

“All upside” Region 9 approves solar project

By Anne Young Albanese

The Region 9 Board of Education voted unanimously on Tuesday, May 19 to move forward with a project to install solar panel canopies above the senior parking lot at Joel Barlow High School.

The project was developed in conjunction with the Connecticut Green Bank, a quasi-public agency created to encourage investment in green energy – and does not come with a price tag for the district.

“Financially, there is no cost to us to put it forward,” explained Board member Meghan Bendish who had been tasked with researching the project. Maintenance of the solar canopies also will be covered by Connecticut Green Bank.

Bendish added, “I like this model because there’s no risk to us, and we’re not stuck owning and maintaining solar panels for the next 20 years.”

Continued on page 5



Photo by Bill Brautigam

The sun made a reappearance in time for a glorious sunset over Meadow Ridge on Monday, May 25 after a washout Memorial Day Weekend. If you have a photo you’d like to see featured here, e-mail editor@reddingsentinel.org.

Committee turns focus to Wire Mill stabilization

By Rocco Valluzzo



Photo courtesy of the Town of Redding
The Gilbert & Bennett Wire Mill’s Sawtooth Building

By making use of a “stabilization only” approach, the Gilbert & Bennett Wire Mill Advisory Committee plans to halt further deterioration of several historic buildings in Georgetown until their proper restoration and redevelopment of the area can occur.

At its Thursday, May 14 meeting, the Committee addressed the “mothballing” philosophy – prioritizing low-cost, effective weatherization and structural shoring over

expensive restoration – to ensure the buildings survive until a developer or developing partners are secured to help realize the recent Georgetown Revitalization plan. The focus will be on public safety and a 10-year weatherization rather than restoration of buildings.

“This is very important to know, we are not doing development here,” said Committee Member Rob Dean. “Development is something that people are going to do

later. We should not be supposing what a developer’s outcomes are going to be. We should not be trying to do restoration work. We should not be ‘prettifying.’”

A prioritized list was presented at the meeting of 14 structures on the former Wire Mill site requiring intervention to prevent total loss. Among the top five is the Weaving Building, which was identified as the highest priority due to severe roof and flashing failures.

Another high-priority structure is the Machine Shop due to current occupancy and income and the Post Office, which is a focal point of the Georgetown Revitalization plan due to its iconic status. The Sawtooth Building needs a 10-year diagonal bracing of brick walls, even if it remains a landscape feature, and the Old Boiler House, whose

Continued on page 7

REDDING’S BIG OUTDOORS

Highstead celebrates nature and art on Open Trails Day June 6

By Susan Clark



Photo courtesy of Highstead
Quinnipiac Mountain Laurel
(*Kalmia latifolia* ‘Quinnipiac’)

Highstead, with its more than 100 acres of woodlands, wetlands, fields and meadows, is a Redding haven with a mission. Located on Lonetown Road in Redding Center, the conservation organization goes quietly about its business most of the year. On Open Trails Day,

however, it puts out the welcome mat and invites guests to explore the property and take part in special programs.

This year, Connecticut artist Sam Swap will lead a free printmaking workshop at Highstead’s pond from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. He will discuss the connections between art and the environment while participants learn how to create their own block prints using specialized carving tools and fine Japanese paper. Swap was New England Trail’s 2025 Artist-in-Residence. He is currently creating prints depicting the Connecticut River for a children’s book in anticipation of the Connecticut River Conservancy’s 75th anniversary.

Then, from 1:00 p.m. to 2:00 p.m., Highstead’s Executive Director, Geordie Elkins, will lead a guided tour of the extensive *Kalmia* collection. Participants will learn about the natural history and

ecology of mountain laurel – Connecticut’s state flower – as they see the more than 40 cultivars in the collection in full bloom. Elkins has served as Executive Director of Highstead since 2019. He is an active member of several regional initiatives, including the Hudson to Housatonic Regional Conservation Partnership, the Pollinator Pathway, and other organizations. A horticulturist by training, Elkins helped plant many of the species visible along Highstead’s trails and throughout the property today.

These two special events for June 6 require registration and are likely to fill up, so don’t delay. E-mail rsvp@highstead.net to register. Whether or not you’re able to join one of the day’s programs, do make time to visit Highstead and explore the property through the several self-guided walks – one of the better ways to spend a spring Saturday in Redding. ■

Voters to weigh in on three proposed ordinances

By Rocco Valluzzo

The Board of Selectmen approved sending three new ordinances to a Special Town Meeting for a vote on Monday, June 16 at 7:00 p.m.

Among them are an Inland Wetlands and Watercourses Citation Ordinance and a Zoning Enforcement Citation Ordinance, which would allow the Town to issue fines for violations and continued non-conformances. The ordinances do not propose changes to what constitutes a violation but rather add the ability to issue a citation (and collection of a fine) to the Town’s “toolbox” of compliance measures. Each day that a violation continues can be deemed a separate offense, for which a separate citation may be issued. The Wetlands Enforcement Officer or Zoning Enforcement Officer, depending on the ordinance, may (but is not required to) issue an informal notice of the violation to give the property owner or responsible party the opportunity for voluntary compliance.

An ordinance creating Historic District No. 1 and the Historic District Commission will also be considered at the Special Town Meeting. The move comes more than a year after several residents in the proposed district – which would include homes and buildings on Smith Street, Church Street, and North Main Street in Georgetown – requested the Town to pursue the State designation. An Historic District Study Committee was formed in November 2024 to study the possibility, with its report clearing the Town’s Planning and Zoning Commissions as well as the State Historic Preservation Office. The creation of the district was approved 14-3 by property owners in February 2026 following a public hearing in November 2025.

Selectwoman Diana Carlino presented extensive research to the Board of Selectmen last week on the “prudent and feasible” language used in the proposed Historic District Ordinance, which refers to the following passage regarding demolition of property in the district: “Demolition of contributing buildings is strongly discouraged and shall be approved only upon a showing that retention is infeasible and that no prudent and feasible alternative exists, consistent with statutory standards and local precedent for preservation ordinances.”

Carlino initially expressed concern that the language might be too narrow, potentially stymieing property development. After reviewing Connecticut General Statutes and case law, she concluded that the term is not strictly defined in State statute, to allow local commissions the discretion to weigh historical significance against the owner’s intended purpose. The Selectmen agreed that the new Commission’s discretion, coupled with the applicant’s right to appeal, provides a balanced approach consistent with other Connecticut towns. ■

Read the proposed ordinances at reddingct.gov/event/special-town-meeting-8

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Democrats endorse and Republicans nominate candidates for 26th State Senate District

By Jessie Wright

Conventions held this month have produced an endorsement of a Democratic candidate and the nomination of a Republican candidate for Connecticut State Senate District 26, which includes Darien, New Canaan, Redding, Ridgefield, Stamford, Weston, Westport, and Wilton.

