

REDDING SENTINEL

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REDDING, CONNECTICUT

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Appealing your real estate assessment

By Jessie Wright

Application forms for appealing real estate assessments are now available and must be received by the Town Assessor's office by February 17, 2023.

The Assessor's office will then send the applications to Redding's Board of Assessment Appeals, who will schedule formal hearings with the applicants in March. These meetings follow the now-completed informal hearings process, which was offered through Vision Government Solutions, Inc. (VGSI), the firm conducting the 2022 property revaluation with the Town of Redding.

John Ford, Assessor for the Town of Redding, estimated approximately 175 informal hearings took place this year, with 40-50% of those participating receiving a reduction in their assessment value.

"In most cases, it was usually factual information – there was information about the property we may not have known about, something that might affect the condition of the home, or something along those lines that we were not aware of that people brought to our attention," Ford explained when asked which type of cases had received a reduction in the informal hearings.

Those property owners who did not participate in the informal process with VGSI can still appeal by February 17 with the Board of Assessment Appeals; by the same token, those who did participate but are still unhappy with their assessment can also still formally appeal.

The average increase to Redding's assessed residential property values following the 2022 revaluation was 28%, largely due to the area's robust growth in the real estate market since 2017.

Greg Stackpole, Chairman of Redding's Board of Assessment Appeals, said it was difficult to predict how many formal applications the Board will receive this year, though from experience, he has seen that property owners don't always formally appeal immediately after a revaluation.

"It's usually the second year out – it's not the initial year. Sometimes people get a notice about their increase, and they don't really understand the ramifications... so it's not until July comes around when they get the tax bill, which also includes any budgetary changes from last year to this year, when they say 'Oh, I may want to go in for an appeal.'"

Members of the Board of Assessment Appeals are elected Town Officials, while alternates are appointed. The Board hears real estate appeals every year, not just the years a revaluation takes place; however, Stackpole noted, if someone successfully receives a reduction from the Board, they cannot come back within the same

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Photo by Andrew Elliott

Evidence of industrious beavers at Collis P. Huntington State Park during a New Year's Eve hike. If you have a photo you'd like us to feature here, with credit of course, please e-mail editor@reddingsentinel.org

West Redding firefighter saves own life GoFundMe campaign raises over \$80,000 for recovery

By Donna Christopher

Zachary Devine, a West Redding resident and volunteer firefighter, took life-saving action for himself when he was struck by a car in a vehicle-versus-pedestrian crash on December 28 while working his full-time job in New Canaan.

Devine, 25, suffered a partially severed leg and serious injuries to the other leg. Despite profuse bleeding, he was able to use a co-worker's belt to place a tourniquet, a family member said.

At 3:34 p.m. that afternoon, a motor vehicle accident with injuries was called into headquarters, the New Canaan Police report said. A commercial truck was stopped on the side of Old Stamford Road southbound lane near the driveway of 429. An adult male was at the rear of the vehicle getting ready to unload the truck for delivery. A southbound vehicle struck the rear of the truck and also the pedestrian (male

unloading the truck), according to the report.

Seeing his severed leg and aware he was losing a lot of blood from the artery, Devine was able to place a tourniquet using a co-worker's belt while waiting for help to arrive.

Devine was then treated by first responders and taken to Westchester Medical Center where he spent several weeks. He lost his left leg from the knee down, and his right leg was broken. Devine had several operations on both his legs, and once his right leg heals, he is expected to undergo intensive physical rehabilitation, his aunt Annie Coolidge of Fairfield said. He is now at Gaylord Specialty Healthcare in Wallingford where he will get a prosthetic leg in the coming months.

A GoFundMe page set up by Devine's uncle, William Coolidge, has raised over \$80,000 to date. The GoFundMe campaign

was set up to help pay for Devine's growing medical costs and expenses due to this injury, including "home accessibility and living modifications that address his new needs (eg: home entrance ramp; new handicapped bathroom, prosthetics, etc)."

"The accident is remarkable, what he did by himself," Annie Coolidge said. "His brother was on the phone with him and said he never heard him so focused. We as his family don't see his training and action. Sadly, this was an opportunity to see him turn on. Truthfully the first responders did a phenomenal job, but if he had not put a tourniquet on himself, he probably would have bled out."

An investigation into the crash is ongoing, New Canaan Police Department Commander and Public Information Officer Lt. Mark DeFelice said. ■

Optimum expands fiber internet in Redding

By Donna Christopher

Fiber internet is now available through Optimum at 1,000 addresses in the Redding area, and construction crews are "making progress" to bring fiber services to more homes and businesses in the area, said the company.

"The ongoing work involves building a 100% Optimum Fiber Internet network in Redding to provide both residential and business customers in the area with access to fast, reliable fiber-optic internet service. The Redding fiber deployment is part of the company's broader network investment initiative in the State of Connecticut to build out fiber internet services across its footprint in the state," said Alexa Bonadonna, Director of Communications, Altice USA in an e-mail.

Fiber-optic internet, which uses light to transmit data through small, flexible glass or plastic fibers, offers faster and more reliable connections than traditional cable internet, which uses electrical signals over thicker, metal cables. Additionally, fiber-optic cables have a greater bandwidth capacity, enabling the transmission of more data at once.

"Our 100% Optimum Fiber Internet services offer symmetrical speeds of up to 5Gb so customers can enjoy fast multi-gig internet service, upload speeds as fast as download speeds, increased bandwidth on multiple devices, greater reliability, and Smart Wi-Fi 6 for whole home Wi-Fi coverage," Bonadonna continued. "In addition, our high-speed fiber internet services enable customers to enjoy a wide variety of internet activities, from high-resolution video streaming in up to 8K resolution to lower latency for data-intensive online activities such as virtual reality applications, gaming, and more."

Construction and installation of the new fiber-optic cables should not cause service disruptions for existing Optimum customers, who may go to the company's website to see when fiber internet service will be available at their address.

Both the Redding Police Department and the Mark Twain Library utilize the fiber network. "We actually use three different networks," said Stephen Peterson, Redding Police Department Records Manager. "One is provided by the state of Connecticut for a secure data link between all PSAPs. The other two are from Frontier and Altice (the parent company of Optimum). The commercial ones are what provide the station with internet and television."

The Mark Twain Library uses two services for its internet connectivity: Connecticut Education Network (CEN) network

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REDDING'S BIG OUTDOORS

Winter's wonders

By Jeanne Ammermuller

Winter can be a great time to hunker down and stay inside – maybe sit in front of a crackling fire, or head to Vermont for some downhill skiing or snowboarding. Redding's trails, however, offer lots of options for enjoying the winter, with or without snow.

The key to enjoying winter outdoors is having the right clothing and equipment to stay warm and safe. There's no need for fancy or expensive gear, but a warm hat, gloves, and outerwear layers you can remove as you heat up will make for an enjoyable adventure. Don't forget your feet, including waterproof boots and warm wool or synthetic socks

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Photo by Jeanne Ammermuller

Winter light in the Saugatuck Falls Natural Area.

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EDITORIAL

Almost exactly three years ago, the CDC reported the first laboratory-confirmed case of Covid-19 in the United States on January 20, 2020, as the threat of a global pandemic loomed large.

The fight against Covid continues today; however, many of us have entered a new phase of our relationship with the virus, resuming, to some extent, in-person business activities, travel, and social gatherings. While daily activities now often look similar to what they were in 2019, the last three years have transformed our community in profound ways.

In our business community, restaurants and stores have closed, moved away, or changed operating models, while a cohort of new entrepreneurs and proprietors have started several ventures springing forth from their time during the lockdowns.

According to State of Connecticut Covid-19 data, 23 of our neighbors in Redding have died due to infection with the virus. What relationships would they have deepened, what community discourse would they have contributed, what activities would they have enjoyed if they still were with us today?

Hundreds of new residents have made Redding their home, many seeking open space and room to live and work at home as the pandemic shifted real estate demand and priorities in families of all shapes and sizes.

In a new report in the journal *Translational Behavioral Medicine*, Boston College researchers found reports of anxiety increased to 50 percent and depression to 44 percent in the first nine months of the pandemic. These rates were six times higher than those reported in 2019. Among our youngest adults (age 18-29), rates of anxiety and depression were even more severe, increasing to 65 percent and 61 percent. How will this shape our leaders of tomorrow? What resources are needed to help us all mentally process and heal from this rupture?

In both encouraging and tragic ways, “back to normal” really has become an impossible claim. ■

Selectmen appoint appeals alternate

By Rocco Valluzzo

The Board of Selectmen appointed Christopher Howard as an alternate for the Board of Assessment Appeals at its January 17 meeting.

Howard, a Democrat and a financial advisor, joins Charles Bachmann (R) and Liz Chandler (D) as alternates.

“That is a board that is going to have a lot of work to do starting in February, so I know they were interested in having all of those seats filled,” said Selectwoman Peg O’Donnell. “These are not the boards people think of right away, but they are really important and especially now when we’re talking about reassessment in town. I think it’s actually pretty encouraging that there’s somebody willing to help with that.”

As required by the Connecticut General Statutes, the Board of Assessment Appeals exists to hear arguments presented by taxpayers regarding motor vehicle and real estate property assessments. Members of the board are elected town officials. Alternates are appointed, one for each member.

“I think that that board of assessment appeals will need to have all the bodies they can,” said O’Donnell. “I’m grateful that he is willing to serve.”

With two vacancies on the Park

and Recreation Commission, the Selectmen opted to wait until next month to decide whether to fill them.

Selectman Michael Thompson said Redding’s Republican Town Committee has someone in mind but was unable to vote on that candidate.

“We’re hoping to get a chance to do that in February and then maybe we can figure out how best to move forward,” he said. “There are two open spots available.”

According to First Selectwoman Julia Pemberton, those open spots have been there for the past ten years. Filling them would increase the Park and Recreation Commission membership to nine in all.

“The Commission functions well with the members that they have, but now we have people interested, which is really encouraging,” said Pemberton. “It’s a really energized commission.”

Pemberton added that she would be in favor of waiting until February, but felt it would be helpful if the Selectmen could have Democratic Town Committee Chair Diana Carlino and Republican Chair Jill Cilo discuss the matter in the meantime. ■

LEGAL NOTICE

Notice to Taxpayers, Georgetown and Redding

The Second Installment Of Real Estate And Personal Property And First Installment Supplemental Motor Vehicle Taxes On The Grand List Of October 1, 2021, Is Due And Payable January 1, 2023.

Taxes Due January 1, 2023, Must Be Postmarked Or Paid Online, No Later Than February 1, 2023, Without A Penalty.

TAXES ARE DELINQUENT FEBRUARY 2, 2023.

Payments postmarked, Paid in Person or Paid online, on or after February 2, 2023, are delinquent and will carry a penalty of one half of a percent. Interest is charged at the rate of eighteen (18%) percent annually or one and one-half percent per month, from the January 1, 2023, due date.

Supplemental Motor Vehicle Taxes are due in full January 1, 2023. Failure to make payment in accordance with the above will result in suspension of registration privileges in addition to the interest charges. Delinquent

Motor Vehicle Taxes must be paid in cash, certified check, money order or online by credit card, to obtain a registration clearance.

FAILURE TO RECEIVE A TAX BILL DOES NOT EXEMPT YOU FROM PAYMENT OF TAX OR PENALTY.

Oldest outstanding taxes must be paid prior to paying current.

Taxes can be paid or viewed at www.townofreddingct.org. Credit card payments are not accepted in person at the Tax Office.

You may call (866) 923-8245 to make a credit/debit card payment.

Due to the Covid-19 virus, Town Hall hours may vary. Verify the Town Hall is open and the department you need is open before going in person. The Town Hall is closed on Fridays. We are located at 100 Hill Rd, Redding, CT; Telephone: 203 938-2706. ■

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

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

We welcome letters to the Editor. Please be clear, civil and concise.

To the Editor,

Redding’s rural beauty is a blessing. And a curse.

The long stretches of woods, waterways, and meadows have become favorite locations for individuals to toss their trash, resulting in our scenic roads becoming unsightly dump sites.

Via posts on Facebook, a number of residents have expressed interest in making and keeping Redding clean and beautiful. To be successful, we need a dedicated team to do more than pick up litter – we need ideas and commitment that will lead to solutions. And we need to start by asking, “Who’s trashing Redding and what can be done about it?”

