford 0
September 18: Joel Barlow 3 / Brookfield 1

Record:
Joel Barlow 6-2

Next matches:
September 26: home versus Stratford at 5:30 p.m.
September 29: away at Notre Dame Prep at 5:30 p.m.

See up-to-date practice and game schedules at joelbarlowps.org/athleticshome

Joel Barlow Academic Centers help students thrive

By Pamela Brown



Photo by Legacy Studios

Michael Sherman (left) and Director of the Writing Center Tim Huminski last spring at an event honoring students for high scores on their junior writing portfolios.

As students settle back into classes at Joel Barlow High School, the staff leading the school's three Academic Support Centers are ready to provide help to those needing extra support in several areas of study. Students may drop in to the Math Center, the Writing Center, and the Academic Resource Center to get assistance on one assignment, significant concepts, or other types of aid to help them succeed in their high school careers.

Math Center

The Math Center is held in Room A102 and is open daily from periods two through eight and after school on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays. An experienced math teacher always staffs it.

"The Math Center is a comfortable and dynamic place where students can focus on strengthening their math skills," said James De Voto, who manages the Center. "On a walk-in basis, students can come in for a variety of reasons. These include homework help, studying for a test, or review of a general math topic. Some students simply choose the Math Center for a quiet place to work during their study hall."

The Math Center had more than 5,000 visits last school year. It offers raffle tickets for each visit and gives away numerous

prizes, including school mugs, hats, T-shirts, and hoodies.

Writing Center

Students needing writing assistance can visit the Writing Center in room A104. It is open daily from 7:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Diane Martini is the Writing Center specialist.

The Center offers writing assistance across disciplines and is equipped with computers and printers. It provides students with individual and small group writing help while supporting educators in teaching writing.

According to Tim Huminski, Director of the Writing Center, "Our mission is to maximize the writing potential of every member of the Joel Barlow community, giving them the skills to become stronger, more independent thinkers and writers. We support writing and the teaching of writing in all subject areas, and we strive to serve all students, teachers, and staff by providing guidance, resources, and a dedicated space to write."

Last year, the Writing Center served 755 students. Many students also use it as a quiet place to study. It hosts an event each year to honor the students who score "Commendable," a five out of six ranking, and "Exemplary," represented by a score of six out of six on their junior writing portfolio.

Academic Resource Center

The Academic Resource Center is in room A106, near the Math and Writing Centers. It helps students develop valuable academic skills for all classes and is open daily from 7:30 a.m. to 2:07 p.m. School counselor Scott Reimold oversees the Center.

The Academic Resource Center is not focused on specific school subjects; it teaches overall techniques that help students improve their study skills. These skills can range from homework completion to organization, skill development, and assessment preparation. "Teachers are assigned to the room during each period and play a key role in helping students stay on track and develop effective academic habits," said Reimold.

While the Academic Resource Center is open to all Joel Barlow High School students, freshmen can especially benefit from its extra support at the start of the year.

"Middle school teachers felt that some students would benefit from starting their Barlow experience by attending these extra support sessions until, as our newest Falcons, they can fly on their own!" Reimold explained. "The first few weeks are designed to introduce students to the way things work at Barlow and learn some organizational skills before they get into working more on subject matter or asking for specific help with academic content."

Along with the Academic Support Centers, students can contact their teachers for extra help or participate in tutoring sessions with National Honor Society students. Students looking for a quiet workspace can visit the Library or the Academic Support Centers. They can also print at the Library or the Writing Center. Students who could use additional social or emotional assistance can visit the Counseling Center or reach out to Youth Mental Health-trained students. ■

Reflections on addiction and compassion

Tipping the Pain Scale film screening

By Eric Lucido



On Wednesday, September 17, I attended the film screening of *Tipping the Pain Scale* at Joel Barlow High School. The screening was put on by the Redding Prevention Council and Young People in Recovery, both organizations working to provide resources to community members struggling with addiction and mental health issues. The film was fabulous, featuring several parallel stories of individuals on an upward trend of recovery from addiction.

Despite extensive marketing efforts for the event, there was a small turnout of about 20 people. First Selectwoman Julia Pember-ton, who attended the screening, commented on this, saying: "Not many people want to face the issue at hand because of how challenging it is." This means that the individuals who are brave enough to make a change in this space have the power to have that much more of an impact.

Another reason for the low turnout could be the stigma surrounding addiction. Stigma is the mental shortcut of blaming someone's addiction on some characteristic about them, rather than understanding their story and how they got to that point. Stigma often disappears when we deeply consider the pasts of those who are affected. When we do this, compassion takes root and allows us to be there for other people who are facing the insidious disease that is addiction. As *Tipping the Pain Scale* pointed to: Compassion is king.

I must emphasize... the film was a work of art. It was one of those movies where you forget where you are for a little while, and you live in the lives of those in the documentary. Greg Williams and Jeff Reilly, who made the film, attended the Joel Barlow screening, and hosted a panel discussion after the movie. In the discussion, it was agreed upon that people are more than one thing. It is easy to label people, but in doing this, we drastically simplify one another which only creates more problems. Keeping this in mind in our day-to-day interactions can enable us to cultivate more compassion for one another. Even short interactions, like mailing a package from the post office or stopping in a local breakfast place for a sandwich, are opportunities to make someone's day a bit brighter. It's true – you never know what people are dealing with.

Something that made the film particularly appealing was the diversity of the stories it followed. One was about sports, another about inspiring kids, politics, and community outreach. Although each story had an upward trajectory, there were ups and downs in each (such is life), but all pointed to the same truth. And that truth is... well, I encourage you to watch *Tipping the Pain Scale* to find out for yourself. ■

Tipping the Pain Scale is available to watch on several platforms at tippingthepainscale.com

Poverty is growing outside CT cities / continued from page 1

health benefits this year. Last year's figure was 1,078.

"With the income criteria remaining the same for now, I'm assuming the numbers went down because some people passed away and others moved out of town," said Fontanez. "And it's possible some people's applications are still pending: The process has definitely become slower."

In households where people don't qualify for public assistance, programs such as the United Way's ALICE initiatives, the Walnut Hill Food Bank, and other area assis-

tance programs serve a vital need.

The United Way recently ran a grant program for ALICE households in Northwestern Connecticut. Redding was able to help a dozen families with grants of \$600.

"You had to be really fast before the money ran out," said Fontanez. "True, it was only \$600, but it made a big difference for a lot of people in Redding and other towns."

The food boxes provided by the Walnut Hill Food Bank originate with the Connecticut Food Bank, for which Amazon/Whole Foods Market is a large contributor.

Clients must fill out a form before receiving food, which enables the Food Bank to keep statistics on who is being served.

"There's no proof of need required at the Food Bank," Cummings added.

Fellow volunteer Geordie Elkins said the Walnut Hill Food Bank was swamped during the pandemic years of 2020 and 2021, then numbers dipped when schools and workplaces opened again. Client numbers began to ramp back up again a year-and-a-half ago, when inflation heated up.

"Food insecurity is a greater need than most people realize," said Elkins, who is the Executive Director of Highstead in Redding. "And the number of volunteers an operation such as the Food Bank requires is staggering."

He pointed out that volunteers must perform analytical duties, such as identifying new food sources, as well as logistics like picking up food, delivering it, and prepping bags for distribution.

Elkins said there's no direct link between his work at Highstead and his volunteer work – "other than

believing in making the world a better place."