Current State Senator Ceci Maher (D) announced in March that she would not be seeking reelection this fall, aiming to provide opportunities for a younger generation of lawmakers.

Weston First Selectwoman Sam Nestor secured the Democratic Party’s endorsement on Monday, May 18 with 48 delegate votes over the 25 delegate votes cast for State Representative Lucy Dathan. Nestor currently is serving her third term as First Selectwoman and has a professional background in marketing and business ownership. Her campaign has identified affordability, public safety, and prioritizing education as key areas of focus.

Nestor and Dathan will face off in a primary on August 11 to secure the nomination.

Republican delegates met on Tuesday, May 19 to nominate Alma Sarelli as their candidate for the seat.

An immigrant from Albania and longtime Westport resident, Sarelli is a current elected member of Westport’s Representative Town Meeting and business owner. She said she does not consider herself a politician, but rather a community advocate who wants to help the towns of the 26th District bring control back to the people, for the people.

Sarelli’s campaign said in a statement that she is focused on making Connecticut more affordable, supporting safe communities, preserving educational excellence, protecting parental rights, strengthening special education funding, defending local planning and zoning authority, and ensuring government works for the people, not the other way around.

Selectman OK two proposals for Neighborhood Assistance Act program

By Rocco Valluzzo

The Board of Selectmen unanimously approved 2026 Connecticut Neighborhood Assistance Act (NAA) program proposals from New Pond Farm Education Center and the Georgetown Volunteer Fire Company No. 1 at its Monday, May 18 meeting and set a date for a public hearing on June 16 at 6:30 p.m. at the Redding Community Center.

The program is designed to provide funding for municipal and tax-exempt organizations by providing a corporation business tax credit for businesses that make cash contributions up to \$150,000 to these entities for certain projects.

New Pond Farm Development Manager Gina Marcus and Executive Director Priya Desai presented a proposal to renovate a farmhouse on the property into an adult learning center for residents aged 55 and older. The project focuses on energy efficiency, specifically replacing approximately

30 inefficient windows and three doors in the 1850s-era structure.

“We do need some work to make it more energy efficient and be mindful of our carbon footprint,” said Marcus. “This was a proposal that we thought would be a really great idea and steps to making it realized as a space for the public.”

The Georgetown Volunteer Fire Company’s proposal is a continuation of its solar installation project, for which it has participated in the NAA in previous years. According to the proposal, the solar panel project will be installed on the roof of the fire company headquarters. Once installed, it will operate autonomously and provide an estimated 86% of the building’s electrical needs, saving an estimated \$11,500 annually at current electrical rates.

“I think it’s great that they’re moving on,” said First Selectwoman Julia Pemberton. “This is a really an ambitious goal.”

POLICE BLOTTER

May 18 – 25 | By Donna Christopher

Police assisted in two citizen calls, four emergency medical service calls, and one fire department call. They processed two firearm permits.

Active warrants

A 30-year-old Danbury man walked into the Redding Police Station on May 19 to turn himself on two active warrants for second-degree failure to appear. He was given a Danbury Superior Court date of June 3. He posted 7% of a \$500 bond, which was \$35.

Theft

A theft was reported on Giles Hill Road on May 25, after a generator was allegedly taken from a building from a known contractor.

Missing person

Patrols located a person with dementia who had been reported missing on Redding Road.

Traffic

There were 35 motor vehicle stops in the one-week period, in which officers issued eight infractions, 11 written warnings, and 16 verbal warnings. The infraction rate was 23%.

Three two-car collisions occurred. One of the crashes, taking place on Black Rock Turnpike around 10:30 a.m. on Memorial Day, resulted in minor injuries.

Suspicious incidents

A caller on Long Ridge Road reported a woman was looking over the fence into the yard. Police were unable to locate the woman.

Police checked out a reported suspicious Jeep on Wayside Lane, and determined the driver had an appointment with the property owner and was early.

Youth were reported on Fire Hill Lane to be ringing the doorbell and running off.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

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

To the Editor,

The Redding Garden Club thanks the community of friends, neighbors, and families for your participation Saturday, May 10 at our annual Plant Sale – our most successful yet! Backyard Beekeepers, Highstead, New Pond Farm Education Center., Norwalk River Valley Trail, Redding Grange (accompanied by Victor DeMasi and his butterflies), Redding Historical Society, Redding Land Trust, Redding Neighbors & Newcomers, and Trail Tenders all contributed to the enthusiasm and enjoyment of the day. We couldn’t have done it without you!

We are honored to share our love of gardening and Redding with everyone. ■

Sarah Cummings, Redding Garden Club Plant Sale Chair



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LEGAL NOTICES

The Brunissen Trust for Redding Senior Citizens, Inc. will meet at 10:00 a.m. on Saturday, June 6, 2026 at the Redding Community Center, 37 Lonetown Rd, Redding, CT. ■

Bill Hill, President

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN to the residents of the Georgetown Fire District of the Annual Meeting of said District to be held here at the Georgetown Fire District Office, 61 Redding Road, Georgetown CT on Tuesday the 9th of June 2026 at 7:00 p.m.

The call of the meeting will be as follows:

1. To hear the reports of the officers / 2. To elect 2 Deputy Commissioners

Dated this 26th day of May 2026. ■

Will Ely, Commissioner / Elio Cavicchia, 1st Deputy Commissioner / Dan Mecozzi, 2nd Deputy Commissioner

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING FOR 2026 CT NEIGHBORHOOD ASSISTANCE ACT PROGRAM PROPOSALS

A public hearing will be held on **Tuesday, June 16, 2026, at 6:30 p.m.** at the Redding Town Hall Hearing Room, 100 Hill Road, Redding, CT to consider 2026 CT Neighborhood Assistance Act Program proposals from the New Pond Farm Education Center and Georgetown Volunteer Fire Company No. 1 ■

Redding Board of Selectmen / Julia Pemberton, Diana M. Carlino, Michael Thompson

Correction to the May 21, 2026 issue:

The secondary headline of a story on page 5 incorrectly named Chicago as the location of an upcoming eight-grade field trip. The trip, as outlined in the article, is to Boston. We regret this error. ■

SENTINEL SUMMER PUBLISHING SCHEDULE



The *Sentinel* begins our summer schedule this week, publishing every other week through August. The next issue will be published on **Thursday, June 11.**

Summer issues will still be delivered to subscribers both in hard copy through the mail and through an e-mailed digital link. All of us at the *Sentinel* wish all of you a happy and healthy summer!

Visit reddingsentinel.org/publishing-schedule for a complete list of Volume 4 issue dates. Contact us at publisher@reddingsentinel.org with any questions.

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Redding Sentinel Ltd believes in supporting the community it serves. We pledge to donate all profits to local community organizations.