Sandi Martin
West Redding

Covid-19 case update

By Jessie Wright

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) moved Fairfield County to the High/Orange category in its Covid-19 Community Levels Map on Friday, January 13. According to the CDC, people living in the counties designated in the High/Orange category are advised to wear a mask indoors in public, stay up to date with Covid-19 vaccines, and get tested if they have symptoms.

Data from the State of Connecticut as of Monday, January 23 show 11 new positive

Covid-19 antigen tests reported in the last seven days in Redding, out of a total 43 reportable tests over that time-period for a positivity rate of 25.58%.

Redding Health Officer Christopher Wegrzyn said that while no new Covid-19 cases have been reported to the Health Department recently, “this may mean that people are testing themselves, and not being tested by a location that would report the test results to the Health Department.”

“The CDC and the Connecticut Department of Public Health both recommend that all residents consider wearing a mask in public indoor spaces,” Wegrzyn continued. “People who are at high risk for severe illness should consider additional measures to minimize their exposure to Covid-19 and other respiratory illnesses. I would agree with these agencies.” ■

Repairs at Town Hall ongoing

By Jessie Wright

Repairs following a December 25 failure in the Town Hall sprinkler system are ongoing, as construction crews work to replace flooring, drywall, and bathrooms to repair water damage and make the building functional for use again.

As of Thursday, January 19, First Selectwoman Julia Pemberton anticipated a “move-in” date sometime in the first week of February, with the building re-

opening for available office hours, meetings, and activities sometime in the second week of February. “However, that is all contingent on us being able to get the materials in,” Pemberton said.

The Town’s insurance company has received the claim and has issued initial payments, according to Pemberton, so much of the necessary work has been able to get started. “Town Hall is remarkably improved,” she

continued. “All of the drywall is repaired, the insulation is repaired, the building has been painted on the inside, but we are waiting for flooring.”

The bathrooms in the building will also need to undergo renovations before a move-in is possible, though most of those materials have been acquired and are ready to be installed. ■

GET TO KNOW THE SENTINEL TEAM

Pamela Brown, Reporter

By Jessie Wright



There are a lot of legal briefs to write... And I thought, ‘I really love this. I love putting things together, investigating, and learning.’”

After pivoting and completing a Masters in English, she started sharing that passion as an Adjunct Professor in English at WestConn, but it wasn’t long before she felt the urge to pick up her own pen. “I was reading these great pieces that the students were writing, and I wanted to do it myself again,” she laughed.

Brown describes her now two-decades-long career as a freelance writer as beginning “organically” – first through teaching, then falling in love with the craft, and then getting started at several of the area’s local news publications. She began contributing to the Danbury News-Times in 2000, and now writes for several newspapers, magazines, and publishing companies across New England, in addition to consulting on marketing and communications with clients through her practice, PMB Writing & Consulting.

Brown’s passion for writing also finds its way into her off-work hours, including working on the re-publication of a romance

novel she wrote several years ago called *Faithful Love* and her avid devotion to jigsaw puzzling. “At any time, really, I’ll have a 1,000 piece puzzle on my dining room table,” she said. “It’s calming – you know when you’ve been thinking a lot about stories and writing, and sometimes you just sit there and you concentrate on what you’re doing, it just takes you away.” Brown is also an enthusiastic tennis player and fan, even naming her mini-golden doodle “Rafa” (after Rafael Nadal) and her newest pup, Andy (a name she and her daughter Alexis now realize could be a reference to Andy Murray, another tennis great).

Brown particularly enjoys the variety in her work, and the opportunities she has to get to know new people and the communities around her. Her coverage of events and residents at Meadow Ridge stands out as a favorite in her writing for the Sentinel. “They’ve become my adopted family in a sense,” she said. “They have shown me that, you know, life is to be lived – to have fun with life, enjoy every moment, and be involved, because that’s what it’s all about.” ■

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ARPA Funds Working Group discusses municipal projects

By Rob Sample

Having excess funds is usually a good thing – but with almost \$1.1 million American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds remaining, the Town of Redding must identify ways to spend the money in ways that best benefit the town.

Accordingly, Redding’s ARPA Working Group met on January 19 to discuss projects that might become candidates for ARPA funding in 2023. Although it might again consider requests from community organizations, the group is now turning its attention to a host of municipal projects.

Nine such projects, totaling just under \$1 million, were outlined at the meeting by Jim Sanders, the Town’s Finance Director and a member of the ARPA Funds Working Group. Among these proposals, facilities upgrades represent about \$530,000 while highway expenditures account for another approximately \$400,000.

“The nearest-term items that have been identified for ARPA funding are facilities related,” said Sanders. The first is an upgrade to the fire-sprinkler system, a measure that Sanders said is unrelated to the recent burst water pipe in Town Hall. The cost of repairing that water line and associated damage is being borne by the Town’s insurance carrier.

Heating/ventilation/air-conditioning upgrades have been proposed for both Redding Town Hall and the Redding Community Center, while a new heat-pump system is being eyed to replace an aging boiler at the old Town Hall building. Related to that, the Town has proposed replacing the cooling system in its computing center and upgrading windows,

siding, and insulation at the Police Department headquarters.

One quite visible upgrade would be a new audio-visual system for the Town Hall Hearing Room and its Conference Room. “We’re trying to move our meetings into the 21st century,” said Sanders, “and this upgrade would better facilitate both in-person and online meetings.”

Working Group member Mary Dale Lancaster questioned why funds had not been set aside each year to meet the needs of some of these proposals. “A lot of these things should have been in some sort of long-range plan,” she noted.

“We do have funds in our budget for basic maintenance of our buildings,” said First Selectwoman Julia Pemberton. “The items Jim presented are on a list proposed as part of our long-range planning.”

Pemberton pointed out some projects have funds allocated to pay them in full, while others require the Town to borrow funds. Items are proposed for capital funding every year: the difference this year is the availability of ARPA funds for some of these costs.

Under the category of “highway funding” are two proposals. The Town hopes to purchase a new vac-jet truck at a cost of \$75,000. These trucks are used to clean storm drains, and a brand-new model will usually cost about \$500,000, Sanders noted. Instead, a neighboring town is purchasing its own new truck and has offered to sell a used one to Redding. “We have established first dibs on the truck,” said Sanders.

“And we have confidence in our own mechanics that it is in good working order.”

A more unusual highway proposal would be the purchase of a software system – at a cost of \$55,000 – that would function as a road-rating and project-management system for town roads. The software firm would drive a small vehicle equipped with a variety of cameras to traverse every road in town, giving Redding’s highway department an up-to-date look at all road conditions.

“With this information, we’ll be able to assign a rating to each road mile that we have,” said Sanders, which would enable the Town to better plan and prioritize road projects.

Rounding out the proposals are a tool truck and brush tractor, for a total highway expenditure of approximately \$400,000.

The upcoming January 26 meeting of the Working Group at 5:00 p.m. will examine a proposal for ARPA funding from the Redding Board of Education, which would cover consulting services associated with school-facility upgrades. “They came in substantially lower than we had planned, which is good news,” said Chris Parkin, the Redding Board of Education Chairman and a member of the ARPA Funds Working Group.

Proposals receiving the ARPA Funds Working Groups’ recommendation will then go to the Redding Board of Selectmen for discussion at their February 16 meeting. ■

Be Foundation looks to secure public-private funding as plans take shape for new arts and culture center in Georgetown

By Jessie Wright

Following its purchase of the historic “Granite Church” at 5 North Main Street in Georgetown, the Redding-based Be Foundation is now pursuing multiple sources of both public and private funding to renovate the building to create an arts and cultural center for the community.

Among those efforts is a pending proposal to the Town’s ARPA Funds Working Group to allocate \$250,000 of American Rescue Plan Act funds to the project, to be matched at a 9:1 ratio by a Be Foundation investment of \$2,340,000. The proposal also requests a separate \$100,000 investment from the Town of Redding as a public-private partnership to help ensure financial sustainability in subsequent years.

The Foundation is concurrently exploring and applying for several state-level grant programs in historic preservation, arts and culture, and economic development. “The state grants all require matching funds, and we are in a good position since Be Foundation can match public resources with its private resources, and those funds are in hand,” explained Be Foundation Executive Director Richard Wenning. “It would be wonderful if we can use ARPA funds for a local match as well. It’s a good use of foundation resources to leverage public resources to accomplish something in the community for the benefit of our town.”

Wenning explained.

“We at Georgetown Village Restoration, Inc., are excited about the future of the Granite Church. Rich and Be Foundation are very community-minded and thoughtful with their planning, which is a boon for Georgetown,” said Kate Perry, Secretary of Georgetown Village Restoration, Inc., a non-profit devoted to facilitating the revitalization of the historic Village of Georgetown. “It’s wonderful that the church will become an important part of the community once again – the timing is ideal with the town’s renewed efforts with the Gilbert & Bennett Wire Mill.”

The historic building, built in 1902 and originally known as the Gilbert Memorial Church, faces a long list of capital projects to make it safe and functional for use once again. The work will be phased so that use of the building can begin even as later phases of the project, like façade repairs, landscaping, and renovations for energy efficiency, continue. The Be Foundation has already patched the 120-year-old slate roof to mitigate leakage over the winter, but it will eventually need replacement. Next up is remediation and renovation of the basement, which has sustained water damage, and a focus on getting the heat, water, and bathrooms in functional states so that basic use of the building can begin.

Study to target sewer infrastructure for Georgetown and Branchville redevelopment

By Rocco Valluzzo

A \$200,000 federal grant awarded to the Western Connecticut Council of Governments (WestCOG) will help fund a study of sewer infrastructure development in Georgetown and the Branchville section of Ridgefield.

The study will assist in the redevelopment of the former Gilbert & Bennett Wire Mill property and the Branchville Transit Oriented Development (TOD) project.

According to WestCOG Executive Director Francis Pickering, the Town of Ridgefield conducted the TOD study for Branchville several years ago. Although the study was completed, the development project was not implemented because the infrastructure necessary for redevelopment at a higher level was not present.

That necessary infrastructure was largely, though not completely, sewer infrastructure.

Proposed redevelopment in Georgetown goes back to the mid-2000’s. When the Georgetown Land Development Company went bankrupt after the Great Recession, the Town of Redding foreclosed on the property, finally gaining possession nearly two years ago.

“We think we can do both projects at the same time,” said Pickering. “We’re not going to short any town. Ridgefield and Redding have a fantastic working relationship. We actually think the Branchville project will help the Georgetown project and vice-versa because you get a critical mass of development.”

There currently is no sewer service in Branchville. Georgetown does have a Water

Pollution Control Authority (WPCA) and sewage treatment plant that is less than a mile away that could potentially expand service to Branchville. That sewage treatment plant was expanded to enable future Georgetown redevelopment.

The sewage treatment plant in Georgetown has a limited capacity, which is currently approximately 245,000 gallons per day. The funded study will look at to what extent both projects can occur.

“There’s an interest in both communities, obviously,” said Pickering. “Ridgefield is interested in redeveloping Branchville, Redding is interested in redeveloping Georgetown, and Redding is also interested in having what is currently an oversized sewage treatment facility and have more rate payers to support it without jeopardizing future

Continued on page 5

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SPORTS

Barlow nails Brookfield-Shepaug

By Rocco Valluzzo



Photo by Rocco Valluzzo

Joel Barlow High’s Scott Romano got the win at 138 pounds in a wrestling match against Brookfield on Wednesday, January 18. Barlow won 47-19.