"That can mean preserving the environment and feeding people in need," Elkins said. ■

Walnut Hill Food Bank volunteer contact: Laurie Nazworth, foodpantryvolunteer@walnuthillcc.org or call (203) 796-7373

Danbury's Daily Bread Food Pantry volunteer sign up at dailybreadfoodpantry.com

Redding Social Services contact: Angelica Fontanez, afontanez@reddingct.gov or at (203) 938-3580

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Historical Society reviews preservation efforts, elects officers at annual meeting

By Susan Clark

Redding Historical Society held its 2025 annual meeting in the Zalmon Read Barn on Sunday, September 21. President Janice Dimon opened the proceedings and invited Board Member Michael McKee to present the slate of officers for consideration.

President Dimon was re-elected, as were Ellery Leary as Vice-President, Pam Reese as Secretary, and Denise Jankovic as Treasurer. Board Members Tegan Conlon, John Dorsey, and Michael McKee were also elected by the members present and voting.

Dimon gave a recap of the Society's activities this year. The traditional annual events – Rock 'n Roots, Garden Club Plant Sale, and National Llama Appreciation Day by Poverty Hollow Llamas – were held. Notably, open houses and tours of Lonetown Farmhouse were not held this year due to swallows coming down the chimney to take up residence, and die, in the building.

Without the ability to showcase the Farmhouse to the community, the Society focused on preservation activities. Finding that the hearth

was sagging, Dan Conlon, architect and husband of Board Member Tegan Conlon, noticed a failing beam and installed a jackpost. Conlon submitted a report to the Town about capital repairs needed. (Both the Farmhouse and Umpawaug Schoolhouse are owned by the Town of Redding, which is therefore responsible for capital repairs.)

Water and dampness are issues at Umpawaug Schoolhouse. While the Town provided funds to paint interior walls, the problem likely goes deeper. Preservation Connecticut circuit riders have visited to do an assessment of the ongoing damage being caused by damp. The August 18, 2024 storm that caused tens of millions of dollars of damage around town appears to have compromised one wall of the schoolhouse. Former Board Member Bert Webbe put in gravel as short-term mitigation, but further repairs will be necessary. Windows also need repair and repainting. These capital needs will be enumerated and presented to the Town for budget consideration.

In other activities, Board

Member Dorsey has begun an inventory of the group's 500-plus book collection. Leary continues his work on the visual timeline history of Redding which was showcased at Georgetown Day. The 1714 plaque program continues, with several additional antique houses being researched to earn their plaques. The popular Founding Fathers lecture series will return in November.

Zalmon Read Barn houses many antique tools and, in closing the meeting, Tegan Conlon put forth a vision of a tool museum to be housed in the barn.

As reported in last week's *Sentinel*, the Historical Society is a participant in the Connecticut Neighborhood Assistance Act tax credit program for businesses. The deadline for businesses to sign up to donate towards approved projects is October 1. Businesses wishing to donate must fill out the form at <https://portal.ct.gov/drs/connecticut-neighborhood-assistance-act-form> no later than October 1, 2025. ■

MUSIC NOTE

Listen to classical music like an insider

By Pamela Brown



Photo courtesy of Sarah Hawkey

If you're a classical music aficionado or simply want to learn more about the genre, Sarah Hawkey, Redding resident and owner of Blossom Voice Studio, will be sharing her knowledge and talent in a special four-part listening and learning series at The Granite.

"The series is geared toward adult music lovers in our community – especially older adults, retirees, and concertgoers who want to enrich their listening and deepen their appreciation for classical music," said Hawkey, a soprano who has been performing classical music of all kinds for decades.

Hawkey's series "Behind the Notes: Classical Music from the Inside Out – A Music Lover's Guide to Classical Music" will run Thursdays from October 30 through November 20 from 11:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. at The Granite in Georgetown.

"My goal is to take audiences 'behind the notes,' sharing insights and conversations that musicians have with each other backstage or after a concert," said Hawkey. "The Granite's acoustics have already proven wonderful for the musical excerpts I'll be sharing, and the space itself is quickly becoming a hub for the arts in our community."

The four-week series will explore a different theme or composer each week. Participants will listen to excerpts, uncover the stories and history behind them, and learn what musicians hear in the music. "We'll cover everything from Bach's *Goldberg Variations* to Vivaldi's *Four Seasons* and its modern reimaginings, to Holst's

The Planets – my favorite symphonic work – and the surprising ways it connects to composers living today. We'll have opportunities to compare performances, tempi, and interpretations," said Hawkey.

Hawkey has performed with some of today's most renowned conductors, philharmonics, and Grammy-nominated ensembles, and has led educational programming with the Metropolitan Opera Guild. She also was the recipient of a grant through the National Endowment of the Humanities to study J.S. Bach's life and music in Germany.

"Some of the most meaningful moments in my professional life have come from conversations with colleagues. Over time, I began having similar exchanges with friends and neighbors outside the music world, talking them through the music as we listened together, sharing the stories behind it, and pointing out the motifs to follow throughout a piece," she explained. "I've seen how those conversations spark excitement and deepen people's connection to the music. 'Behind the Notes' is my way of offering that experience more widely, so that anyone can feel what it's like to listen as an insider."

Hawkey hopes the series becomes a cornerstone of adult continuing education in the community that grows into lectures, a concert series, or a chamber music series at The Granite. "I hope participants leave each session feeling enriched, engaged, and more connected to the music they already love. My goal is for them to hear familiar works with fresh ears, notice new details, and experience that 'lit-up' feeling that music can bring. When we learn how to listen closely for its many layers, we invite ourselves into a deeper, more full-body listening experience. That kind of listening allows us to connect with the music in ways that can be profoundly moving and transformative." ■

For more information and to register, visit sarahhawkey.com/behind-the-notes

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OBITUARY

Joseph L. DiCesare September 25, 1943 – September 4, 2025

Joseph Leo DiCesare, Ph.D., of Redding, passed away September 4, 2025 at Danbury Hospital. He was born on September 25, 1943 in Woonsocket, RI, the son of the late Leo DiCesare and Rose (Santucci) DiCesare.

Joseph was married to the love of his life, the late Susan DiCesare (Roddy) for 41 years until her passing in 2011. Joe and Susan moved to Redding where they raised their son Christopher and shared many years of love and dedication. Their home was lively with beloved pets and filled with beautiful art and antiques, a passion of Susan's. Joe could often be found tending to

the property, which was a source of solace for Joe who appreciated the visits from a variety of wildlife. He also enjoyed spending time with family, golfing with friends, skiing, and traveling with his son Christopher.

Joe dedicated his career to working as a scientist, which reflected both his intellectual curiosity and commitment to advancing knowledge in his field. He earned his Ph.D. in Biochemistry from the University of Rhode Island and, in 1973, joined the Perkin-Elmer Corporation where he would stay until his retirement in 2016. There he pursued research that resulted

in 39 patents, including nucleic acid amplification and work on the Hubble Space Telescope.

He was predeceased by his sister Beverly and his parents. He is survived by his son Christopher DiCesare, daughter-in-law Alicia Fuller, sister Gloria Nadeau, sister-in-law Pat Thatcher, and many nieces and nephews.