Rain can't dampen Memorial Day Parade



Photos by Susan Clark, Linda Meyer Mitchell, and Ellen O'Dwyer-Woods
In a remarkable display of gratitude and patriotic spirit, the annual Memorial Day Parade on Saturday, May 23 brought out community groups, fire departments, a float by Redding Grange #15, children with decorated bicycles, marching bands, and elected officials, despite the steady rain, to honor those who died in service to our country.

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Fire District #2 voters approve budget... and erroneous mil rate

By Jessie Wright

Voters in Fire District #2 gathered on Thursday, May 21 for the district's annual meeting and to weigh in on the 2026-27 budget. The proposed operating budget showed a modest increase – just 1.5% over the current fiscal year. The Grand List (the combined value of real property in the district) also increased slightly from last year, meaning the mil rate – and therefore, tax bills for many living in the district – should have been set to go down in 2026-27.

However, the new mil rate – 1.147 – which voters approved on Thursday, was mistakenly calculated using the budget's total revenue number, not the revenue to be levied through taxes. (The district collects \$80,000 each year through ambulance service fees, which should not have been included in the mil rate calculation). So, instead of a 0.2% reduction in the mil rate, voters approved a 13% increase.

The discrepancy was raised during public comment ahead of voting, but the source and implications of the mathematical mistake were not identified until immediately

following the meeting, when the *Sentinel* met with District Tax Collector Christine Quigley to confirm the source of the mil rate calculation.

A total of 18 voters in the district attended the meeting, which began about 30 minutes after its posted time as the Commissioners waited for enough people to arrive to make the required 15-person quorum. Both the budget and the mil rate received votes of 17-1.

The Commissioners were crestfallen when they realized the issue, only minutes after the meeting had adjourned.

"We're taxpayers ourselves," Commissioner Charles Wells said as he looked over the numbers. "We'll do whatever we have to do to make this right."

The district will hold a meeting on Thursday, June 4 at 7:00 p.m. for a special budget and mil rate vote to correct the error. The budget that will be voted upon for 2026-27 is \$604,192 and the mil rate is 1.013. The meeting will take place at the West Redding Firehouse at 306 Umpawaug Road. ■



Resident Joe H. teeing off at the Ridge Range golf simulator.



Resident Bob T. exploring his artistic side in the activities room.

There's a real sense of community at Meadow Ridge. The amenities are amazing, and the food is fantastic. There's quality care here; should my mom need it, that gives us great peace of mind.

— Greg Z., son of resident Ingrid Z.

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SPORTS

Barlow advances to semifinals

Girls lacrosse | By Rocco Valluzzo



Photo by Rocco Valluzzo

Joel Barlow High's Sawyer Cutler, left, battles Weston's Izzy Gronowetter for a draw control during a South-West Conference girls lacrosse quarterfinal game on Tuesday, May 19. Barlow won 13-8.

Taking better care of the ball turned out to be what the Joel Barlow High girls lacrosse team needed late in the South-West Conference quarterfinals.

The fourth-seeded Falcons were tied with fifth-seeded Weston heading into the fourth quarter on Tuesday, May 19. By maintaining possession, Barlow created the scoring chances they needed and took advantage of them for a 13-8 victory at home.

The win completed a rare season sweep of the Trojans (11-7 and 13-8), marking the first time in many years Barlow has beaten this oppo-

nent twice in a single season.

Once the contest got underway after some pre-game downpours, the Falcons consistently won draw controls despite the wet turf. Weston, however, took the lead twice before the Falcons answered each time with goals by Sophia Sgritta and Jessica Russo. It remained a 2-2 tie after one quarter.

Although the Falcons struggled with turnovers in the next frame, they did manage an offensive run with Russo (two goals), Emma Ogden, and Lila Fellows all scoring within a span of less than two and a half minutes. Weston answered

with a goal on a free position play in the time remaining as Barlow led 6-3 at halftime.

A couple of Falcon turnovers in the third frame helped Weston inch closer. The guests scored one, then, following another goal by Ogden with seven minutes left to go, Weston scored three straight to tie it at 7-7.

Netting her fourth goal of the afternoon, Russo put her team back on top early in the fourth quarter. A penalty against the Trojans later put them down a player and the Falcons took advantage of the situation with a goal courtesy of Caroline Lippoth.

After a fifth goal from Russo, Weston came within two (10-8) with just under five minutes to go but the Falcons did not slow down, netting three more goals in the time remaining. Freshman goalie Lilly Friedman also came up with some key saves to stop Weston's threat.

"She's stepped up a lot with us this year," said Barlow Head Coach Megan Kreitler. "She's definitely got a lot of growth still in her, but she definitely helps us out on the defensive end."

Kreitler also credited Grace Olsen on defense for holding Weston's main threat, Ruby Mecca, to four goals. Lippoth also provided critical support in the midfield, limiting Weston's scoring opportunities during the physical contest.

Russo led the Falcons with six goals. Ogden followed with three. Sgritta had two while Lippoth and Lila Fellows (one assist) each had one.

Note: Barlow lost 6-9 to top-seeded defending champ New Fairfield in the semifinals two days later. It will now take part in the State Class M tournament this weekend against an opponent at a time and location to be determined.

Falcons are conference runners-up

Girls and boys track and field | By Rocco Valluzzo

Girls track and field

For a small group in terms of numbers, the Joel Barlow High girls track team had a big impact at the South-West Conference championship last week.

The Falcons had fewer than a dozen athletes competing at New Milford High on Thursday, May 21. Between them, however, they would score 84 points, second only to Newtown, which claimed its fourth straight league crown. Weston was third with 81, a point ahead of Brookfield. Pomperaug followed with 75.

"We had 11 girls qualify and compete yesterday - most of them competing in three or four events," said Barlow Head Coach Ryan Swift. "They performed brilliantly."

Barlow did not earn points in every event, but they were propelled by a number of strong finishes. Its first points came in the 4x800-meter relay at the start of the meet with Olivia Kotula, Clara Mehner, Stephanie Bardani, and Kate Duggan finishing in 10:12.84, taking fourth overall.

The results of the 100-meter high hurdles came as no surprise, as defending champ Phoebe Cora Smith took the gold medal again, this time in 15.28. For the third year in a row, she was the winner in the 300-meter hurdles, taking the gold medal in 45.77.

"Phoebe is, obviously, one of the best athletes in the state and rose to the occasion winning both hurdle events," said Swift.

A bronze medal went to Barlow in the 100-meter race with Olivia Taylor running a 12.98, only 0.03 seconds ahead of Newtown's Gemma Marks. Another came in the 400 when Vika Abukhovich finished in 1:00.31.

Duggan won an individual medal in the 800, taking the silver in 2:17.15, second only to Weston's Abby Winslow. It was a similar result in the 200 when Taylor finished second in 26.64.