Simply having an advantage in terms of numbers led the Joe Barlow High wrestling team to a victory in its match against Brookfield-Shepaug last week. The Falcons were able to fill the vast majority of the weight classes on Wednesday, January 18. This allowed them to pick up a number of easy wins for a 47-19 victory at home. The Bobcats opened the meet with a win in the 106-pound

division. Matt Bray managed a couple of takedowns and a reverse in securing a 6-0 finish over Barlow’s Sophia Brault. Brookfield, however, had no eligible wrestlers for the next three weight classes, giving the Falcons some easy points. Getting victories by forfeit were Jacob Hamlin in the 113-pound division and Ryan Knob at 120 pounds. Neither team had wrestlers at 126 pounds, resulting in a

double forfeit. Danny Carazza then outscored Barlow’s Stryder Hanson 16-5 in the 132-pound match. Taking seven of the next nine weight divisions, the Falcons pulled out of reach. Scott Romano scored enough points at 138 pounds for a 17-0 technical fall over Isaac DeAlencar. Anthony Azzara then got the win by forfeit for the Falcons at 145. At 152 pounds, Kip Falson secured a win for Brookfield-Shepaug by pinning Max Singleton in two minutes, 32 seconds. Barlow still led 23-13 in the meet and took care of any threat of a Bobcat comeback by winning the next three classes by forfeit. Victories would go to Logan Bacas (160), Jacob Erdo (170), and Dylan Cooke (182). Sebastian Carajal allowed just a point for a 5-1 win over Cole Malcolm at 195 pounds. Chad Pranzo followed with a 10-7 win over Marco Cacace at 220. Brookfield-Shepaug got the win by forfeit at 275 pounds as Barlow had no eligible wrestler. Barlow is at the Brookfield wrestling tournament on Saturday at 9:30 a.m. and then travels to Weston on Wednesday for a 6:00 p.m. meet. ■

Knights dominate Newtown-New Fairfield

By Rocco Valluzzo



Photo by Rocco Valluzzo

Joel Barlow-Weston-Abbott Tech’s Tommy Kane takes a shot on goal during a boys varsity ice hockey game against Newtown-New Fairfield on Saturday, January 14. JBWA won 5-1.

As the midway point of the season approaches, the Joel Barlow-Weston-Abbott Tech (JBWA) hockey team appears to be getting up to speed offensively as well as defensively. The Knights, who have now reached the .500 level, had one of their best performances of the season on both ends of the ice when they took on Newtown-New Fairfield on Saturday, January 14. Controlling the puck for most of the afternoon, they made short work of the competition in a 5-1 victory at the Danbury Ice Arena. “We’re young, and when you have a lot of first-year players on the team, it turns into probably about a half-a-year acclimation process before they get up to the speed of the high school game,” said JBWA head coach Bob Stearns. “We’re getting really close to that halfway point of the season. They’re starting to find their rhythm, and they’re playing a lot better.” The Knights opened up with a number of shots early in the first period and finally connected with 9:17 left when Tommy Kane scored right in front of the goal on an assist by Spencer Thomas. The same scoring combination worked again two minutes later, only this time it was Thomas who took a feed from Kane from behind the goal for the score. Kai Smith was also credited with an assist as the Knights led 2-0.

Before the period was done, the Knights would strike one more time. Emmet Arees sent a pass to Smith, whose shot went under Nighthawk goalie Garrett McCollam for the score with 5:29 left. Thomas also had an assist on the play. Early in the next period, the Knights made it 4-0 when Thomas took a pass from Smith, got free on a breakaway, and slipped McCollam at the 11:48 mark. The Nighthawks’ only goal came with 9:04 left in the period on a power play as the Knights were down a player due to a high sticking call. Alex Schmidt ended the shutout with the assist going to Ashton Albert. Both sides traded several shots for much of the third period, but with 2:35 left Smith scored as Jack Zuch and Thomas assisted to ice the game. The latter finished with two goals and three assists. Smith also had two goals and a pair of assists. Kane had one goal and one assist. Connor Thomas was in goal for the Knights. “Defensively, it all starts with Connor Thomas,” said Stearns. “He’s a phenomenal goaltender who I trust implicitly. We’ve got a solid core of defense who really take the center of the ice away and get to the red line and get the puck in deep.” The Knights visit Trumbull Thursday, January 26 at 5:00 p.m. at the Shelton Sports Center. ■

Ice rink at Redding Community Center

By Jessie Wright



Photo by Jessie Wright

An unseasonably warm January has prevented skating on the seasonal ice rink outside of Redding Community Center in

recent weeks, but the rink remains set up and ready for Redding residents to enjoy whenever temperatures drop.

The rink is located in the Redding Community Center parking lot, to the right of the Park and Recreation entrance. It is open dawn until dusk, weather permitting, for Redding residents or guests accompanied by a resident. “Sticks and pucks” times are Saturdays and Sundays from 9:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. Otherwise, the rink is available for recreational skating – please note skates must be worn on the ice surface. Call the Park and Recreation cancellation line at (203) 938-5036 X 3 before heading over to find out if the rink is open that day. ■

Optimum expands fiber internet in Redding / Continued from page 1

for its internal network, and Optimum Business for its public Wi-Fi network. George Avidon, the Library’s Associate Director of Technology and Operations, outlined the advantages of having fiber-optic internet. “Optimum Business, along with our upgraded and up-to-date Wi-Fi equipment consisting of multiple access points around the MTL campus, allows our patrons to experience download speeds of up to 300 mbps (almost three times faster than the national average internet speed),” he explained. “From daily experience, we do see the benefit of having a dedicated fiber-optic connection for our location. Fiber-optics is capable of approaching speeds of 1Gb downloads as long as the on-site equipment (routers, switches, cables, access points, devices, etc) is able to handle the connection speeds.” “Fiber-optic connections tend to be a bit more stable and are monitored differently than traditional cable lines,” Avidon added. “From experience, we would like to see the availability of fiber-optic connectivity expand

in the town as it will provide faster and more robust accessibility to our digital collections, online programming, and interactivity with our overall online content.” While installation work has been ongoing throughout town, customers making the switch have had varying experiences with the new service. Christopher Racette signed up for Optimum fiber internet recently and posted about the experience on a local social media page. “It has only been a few days, but I switched from their standard internet to fiber,” he said. “With the old connection I was paying for 500 Mbps down, and I’m honestly not sure what the up was supposed to be. The reality is I got ~275 down and around 10 up. On fiber, I am paying 500 down for the same price as the old connection. I seem to be averaging 525-550 down and 475-525 up and have not had any of the connectivity issues I had previously. Works really well.” Installation was easy, Racette said. “They came a few days before my in-house appointment to run a fiber line from the road to the utility pole closest to my

house (I have two poles down my driveway). Then on my scheduled day, they ran from the pole to my house.” The work took an hour and a half and involved bringing a fiber cable into his house, drilling, and pushing the fiber cable through the wall. The existing coaxial wire/connection was not removed. John Burgee had less of a seamless experience making the switch. “We had five people come by. The fifth guy finally got it set up yesterday, but I literally had to pull the fiber through the conduit myself,” Burgee said. “It was a four-hour job. That said, it’s working great now, and I’m getting over 500 Mbps down and up.” Fiber optics are not yet available at Tamara Monti’s address, who said her internet drops all the time. “It’s really awful. I used to call them a few times a week, but that’s not sustainable. Wish we had true options.” Galena Averbakh Ignatenko thinks, “Maybe we are lucky. I worked from home for the past eight-plus years, sort of hours with heavy remote connection usage, and I can’t complain! Knock on wood.” ■

Winter’s wonders / Continued from page 1

(cotton socks hold moisture and cold). And if it’s snowy, gaiters can help keep the snow out of boot tops, and hiking poles and traction cleats like “YakTrax” that fit over your boots will keep you from slipping on icy trails. Now that you’re all bundled up, there are some great trail options that are particularly pretty in the winter. The peace and quiet at Topstone is unmatched; the Pond Trail gives you a good view of the waterfowl that often overwinter on the pond – just bring your binoculars, as they often move away from intruders. The Chase Longview Trail on a clear day in winter gives an unobstructed view for miles. Another winter favorite is Collis P. Huntington State Park. The hill going down from the Sunset Hill Road parking lot is a dream for sledding. The fields along Sunset Hill Road, including the Town-owned Couch Hill Preserve, are flat enough to make great cross country skiing destinations. And the pond is stunning. One winter, it froze solid and was covered in snow, allowing for incredible snowshoeing and cross-country skiing. Since this is potentially very dangerous, be sure to understand ice safety before venturing out. According to the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection, “Ice is never 100-percent safe. You cannot judge the strength of ice just by its appearance, age, or the temperature.” (For more information, visit portal.ct.gov/DEEP/Outdoor-Recreation/Ice-Safety). For those who love cross-country skiing and want to support a local non-profit, New Pond Farm offers cross country skiing

for its members. The open fields offer a beautiful option for skiers who are comfortable on a slightly hillier terrain. And for those more comfortable snowshoeing, New Pond Farm offers a small selection of snowshoes for members to borrow and use out on the property. Another option for both cross-country skiing and snowshoeing (and of course hiking), is the Saugatuck Falls area across from John Read Middle School. On a sunny day with or without fresh snow, the light is magical through the evergreen trees and bouncing off the boulders and stone walls. Virtually all the trails are great for snowshoeing, allowing you to experience the unique quiet that comes from snowy landscapes. The Falls Trail passes through a wide-open meadow that is mowed in autumn, leaving a great space for honing your cross-country skills. There is some etiquette for sharing the trails in the winter. If you see that someone has already cross-country skied along a trail, try to avoid the tracks when hiking or snowshoeing. Those tracks can be re-used by skiers, making the trip faster and easier. According to REI.com, “As soon as a snowshoe hits the trail, the even plane is disrupted, ruining the terrain for the users to come.” However you choose to enjoy winter in Redding (even when snow is scarce), be prepared, be courteous and careful, but most of all, don’t miss out on the many outdoor spaces that can offer a break from the four walls of home. ■

Jeanne Ammermuller is a member of the Redding Land Trust Board of Trustees

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Barlow Beat

By Griffin Ellis

Students took their mid-terms last week, which closed out the first semester. The National Honor Society held tutoring sessions, and the Easton Public Library and Mark Twain Library provided a great space for students to prepare and study for their mid-terms after school. I studied at the Mark Twain Library for multiple nights during testing week, and I only wish I had used this resource more often during my high school years. Our town is fortunate to have such a great public library.

Now that mid-terms are over, upperclassmen are looking forward to “Counties” – charity balls which invite juniors and seniors from Fairfield County and will take place on January 27 and February

4. One charity that “Counties” has supported in the past is the “Mikey’s Way Foundation” which was created by the late Michael “Mikey” Friedman of Easton who battled a rare form of cancer. The Foundation’s mission is to “better the lives of patients diagnosed with pediatric cancer, by creating meaningful diversions and connections to the outside world children are forced to leave behind.” “Mikey’s Way” is an integral piece of the Barlow community; various athletic teams have game nights dedicated to it, and every June the school hosts a “Color Run” to raise proceeds and awareness. “Mikey’s Way” is a testament to how the Barlow community extends beyond the

school walls.

Other happenings this January included the celebration of five Joel Barlow athletic teams (baseball, football, boys cross country, girls volleyball, and boys volleyball) for winning State championships in 2022. These teams were honored during half time of the girls varsity basketball game against Stratford on January 12. Five more banners are now set to be hung in Barlow’s lower gym, colloquially referred to as “the golden dome”. Five state championships in one year is incredible and requires great coaching, dedicated student-athletes, and a supportive school community: all of which Barlow has. ■

Five state champion teams recognized at Joel Barlow High School



The Joel Barlow High sports teams that won state championships in 2022 were recognized during a halftime ceremony at the girls basketball game against Stratford on January 12. Barlow won titles in baseball, boys volleyball, boys cross country, girls volleyball, and football last year.

Photo by Mike Santangeli

Redding students on WCSU 2022 Dean’s List

Western Connecticut State University has announced the students who have been named to the Dean’s List for the fall 2022 semester. The following Redding residents have achieved this distinction:



- Jason Boccarossa, Exploratory Studies
- Samuel Cox, Secondary Education
- Sebastian Frisch, Health Promotion Studies
- Charles Guidera, Business Administration
- Mark Maksel, Chemistry
- Keyner Rojas, Biology
- Emily Shaw, Nursing
- Chris Walker, Accounting

Study to target sewer infrastructure

Continued from page 3

development in Georgetown. We need to ensure that we can support Georgetown redevelopment, but we’re seeking to determine if we can we also use this plan to support Branchville redevelopment.”

Pickering also explained that since the Georgetown project was first proposed, the dynamics of the real estate market, commercial as well as residential, have changed. What was previously envisioned may no longer be financially viable.

“What is needed in terms of sewage treatment capacity for a commercially-viable development in Georgetown is now maybe different then what was 15 years ago,” he said. “We need to look at that and understand what is actually financially viable in Georgetown and see if that has any surplus capacity we can share with Branchville.”