Services will be private, in keeping with the family's wishes. In lieu of flowers, donations in Joseph's memory may be made to Connecticut Foodshare – ctfoodshare.org ■

BIRTH

Daisy Sage Nilsen Born August 14, 2025



Hannah and Grady Nilsen of Ogden, Utah welcomed their daughter Daisy Sage Nilsen, born on August 14, 2025. Daisy made a surprise arrival 10 days early, weighing 5lbs. 8oz and 18" long. "Daisy is thriving and we are overjoyed!"

Daisy is the first grandchild for Julia Pemberton, Redding's First Selectwoman, and Adam Pemberton. This is also the first grandchild for Grady's parents, Ashley and Aaron Nilsen, who reside in Salt Lake City, Utah. ■

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Creosote, critters, and cold calls

What every homeowner should know about chimney safety

By Justin Reynolds

Does your household burn a fire at least once a week during the winter? If so, you need to get your chimney inspected – and probably swept – each year.

That's according to Dave Burns, owner of August West Chimney, LLC, a Redding-based business that has been keeping fireplaces and wood stoves in the area clean and safe since 1973.

August West was originally founded by Tom Risch – “an inventor type with a brilliant marketing mind,” Burns said – after he came across a top hat while cleaning out a woman's attic in Wilton, started singing the Mary Poppins' classic “Chim Chim Cher-ee,” and got lost in conversation about what became of the profession of chimney sweeping; that topic then became top of mind for him.

“Back then, there was an explosion of wood stoves all over the country because of oil embargoes, which made it really expensive to heat houses,” explained Burns, who lives in Redding with his wife Maria. “Tom called local chimney sweeps, interviewed them, and realized this was a business waiting to happen. He basically reinvented the way modern chimney cleaning is done.”

Risch came up with new tools, new vacuums, and a new process: cleaning chimneys from the inside of the house. According to Burns, “his innovations have become the modern standard for proper chimney cleaning nationwide.”

According to Burns, one of the biggest misconceptions homeowners have about chimney maintenance is how often their chimney should be checked on.

“Wood stove flues need more care than other types of appliances because the smoke from a stove moves through the chimney much

more slowly than in an open fireplace. This increased residency time creates more flammable soot and creosote deposits, which must be removed with a thorough sweep,” Burns said. “They also get used more often because they're more efficient, so they get dirty faster.”

(Creosote is a tar-like byproduct of burning wood that builds up inside chimneys and flue lines. Over time, it can become highly flammable and pose a serious fire hazard if not regularly removed.)

Many people also don't realize that furnaces and boilers often vent out of chimneys, and those flue liners need to be inspected and cleaned, too. Burns recommends installing carbon monoxide detectors throughout your house – especially near bedrooms – to ensure dangerous fumes don't go undetected in the event of a malfunction.

While Burns recommends cleaning wood stoves and fireplaces that are used weekly each year, fireplaces that are used infrequently should be “checked every couple of seasons for soot build-up, animals that may have nested, and damage to the flue or damper.”

According to Burns, getting your chimney cleaned at the end of the season – usually in the spring – is ideal. That way, you won't have to worry about a dirty chimney giving off an ashtray odor when your AC is running in the summer. Plus, with human beings being the procrastinators that we are, chimney sweeping companies can become busy in the fall.

“If you wait too long, you're further out on the schedule, and you never know when the first night for a fire will be,” Burns said. “Get your chimney cleaned in the spring so you're ready to go for that first fire in the fall.”

To keep your chimneys in good shape, Burns suggests burning hardwoods that are well-seasoned, i.e., having been drying for eight months or so.

“Seasoning and processing the wood correctly is really important,” he said. “Also, just because a wood supplier says their wood is kiln-dried doesn't mean it's properly seasoned and ready to burn. Kiln-dried wood should also spend a few months naturally drying out as well.”

Burns also urges people to be cautious when they receive a cold call marketing chimney cleaning services.

“Reputable, certifiable sweeps – the honest players – they're always booked,” Burns said. “It's a sure sign something's not adding up if they're calling you. They might offer low prices, but they really sell fear; they'll come in and find a bunch of things ‘wrong,’ and what first appears as a low-price cleaning suddenly becomes expensive.”

Over the years, Burns has seen it all. Most surprisingly, he once found a live duck in a fireplace flue, which he was able to rescue. Even if you don't burn fires, it's worth having your chimney inspected every so often in case any critters have taken up residence there.

“I like to think of all the chimney fires we have prevented over the last 50-plus years. People look for meaning in their work, and we don't have to look very far,” Burns said. “Good maintenance goes a long way toward mitigating dangers and keeping your family safe. We're making people safer, and it feels good.” ■

For more information call (203) 226-0416 or e-mail augustwestchimney@gmail.com

From spooky to silly – swap Halloween costumes for fresh looks

By Pamela Brown

Redding Neighbors & Newcomers is helping families turn last year's Halloween costumes into new ghoulish getups and exciting ensembles with their second annual Costume Swap.

“I'm excited to make this a yearly tradition,” said Lindsay Menking, RNN Coordinator, who came up with the idea last year. “I've been part of the Trunk or Treat team for over 10 years, so Halloween is always on my mind. I'm also a fan of our local Buy Nothing Facebook group where neighbors share items they no longer need, and I'm passionate about sustainability. I thought: Why not create a dedicated space for costumes at this time of year?”

RNN is partnering with the Park and Recreation Department for the Costume Swap. The Costume Swap has two stages. First, residents drop off gently used costumes to four different locations during the collection period, which is open now through Monday, September 29. Then, costumes will be organized and set up at the Community Center for people to browse and take home on two Saturdays in October. “We accept costumes for all ages, including homemade or store bought. We will accept full costumes and props and accessories, but we ask that they not be ripped, stained, or missing important pieces,” said Menking.

Menking says she hopes to see even more donations this year. “We have expanded our drop-off locations to cover every part of town by partnering with the local volunteer fire departments, in addition to the Community Center, which makes it easier for more residents to participate,” she said. The four collection locations include the Georgetown Fire

Department at 6 Portland Avenue; Redding Ridge Fire Department at 186 Black Rock Turnpike; West Redding Fire Department at 306 Umpawaug Road; and the Redding Community Center at 37 Lonetown Road.

Costumes will then be displayed at the Community Center Pavillion on Saturday, October 4 and Saturday, October 11 from 10:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m., rain or shine. The costumes will be available for anyone in the community to browse and take home. “It's a straightforward exchange – leave what you can, take what you need,” Menking explained.

Menking praises her team of volunteers who helped her coordinate the logistics, from choosing dates, to organizing drop-off locations and reserving space at the Community Center. “My team helped create and distribute flyers, gather supplies like bins, clothing racks, and hangers, and are collecting the costumes during this two-week drop-off period,” she said. “Then, we come together to sort everything by size and age group, and on the event days, we set up the costumes and stay on-site to keep everything running smoothly. It's a true team effort.” Team members include Jess Tyson, Ali Diskin, Kate Sparks, Kendall Eagan, and Michi Drummond.

Menking is happy to give Halloween costumes a second life. “Kids outgrow them so quickly, and adults rarely reuse costumes, so this gives people a chance to declutter, share, and support the environment at the same time,” said Menking. “It helps residents connect, brings the community together, and supports RNN's charitable mission while participating in a sustainable practice.” ■



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BOOK REVIEW

The Outsiders

By S.E. Hinton

Young Adult: Grade level 7-9, reading years 12-18

224 pages / Viking / \$11.63

The Outsiders, by S.E. Hinton, was first published in 1967. It is considered to be among the most successful (15 million in sales) of early young adult fiction offerings. The “young adult” category is defined as readers from 12 to 18 years old. Without discussing whether this category is valid beyond a commercial designation, *The Outsiders* works admirably as a work of fiction, making the author a successful novelist by any measure. Now 77, Hinton was 19 years old when her first novel, *The Outsiders*, was published. New interest in the story has developed as a Broadway musical adaptation recently emerged.