Barlow's third gold medal came in the 4x400. Taylor, Smith, Abukhovich, and Duggan combined to finish in 4:01.99, beating Brookfield by nearly five seconds.

Winning her third individual medal, Taylor took the gold in the long jump with a leap of 17 feet, 8.5 inches, a personal best. Duggan won her second individual medal in the pole vault by clearing 9 feet, 6 inches for the bronze. Vivian D'Amico was fifth with 8 feet.

Boys track and field

The field of competitors in the boys championship was a tough one, as the Falcons fought for every point they earned. Totaling 28, they were ninth out of 14 teams.

Defending champ Bethel ran away with its third straight title, this time with 197 points. Stratford was a distant second with 80, and Newtown was third with 74.

"With Bethel being so strong, it was tough to place high overall," said Barlow Head Coach Ryan Paola. "But we met expectations

given the competition."

Barlow's only track points came in the 200. Kaelen Kumar was seventh in 23.59.

Its remaining points were in the field events. Bauer Heres had his team's best finish. Clearing 13 feet in the pole vault (personal best), he took the silver medal.

"Bauer was definitely the highlight," said Paola. "He went from an eight-foot pole vaulter last year to jumping 13 feet and coming in second, really impressive and a result of a lot of hard work."

Max Mehner cleared 11 feet 6 inches, as did Pomperaug's Anthony Mahr, but took eighth based on number of attempts.

Two scored for the Falcons in the javelin. Taking the bronze medal, Noah Beninati had 163 feet 1 inch. Sam Walker was right behind him with 161 feet 10 inches.

"Noah and Sam both had solid performances and are in the top tier of javelin throwers in the state," said Paola. "Sam also achieved a personal record, which was great to see."

The latter also scored in the discus with a throw of 102 feet 4 inches, good for seventh. Ethan Rose was fifth with 118 feet 2 inches, a personal best.

Both the girls and boys teams will take part in the State Class M meet on Monday, June 1 at 10:00 a.m. at Willow Brook Park in New Britain. ■

Weston pulls out of Barlow's reach

Boys lacrosse | By Rocco Valluzzo



Photo by Rocco Valluzzo

Joel Barlow High's Braylon Bennett, left, tries to get around Weston's Rio Zullo during a South-West Conference boys lacrosse semifinal game on Thursday, May 21. Barlow lost a 7-12 decision.

A late surge by the Joel Barlow High boys lacrosse team was not enough to overcome some earlier difficulties in a South-West Conference semifinal game at Weston last week.

The third-seeded Falcons outscored the second-seeded Trojans 4-1 in the last quarter on Thursday, May 21. The deficit, however, was too large for them to overcome in the time remaining as they came up short 7-12.

The Falcons won a number of face-offs early on, setting up multiple shots. Most of the time, they were turned away by Weston goalie Ben Pellegrini, who did not surrender a goal until late in the half.

"We got a lot of quality shots in that first half," said Barlow Head Coach Taylor Leahy. "They just didn't go in. Their goalie made a bunch of good saves."

In the meantime, Weston's attack had more success. A pair of goals by Cobie Walker put his team up 0-2 after one frame.

Such marked the beginning of a 0-7 run that continued well into the second quarter. It was not until 33 seconds remained in the half that Barlow stopped the run, coming on a reverse shot by Matt Branca to make it 1-7 at the break.

Walker completed his hat trick less than 30 seconds into the third quarter. Although the Falcons answered with goals by Alan Gurney

and Kaden Holub later in the frame, the Trojans netted four goals in the quarter, several coming when the Falcons were down a player due to penalties.

Despite a challenging first half dominated by Weston's defense, Barlow demonstrated significant resilience in the final frame. It found success by winning individual matchups and improving its ball security. Four goals, however, would not be enough.

"We did a better job of hanging onto the ball in that fourth quarter and not turning it over," said Leahy. "I think that kind of plagued us a little bit in the second and third quarter. They've got a good defense, and you know, they forced us into some mistakes. And at the end of the day, it was just too late when we kind of woke up and started to really play."

Holub led Barlow with three goals and Jake Russo had two while Branca (two assists) and Gurney netted one apiece. Braylon Bennett finished with two assists.

Looking ahead, the Falcons could encounter some familiar opponents in the State tournament. As the number five seed in Class M, Barlow is likely once again to face Weston and New Fairfield, who hold the top seeds. The Falcons open the tournament next week against an opponent at a time and location to be determined. ■

Falcons fall to top seed

Baseball | By Rocco Valluzzo



Photo by Rocco Valluzzo

Joel Barlow High's Drew Gutowski applies the late tag to Bethel's Brody Kasack during the South-West Conference baseball quarterfinals on Friday, May 22. The eighth-seeded Falcons lost 4-12 to the top-seeded, defending champ Wildcats.

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Christopher Geissler named incoming John Read Middle School Principal

By Anne Young Albanese



Photo by Dr. Jason McKinnon
Alisha DiCorpo, ER9 Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction, with Christopher Geissler, the incoming Principal for John Read Middle School.

The Redding Board of Education and the Easton-Redding-Region 9 administration have hired a new Principal for John Read Middle School. Following a special meeting on May 19, Christopher J. Geissler was announced as the school’s newest leader beginning July 1, 2026.

Geissler has more than two decades of educational experience, including 15 years as the Principal of Middle Gate Elementary School in Newtown. Before that, he was the Assistant Principal for Fairfield Woods Middle School in Fairfield. He has dedicated his career to educating middle schoolers. His career began in 2001 as a fifth-grade teacher at Osborn Hill School in Fairfield. He also served as the lead teacher for mathematics and social studies. In 2004, he joined Burr Elementary School in Fairfield, where he served as a fifth-grade teacher and grade five lead teacher. “Chris is widely respected as a thoughtful, collaborative, and highly visible leader who builds authentic relationships throughout the school community,” said ER9 Superintendent Dr. Jason McKinnon. “Throughout his career, he has demonstrated a deep commitment to instructional excellence, student-centered leadership, strong school culture, and meaningful partnerships with families and staff.” Laura Worosz, Chair of the Redding Board of Education, was

heavily involved in the search and selection process. “During the interview process, it became apparent that Chris’s approach to leadership is driven by his care for students and a genuine approach to relationships. Not only will Chris bring his experience as a strong instructional leader, but he also understands the importance of culture and community,” she said. “I am honored and excited for the opportunity to join the John Read Middle School community,” said Geissler. “I look forward to partnering with students, staff, and families to continue fostering a positive, inclusive, and engaging learning environment where all students can thrive.” Geissler will be taking over from Jennifer Desmarais, who is retiring after dedicating most of her career to the Redding and Region 9 school districts. She started teaching social studies at John Read Middle School. In 1999, she moved to Joel Barlow High School to teach social studies, working her way to Assistant Principal before returning to John Read Middle School as Principal in 2022. ■

Barlow Palooza celebrates student creativity and study

Photos by Victoria Flishenbaum



On Thursday, May 21, Joel Barlow High School was filled with student displays, performances, presentations, and activities during the 20th annual Barlow Palooza, an event celebrating student ingenuity and school programs. (From top left, clockwise): Barlow a cappella singers performed in the Library Learning Commons; pencil-style drawings shown as part of the art displays, with a life-sized vulture center in the center; Barlow Robotics put on a spectacle for onlookers with their robot, trying to organize yellow cones into a pile; The "Ceramics Station" where Barlow students demonstrated pottery making.