What has also changed are substantial improvements in plumbing fixtures’ efficiency, such as low-flow shower heads and toilets. Connecticut lags behind

the rest of New England in all of its plumbing efficiency standards. Pickering hopes that will be addressed in the next legislative session.

“We’d like to pull up to match our peer states,” he said. “If we do that, the assumptions of how much water the development will use and how much wastewater it will then in turn produce will be different.”

The study can produce a number of findings, such as the ability to accommodate both projects without any additional capacity, or accommodate one project and a scaled back version of another project. Additional water efficiency or some capital improvements may be required in the development. All of that is to be determined.

“We’re going into this with a completely open mind,” said Pickering. “We just want to make sure we can help both Redding and Ridgefield.” ■

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Celebrate the season at Wilton’s Winter Carnival

By Pamela Brown



Photo courtesy of Wilton Chamber of Commerce

Some days it hardly feels like winter, but the Wilton Chamber of Commerce hopes to change that with its upcoming Winter Carnival. The annual event takes place on Sunday, February 5 from 12:00 – 4:00 p.m. at the Wilton Town Green.

“It’s great for all ages,” said Camille Carriero, Executive Director, Wilton Chamber of Commerce. “Youngsters can enjoy the children’s activities, teens and tweens are able to participate in age-appropriate activities at the Wilton Library, adults can enjoy food and beverages for purchase at local restaurants and participating food trucks, and shop and stroll through Wilton Center as they head from one activity.”

Sponsored by Fairfield County Bank, the event kicks off with a horse-drawn carriage ride around Old Ridgefield Road and the Town Green in an open-air wagon. Children’s activities include face painting and sand art, a meet-and-greet with a winter princess and a friendly snowman, and an introduction to mini ponies from Rising Starr Horse Rescue. The Wilton Library will open at noon for teens and tweens in grades 6-12 to create decorative paper snowflakes in the Teen Department, and children in grades K-5 can take part in a wintery craft project and get a free winter bookmark at the Children’s Library.

Tony the Jester, a magician, will be walking around the Town Green engaging guests with tricks and performing an afternoon stage show at the Gazebo. There will also be a live ice sculpting

demonstration by a sculptor who will transform a single block of ice into a creative masterpiece. Other pre-carved ice sculptures will be displayed at various locations and will be part of a scavenger hunt with prizes.

Local food trucks, including Bubble & Brew and Cousins Maine Lobster, will be on hand, and over at Schenck’s Island, the Wilton Rotary Club will have a bonfire where attendees can roast marshmallows.

Once again, Wilton Go Green, a non-profit that develops and promotes sustainable initiatives and educational events in cooperation with the Town of Wilton and other area non-profits, will take part in the carnival. “This local organization is partnering with the Chamber of Commerce and Curbside Compost to make our Winter Carnival more green,” Carriero explained. “They will be providing an area to collect recyclables and will have a sorting station to collect and divert food remnants from the event to a composting facility.”

Many local retail stores and restaurants will be open that afternoon and Carriero encourages attendees to enjoy the festivities while also supporting the local businesses before, during, and after the event.

“The purpose of the Carnival is to present an event that can be a gathering place in the heart of Wilton Center and generate added foot traffic and exposure to our local businesses during a time of year which is relatively quiet for our shops and restaurants,” she said. “It’s an opportunity to enjoy festive activities during the winter and to show our support for the local businesses and organizations that make our town so special!” ■

The Wilton Winter Carnival is free and open to the public. For more information, visit wiltonchamber.com, call (203) 762-0567, or email info@wiltonchamber.com

Letterboxing in Redding

Join a century-old scavenger hunt to find hidden treasures

By Justin Reynolds



Photos by Cathy Kane Young

From left to right, Miles Ferris, Jasper Mars, Robbie Young, and Cooper Mars on a recent letterboxing trip in Collis P. Huntington State Park.

Looking for a unique outdoor activity that’s fun for the whole family? Consider throwing on a pair of hiking boots and trying your hand at letterboxing.

If you’re unfamiliar, letterboxing is an outdoor hobby where participants use clues to hunt for letterboxes — small, weatherproof boxes that contain figurines, notebooks, and handmade rubber stamps that are original works of art. Once a letterbox is found, searchers sign the notebook and make an imprint of the rubber stamp in their own notebooks to document their experience. They then re-hide the box where they found it, leaving it for the next group.

“It’s a fun activity that can take anywhere from five minutes to an hour or more,” said Cathy Kane Young, a Redding resident who’s been letterboxing with her kids for nearly 15-some years. “It’s great for getting the kids outside for exercise in the guise of treasure hunting. Sometimes the boxes are hidden in a rock wall, and sometimes they’re in a hollowed-out tree.”

Letterboxing traces its roots to Dartmoor, England in 1854 when a man named James Perrott built a cairn in a remote countryside

moorland, placed a small glass jar near it, and told hikers to leave a note in the jar if they saw it during their travels. Hikers took Perrott up on his suggestion and began leaving messages to folks who might find the jar in the future — and thus, letterboxing was born.

Over the years, the hobby continued to attract more and more participants, growing into the global phenomenon it is today. In the 1990’s, Smithsonian magazine published a feature on the letterboxing community in England, which many agree led to the activity becoming popular in the United States.

“I found out about letterboxing from my brother, who learned about it in Spain and Portugal,” Young said. “When he came to visit us in Redding, he looked up ghost stories, visited the White Lady in Easton, and then did letterboxing in the area. He’s done it all over the world.”

While similar to geocaching — which involves finding hidden objects using GPS devices — letterboxing is more of an old-school, deviceless activity (but not entirely). Members of the letterboxing community own and manage their own letterboxes, publishing clues online that



The Collis Letterbox logbook.

searchers follow to find the boxes and get their stamps.

To find those clues and begin your own letterboxing experience, head over to atlasquest.com, create a profile, and search for boxes in Redding, CT. Assuming you’re interested in finding a box yourself, be sure to search for “active” boxes (the site also maintains records of “retired” boxes).

According to the website, there are roughly 30 active letterbox installments hidden in Redding and 276 active letterboxes within 15 miles of Redding in towns like Ridgefield, Wilton, Easton, Weston, and Danbury. Each listing includes the box’s findability (e.g., good, average, challenging, or impossible), the date it was planted, and the date it was last found.

Some letterbox owners opt to hide a series of boxes, which is what you’ll find if you search for the Wind in the Willow series of letterboxes at Topstone Park.

To give you an idea of what a letterboxing clue looks like, here’s how the owner of that series instructs searchers to find one of the boxes: “Standing in the upper parking lot, face the lake, and take the Pond Trail on the east

Continued on page 9

WHY REDDING?

A move, a wedding, and a life spent near nature

By John Karrel



Photo by Emma Abeln
Erin Abeln and Juan Pablo Ayala, at their Umpawaug Road front door.

As part of my work on last month’s “The house at the corner of ‘Ump & Pea”” column, I introduced myself to the house’s current owners and now can continue the Sentinel’s ongoing feature of profiling town residents new and not-so-new to collect their impressions related to their move here.

Erin Abeln and Juan Pablo Ayala moved to Redding in August 2022 – then got married in October! The young couple organized a celebratory barbecue on their new property the day after the ceremony. Erin, a St. Louis native, is co-founder of an NYC experiential and content production firm, which has enjoyed great success since opening its doors in 2017 (eventure.nyc). Juan Pablo, born and raised in Caracas, Venezuela, is a master lithographer and bookmaker, and his original wood carvings poke out from different corners of the house (perrobebe.com).

It was moving for me to talk with them at some length a few days ago, sitting in the downstairs of their new home, gazing out at the pond that was such a prominent part of my childhood.

How did they hear about Redding?

They had bought a Brooklyn apartment in 2021. After establishing themselves in Sunset Park, they began their search for properties outside of the city, starting in upstate New York. Nothing felt quite right. Some towns intrigued them, perhaps for a weekend visit, but not as a home. They met a real estate agent through their search, a German woman who was a former art dealer, and she gave them a strong push toward Connecticut. Meanwhile, Erin was scouring Zillow. They pursued only three Connecticut listings: one in Washington, then two in Redding. The second of the Redding homes ended up being the ultimate winner. So, the specific house ultimately drove their search.

What makes their home special to them?

It gives them a “sense of relaxation” and a strong “connection to nature”, a pronounced difference from life in the city, although they retain their Brooklyn apartment, which they use when it makes sense to be there for a stretch of days. Erin’s Redding office is on the house’s top floor, in a room previously converted from raw attic space. She never tires of the view of the stream feeding into the pond while she is on work calls. Juan Pablo revels in the house’s endless

“nooks and crannies.” They appreciate that they moved into a house that had been well cared for, so they can take their time thinking about possible long-term modifications that would suit their life together.

Has anything surprised them about living here?

Without hesitation, they said, “the beauty of nature,” which struck them notably the Friday morning of their wedding weekend, when they embarked on a leisurely drive searching for mums for the barbecue. They also noted the house’s “sense of history,” yet it is “functional and practical.”

What do they like most about living in Redding?

They still feel relatively new – after only five months, no surprise – and essentially like all they have seen so far.

Is there something they would like to see changed or improved?

They wonder if there might be some new commercial additions that could contribute to the town’s tax base and general atmosphere, perhaps a tearoom and/or coffee house. Also, Juan Pablo is searching locally for print studio space but may end up building it on the property.

What are their favorite things to do in town?

Hiking – including the Jones Trail and Munro Trail, and the Saugatuck Reservoir.

Favorite things nearby?

- Hiking – Devil’s Den Preserve, Weston
- Restaurant – Kawa Ni, Westport
- Auction House – Westport Auction, Bridgeport

What do they miss about the place they come from?

Since the Brooklyn apartment is still a part of their lives, they get the best of two worlds! ■

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December 2022 real estate report

A look at trends in the local housing market | By John Talley and Bill Whitehead

Redding home sales in 2022 reached an impressive average sale price of just over \$900,000 versus \$746,000 in 2021. The total number of houses sold in 2022, 146, dropped by 63 from the 2021 total, with constraints on the supply of inventory coupled with resilient demand for houses in Redding contributing to the price increase.

As we look ahead to the new year, the factors driving Redding home sales will remain a combination of macro-economic factors affecting supply and demand, while on a micro-economic level, over which we, as homeowners, have greater control, success can be achieved by ensuring that price and value are aligned.

Redding Sold - December	Sale Price	List Price	%/ List Price	Days on Market
4 Bald Rock Rd	\$635,000	\$650,000	-2.31%	55
87 Topstone Rd	\$658,000	\$669,000	-1.64%	42
24 Old Stagecoach Rd	\$799,900	\$799,900	0.00%	95
41 High Ridge Rd	\$810,000	\$799,000	1.38%	5
42 Lonetown Rd	\$825,000	\$869,000	-5.06%	141
12 Wagon Wheel Rd	\$852,000	\$800,000	6.50%	82
99 Cross Hwy	\$980,000	\$1,089,000	-10.01%	51
562 Redding Rd	\$1,009,500	\$1,500,000	-32.70%	406
19 Limekiln Rd	\$1,200,000	\$1,275,000	-5.88%	174
284 Redding Rd	\$2,100,000	\$2,475,000	-15.15%	91
Average	\$986,940	\$1,092,590	-9.67%	114

December 2022													
Town	Current Inventory	Homes Sold		Average Days on Market		Average List Price		Average Sale Price		Percent Sale Price >/< List Price		Average Price/SqFt	
	As of January 17	December	2022	December	2022	December	2022	December	2022	December	2022	December	2022
Redding	13	10	146	114	55	\$1,092,590	\$903,315	\$986,940	\$903,352	-9.67%	0.00%	\$261	\$293
Ridgefield	43	18	366	54	46	\$959,378	\$960,793	\$964,538	\$984,948	0.54%	2.51%	\$334	\$335
Weston	18	6	195	56	54	\$1,310,833	\$1,276,489	\$1,320,667	\$1,325,461	0.75%	3.84%	\$274	\$357
Wilton	18	11	256	50	46	\$1,293,000	\$1,107,564	\$1,278,273	\$1,162,133	-1.14%	4.93%	\$344	\$351
Easton	16	10	113	70	59	\$659,975	\$901,737	\$658,490	\$923,164	-0.23%	2.38%	\$232	\$259
Bethel	9	12	146	42	44	\$432,567	\$495,191	\$438,375	\$505,025	1.34%	1.99%	\$226	\$245
Newtown	37	31	345	50	53	\$587,598	\$566,913	\$584,087	\$578,240	-0.60%	2.00%	\$261	\$247
Average	22	14	224	62	51	\$905,134	\$887,429	\$890,196	\$911,760	-1.29%	2.52%	\$276	\$298

John Talley and Bill Whitehead are Realtors with Vincent and Whittemore Real Estate.