The Outsiders examines issues of class and caste in America through the emotional lens of a 14-year-old boy living independently with his two older brothers as orphans after their parents were killed in a car crash. Hinton’s narrative points out how inexperience is a handicap to understanding emotions accurately – life appears opaque and complex and becomes all at once hostile to childish understanding. Her focus falls on how misapprehensions can turn toxic quickly with bad results in the real world. Connecting dots of insight, Hinton shows how inexperience quite naturally causes misunderstanding, which can then cause avoidable and tragic calamity. Using a 14-year-old first-person narrator, Hinton gives the reader truth and consequences in a heap measure, and shows how, in a cruel world, the sensible, almost sacred, default is love and allegiance to family, however that is served up. Her winning characters emerge successfully from the emotional domestic turmoil and riven social contexts she presents. Each individual story plays out with organic design

for redemption or damnation. There are depictions of life and death in order that these are understood as serious truths in maturity.

And sometimes, ironically perhaps, truth is the goal of fiction. Fiction defines its subject. *Who dunnit?* can become as valid a question as *Why is the sky blue?* And it would be unworthy of the work to lean on category to dismiss a writer for his or her style. A person’s age has little to do with complexity, and artistic merits – emotional or literary – calculate differently. Insight is typically valued over stuff. Real knowledge is held as something precious. S.E. Hinton, novelist, shows us how and why.

During the late 1950s and 1960s, teenage angst was identified as a thing and depicted in films like *Rebel without a Cause*. Youthful intellectual restlessness was also identified and described in books like *On the Road*. The post-World War II period in America lasted for approximately 25 years, and American culture passed through several traumatic incidents during that time: the Vietnam War, male-only conscription, historically significant assassinations, and an expanding youth culture defined in opposition to convention.

The Outsiders has passed many tests as a durable contribution to American literature on its own terms. Its longevity testifies to continuing relevance. Through harsh experience, the narrator discovers how empathy has a central role in the relationship between truth and consequences, and that love transcends emotional onslaught. ■

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

Notes from a neighbor

Watch your language! | By Carter Wiseman

Few of us remember when we learned to talk. But most of us are stuck with the language we picked up when we were starting, and changing the way we speak – and hear – is not always easy.

Many years ago, “cool” was a temperature; then it became Paul Newman’s way of handling authority. “Awesome” was once synonymous with “overwhelming;” now it is a general term of approval. “Like” was either a transitive verb that meant the expression of affection (“I like ice cream”), or a preposition that was used when comparing one thing to something similar (“She looks like Brittany Spears”). When and why did “effective” become “impactful”?

Parents and other elders are good at bemoaning the degradation of English usage. My father used to hammer me about peppering my speech with “um” and “ah.” He said they were meaningless sounds used to camouflage the fact that I had not thought through what I had to say. He was right, and I grudgingly stopped.

Language evolves, as it should. We need new words for new things. In the days of lead pipes, there was no need for *polyvinyl chloride*. In a horse-drawn era, we could do without *hypersonic*. An abacus was happy without *algorithms*. Another reason is that language gives us codes by which to establish our difference from others. When the English actress Maggie Smith as Violet Crawley in *Downton Abbey* asked, “What is a *weekend*?” she knew the answer; she just wanted to make clear to her social inferiors

that she didn’t work for a living, so didn’t need two days off.

But some changes seem unnecessary. Among them are excessively sensitive euphemisms. Is someone who has died less dead having *passed*? Is a student’s problem with a teacher less serious if it is a challenge? When a soldier is assigned to a combat zone, is he in less danger than he is if *deployed*?

I am trying not to be prematurely curmudgeonly; finger-wagging grammarians are a boring breed. But some persistent linguistic ticks are bugging (annoying) me.

The three that stand out most prominently are: “like,” “you know,” and “right,” not least because I find them creeping into my own speech. Listening to and reading the words of politicians, spokespersons, and pundits, I find myself counting on all 10 fingers how often these allegedly articulate people blow verbal smoke. And then I catch myself doing the same thing without noticing.

My test is clarity. When someone says, “I’m like, sure,” my reaction is: Either you are sure, or you aren’t. To those who favor “You know,” I feel like responding, “No, I don’t know, or why would I be listening to you?” When a podcaster assumes my agreement in dropping a “right?” at the end of a sentence, I am tempted to reply, “How can you know what I am thinking?”

I’m down with change, just as I have always been up for it, but I prefer telling it like it is. Right? Um. Oops. ■

LIBRARY CORNER

Farewell to a one-of-a-kind artist and friend

By Erin Shea Dummeyer



Photo by Jessie Wright

Jimmy Grashow (right) in his studio in 2023 celebrating with Mitch Ancona and Erin Shea Dummeyer the partnership to create *The Seated Rose wine* to benefit Mark Twain Library.

Upon entering Mark Twain Library, visitors are greeted by a cheerful cardboard monkey sitting on a swing. It’s a signal for the

subconscious: this is a place where children are welcome. Created for us years ago by Redding artist Jimmy Grashow, our monkey is a treasured unofficial mascot, almost as treasured as our official mascot that is Mark Twain. Last week, we lost the one-of-a-kind Jimmy Grashow, and this town feels a little bit dimmer.

Jimmy was a mentor, a friend, and a supporter of Mark Twain Library in countless ways. He was involved in our Art Show for 50 years! He was on our Hermes Art Series Advisory Committee, bringing events in the visual, literary, theater, and musical arts to our rural town. In 2022, he opened his studio to some sponsors of the Mark Twain Library’s annual Art Show, and it was during this time that I got to experience Jimmy’s

quintessence. He hopped around his studio (really, he seemed to frolic around with such enthusiasm as if he had wings on his shoes). From piece to piece, he showed us his works in progress and described the inspiration and artistic process for each one. This is the mark of a true artist to me: someone who can’t turn it off even if they were asked to try. We were all enraptured by him and the enthusiasm he oozed for his craft. Even though I only knew Jimmy for a short time, I really feel like I was given a gift that night.

We will miss his mischievous, imaginative, and blue-sky spirit but will cherish our memories of Jimmy Grashow. ■

Erin Shea Dummeyer is
Director, Mark Twain Library

Good books for good readers

By Margi Esten

Detective and mystery fans: I’ve found a new author, Dervla McTiernan, and I am sure you will love her Detective Cormac Reilly as much as I do.

So far, there are four books in this Irish police procedural series, similar to Tana French’s *Dublin Murder Squad*. They feature the usual array of criminals and law enforcement characters, including

the protagonist Cormac Reilly of the Garda Síochána. The series offers a deep look into the dark heart of Ireland – set mostly in Dublin and Galway – that is rife with corruption, desperation, and crime. Most of the stories also involve the disenfranchised who find themselves in compromised situations and Cormac Reilly, of course, who is an incredibly decent

but tortured man himself.

I have been reading the series in order: *The Ruin*, *The Scholar*, *The Good Turn*, and I am about to begin *The Unquiet Grave*.