“All upside”: Region 9 approves solar project / continued from page 1

“I think that it’s probably the right thing for our community to be investing in solar energy period, and the reality is it’s highly unlikely that we’re going to invest administrative time, Board time, and taxpayer money [into the project],” Region 9 Board of Education Chairman Chris Parkin said in summary. The impetus for the project came from Barlow sophomore Alexandra Humphrey, who researched and proposed the undertaking to the Board in November. She has been mentored through the process by Susan Auslander, a resident at Meadow Ridge and the leader of that community’s Solar Committee, which helped lead the effort to get a solar installation online there in 2024. First Selectwoman Julia Pemberton introduced Auslander to Humphrey, and Auslander has been able to guide Humphrey through the research needed specifically for a project at Joel Barlow High School.

Humphrey argued that, in addition to the energy cost savings the project would provide, there also would be educational benefits. “Incorporating solar into the curriculum at Barlow, we have the AP Environmental Science, but also just teaching students about climate change overall and showing them that Barlow and our community is making change is a good look for the school,” Humphrey pointed out. Bendish responded, “That was one of the questions that was asked. The Green Bank can supply some data for some of the classes at Barlow [to utilize].” The Board has decided to move ahead with a Netting PPA (power purchase agreement). In this agreement, Region 9 will purchase electricity from the Connecticut Green Bank. If Barlow stays with the original configuration, Connecticut Green Bank estimated that Region 9 will save \$47,930 for the first

year, with a total estimated savings of \$1,593,974 for the length of the agreement. (Note: Since there are so many variables involved in the calculations, these numbers are not guaranteed.) Nevertheless, the Board committed to the program because the program will certainly save taxpayers money, regardless of the exact number. “I congratulate Allie Humphrey for bringing this program to the Board’s attention and being a persuasive advocate for bringing solar power to Barlow,” Parkin said in a statement after the meeting. “Region 9 will benefit from her hard work for years to come. The program is all upside for the district. We will use solar power to reduce the financial and environmental cost of operating Joel Barlow High School without taking on the cost or risk associated with building and maintaining the solar canopies.” ■

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Barlow takes second at State Robotics Championship

By Rob Sample



Photo by Jon Stinson
The Barlow Robotics team was all smiles after their team’s alliance took home second place at the Connecticut State Robotics Championship on May 17.

The robotics team at Joel Barlow High School placed second at the Connecticut State Robotics Championship on Sunday, May 17 at Glastonbury High School. Robotics teams from 28 Connecticut high schools took part in the event, which is held each year under the auspices of the Connecticut Interscholastic Athletic Conference (CIAC). “Qualification for participation in the championship is based on a team’s performance in qualification tournaments, which in Barlow Robotics’s case took place in March at Wilby High School in Waterbury and in Greater Boston at Revere High School,” noted Jon Stinson, one of the lead mentors for the Barlow Robotics team. “Barlow ended up at 17, which put it in the top 28 statewide and qualified the team for the Connecticut championship.” Stinson pointed out that some of the teams Barlow competed against at the State Championship also qualified to compete at the international FIRST Robotics Championship, which took place April 29 through May 2 in Houston. “So, the State Championship was a highly competitive event,” said Stinson. “The event itself follows the same competitive structure and rules as the FIRST Robotics tournaments.” Placing second for the 2026 event builds on the strong performance the team gave at last year’s Connecticut championship – which also took place at Glastonbury High School. There were 22 competing for the title last year, and Barlow finished in sixth place. The final results followed an intricate series of matches and play-offs modeled on an athletic competition. In fact, the CIAC created the championship to extend recognition

to high schoolers in competitive STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) programs along the lines that top athletes receive. “It’s really like an athletic competition,” said Stinson. “CIAC launched this in an effort to recognize some of the academic-adjacent clubs and competitions in the same way that the State honors star athletes. There is also an ‘All-State’ awards nomination, for individual students in robotics. We have our eye on taking part in that for next year.” A key part of the competition is the formation of alliances with FIRST Robotics teams from other competing schools. For example, in the semifinal match between the number three seed alliance (of which Barlow was part) and the number two seed, the number three seed alliance won. After that point, the number three seed alliance advanced to the finals to compete against the number one seed alliance. “Though Barlow was the 16th-place team, we became part of the third-place alliance because the teams on that alliance recognized that Barlow was a top team for defense from its performance at the earlier tournaments,” said Stinson. “As a result, our alliance played against the second-place alliance twice and beat them both times.” “Our driver, Sam Hartley, is relentless in the competition arena who helped us perform brilliantly against the best teams in the competition,” said Stinson. “But our whole group of students there were just fantastic. I could go through the entire list and give every single one of the students a compliment. In addition, parents came up to cheer the kids on.” In the final round, Barlow was on the same alliance with a team from Choate Rosemary Hall in Wallingford – the number two seed alliance played against was the “CyberKnights” from Southington. “That team won both of their FIRST qualifying events and were part of the seventh-place alliance at the World Championships in Houston,” said Stinson. “Overall, the entire New England District for FIRST Robotics is very competitive – besides Connecticut there are a lot of excellent teams from Massachusetts and Rhode Island as well.” “From my perspective, being down in the ‘pit’ with them was very gratifying after the work the team did this year,” Stinson continued. “The Barlow Robotics team put in a rock-star performance, and placing as well as it did puts it in an excellent position for next year’s round of robotics tournaments.” ■