Engineers evaluate specific Gilbert & Bennett buildings

By Rocco Valluzzo

The condition of the buildings at the former Gilbert & Bennett Wire Mill property as well as their suitability for re-use are now being evaluated as part of the Georgetown Redevelopment project.

Tighe & Bond, the Middletown-based engineering firm that is conducting the study, presented its current findings to the Gilbert & Bennett Wire Mill Advisory Committee at its meeting on Thursday, January 12. While a number of buildings have been evaluated, others have yet to be examined.

Senior Compliance Specialist Philip Hutter and other representatives from the firm visited the property on January 6. They were able to get into the majority of the buildings and compare the current site conditions with the data previously conducted by Tighe & Bond during a study in

2005.

Some of the materials that were observed, such as boilers and boiler insulation, had been removed from the buildings since 2005, but a lot remains – mostly pipe insulation and window systems (caulking and glazing). There were hazards found in at least two of the buildings, including fallen debris with pipe insulation and paint with lead-based polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs).

Bags of asbestos-containing materials were found in one of larger buildings on the southern end of the property. Some of the exterior materials on one of the buildings contained an asbestos-based bituminous coating. Hutter recommended conducting supplemental sampling for asbestos.

Structural Engineer David Sullivan noted that the majority of these buildings are brick. If there

is water getting into the walls, that can deteriorate the mortar and cause failure.

“Of the buildings I went into, I was told the Weaving Building was a priority because of its location,” said Sullivan. “The brick masonry is intact, and it hasn’t shown signs of severe deterioration, but the roofing has failed, and water has been getting in through the roofing on to the flooring for a good period of time, so there are areas in that building where the floor has failed on multiple levels. It has good bones but a continued ingress of water, causing problems to other systems like the roof deck itself and the other floors below.”

Building E5, which is occupied and used for storage, is in fair to satisfactory condition overall. The brick masonry is intact, and the windows have been replaced in the last 20 years, but it would need a new roof.

The majority of the brick masonry on the Reverse Twist Building is in reasonable condition, according to Sullivan. There is some deterioration at the northeast corner, and the longer the water is allowed to get into the brick, the worse it will get.

“That one should be prioritized, because there are tenants in there,” Sullivan said. “I recommend getting a mason.”

The Low Pressure Boiler Building, which is occupied, is in overall satisfactory condition, and definitely a candidate to remain in service. Building E17, a machine shop, has leakage on the north side which is impacting the timber roof trusses and the timber flooring. The condition of the building is fair overall, with no issue with the masonry.

Another building Sullivan looked at was the Post Office on the west side of the site. Although he

was not able to access the interior to examine it, he did observe that the structural roof and roofing had failed. Windows had also failed, and doors were missing.

“There are some things that should probably be addressed as far as access goes,” he said. “Some of those buildings had areas where there’s failure within the buildings and are not safe for someone trespassing. Similarly, there are openings that aren’t covered at upper levels that create fall hazards.”

He recommended that ready access into the buildings be prevented. This is a major concern on those with more than one floor.

Tighe & Bond will evaluate the condition of the remaining buildings as well as the river walls at a later date. ■

Appealing your real estate assessment / Continued from page 1

assessment period to try to get another reduction. If they are still unsatisfied, at that point they can file an appeal with the superior court in Danbury.

Property owners wishing to appeal their assessment with the Board must gather and submit information at their formal hearing to support their opinion on the value of the property. Both Ford and Stackpole recommended supplying sales data and assessment values from comparable homes in the area, which are all available through the online VGSI database.

“It’s got to be apples to apples, and you have to have similar square footages and also within the same neighborhood,” Stackpole outlined, noting that the grade of materials used in construction and quality of finishes should also be comparable. “Looking at the price-per-square-feet and everything doesn’t give a clear metric on val-

uation, so I wouldn’t personally weigh too much on a price-per-square foot on a house.”

Getting an independent appraisal is another tool applicants can use to argue a change to their property’s assessed value.

“What I tell all people, is if they are really not happy with their value, they can go out and have an appraisal done,” Ford explained. “They can have what’s called a retrospective appraisal, and they would get an appraiser to give an opinion as of October 1, 2022.”


“If you’re going to get an appraisal, try to get it now,” Stackpole urged. “Because appraisers, even though it’s been slowing down in the market, this is the time when they usually get a lot of jobs in other municipalities and stuff like that if there’s a revaluation.”

When gathering supporting evidence, it is important to keep in mind that all information should

be used to determine the value of the property as of October 1, 2022 (not market conditions today), as that is the date for the upcoming Grand List, the aggregate valuation of taxable property within a given town.


“We are not the board of tax appeals,” Stackpole added. “We can’t appeal your taxes – that’s budget driven. So we deal primarily only with value, so that’s got to be the focus. What is the value of your property? And you must have an opinion. You have to write your opinion down on the form.” ■

The appeal form is available online at townofreddingct.org/about-redding/forms and must be submitted by February 17, 2023.




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BUSINESS SPOTLIGHT

Tasty jerky and smoked meats, Redding style

By Justin Reynolds



Photos courtesy of Frank Williams

After working in banking for more than 25 years, Frank Williams decided to call it a career. To fill his newfound free time, Williams transformed a tasty longtime hobby – making beef jerky and other smoked meats – into a small business of sorts.

“I wanted to give folks around here some fantastic homemade jerky, smoked meats, and homemade sausages all at a reasonable price,” said Williams, who has lived in Redding since 2006.

About five years ago, Williams visited Austin, Texas and had lunch at the Franklin Barbecue after “waiting in line for six hours or so,” he said. During that trip, Williams went inside the restaurant’s smoke room and struck up a conversation with the owner.

“He was going to start making and selling his own brand of smoker,” Williams said. “We put ourselves on a list, and this took about three years to get. We got the

68th one made.”

Once the smoker arrived in Redding, Williams started making smoked pork butts and ribs, brisket, and smoked turkey breasts for himself and his family.

“I decided the smoker was large enough to ask around town if folks wanted some of what I was cooking,” Williams said. “Putting one piece of meat on the smoker at a time seemed like a shame. We’ve been cooking once a week since, which tells me folks around here like it.”

On the smoker, Williams cooks bone-in pork butts, boneless turkey breasts, ribs, brisket flats, and homemade sausages in two varieties, jalapeño cheddar and Italian, which come in one-pound packs. Though prices fluctuate, pork is usually around six pounds for \$58, turkey is usually around five pounds for \$75, racks of ribs cost \$30, and brisket flats are usually around five pounds for \$88, according to Williams.

Williams also offers a nice



selection of jerkies sold in 4.2-ounce bags, including beef in teriyaki, Cajun, honey barbeque, Jamaican jerk, and lemon pepper varieties and soy ginger turkey.

While Williams has experimented with some more exotic jerkies – he’s made moose jerky and venison jerky for fun – he generally tries to stick to his own recipes.

“I know how they should come out and taste,” he said.

“All things on the smoker are cooked to order,” Williams said. “Folks come to my home and pick up their order at the end of the day.” If you can’t pick something up the day it’s cooked, no problem. Williams can either stick it in the refrigerator for the night or vacuum-seal bags and freeze them for later use.

“Jerky is only made when I have orders to fill,” Williams said. “The process takes about three days for each batch. I only make about four pounds of jerky at a time — small batches.”

Is your mouth-watering right about now? Reach out to Frank by texting him at (203) 858-5626 or contact him via Facebook Messenger. He’ll even deliver orders of three bags of jerky or more to folks in Redding at no extra charge. ■

Police department round-up

Failed compliance checks at local liquor stores

By Regan B. Purcell

In the United States, you must be 21 years old to purchase alcohol; however, before the National Minimum Drinking Age Act of 1984, the legal age when alcohol could be purchased varied from state to state. Aside from a brief interlude in 1972-1985, the minimum age in Connecticut to purchase alcohol has been 21 years old for over 100 years. Teenagers attempting to buy alcohol is a tale as old as time, and this month two local businesses failed a compliance check on selling alcohol to underage consumers.

On January 11, the Redding Police Department assisted the Connecticut Liquor Commission Agents with compliance checks of Redding’s three liquor stores. The compliance check was the result of complaints about young people buying alcoholic beverages at some of the local liquor stores. As part of the compliance checks, a 19-year-old subject was sent into each of the three liquor stores and attempted to buy alcoholic beverages at each one. All transactions were observed by the Liquor Control Agents.

The results of this planned event were two out of three Redding liquor stores being out of compliance. *Redding Wines & Spirits* at 119 Black Rock Turnpike and *Lina’s Wine & Spirits* at 2 Long Ridge Road both sold alcoholic beverages to the 19-year-old and were subsequently referred by the Liquor Commission Agents for a hearing date. The hearing could result in a fine for the business or temporary closure for no more than three days. *Georgetown Package Store* at 34 Main Street complied by asking for proper identification. Due to the subject being 19 years old, they refused to sell alcoholic beverages and then asked the subject to leave the store.

Young people’s desire to buy alcoholic beverages isn’t unique to Connecticut, but unfortunately in recent years our state has seen some troubling trends. In a 2019 Connecticut Epidemiological Pro-

file of Alcohol, the State Epidemiological Outcomes Workgroup found that “the prevalence of alcohol use is higher in the state compared to the national average” and “young adults in Connecticut ages 18-25 have the highest rate of reported past month alcohol use (68.4%).” In July of 2021, the New Haven Register featured the article “Problem drinking continues in CT post-pandemic, experts say”, highlighting how the sale and consumption of alcohol continued to increase, despite people resuming normal activities following pandemic business closures.

The reasons for young adults seeking alcohol may vary, but at the end of the day, our liquor laws are intended to protect our youth’s developing minds. Let’s keep this in mind the next time we go to our local liquor stores...especially when you get carded even though you might be old enough to remember when the drinking age was 18! ■

Making the switch to an electric vehicle

By Donna Christopher

Electric prices will nearly double this year for many in Connecticut, but it’s still a good time to consider buying an electric vehicle (EV).

EV’s function by plugging into a charge point and taking electricity from the grid. They store electricity in rechargeable batteries that power an electric motor and accelerate faster than traditional fuel engines – so they also feel lighter to drive.

Driving an EV in the long run is a more environmentally-friendly option than a gas-powered vehicle. They may be more expensive to initially buy; however, operating them presents several opportunities for cost savings. Over time, you will save on fuel and repairs – EV’s, for instance, don’t require oil changes or air filters.

Connecticut offers a tax credit of up to \$7,500 for purchasing an EV and rebates for installing a charging station at your home or business. Having a home charging station may be preferred for Redding residents, where there is currently no public charging station, though there are plenty of options in bordering towns, including dealerships on Route 7, the Wilton Library, Copps Hill Plaza in Ridgefield, and Whole Foods in Danbury.

Level 2 charging stations can be installed at home for a cost between \$500 and \$1,200. A regular 120-volt outlet at home can also charge your EV, but it can take up to 40 hours to fully charge a typical vehicle. A Level 2 station will provide 12 to 80 miles of range per hour of charging, so you can charge your EV overnight while you sleep. Electricity rates at night during off-peak hours are also lower, saving owners of home charging stations money as well.

Eversource offers rebates and incentives up to \$1,000 to install a Level 2 (220-volt) charging station at your home. “We do not install charging stations. We administer a program of incentives designed to encourage the installation of them in residences as well as businesses,” explained Mitch Gross, Eversource Connecticut Media Relations.

Level 3 DC Fast Chargers are typically found in public infrastructure and can charge an empty battery in just 30 minutes, according to EV Connect (evconnect.com). As EV’s rely on charging, it’s a good idea to have an app or map installed on your phone or in the vehicle to locate public EV charging stations on the route and at your destination.