Dervla McTiernan is a bestselling Irish crime novelist who also has written *The Murder Rule* along with novellas *The Roommate*, *The Sisters*, *The Wrong One*, and *The Fireground*. ■

Grow, Learn & Connect

Cooking & Baking at New Pond Farm

Starting
Sept 30

On the Farm:
Gardening & Cooking
for Middle schoolers

This 5 week afterschool is a great way to learn new skills while making new friends!
Bus service from JRMS!

Contact us newpondfarm.org

Oct 1

Baking on the Farm
for Adults

A hands-on baking workshop featuring the flavors you wait for all year long! Make melt-in-your-mouth apple cider caramels and pumpkin sammies alongside local baker Maisie Todd Wallick

Nod to the pod

Dear Hank and John: Episode 268 –
How Onion Weight Per Onion

By Amy Maloof

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

Hank and John Green are brothers, I’m a sucker for sibling podcasts, and so here we are. Ostensibly an advice show, it’s really a chance to nerd out over random facts, British soccer, and Mars, while enjoying the banter of two lightly/delightfully neurotic Gen X-ers.

Oldest brother John is a novelist with a big following. He writes young adult fiction, and is best known for his book *The Fault in Our Stars* (which I have put off reading for many years – it’s about teenagers with cancer), but my oldest daughter loves *Looking for Alaska*, and I would

highly recommend *An Abundance of Katherines*. Off the page, in real life, John is always a little melancholy. Hank, the youngest, is a huge science nerd and educator, a standup comedian, and also writes. Hank has some serious Tigger energy. They balance each other out.

If you’re like me and you love a visual, both brothers are also YouTubers – lots of educational stuff, your kids have probably seen videos from their Crash Course series – and it is fun to discover that side of their work, too. But I love the simplicity of their podcast. Listeners write in with questions, ranging from earnest queries about post-college unemployment

woes to wondering how long “a while” really is. In this episode, the brothers travel down a strange root vegetable rabbit hole when a woman writes in asking how to get rid of 50 pounds of onions. It’s silly and genuinely funny and somehow also smart, a welcome distraction from... (gestures around dramatically) ...everything.

The Green brothers are quirky and hopeful. They always find a way of being real, acknowledging that things feel hard right now – for lots of different people for many different reasons – while consistently and without forcing it, finding some good, too. Each show is kept clean, so kids can listen, too; I sure hope they do. ■

REDDING KIDS

Fall Edition

Cartoon Corner

What is a newspaper without cartoons?



Franken-pumpkin by Gabby



Mona Lisa Mickey by Vincent

These two drawings were created by students in the Boys & Girls Club of Redding-Easton's Art Club. If you have a cartoon you'd like to submit to Redding Kids, e-mail editor@reddingsentinel.org

Become a bird watcher!

Redding Tree Conservancy is holding a Bird Bingo Contest for kids and pre-teens this fall in partnership with Mark Twain Library. Use the bingo card below or pick one up from Mark Twain Library and keep an eye out for as many species as you can find before October 7, when cards should be dropped back at the Library.

Then, enjoy an informative virtual presentation by Connecticut Audubon Society's Joe Attwater hosted by the Library on October 8 at 6:30 p.m. The winner of Bird Bingo will be announced at the end of the virtual program. ■

BIRD BINGO
WIN \$50

Enter by Oct 7 Ages 4-12

 American Robin	 Northern Cardinal	 Downy Woodpecker	 Gray Catbird
 Carolina Wren	 Blue Jay	 Tufted Titmouse	 Black-capped Chickadee
 Red-bellied Woodpecker	 American Goldfinch	 Common Grackle	 Mourning Dove
 Coopers Hawk	 American Crow	 Cedar Waxwing	 Song Sparrow

PLAY AND WIN
Circle all the Birds of Fall on this Bingo card that you see in your backyard, at school or anywhere in Redding. Return the card with your name, phone number and date submitted to Mark Twain Library's Main Desk no later than October 7 at 5:00pm.

LISTEN AND LEARN
On October 8 from 6:30-7:30pm, Connecticut Audubon Society's Joe Attwater will introduce you to "Birds of a Feather: From Backyard to Beyond" during a special Zoom gathering. At the end, he will announce the \$50 winner. Register for the event at marktwainlibrary.org.

SPONSORS

Contest Rules: Prize will be awarded to the child/pre-teen who circles the most birds. In event of a tie, the earliest dated entry will win. Judges decisions are final.