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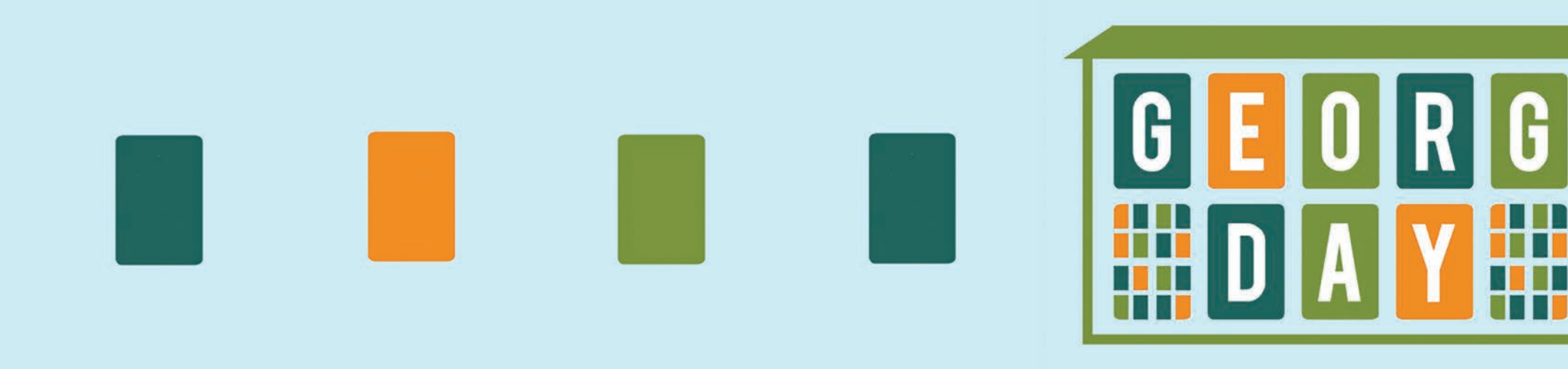
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Georgetown Day is on Sunday, June 7 | *By Justine Tassitano*

The 23rd annual Georgetown Day is on Sunday, June 7, from 12:00 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. Join your friends and neighbors for this exciting, free, family-friendly street festival on Main Street. Get a head start on summer and enjoy the many activities for all ages! Georgetown Day is organized and hosted by an all-volunteer committee with members from Georgetown Village Restoration, Inc. (GVR), Georgetown Volunteer Fire Co. (GVFC), Georgetown Community Association (GCA), and the Georgetown Lions Club.

“We’re proud to organize Georgetown Day, in its 23rd year,” said Nic Palazzo, GVR’s President and Georgetown Day Committee leader. “The community comes together for this wonderful event every year, and it’s great to see everyone enjoying themselves. We’re grateful to our sponsors that allow us to keep this event free for the community!”

Make sure to visit the official Welcome Booth, hosted by GVR in front of Lombardi’s, where you can find a Georgetown Day event map and schedule, limited edition

Georgetown Day T-shirts and free tote bags, and other Georgetown-branded merchandise like mugs, clothing, keychains, hats, and more. Profits collected from these items sold by GVR are put toward community projects in Georgetown, including Main Street’s new free Wi-Fi, street beautification, and safety initiatives.

Over 80 artisan vendors, food booths, and community organizations will be showcasing their goods and offerings on Main Street. The Georgetown Day committee prioritizes artisans who hand-make their goods and local food vendors for the event’s booths. In addition, the Town of Redding’s Gilbert & Bennett Wire Mill Committee will be near the Welcome Booth to share information on the redevelopment work at the Gilbert & Bennett Wire Mill and plans for the future.

There will be multiple local food vendors, including Georgetown establishments like Kermit’s Bake Shop, Milestone, Lombardi’s, Uncle Leo’s & Rosny Gourmet, Uncorked Georgetown, The Georgetown Owl Market & Saloon, The Given

Inn, Rancho Alegre, and more. Additional food vendors include Grumpy Dumpling, Bangkok Republic, Paella Party CT, among others. The Lions Club will host their famous beer tent with a range of snacks and beverages, including beer from nearby Nod Hill Brewery, with proceeds benefiting their organization.

Keeler (Lexus of Westport | Toyota of Westport | BMW of Ridgefield | Genesis of Ridgefield | Audi Hawthorne) is sponsoring the Georgetown Day Food Tent, where attendees can relax in the shade and enjoy their bites to eat. The Chili Cook-Off, organized by Georgetown Community Association and sponsored again by Naz-zaro Inc., features local restaurants sharing their chili masterpieces to compete for a popular vote from eventgoers. GCA is also offering their famous pickles-on-a-stick this year. All proceeds from the cook-off and food sales will go to supporting GCA’s Georgetown events and programs.

Georgetown Day also showcases two live music stages featuring local bands. The main stage is

generously sponsored by the event’s longest and leading sponsor Fairfield County Bank and will be located next to the Georgetown Package Store. Violet Engine kicks it off at noon followed by The MoJo Rhythm Kings (starting at 1:20 p.m.), Sugarhouse Band (2:40 p.m.), and Chuck’s in London (4:00 p.m.).

The second stage is sponsored by Bartlett Tree Experts and Eco-Systems Inc. Irrigation & Lighting, and will be in the parking lot of Uncorked Georgetown. Griffin Anthony starts at noon followed by Symphonic Bodega (1:15 p.m.), Last Minute Men (2:40 p.m.), and The Tune Squad with Holley McCreary (4:00 p.m.).

Georgetown Day also features a variety of kids’ activities, including face painting, an adventurous Main Street scavenger hunt, and Spray-a-Hose with GVFC, where kids can learn about firefighting. Additionally, there will be creative family-friendly activities led by the GVFC Community Engagement Committee. And of course, don’t miss the famous Playway area, sponsored by Servco Oil & Propane,

featuring interactive activities like Build A Boat & Waterway, a dinosaur and construction site sand table, temporary tattoos and bubbles, several touch-a-trucks thanks to Palazzo Landscaping, and more.

Free attendee parking will be located at the Wire Mill parking lot off of Portland Avenue. Free shuttles will be provided to and from the lot and will be running constantly all day. Shuttle attendees will load and unload from the parking lot in front of The Granite, at the corner of Portland Avenue and North Main Street. Accessible parking for those with disabilities is available onsite on North Main Street.

The Georgetown Day committee kindly requests leaving your pets comfortable at home due to the large crowds and hot pavement. ■

More information can be found by following @georgetownday on Instagram and Facebook, or at GVR’s website, georgetownct.org. See you there, rain or shine!

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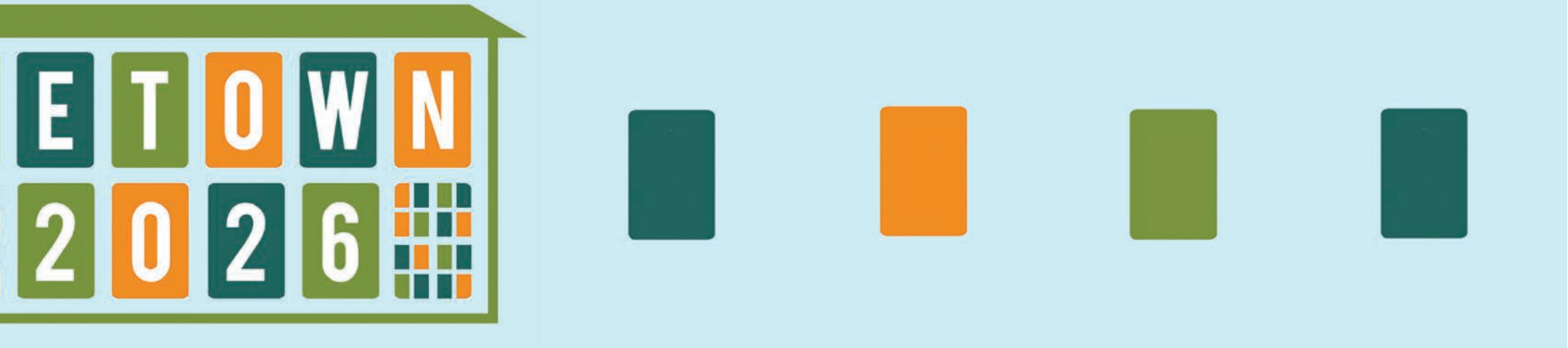
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A flair for chili and a passion for community