There have been both public and private efforts in recent years to build out state and national networks of available EV charging stations as EV ownership becomes more popular. The Connecticut Department of Transportation (CT DOT) in September announced plans to share the National Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Formula Program (NEVI) formula funding and plans to work closely with different state agencies and stakeholders to develop a State Plan on how best to build out the state’s fast charging network. Each state was charged with coming up with a plan for using their NEVI fund and submitting them for approval to the U.S. Joint Office of Energy and Transportation by August.

CT DOT’s Strategic Communications Manager Shannon King Burnham said the biggest purview of the agency is with the national electric vehicle infrastructure plan.

“It comes out of the infrastructure law that was passed over a year ago by President Biden,” Burnham explained. “We

did a gap analysis almost exactly a year ago, and we were looking at the gaps in the distance between one electric charger and another, so if someone is driving through Connecticut, how far can their charge go? We call it driver anxiety. If you have an electric vehicle and don’t have a charger in your home, you can rely on public chargers, so the NEVI plan nationwide is to close that gap,” said King. “All the car manufacturers are getting into electric vehicles, and more and more are becoming available.”

Last January, both Eversource and United Illuminating worked with the Public Utilities Regulatory Authority (PURA) to unveil a statewide electric vehicle charging station installation program, designed to improve the infrastructure required for meeting the state’s EV goals by 2025. Connecticut was one of eleven states to sign the Zero-Emission Vehicle Memorandum of Understanding in 2013 and has committed to an ambitious EV adoption goal of 125,000-150,000 EVs on the road by 2025.

In Redding as of July 2022, there were 158 EV’s out of a total of 6,471 passenger vehicles in the town. Across the state, there were 25,444 EV’s, with half owned by Fairfield County drivers. Forty-one percent of the state’s EV’s are Tesla, among 25 various makes which include the luxury brands of BMW, Jaguar, and Porsche, and consumer options by Hyundai, Nissan, and Volkswagen.

Arthur Peralta is a sales rep for Bruce Bennett Nissan in Wilton, where the new Ariya EV is now available to customers. A typical trim level, which is the base model called Ventura Plus, starts at \$43,000 and goes up to \$60,000.

“The average price of a (gas-powered) car is from \$25-\$35,000, so they will be slightly above your normal price markings. Being new to the market in general and being an electric car compared to Tesla it will be considered a middle-class price,” Peralta said.

“As the times progress, we’re definitely getting more people interested in owning an electric vehicle,” he continued. “People are becoming aware of the benefits of owning an electric vehicle. It can be more of an asset.”

Peralta noted that while it’s always convenient to have an electric charging station at your own home, access to charging is never too far away. “Good news is if you don’t want the extra expense, you can drive to your local dealer and charge up for no cost,” he said.

While EV’s present several environmental and cost benefits, there have been some safety concerns raised about the risks of heavy EV’s colliding with lighter cars and the potential for more injuries to pedestrians.

There are “unintended consequences,” the head of the National Transportation Safety Board told the Associated Press this month, in an article that “warns of risks posed by heavy electric vehicles colliding with lighter cars.”

EV’s often weigh more due to their higher range batteries that can weigh up to thousands of pounds, which cannot match smaller internal combustion vehicles. A 2018 study by the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety found that hybrid vehicles, which, like EV’s, can accelerate more quickly than gas-powered cars, were 10 percent more likely to injure a pedestrian than their gas-powered equivalents, according to a January 4 article in The Atlantic. ■



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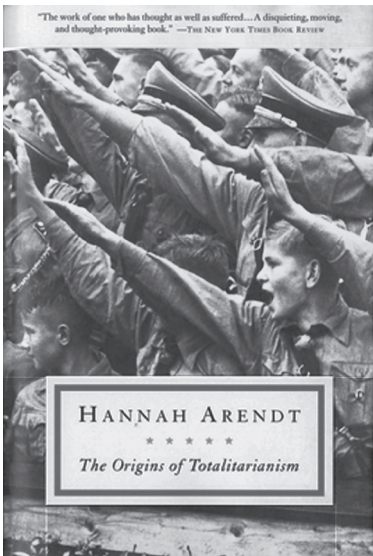
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BOOK REVIEW

The Origins of Totalitarianism | By Hanna Arendt

576 pp. Mariner Books. \$19.99



Holocaust Remembrance Day (January 27) insists that an accurate knowledge of history is crucial to global good citizenship. The 20th century was a time of invention and high achievement, but also of war and ghastly Nazi horror. Hanna Arendt’s *The Origins of Totalitarianism* attempts to explain underpinnings of that chilling episode. She reveals how terror and loneliness are the lynchpins of dictatorship, and when a population, for reasons real or imagined, feels victimized, it is most vulnerable to authoritarian assertions. Hanna Arendt wrote: “Terror can rule absolutely only over men who are isolated against each other ... Isolation may be the beginning of terror; it certainly is its most fertile ground; it always is its result.”

Originally coined by Adolf Hitler, “The Big Lie” was a propaganda technique deployed through the practice of gross distortion repetitively asserted as true. Nazis used this practice to vilify Jews as traitors, and to justify the Holocaust. Nazi Big Lie propaganda blamed Jews for nefarious hidden powers in a way that echoes recent assertions, in certain American quarters, of a deep state. To enhance delivery

of propaganda, the government gave German citizens radios – with one station only. Dynamics of misinformation continue today with new but effective social media networks available worldwide.

Ann Applebaum, writing about *The Origins of Totalitarianism* last year in The Atlantic, saw troubling analogies to contemporary American politics: “[Arendt] was fascinated by the passivity of so many people in the face of dictatorship, by the widespread willingness, even eagerness, to believe lies and propaganda... The masses ‘believe everything and nothing, think that everything was possible and that nothing was true’.” Applebaum continued: “To explain Nazi anti-Semitism, Arendt reached back not only to the history of the Jews in Germany but also to the history of European racism and imperialism, and to the evolution of the notion of the ‘rights of man’ – which we now more commonly speak of as ‘human rights’.”

Truth is the enemy of the lie, but myth is an enemy of the truth. Antisemitism repeats defamatory tropes often enough to make myths from misinformation difficult to correct. When credulity turns toxic these myths resurface. Aggressive grievance infers denial and projects unjustified blame with repugnance as its sum. Holocaust denial, for example, can be compared to denials we have seen recently in our culture, from election denial to the denial of vicious school homicide as a politics of pretext for gun confiscation. Hanna Arendt had a dark prediction for humanity that, despite her analysis and fears, has not yet materialized. In her explication of Nazi horror, however, Arendt offers an acute history of past as prologue to a future that now belongs to us. ■

LIBRARY CORNER

By Erin Shea Dummeyer

In the new year, why not make a resolution to volunteer? According to the authors of *Simple Changes, Big Rewards: a practical, easy guide for healthy, happy living*, researchers at the London School of Economics examined the relationship between volunteering and measures of happiness in a large group of American adults and found that the more people volunteered, the happier they were. Compared with people who never volunteered, the odds of being “very happy” rose 7% among those who volunteer monthly and

12% for people who volunteer every two to four weeks.

At the Mark Twain Library, we are indebted to the hundreds of dedicated volunteers who work in earnest to raise operating funds for us year-round. Because Redding is such a small town, volunteering with one of the Library’s annual fundraisers is also a wonderful way to meet people and forge friendships. For many, it becomes an annual tradition.

During my first shift volunteering at our annual Labor Day book sale, I was surprised to learn that

my shift partner had even taken a day off work so that she could volunteer that day. At last year’s Frog Frolic, I set up folding tables with a mother who was volunteering with her two daughters. I loved to see that they had made it a family affair. So, in 2023, why not do something for yourself by doing something for others? Please reach out to me so I can match you with a volunteer opportunity at one of the Library’s fundraisers. ■

Erin Shea Dummeyer is Director, Mark Twain Library

Good books for good readers | By Margi Esten

Here is an eclectic group of engrossing – and very readable – biographies for those of you so inclined:

Savage Beauty: The Life of Edna St. Vincent Millay by Nancy Milford. Thirty years after the publication of the acclaimed *Zelda: A Biography*, Nancy Milford returned with this portrait of the passionate poet and artist who was often described as the heroine of the Jazz Age. Her flamboyant lifestyle and celebrated love affairs were legendary, and her home in Croton-on-Hudson, NY became a haven for some of the most fascinating artists and writers of the time. Her personal life, however, was fraught with

challenges, and her intimate writings are reminiscent of those of Sylvia Plath.

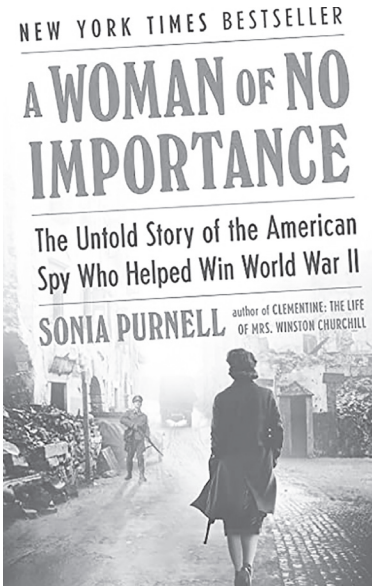
Speaking of Sylvia Plath, *Red Comet: The Short Life and Blazing Art of Sylvia Plath* by Heather Clark was published in 2020. Clark successfully shifts the focus from Sylvia Plath’s tragic death to her brilliant life. And it was indeed a short, but brilliant life.

Edith Wharton: A Biography by R.W.B Lewis is a full-scale critical biography of the turn-of-the-century American novelist. Lewis details the relation between her life and her works and argues – correctly, in my opinion – her place as a writer of much importance. (More to come in a future column

on Edith Wharton novels – ALL of which I strongly recommend. She is remains in my top five novelists!)

Finally – an autobiography: *Personal History* by Katharine Graham won the 1998 Pulitzer Prize for Biography or Autobiography and received widespread acclaim. Some themes include her family’s involvement with The Washington Post, her relationship with her husband Philip Graham, their relationships with John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson, her evolution from a housewife to the chairman of a major publishing company, and the challenges she faced in a male-dominated work environment. ■

Upcoming book events feature historical dramas, local author | By Pamela Brown



If you enjoy reading, you’ll appreciate two upcoming events that feature riveting books and promise interesting discussion.

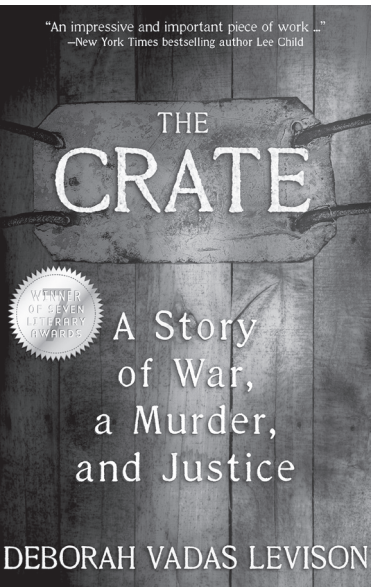
Redding Heritage Center’s Talking Books – A Woman of No Importance

Monday, January 30 at 1:30 p.m.
37 Lonetown Road

Join a group of literature lovers to discuss the New York Times Bestseller *A Woman of No Importance: The Untold Story of the American Spy who Helped Win World War II* by Sonia Purnell, highly-acclaimed biographer, journalist, and public speaker. The exhilarating spy thriller tells the never-before-told true story of Virginia Hall, a one-legged young woman turned Allied spy whose heroism changed the course of World War II. The book is available at the Mark Twain Library.

The wartime drama includes daring prison escapes, code names, cover stories, and James Bond-style tricks. Purnell also shines the light on how Hall overcomes bias and hostility and how her efforts ultimately changed espionage and the views of women in warfare. One of USA Today’s Five Must Reads and chosen as a Best Book of the Year by NPR, New York Public Library, and many others, the book has been optioned for a film by Paramount Pictures.

Talking Books book club, now in its eighth year, is facilitated by Myrna Robinson and Hilda Rhodes. “We select eclectic books and like to travel through literature,” said Robinson, noting this month’s selection appeals



to people interested in historical novels and women’s issues. “It’s an interesting concept of a very feisty woman who overcame adversity doing remarkable things. It reads well and holds your interest.”

Even if you haven’t read the book, Rhodes encourages people to attend. “It’s a very welcoming group. We have a mix of people, and we all chime in. The beauty of this is we start the discussion and then we socialize.”