Make Redding GLOW

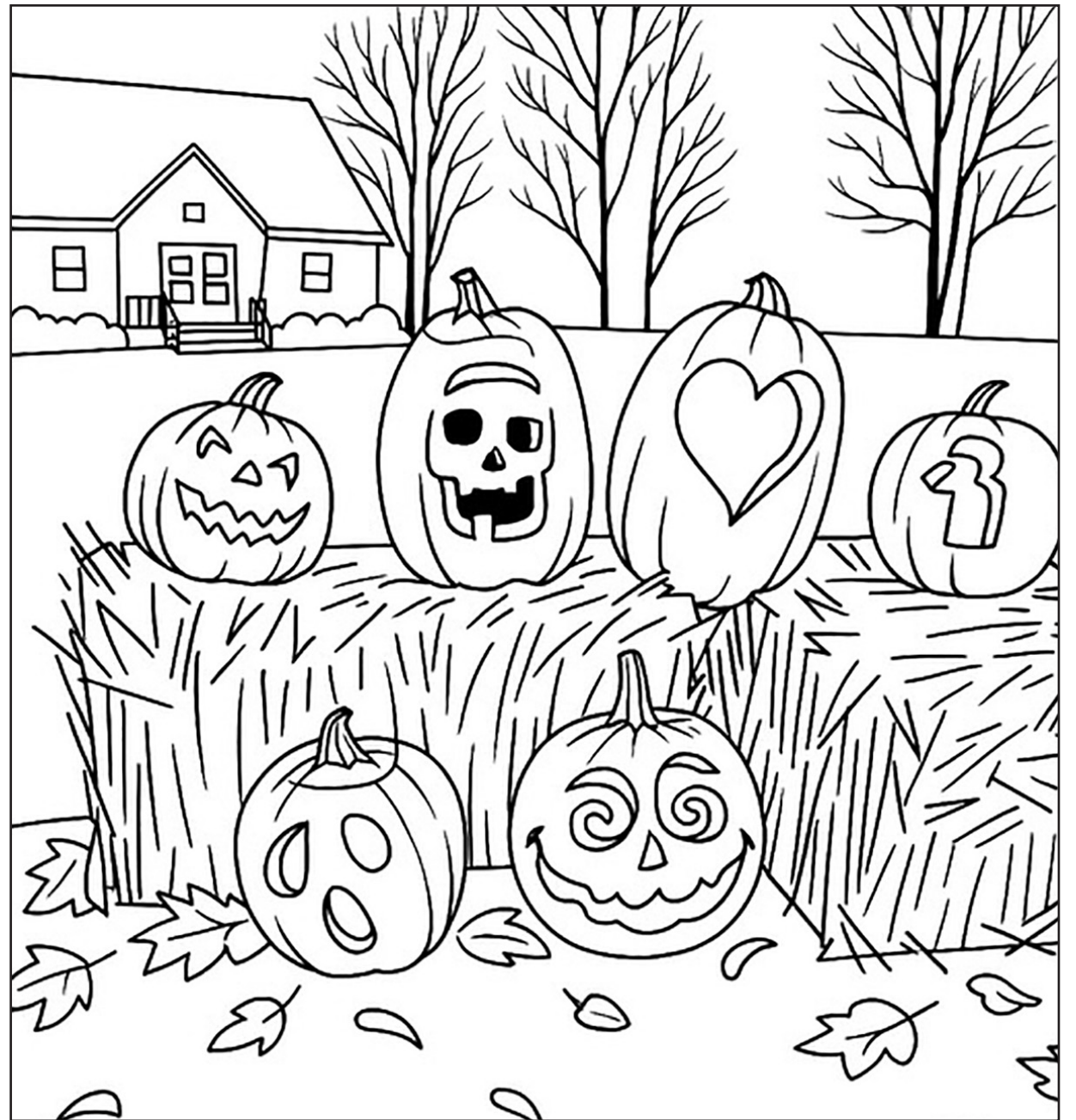


Image created from photo by Alice Smith

Every Halloween, Redding Garden Club creates a Jack-O-Lantern display on the Town Green from carved pumpkins that residents drop off. Color this Halloween scene and send a photo of your work to editor@reddingsentinel.org for a chance to be published in an October issue.

Scary, spooky stories from Mark Twain Library



Get ready for Halloween by checking out some of the books on this Scary Spooky Stories List put together by Mark Twain Library and geared toward readers in grades 3-6. Below is a taste of what is in

store – scan the QR code for the complete list... and to check them out online!

Scratch, Scratch
by Lindsay Currie

What Lives in the Woods
by Lindsay Currie

Wait Till Helen Comes
by Mary Downing Hahn

Stories to Keep You Alive Despite Vampires!
by Ben Acker

Scare Me by K.R. Alexander

Bury Me by K.R. Alexander

Haunt Me by K.R. Alexander

Out to Get You: 13 Tales of Weirdness and Woe by Josh Allen

Once They See You: 13 Stories to Shiver and Shock by Josh Allen

Only If You Dare: 13 Stories of Darkness and Doom by Josh Allen



See, hear, taste, smell, and feel autumn

By Mary Corcoran



Maple leaves



Photos by Mary Corcoran / Fungus

What do you think of when you hear about leaves changing color, pumpkins, wild turkeys, and cooling temperatures? Why, autumn, of course! Try using your five senses – sight, smell, hearing, taste, and touch – to experience this beautiful season.

Do you enjoy **seeing** the beautiful green leaves on trees in the springtime and summer? Those leaves are on deciduous trees like maple, oak, and beech. (Coniferous trees, like pine, spruce, and fir, have needles; they do not lose their needles all at once.)

The leaves of deciduous trees are green because of chlorophyll, a pigment that is inside plant cells. Chlorophyll absorbs or takes in sunlight, part of the chemical reaction called photosynthesis which makes sugar (food) for the tree. Trees also use carbon dioxide from the air and water for photosynthesis.

In autumn, when there is less light for trees, chlorophyll breaks down, but something is revealed – yellow! The yellows and oranges in fall leaves come from other pigments that were already in the leaf but were covered up by the

chlorophyll. How about the reds in leaves? Well, that happens when sugar is left in a leaf, and a chemical change makes new pigments. After all this, when leaves are finished with their work of providing food for the tree, they drop off.

Do you think the leaves will be really colorful this autumn? Cool, dry, and sunny weather makes for great fall leaves! Will you be a "leaf peeper" this year? Try walking through or jumping into a pile of dried leaves this autumn and **listen** for the crunching sound. Then be sure to check for ticks!

This also might be a good time of year to be on the lookout for (but **don't touch!**) fungi. Fungi are in a group of their own, and so are not animals, plants, or any other kind of living thing. Fungi use spores, while plants use seeds to reproduce (make more of their kind). There are spores on mushrooms or toadstools, but if you see one, don't touch it! Many are poisonous, even by just touching.

Now, something that you can **taste**... pumpkin! Do you like pumpkin pie? Maybe you'll have it plain, with ice cream, or with whipped cream? Pumpkins are a well-known fruit in autumn. They grow from seeds into a plant that makes flowers. Part of the pollinated flower grows to make a fleshy fruit called a pumpkin that we eat.

Have you ever planted pumpkin seeds or other plants? Planting seeds is the first step in growing a crop. The embryo or "baby" plant is inside the seed. When the time and conditions are right, it will germinate or begin to grow.

Many plants, like milkweed, have to spend the winter outside to germinate. You can help our butterflies, especially monarchs, by planting milkweed – which is best to do in autumn. When the seeds germinate in the spring, they will grow into plants with flowers that have a sweet-smelling, honey-like scent that attract butterflies like monarchs. **Smell** those blossoms

and you'll see why monarchs love milkweed! They lay their eggs on these plants, and the larva (caterpillar) eat the leaves. And surprise, the leaves have a chemical that is toxic to other animals, protecting the caterpillars from predators.

Have you started wearing a sweater or jacket? You'll soon need one to **feel** warm. Maybe on cool mornings waiting for the bus? We can bundle up, but how do wild animals like snakes, turtles, and bears deal with cold temperatures and lack of food here in Redding? You will learn all about that in the Redding Kids Winter Edition – pick it up in January to read about hibernation, brumation, and migration! ■

Mary K. Corcoran
is a published children's book
author and science teacher
living in Redding

THE NATURAL WORLD

Otterly fabulous facts | By Terry Karpen



Photo by Stacey Clark

When trying to spot an otter in the water, look for ripples, bubbles, and a head on the surface of the water.



Photo by Paul J. Fusco / CT DEEP

Northern river otters are semi-aquatic mammals that are found throughout North America.

Last month, I received a text message from my neighbor, Stacey Clark. “Terry, I was shocked to see otters by Orchard Drive this morning. Have you seen them around? There were three. I was so delighted to see them on my morning run!”

I replied, “Shocking!!! I’ve been aware of the beavers there. They did a lot of damage to my property by cutting down trees and causing flooding. But otters?! Wow.”

Wanting to impress my neighbor with my own recent wildlife sighting, I added, “Did I tell you that I saw a black bear strolling along Dayton Road last month? I saw it from my window and at first glance thought it was a person.”

Adding to our neighborly boast fest, she wrote, “Last week we had a coyote in the backyard and a day later our next-door neighbors told us there was a bear heading our way, but we never saw it. Lots of animal movements these days.”

Next, being a dedicated researcher, I immediately did an internet search for otters in Connecticut and responded to her with information found on the Connecticut DEEP website:

“Beavers are important to otters because the marshes they create make ideal otter habitat. Plus, otters will use abandoned beaver dens.”

I was impressed to discover the beaver/otter connection. I had previously researched beavers after they moved into my neighborhood and colonized the “lower 40” of my property. Now I was curious about the newest occupants and did a deep dive (pardon the pun) to learn

about these rarely seen animals.

I discovered they are mostly crepuscular, meaning they are active around dawn and dusk, which is why they are not frequently seen. Another fact I encountered was that the increasing beaver population has created beneficial habitats for river otters. I learned that beavers are described as “ecosystem engineers,” because their dam-building work has such a huge effect on habitats. This relationship, known as ecological facilitation, demonstrates how beavers, modifying the environment, can increase the overall biodiversity and resilience of water systems for other species, including otters.

After learning this, I decided to forego my grudge against the beavers for the damages done to my property.