By Susan Clark

Jeff Amente, of Glen Hill Road, has almost lost track of the number of times he and his wife Marguerite have won the Georgetown Day chili contest. (Later verification says 10.) Marguerite and Jeff, a self-described South Norwalk boy, have lived in Redding for 22 years after moving from Ridgefield for the open space and lack of congestion. It was three years before they entered the annual chili contest, in 2007, and began to make their mark on the competition.

This year’s contest will be the second under new rules limiting entrants to chilis cooked in commercial kitchens. The change hasn’t dampened enthusiasm for this popular event, however. Last year, there were 192 tasters ready to cast their ballots, the highest number ever. When Georgetown Day officially opens at 12:00 p.m. each year, there is almost always a line already by the chili table.

Doreen McManus, Vice President of Fairfield County Bank, Georgetown Day’s lead sponsor, started managing the chili competition in 2022. There are no rules about what constitutes chili, she told the *Sentinel*. Just show up with 12 quarts in a pot and be prepared to say what’s in it. Roughly. Cooks are not expected to divulge their recipes. McManus described the Amentes as passionate about their chili as well as the contest and pointed out that they always stayed with their chili, personally serving up portions to tasters who pay \$10 to sample the array.

Both McManus and the Amentes talked about the chefs and tasters as a community. The same families come back every year, either to serve or be served. But because passion and a love of community aren’t necessarily enough to win, Jeff and Marguerite passed along some tips for contestants, as they take a step back from competing:

- Basic but critical: Bring enough chili. The Amentes ran out their first two years competing. If you run out, people can’t taste your chili and cast a vote for it.
- You’ve got to sell your product. The Amentes’ chili is made from wild game, an attention-getting variety that includes venison, buffalo, and beef. They developed the recipe together and, as Marguerite says, being Italian, their approach is “a bit of this and a bit of that.” Nothing measured.

• Add a little something extra. Jeff started making wine with his grandfather at the age of five. He offered tasters shots of his homemade wine with their tasting portions of chili. In jest, he was accused of bribing tasters. The Amentes also offered toppings, like cheese and sour cream.

Asked if they had any stories to tell about their competitors, Jeff said they love them all.

This year’s entrants are Heibeck’s, Black Cat, Dave “Chile” Wanke, Grumpy Dumpling, Lombardi’s Trattoria, Milestone, Uncle Leo’s & Rosny’s, Georgetown Fire Department, Georgetown Owl, and The Given Inn. ■



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Committee turns focus to Wire Mill stabilization / continued from page 1

steel frame is failing and masonry is expanding due to rust, needs shoring up.

“The Town has now owned the property for about 10 years,” said Dean. [Editor’s note: While foreclosure proceedings on the property began in 2014, the Town of Redding did not take title to the property until 2020.] “It’s done nothing with these historic structures, and they continue to deteriorate. That’s a process that didn’t start with the Town, it started with the previous

developer, but it has continued with the Town, and it really has to stop, or else these buildings are going to be lost.”

The Committee also discussed the necessity of maintaining the historic fabric of the site to maintain the support of the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO). Dean emphasized that losing the historic preservation angle would likely result in losing State patronage and development-oriented bureaucratic support.

For the Board of Finance to find the process “credible,” the Committee agreed it must move from general studies to specific, bid-ready specifications with clear 90% pricing estimates.

“Public ownership gives us a great luxury in that we do not have future bond holders or banks breathing down our necks. We have the luxury of time to do things that don’t require overnight results,” Dean pointed out. “However, at the same time, it requires a clear

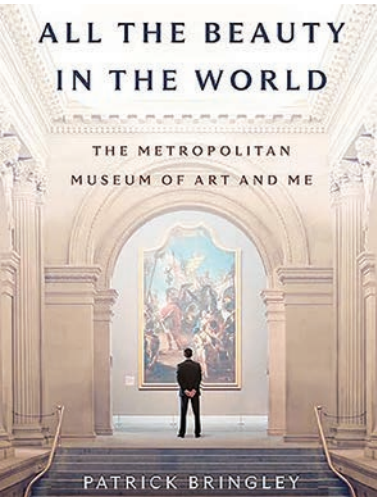
public accountability on issues such as historic preservation and frugal, visible, effective use of resources.”

The Committee also reached a consensus on the need to align these efforts with the Long Range Financial Planning Committee and the upcoming September capital planning cycle to secure necessary funding. The Gilbert and Bennett Wire Mill Fund, currently holding approximately \$600,000, was identified as the primary source for initial architectural specifications. ■

BOOK REVIEW

All the Beauty in the World
The Metropolitan Museum of Art and Me

By Patrick Bringley / 240 pages / Simon & Schuster / \$18.99



Patrick Bringley brings a knowledgeable insider’s eye to this memoir of his time as a guard at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. His mother introduced him to the world of art with trips to the Art Institute of Chicago, and spending time in museums became a habit and a solace for him.

Bringley moved to New York and worked at the *New Yorker* magazine, where he landed a job in their events department. For a few years, he assisted literary luminaries as they participated in the *New Yorker* Festival and the like. Until, slowly then suddenly, his older brother – also living in New York – became unwell. Within two years he would be dead from cancer. And being an events runner at the *New Yorker* didn’t feel right.

He looked for a job where he could be absorbed in his thoughts, without the need to use his brain too much for work. Turning to the art world, to a museum environment that felt familiar and comfortable, he applied to become a guard at the Met.

All the Beauty in the World chronicles his years at the Met, both as a guard and as a young man growing into his adult self. We learn how guarding the Met’s precious artworks happens – the rules and routines, assignments, rotations and challenges. Bringley has a good ear for the telling question and, without condescension, lets us know how guards respond when asked, for example, where in the museum they can find the Mona Lisa. (It’s in the Louvre in Paris.) The most common question seems to be “Is it original?” and the visitor is assured that all the art in the museum is, indeed, original.

Improbable friendships are made. In the museum equivalent of “chain migration,” the guard ranks are over-populated by immigrants from Albania and Ghana as one person lands a job then tells his friends and family. Some guards stay until they retire; others just a few years. Together they form a tight community that supports Bringley until he feels it is time to move on.