The Talking Books book club is free and open to anyone. Subscribe to the Heritage Center’s e-newsletter for an update on future titles. To register, call Michelle Stillman at (203) 938-9725.

Mark Twain Library’s CT Author Series – The Crate: A Story of War, a Murder, and Justice

Tuesday, January 31 at 7:30 p.m.
439 Redding Road

The next installment in the Mark Twain Library’s CT Author Series will feature *The Crate: A Story of War, a Murder, and Justice* by Deborah Vadas Levison, an award-winning Connecticut author and journalist. In this true crime book, Levison, a resident of Trumbull, recounts the extraordinary ordeal of her parents, Holocaust survivors, who discovered a mysterious wooden crate, nailed shut, underneath their lake house in Canada.

“We have so many authors right here in Redding and the state of Connecticut, and we have the ability to shine a light on these local

writers, which they appreciate, and we take pride in doing,” said Lisa Goldstein, Communications Specialist at the Mark Twain Library. “We scheduled this book to coincide with International Holocaust Remembrance Day on January 27, given that the book centers around a family that escaped the Holocaust and since its author lives in Connecticut.”

After the discussion, there will be a Q&A with Levison and a book signing. Copies of Levison’s debut fiction, *A Nest of Snakes*, will also be available.

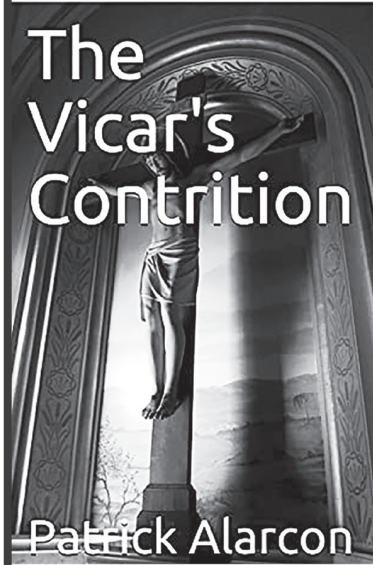
Levison never intended to write about her family, until they became involved in a grisly crime. “I had to put it in the context of my family history - the Holocaust. The narrative intertwines evil in the past with evil in the present,” she explained. “The discovery of what was inside the crate traumatized my family, especially my fragile parents. It dredged up their memories of surviving concentration camps, cattle cars, and death marches, and forced them to confront violence on their doorstep.”

It was Levison’s mission to preserve her parents’ stories from the Holocaust as a family history for future generations, and so others could learn from them. “International Holocaust Remembrance Day is an opportunity for the world to honor the memories of the six million Jews who perished at the hands of the Nazis, to pay tribute to the survivors, and to quash the deniers. It’s a day that should be used to teach our kids lessons of kindness and acceptance, to show them what can happen when hatred and racism flourish, and to educate them about the darkest days of human history,” she said.

Levison is looking forward to meeting readers, discussing other authors, and telling stories. “More than anything, I love charming little libraries nestled in charming little towns,” she said. “There’s nothing better than browsing through the racks and chatting with the librarians about their favorite titles.” ■

The CT Author Series is free to attend, but registration is required. Visit marktwainlibrary.org to register. Learn more about the author at debbielevison.com

Redding Author



As a severe Nor’easter falls upon St. Thomas Seminary, a seminary student named Timothy is murdered by Jesuit assassins for his investigation of a secret society operating within the Vatican. His classmates, guided by their Professor, seek to avenge their friend by finding his hidden diary and sharing his work. Their quest brings them around the world, as they try to avoid entanglements with local law enforcement who have a growing interest in the case. All the while the assassins are on their trail, seeking to finish the job and prevent them from revealing the truth.

About the Author

Redding resident **Patrick Alarcon** is a graduate of St. Thomas Seminary and a retired high school science and history teacher. He is currently an Adjunct Professor at Sacred Heart University in Fairfield. In addition to *The Vicar’s Contrition* he has recently published *Deadly Beacon*.



Available for purchase on Amazon, scan the QR code for more information

Letterboxing in Redding / Continued from page 6

side (to your left). Walk the Pond Trail until you see Boulder Top trail on your left. Follow Boulder Top approximately 100 paces up the hill until you come to a tall oak tree in the middle of the path with a mossy boulder on the right. From this tree take a bearing of 130 degrees and walk 30 paces in that direction to a large rock. Mole’s home is inside the crevice of a large boulder.”

In addition to Topstone Park, letterboxes can also be found in town at places like Putnam Memorial State Park, Stormfield, and Collis P. Huntington State Park, which Young recently visited for a letterboxing excursion to find the Collis Letterbox.

“It’s an easy one to find and a beautiful little hike,” Young said.

If you’re looking for a fun outdoor activity to do as a family, why not give letterboxing a whirl? It’ll get the kids moving and learning, and it’s as close to free as most things can be.

“In my opinion, it’s more fun than geocaching,” Young said. “Since the boxes are weatherproofed, this is something you can do all year long.”

One of the most enjoyable parts of the activity is its secretive nature. So, if you end up going letterboxing, just make sure no one is watching when you re-hide the box for the fun to continue for the next treasure hunters. ■

The Natural World

Hurrah for hellebores

The perfect perennial | By Terry Karpen



Photo by Terry Karpen

While most perennials lose their foliage in the fall and go dormant in the winter, there are those, like hellebores, that are evergreen. With flowers that blossom in late winter and early spring, cold-season bloomers like these are rare in the flower world. At times the leaves are flattened, and flowers droop due to winter frost and snowfall, but before long, they recover when the warmth of the winter sun reappears.

Folklore dating back to Greek antiquity, and found throughout history, tells of the magical and medicinal qualities of hellebores. Its black roots were known for centuries as a cure for mania and melancholy. Hellebores are said to have the ability to ward off evil spirits, and it’s considered a sensible precaution to plant it as close as possible to the entrance of the

home. Ironically, in witchcraft it is believed to be used for summoning demons.

Hellebores were brought to North America for ornamental use in our gardens around 1850. They are valued for their early and long-lasting flowering period, as well as for their beauty, vigor, and deer resistance. Until about 30 years ago, these perennials were uncommon in home gardens.

Commonly known as hellebores, the genus *Helleborus* consists of approximately 20 species of evergreen perennial flowering plants. Most of the hellebores readily available today are hybrid crosses of nine species, collectively referred to as *Helleborus x hybridus*. Mature plants form clumps that are 18 inches to 24 inches tall and 24 inches to 30 inches wide.

Native to much of Europe, hel-

lebores (*Helleborus*) belong to the *Ranunculaceae* or buttercup family. Like most members of the buttercup family, hellebores are avoided by deer because their leaves, stems, and roots are poisonous.

Leaves

Even when hellebores aren’t in flower, their foliage is attractive too. The leaves are palmate with serrated edges and come in different shapes depending on the variety. The leafy stems grow from the base of the plant and are topped with five to nine leaflets. New leaves are smooth initially and turn leathery as they age. Hellebore foliage is glossy and durable and is typically dark green, although there are continually new hybrids with variations of leaf color such as gray-green, blue-green, pewter, and there are others with colorful veins of red, white, silver or mottling. Although the foliage is evergreen, the leaves decline as winter progresses.

Flowers

Hellebores have saucer-shaped flowers, two to three inches in diameter appearing on thick stems that rise above the foliage. There are hybrids in a wide variety of colors which can be pink, yellow, white, cream, green, maroon, or purple. They come in single, semi, and fully double forms, with ruffled

or smooth petals. Some varieties have colorful veins or margins, others are spotted or speckled. The blooms on most of the older varieties are downward-facing, but the newer hybrids have more upward-facing flowers.

Growing conditions

Hellebores grow best in well-drained soil, rich in organic matter, but tolerate most growing conditions, with the exceptions of very dry or wet soil. Most prefer partial shade, but some varieties will tolerate sun. While they are mostly thought of as “shade plants”, they are in fact shade-*tolerant* plants.

Clumps of hellebores blooming in February or March are a joyful experience to behold. Locate plants to enhance views out of windows or near walkways so that the early blooms may be savored. Group plants in semi-shady locations under trees or large shrubs, woodland gardens, or border fronts. When flower stems are left in place, many hellebore hybrids will spread by self-seeding and form an attractive ground cover.

How to care for hellebores

Hellebores require little maintenance, except for cutting back winter-damaged leaves in late winter or early spring. Allow the healthy evergreen foliage to

remain on the plant throughout winter. New leaves appear in the spring. Dead or diseased leaves can be pruned at any time of year. Cut leaves back to the base of the plant. Use hand pruners, and wear gloves when handling this plant, as the sap of the hellebore can irritate the skin. There is no need to rush in removing the faded flower stems. The flower heads will last through most of the summer and continue to offer ornamental interest in the garden. The showy flower parts are not petals, they are sepals; the sepals remain attached to the plant until late in the season. Cut back flowers by removing the entire stem at the base.

Companion plants for hellebores

Plants that require the same growing conditions: a wide range of partial sun to shade tolerant perennials, ferns, sedges, grasses, and shrubs. Also include bulbs that bloom at the same time as hellebores.

There are many hellebore species, cultivars, and hybrids to choose from. With a well-planned selection, you can have hellebore flowers in your garden from January to June. No garden should be without hellebores. ■

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

OBITUARIES

David Hopkinson Brooks April 26, 1929 — January 13, 2023

David Hopkinson Brooks died on Friday, the 13th of January 2023, in the comfort of his family home (purchased by his Great Grandfather in 1907). Jo-an, his wife of 71 years, and family were with him.

David was born in Neuilly,

France April 26, 1929. He graduated from the Taft School and in 1952 from Cornell University, simultaneously receiving his Lieutenant’s commission and orders from the U.S. Army. After serving in the Korean war, he returned

to Connecticut, and a business career in NYC in magazine sales, working overtime for Harper and The Atlantic, Scientific American, and Smithsonian.

He was devoted to the natural world, his home, and farm life where he raised sheep, horses,

dogs, canaries, and vegetables. His multiple hobbies included barbershop quartet singing, playing squash at the N.Y. Racquet Club, hiking, fishing, jogging, skiing, riding with the Fairfield Hunt Club, painting, carving, and writing. The latter rewarded him

with a published novel, *Gone Away*. Dave loved life and shared his enthusiasm with all who knew him, and so he will be missed as an irreplaceable friend, father, and husband. ■

Domenica Hannaway passed away January 14, 2023



Domenica “Mamie” Theresa Hannaway, 91, of Redding, beloved wife of Harold Hannaway, passed away on Saturday, January 14, 2023. She was born and raised in Boston, MA, where she met and married Harold, her loving husband of 71 years. They traveled and lived in many parts of the world throughout Harold’s military career, including the USMA at West Point and Germany. After his retirement from the military, they settled in Westport where they lived for the last 50 years, only recently moving to Redding.

Though having lived in many locations, Domenica knew how to make any place a true home for her family. She loved them dearly and found great joy in caring for them. Domenica preferred staying active and was involved with the Westport Women’s Club (including their gardening group), Westport (Boat) Power Squadron, Minuteman Club, Westport Cotillion, and a faithful member of Saint Luke’s Church. Domenica was very fond of visits to Compo Beach, boating on “Missus & Me”, tole painting, antiquing with her

husband, and together they ran an antique business.

Domenica’s memory will be lovingly remembered by her husband, Harold C. Hannaway, of Redding; two daughters, Kathleen Rivas, and her husband, Richard, of Fredericksburg, VA and Colleen Kinyon, and her husband, James, of Cheshire, CT; grandchildren, Richard, Ryan, and Reece Rivas and Sean and Spencer Kinyon; and great-grandchildren, Richard, Reed, and Raymond Rivas, and McKenzie, McKayla, and Brycen Barnes. Domenica was

predeceased by a granddaughter, Kristine Rivas.

A Funeral Mass was held on Monday, January 23, 2023 with entombment at Oak Lawn Cemetery, Fairfield. To order flowers online or to sign her online guest register, please visit www.LeskoPolkeFuneralHome.com ■

Beverly Naumann August 23, 1931 – January 18, 2023



Beverly Naumann died peacefully at the Regional Hospice care facility in Danbury while surrounded by family and friends on Wednesday, January 18.