Otterly fabulous facts

The North American river otter (*Lontra canadensis*) also known as the northern river otter and river otter, is a semi-aquatic mammal that inhabits rivers, lakes, ponds, swamps, marshes, and estuaries throughout North America, including Canada, the Northwest U.S., the Great Lakes region, New England, and Atlantic and Gulf Coast states. These environments provide adequate food and shelter.

At the time of European settlement, river otters were common throughout North America. Subsequent habitat loss caused by unregulated hunting and pollution severely reduced the population. They are a rare sight in Connecticut and elsewhere in their

range because the species avoids contact with humans, but the river otter population has been increasing. This is due to reduced trapping pressure, as well as improved water quality and habitat restoration from environmental protection regulations.

According to the Saginaw Zoo in Michigan, otters are “a sign of a healthy ecosystem. River otters are considered an indicator species – which means their presence signals that the surrounding environment is clean and healthy. Because they rely on clean waterways to survive, polluted or degraded habitats quickly drive them away.”

River otters are excellent swimmers adapted for both land and water. They live most of their lives on solid ground and use the water to travel and find food.

River otters are carnivorous. They eat fish, frogs, crayfish, shellfish, snakes, turtles, salamanders, earthworms, aquatic insects, and small birds and mammals.

River otters can stay underwater for up to eight minutes, dive as deep as 60 feet, and run as fast as 18 miles per hour.

Adult river otters weigh between 10 to 30 pounds and are about three to four feet long, not including the tail. Males are usually larger than females.

They have dense, water-repellent fur and a long, powerful tail and webbed toes that aid in swimming.

River otters are social, playful, and highly intelligent mammals.

River otters are not the same species as sea otters which are larger, marine-living mammals.

Dayton Road, where the fauna, including deer, turkeys, bears, coyotes, beavers, and river otters play, is bordered on the south side by the Nature Conservancy Devil’s Den Preserve – an 1800-acre oasis for wildlife and plants. ■

For more information on Redding’s wildlife, visit reddingctlandtrust.org/wildlife

Terry Karpen is proprietor of Queen Of Spades Gardens & Landscapes in Redding

If trees could talk Our evolving ecosphere

By John McLeran



Photo courtesy of Highstead

Biology students performing monitoring activities.

As Open Space Manager, I am, on occasion, asked: What do we know about our trees? Turns out, we know quite a bit. While the Town of Redding Conservation Commission was founded in 1964, and Redding Land Trust came along a year later, I could not at that time find any formal studies of our flora or fauna. However, in 1973, the Conservation Commission hired the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies to conduct an in-depth survey of the Saugatuck Falls Natural Area. One of the objectives was “to apply the knowledge gained to wisely managing the tract,” keeping in mind that “management of a natural area is mostly a matter of enlightened inaction.” While the survey did list tree species, there was no attempt to assess their commonality or condition.

The next formal study I discovered evaluated the conservation value of the Bridgeport Hydraulic Company Watershed Lands (2,800 acres) in Redding, 1991. This report features a series of detailed maps showing the abundance of either mixed hardwood or conifers and the conservation value of each parcel. (A copy of *Scoping The Wetlands* is on file at Mark Twain Library.)

In 2006, Ed Faison, Senior Forest Ecologist, Highstead, instituted a formal forest monitoring program. Thirty-eight 20 meters x 20 meters plots were established at three Town-owned sites with a plan to re-survey each site periodically. Methodology included: Record the species, diameter, and alive/dead status of all the trees (and shrubs including invasives) at least 2.5 centimeters in diameter, and estimate their

abundance, and regeneration. In 2013, I helped resample many of the plots, and in 2017, with the arrival of the emerald ash borer, we established additional plots to specifically track changes in ash trees.

With this ongoing database, we can now make a broad array of observations: For example, the dramatic increase of most invasives, especially Japanese stilt grass; the surprising decline of garlic mustard; the mortality rate of white ash (roughly -90%) and the resulting increase in tree regeneration; dead standing trees and downed logs as a result of the emerald ash borer; and an uptick in blowdowns from tropical storms in 2011-2012. To my knowledge, Redding is the only town conducting such in-depth surveys in the state. And, we look forward to resampling these plots again to track new dynamics from beech tree disease to ongoing changes from emerald ash borer, etc.

To supplement the ongoing long-term monitoring I, along with other Land Trust trustees, attend an assortment of workshops. The Connecticut Land Conservation Council annual conference at Wesleyan University is the granddaddy of events, offering an abundance of sessions on all subjects relating to trees. So, yes – we do know quite a bit about our beautiful and fascinating trees, but because the climate and the trees themselves are always in transition, it is up to us to keep up. ■

If you have a tree or story about trees you’d like to see featured in this column, send to reddingtreeconservancy@gmail.com

Doing what comes naturally Hilltop Farm is brought back to life | By Janice Rotchstein



Mike Procaccini and Michelle Sandone prepare for this year’s harvest.

She’s an art teacher. He’s a plumber. In their spare time, they are cultivating 20 acres of apple, pear, apricot, peach, and paw paw trees, tapping their maples, gathering bounty from the chestnuts, and raising mulberries.

It’s all happening off Redding’s Sport Hill Road. That’s where Michelle Sandone and her boyfriend, Mike Procaccini, are breathing life into her family’s multi-generational Hilltop Farm which had fallen into disuse.

The result: in just five years, their maple syrup has been

named USDA-certified organic, its processing awarded a National Audubon Society’s “bird-friendly” citation, and Redding Grange and Newtown’s Shortt’s Farm are featuring their produce and products.

What’s the secret behind this couple’s success?

“We do what’s best for nature,” said Sandone, “by planting saplings native to the region, and caring for them organically so birds, bees and wildlife can thrive.”

“That’s also why our syrup is made the old-fashioned way,” Procaccini added. “A Canadian friend

showed us how to tap our maples with buckets and boil the sap over a wood-fired arch. Not using filter aids or defoamers gives a natural, but complex taste that you won’t find in most stores.”

This respect for nature was rooted in Sandone’s and Procaccini’s upbringing. Both were farm-bred. He dreamed of sowing apple groves; she of reviving her family’s homestead. Together, they turned those wishes into reality by buying 20 acres of Hilltop Farm from Sandone’s grandparents’ trust.

Within months, both set to work – undaunted by the land’s hilly, weed-infested terrain, an old barn in shambles, and no farm equipment.

First, they each learned to lead two different lives.

By day, Sandone commuted to Greenwich where she taught art to middle and high school students. At night, she created meticulous Excel sheets, carefully listing which fruit trees would thrive in Redding, and then sorting by origin, parentage, and taste.

After Procaccini finished his plumbing assignments, he’d join her to identify the genus that had a high resistance to pests, didn’t need chemical spraying, and could be picked at different times of the year.

“What really kick-started the business,” said Sandone, “was a donation of 10 apple trees with tilling support from Stahursky Farms in Westport.”

“That and my dad’s backhoe,” laughed Procaccini.

Since 2020, they have planted over 100 fruit trees. This fall, the harvest includes 26 apple varieties, seven peach, five pear, and six apricot – all being managed while cultivating paw paws, mulberries, chestnuts, and maples. “We couldn’t have done it without our families who would pitch in at a moment’s notice, and still do,” admitted Sandone.

Sandone also has branded their enterprise with a maple tree logo, created a website at hilltopfarmllc.com and started connecting regularly with followers on Instagram @hilltop.farm.