Born on August 23, 1931 in Greenwich Hospital, Beverly grew up in Riverside with her parents, Jessie and DeHaven Ross, and older sister, Barbara. A few

years after graduating Greenwich High School, she married Harold William George Lyons. They had two sons, Tim and Jeff. After her divorce in 1972, Bev moved to Redding, CT. She planned on marrying veterinarian Jim Rankin, but an unexpected and devastating illness caused his passing. She married William Naumann in July

of 1975. Bill passed in January 1999.

When she lived in Greenwich, Bev was a dedicated homemaker and mother. She was also very proud of her vegetable garden; her summer meals for the family always included homegrown tomatoes, corn, cucumbers, green beans, and radishes. When she wasn’t at home taking care of her kids or the house, she more often than not was at her favorite place in town: Tod’s Point. She worshipped the sun, sand, and surf.

Bev was very proud of her heritage. On her father’s side, she was a direct descendant of Jacob DeHaven, a patriot during the Revolutionary War who directly funded George Washington and the Continental Army with \$50,000 in gold, and an estimated \$400,000 in supplies while the army was encamped at Valley Forge over the winter of 1778. Her father, DeHaven Ross,

was treasurer of the Homelite Company in Port Chester, NY, Commodore of the Riverside Yacht Club, and very active in civic affairs of Greenwich. On her maternal side, her grandparents, Henry Lawrence Southwick and Jessie Eldridge Southwick were fundamental in the founding, funding and teaching during the early years of Emerson College in Boston. Her grandmother’s maiden name, Eldridge, is the original publisher of The Eldridge Tide and Pilot Book; essential reading for any seafarer worth his or her salt.

Bev’s love of animals was well-known to all that knew her. She regularly donated to various animal welfare organizations too numerous to count. Her passion for golden retrievers was also legendary; she had four goldens while living in Redding. She also had numerous cats, and for years daily fed her wild friends – deer,

raccoons, opossums, feral cats, and birds. Bev’s love of nature also extended into her lovely array of flowers and plants that annually adorned her deck.

Beverly had a truly free spirit. Her innate goodness and cheerful demeanor were felt and appreciated by all who know and loved her. Firm in her beliefs, strong and passionate with her opinions, there was never any question about where she stood on any given topic.

Beverly is survived by her beloved golden Pip, Pepe the Cat, her sons: Tim of Greenwich and Jeff of Bethel; granddaughters Jessie Lyons of Stamford, Ashley Yanez of Greenwich and two great grandchildren.

In lieu of flowers, please feel free to make donations to any animal welfare organization of your choosing.

To offer online condolence please visit: www.boutonfuneralhome.com ■

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

\$ = fee applies
R = registration required

ARTS	CHILDREN, TEENS	FOOD	RELIGIOUS SERVICES	MEETINGS
<p>Monday, Jan. 9 - Friday, Mar. 24</p> <p>Easton Arts Council Winter Celebration of the Arts + Member Art Show Check eastonlibrary.org for open hours. The Easton Arts Council will host its annual Celebration for the Arts Member Show in the Easton Public Library Community Room, with works by 50 artists and photographers from Easton and neighboring towns. Contact Elizabeth Katz at katz.elizabethi@gmail.com with questions. Easton Public Library 691 Morehouse Road Easton eastonartscouncil.org</p> <p>Wednesday, Feb. 1</p> <p>Milestone’s Stand-Up Comedy Spectacular 7:30 p.m. – 11:30 p.m. Milestone 2 Main Street milestonect.com \$</p> <p>Thursday, Feb. 2</p> <p>Redding Elementary School Winter Concert 6:30 p.m. Grade 3 & 4 Chorus and Grade 4 Orchestra Limited to two guests per student Redding Elementary School 33 Lonetown Road reddingelementaryps.org</p>	<p>Saturday, Jan. 28</p> <p>January Astronomy 6:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m. Join our knowledgeable team of volunteer astronomers on Astronomy Hill for views of constellations, star clusters, planets, and more. New Pond Farm 101 Marchant Road newpondfarm.org \$, R</p> <p>Sunday, Jan. 29</p> <p>Babysitter Awareness Training Ages 11-15 10:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. Red Cross Babysitter Certification cards awarded upon successful completion. Redding Community Center 37 Lonetown Road townofreddingct.org/parks-and-recreation \$, R</p> <p>Saturday, Feb. 11</p> <p>Take Your Child to the Library Day All day Legos, donuts, musical entertainment, and more. Refer to library website for complete event listings and details. Mark Twain Library 439 Redding Road marktwainlibrary.org R</p> <p>Wednesday, Feb. 22</p> <p>Family Bingo Bonanza 6:30 p.m. – 7:30 p.m. Grades K–4 Children must be accompanied by a parent. Redding Community Center 37 Lonetown Road townofreddingct.org/parks-and-recreation \$, R</p>	<p>Sunday, Jan. 29</p> <p>The Taste of Easton-Redding presents Soups & Stews 1:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m. Bring your favorite winter dish Easton Public Library 691 Morehouse Road Easton facebook.com/groups/292256432939141</p> <p>Thursday, Feb. 2</p> <p>Super Beer and Food Pairings 7:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m. Learn about the best beer pairings for your super bowl party and best practices for pairing all foods with beer with beer cartoonist and Connecticut Native Em Sauter. Mark Twain Library 439 Redding Road marktwainlibrary.org R</p> <p>Tuesday, Feb. 7</p> <p>Cooking with the Thirsty Radish: The Sweet and Savory Sides of Chocolate 7:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m. Discover the fundamentals of baking and cooking with chocolate at home and learn how to select the best variety for your own creations. Mark Twain Library Zoom marktwainlibrary.org R</p> <p>Tuesday, Feb. 14</p> <p>Taproom Tastings: Bread 6:30 p.m. – 7:30 p.m. Join Chief Curator Catherine Prescott and historian Mary Tsaltas-Ottomanelli as they investigate historic food and drink cultures. Zoom Keeler Tavern Museum keelertavernmuseum.org/events R</p>	<p>Bethlehem Lutheran Church Sundays at 10:00 a.m. (in person) or 10:15 a.m. (Zoom) 44 Portland Avenue bethlehemplutheranct.org</p> <p>Christ Church, Episcopal Sundays at 9:00 a.m. 184 Cross Highway christchurchredding.org</p> <p>First Church of Christ, Congregational Sundays at 10:00 a.m. 25 Cross Highway firstchurchredding.org</p> <p>Long Ridge United Methodist Sundays at 11:30 a.m. 201 Long Ridge Road longridgeumc.com</p> <p>Sacred Heart Catholic Church Saturdays at 4:00 p.m. Sundays at 9:00 a.m. and 10:00 a.m.; 12:00 p.m. (Latin) Tuesdays and Thursdays at 8:30 a.m. Wednesdays at 6:00 p.m. (Latin) 30 Church Street sacredheart-stpat.org</p> <p>St. Patrick Catholic Church Saturdays at 5:30 p.m. Sundays at 8:30 a.m., 10:30 a.m., and 5:00 p.m. Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays at 8:30 a.m. 169 Black Rock Turnpike sacredheart-stpat.org</p> <p>Temple B’nai Chaim Fridays at 7:30 p.m. 82 Portland Avenue templebnaichaim.org</p>	<p>Thursday, Jan. 26</p> <p>ARPA Funds Working Group 5:00 p.m. Zoom townofreddingct.org</p> <p>Tuesday, Jan. 31</p> <p>ER9 Joint Boards of Education 7:00 p.m. Joel Barlow High School Library Learning Commons 100 Black Rock Turnpike er9.org</p> <p>Thursday, Feb. 2</p> <p>ARPA Funds Working Group 5:00 p.m. Zoom townofreddingct.org</p> <p>Monday, Feb. 6</p> <p>Park and Recreation Commission 7:00 p.m. Redding Community Center 37 Lonetown Road townofreddingct.org</p> <p>Monday, Feb. 6</p> <p>Republican Town Committee 7:30 p.m. Redding Community Center 37 Lonetown Road townofreddingct.org</p> <p>Tuesday, Feb. 7</p> <p>Economic Development Committee 8:30 a.m. Town Hall* / Conference Room 100 Hill Road townofreddingct.org</p> <p>Tuesday, Feb. 7</p> <p>Redding Board of Education 7:00 p.m. John Read Middle School 486 Redding Road johnreadps.org</p> <p>Tuesday, Feb. 7</p> <p>Conservation Commission 7:30 p.m. Refer to townofreddingct.org for meeting location townofreddingct.org</p> <p>Wednesday, Feb. 8</p> <p>Commission on Aging 9:00 a.m. Heritage Center 37 Lonetown Road townofreddingct.org</p> <p>Wednesday, Feb. 8</p> <p>Zoning Commission 7:30 p.m. Town Hall* / Hearing Room 100 Hill Road townofreddingct.org</p> <p>Please refer to townofreddingct.org/events for additional Meetings listings and more information.</p> <p>*Meeting may be held virtually via Zoom due to ongoing water clean-up at Town Hall. Please refer to townofreddingct.org/ events for current location information.</p>

This Week’s Featured Events

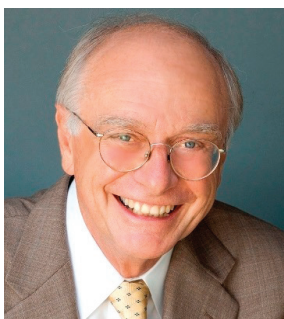
<p>Take Your Child to the Library Day</p> <p>Saturday, Feb. 11 All day Legos, donuts, musical entertainment and more. Refer to the Mark Twain Library website for complete info. Mark Twain Library 439 Redding Road marktwainlibrary.org</p>	<p>Formal Dress Exchange</p> <p>Saturday, Feb. 11 - Sunday, Feb. 12 11:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. Open to any student/parent in need of formal attire. St. Thomas’ Episcopal Church 95 Greenwood Avenue Bethel Contact dawnfaw@aol.com</p>	<p>Valentine’s Day Tea Party</p> <p>Monday, Feb. 13 4:00 p.m. The National Charity League will provide royal treatment with porcelain cups at this free event. Heritage Center 37 Lonetown Road Register by contacting mpilato@townofreddingct.org or call 203-938-9725</p>	<p>Want to feature an upcoming event?</p> <p>E-mail us at advertise@reddingsentinel.org for more information.</p>
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COLDWELL BANKER REALTY



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203.770.3349



Jack Baldaserini
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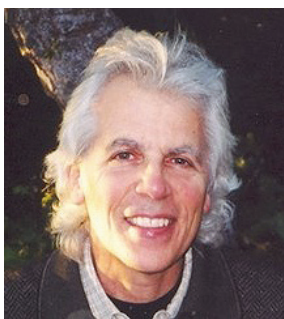
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Barbara Baughman
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Alexis Bennett
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Tim Dent
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Lara B. DiBari Tersigni
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Donna DiBartolo
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Jasmine Gannalo
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Debbie Gore
203.417.5692



Joanne Grasso
203.733.9344



Jefferson Guthrie
203.788.9400

COLDWELL BANKER REALTY
LISTINGS SOLD
IN UNDER 50 DAYS



87 TOPSTONE ROAD
\$658,000

Tucked off a designated scenic road on almost six acres and a backyard bordered by land owned by the Audubon Society. All rooms are all generously proportioned with an open flow Living Room/ Dining Room. The Kitchen is well appointed with Granite Counters, Double Wall Ovens, a lot of Cabinetry/ Storage, opening to a Large Deck.

Listing Agent: Peri Bartro



563 REDDING ROAD
\$675,000

Very special Antique Farmhouse sits on 3 gorgeous, level acres along the Saugatuck River and includes a vintage 1930's one-bedroom Cottage with its own driveway and postal address. The main house is pristine and immaculately restored and maintained. Beautiful mature trees and a detached barn/garage.

Listing Agent: Marilyn Sloper



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George Hanlon
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Deb Haws
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Sharon Hoverman
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Denise Taylor
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Terri Tournas
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Adrian Voss
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Applicant subject to credit and underwriting approval (20221102-1745808)

Equal Housing Lender Mary Dent NMLS ID: 260216 | CT - LO-260216 | GRA NMLS ID #1598647 (Nationwide Mortgage Licensing System www.nmlsconsumeraccess.org) • CT - Lic # MCL-1598647

Call Mary to discuss
your mortgage options.



Mary Dent

VP of Mortgage Lending

C: (203) 715-8584 garate.com/MaryDent
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