Sandone and Procaccini continue to envision their future by paying tribute to her past. It was in the late 1800s, that Sandone’s great-grandfather Joseph Stehlik, an emigrant from Czechoslovakia, fell in love with a lush 35-acre plot in Redding. When his son Howard took over, the tract became a working farm called Hilltop – brimming with horses, chickens, pigs, and sheep as well as vegetables

and herbs. Years later, Howard’s daughters put their own stamp on the property by using it to raise and board horses.

Now it’s Sandone’s turn – with Procaccini – to continue that legacy by redefining Hilltop’s resources and tapping its bounty – all while doing what’s best for nature. ■



Photos by Janice Rotchstein
Hilltop Farm’s organic syrup has received special citations.

Special note: Meet Michelle Sandone and other local entrepreneurs at the Redding Grange Agricultural Fair on Sunday, October 26, 11:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m., 399 Newtown Turnpike

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

\$ = fee applies
R = registration required

This Week's Featured Events

43rd Annual Artisan Fair

Saturday, September 27
10:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.
Rain or Shine, Parking at Redding Elementary School with shuttle bus service
First Church of Christ, Congregational
25 Cross Highway
firstchurchredding.org

Sacred Heart and Saint Patrick Parish Oktoberfest

Saturday, September 27
3:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.
Family-friendly event with German beer, food, music, and games
169 Black Rock Turnpike
sacredheart-stpat.org

Music on the Hill invites you to Soaring!

Friday, October 3
8:00 p.m.
The Music on the Hill Chamber Chorus performs uplifting and exhilarating music celebrating the soaring human spirit.
Norfield Congregational Church
64 Norfield Road
Weston
musiconthehillCT.org/events
\$

Want to feature an upcoming event?

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

ARTS

Friday, September 26 – Sunday, September 28

Newtown Arts Festival
7:00 p.m. – 10:00 p.m. Friday
11:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. Saturday and Sunday
Concert under the stars on Saturday, following by a two-day outdoor festival with vendors, live performances, interactive art, and food trucks
Fairfield Hills Campus
Wasserman Way
Newtown
newtownartsfestival.com
\$

Thursday, October 2

Bluegrass Nights
7:00 p.m. – 10:00 p.m.
House band at 8:00 p.m. with open jamming through the night
The Granite
5 North Main Street
thegranitechurch.org

Friday, October 3

Music on the Hill invites you to Soaring!
8:00 p.m.
The Music on the Hill Chamber Chorus performs uplifting and exhilarating music celebrating the soaring human spirit.
Norfield Congregational Church
64 Norfield Road
Weston
musiconthehillCT.org/events
\$

CHILDREN | TEENS

Friday, September 26

In the Kitchen: Breakfast for Dinner (Grades K-4)
4:30 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.
Build kitchen skills and share meals together
New Pond Farm Education Center
101 Marchant Road
newpondfarm.org
\$, R

Monday, September 29

Afternoon Movie – Roald Dahl Day
4:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.
Movie, cupcakes, and fun for grades 5+
Mark Twain Library
439 Redding Road
marktwinlibrary.org
R

Tuesday, September 30

Freshman Fondue
4:00 p.m. – 4:45 p.m.
Freshmen celebrate first year of high school with chocolate fondue
Mark Twain Library
439 Redding Road
marktwinlibrary.org
R

Saturday, October 4

Floating Pumpkin Patch
2:00 p.m. – 4:45 p.m.
Registration for one, 45-minute slot is required and pay per pumpkin
Riverbrook Regional YMCA
404 Danbury Road
Wilton
wiltonymca.org
\$, R

FOOD | WINE

Saturday, September 27

Georgetown Lions Club Italian Dinner
5:00 p.m.
Sacred Heart Church
30 Church Street
Call (203) 241-0739 for tickets
\$, R

Wednesday, October 1

In Season: Baking on the Farm – Apple Cider Caramels and Pumpkin Sammies
6:30 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.
New Pond Farm Education Center
101 Marchant Road
newpondfarm.org
\$, R

NATURE

Saturday, September 27

Fall Flower Social
4:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.
DIY flower bar, firepits, demos, and more
Redding Flower Farm
130 Picketts Ridge Road
reddingflowerfarm.com
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Sunday, September 28

Annual Mushroom Walk
9:30 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.
Woodland walk with amateur mycologists
New Pond Farm Education Center
101 Marchant Road
newpondfarm.org
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Sunday, September 28

Native Landscaping for Beginners
2:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.
Learn and get ideas from a Master Gardener
New Pond Farm Education Center
101 Marchant Road
newpondfarm.org
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SPECIAL PROGRAMS

Saturday, September 27

43rd Annual Artisan Fair
10:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.
Rain or Shine, Parking at Redding Elementary School with shuttle bus service
First Church of Christ, Congregational
25 Cross Highway
firstchurchredding.org

Saturday, September 27

Sacred Heart and Saint Patrick Parish Oktoberfest
3:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.
Family-friendly event with German beer, food, music, and games
169 Black Rock Turnpike
sacredheart-stpat.org

Monday, September 29

Parent Meet-Up
9:30 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.
Unwind and build community with other parents – children welcome
New Pond Farm Education Center
101 Marchant Road
newpondfarm.org
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Tuesday, September 30

Redding League of Women Voters Fall Kick-Off: Microplastics and Public Health
6:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.
New Pond Farm Education Center
101 Marchant Road
E-mail lwvreddingct@gmail.com to register
R

Tuesday, September 30

Portraits – Photography Workshop
7:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.
Virtual adult program, learn from a professional photographer
Mark Twain Library
marktwinlibrary.org
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Wednesday, October 1

Night of Hope
6:30 p.m.
A panel of speakers will share their journeys of finding light through darkness and normalize conversations about mental health
The Granite
5 North Main Street
thegranitechurch.org
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Thursday, October 2

Nuestra América: Stories of 30 Inspiring Latinas/Latinos Who Have Shaped the United States with Smithsonian Educators
2:00 pm – 3:00 pm
Virtual
Mark Twain Library
marktwinlibrary.org
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Monday, October 6

Conversation on Aging
10:30 a.m.
Heritage Center
37 Lonetown Road
E-mail mstillman@reddingct.gov or call (203) 938-9725
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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
cibredding.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, September 26
Shabbat Shuvah
7:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.
Virtual
templebnaichaim.org

Please check church and temple websites for holiday and special services

MEETINGS

Thursday, September 25

Long Range Financial Planning Committee Special Meeting
4:00 p.m. – 5:30 p.m.
Town Hall / Hearing Room
100 Hill Road

Wednesday, October 1

Brown Bag Lunch With First Selectwoman
12:00 p.m.
Town Hall
100 Hill Road

Saturday, October 4

Public Session – Revitalize Georgetown
2:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.
Joel Barlow High School
100 Black Rock Turnpike

Monday, October 6

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

Monday, October 6

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

Tuesday, October 7

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

Tuesday, October 7

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

Tuesday, October 7

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

Wednesday, October 8

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

Wednesday, October 8

Commission on Aging
9:00 a.m.
Heritage Center
37 Lonetown Road

Wednesday, October 8

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

Thursday, October 9

Redding Historic Cemetery Committee
2:00 p.m.
Town Hall / Hearing Room
100 Hill Road

Thursday, October 9

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

Thursday, October 9

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

* Town offices will be closed Monday, October 13 for Columbus Day



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