Following the death of his brother, working at the Met was a coming home, and he stayed until great loves supported him in a different way. He married and became a father.

Bringley is knowledgeable about art and writes with authority about the various artworks and exhibitions he guards. This is one of the most delightful aspects of the book. And, just as his mother made him choose a favorite painting on every visit to a museum, he selects one at the Met on his last day on the job. ■

Review by Susan Clark

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LIBRARY CORNER

By Erin Shea Dummeyer

It’s always fun to peruse the *New York Times* bestseller list to see what books are popular right now. But how about a Redding bestseller list complete with the most popular titles in town? Or another way to phrase it, “Be nosy about what your neighbors are reading!”

Topping the Redding bestseller lists are two debuts. *Theo of Golden* by Allen Levi is a gem of a book that tells the story of Theo, who arrives in the small Southern town of Golden. He walks into a coffeeshop and begins purchasing the pencil portraits of the townspeople that hang on the walls. Another fabulous debut and the second most popular book in town right now is

Caro Claire Burke’s *Yesteryear*. It’s about an Instagram influencer cosplaying as a “trad wife” who wakes up one day in what appears to be an alternate universe. I’m probably not selling it well but I loved it. It explores themes of motherhood, masculinity, and internet culture with a wild twist ending.

The waitlist for Michael Connelly’s *Ironwood* is building, which is no surprise as his books are perennially popular here in town. Some other books with growing holds lists haven’t even been published yet, but anticipation is growing. Daniel Silva’s *Ransom* comes out this July, but your neighbors are already clamoring for it. And

then of course Louise Penny’s *Miss Wolcott’s Ghost* has a growing holds list despite not coming out until October. Penny’s books are always a hit in this town.

It’s also always interesting to see if some of the titles from the *New York Times* bestseller list are as popular in our neighborhood. Carley Fortune’s steamy Canadian romance *Our Perfect Storm* and *The Help* author Kathryn Stockett’s latest *The Calamity Club* have short waitlists right now, but who knows what next week will bring? ■

Erin Shea Dummeyer is
Director, Mark Twain Library

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Colorful community celebrations as Pride month begins

By Willow Bradford



Photo by Emily Denaro

Bethel CT Pride’s Annual LGBTQIA+ Parade and Celebration
Saturday, May 30
Bethel Municipal Center,
1 School Street, Bethel
12:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Kick off Pride month with a sidewalk parade at 12:00 p.m., followed by a flag raising with vendors, kids activities, and music in downtown Bethel. The event is free, family friendly, and will take place rain or shine.

4th Annual Wilton Pride Festival
Sunday, May 31
(Rain date June 7)
Wilton Town Green,
Old Ridgefield Road, Wilton
11:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Boasting a DJ, artisan market, face paint, photo booth, and a scavenger hunt, Wilton Pride will present the 4th Annual Pride Festival. Sponsors like ASML will run a painting table alongside a community art mural and sensory inclusive event.

Make a Rainbow Butterfly for Pride
Sunday, May 31
Children’s Program Room at
Wilton Public Library,
137 Old Ridgefield Road, Wilton
2:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.

For children ages 4-11, the Wilton Public Library will host a Rainbow Butterfly crafting event. Children will turn recycled products into beautiful rainbow butterflies in support of Pride. Registration is required at wiltonlibrary.org/events.

Easton CT Pride’s 7th Annual Flag Raising
Monday, June 1
Easton Town Hall,
225 Center Road, Easton
5:30 p.m.

Raise the Pride flag and hear from guest speakers, enjoy ice cream, and listen to music. Easton Pride yard signs are available for pickup at Greiser’s in Easton.

Ridgefield Pride in the Park
Saturday, June 6
Ballard Park,
485 Main Street, Ridgefield
12:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.

Ridgefield Pride in the Park is a free event, open to the public and catering to families, with a variety of activities, crafts, entertainment and informational tables geared towards all ages. The rain location will be Yanity Gym.

Prideful Run with Ridgefield Running Co
Saturday, June 6
Main Street, Ridgefield
11:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Held in conjunction with Ridgefield Pride in the Park, Ridgefield Running Co. will celebrate pride with a three-mile run/walk down Main Street in Ridgefield. Registration is required and there will be a celebratory T-shirt.

Danbury Pride
Saturday, June 6
Hatters Park,
7 East Hayestown Road, Danbury
1:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Hosted by Summer Orlando in Hatters Park, Danbury Pride will offer food trucks, vendors, information, and entertainment. Everyone of all ages is welcome.

39th Connecticut LGBTQ Film Festival
Friday, June 12 – Saturday, June 20
Cinestudio, 300 Summit Street,
Hartford

Hosted by Out Film CT, this 17-day film festival (nine days in person, followed by eight days online), will feature over 85 films in 23 programs to bring people together to introduce, celebrate, and rediscover the ideas and values that make the LGBTQ community unique. ■

The importance of “mom”

Mark Twain Library hosts documentary screening on gay sons and their mothers

By Anne Young Albanese



Filmmaker and psychotherapist Rick Miller visited Mark Twain Library earlier this month to share his 30-minute award-winning documentary *Mom, I Have Something to Tell You*. According to Miller, the film “reveals one of the gay man’s most important (and lesser-talked-about) relationships: the one with his mother.” As Miller sat with sons and their mothers during the filming process, he learned that mothers were the first and, in a few instances, the only individuals in their family that sons felt they could be themselves with.

Following the screening, he led a discussion with those attending. “Audiences are surprised at how they see themselves in these stories,” Miller said of the reactions to screening his film at various places. He said he has observed many mothers, sons, and family members having a profound experience from watching the film. *Mom, I Have Something to Tell You* was accepted into numerous film festivals. It was an “Official

Selection” at the New York Lift-Off Film Festival and The OUTSOUTH Queer Film Festival. It earned the “Award of Merit, LGBTQ+ Theme” and the “Award of Recognition, Documentary Short” from The Indie Fest. At the Best Shorts Competition, it won an “Award of Merit LGBTQ+ Theme,” an “Award of Recognition LGBTQ+ Filmmaker,” and an “Award of Recognition: Viewer Impact: Motivational/Inspirational.” It was a “2024 Special Mention Global Shorts Winner. It also received a “Winner Award of Recognition” at the Accolade Global Film Competition.

While the film is \ touring the film festival circuit, it is not available for streaming. However, anyone interested in hosting a showing can learn how at gaysonsandmothers.org/documentary.

Rick Miller, LICSW (Licensed Independent Clinical Social Worker), has dedicated his 40-year career to motivating people to change and inspiring them to find optimism inside themselves. Through his work as a psychotherapist, public speaker, podcaster, workshop presenter, interviewer, and author, he helps individuals, couples, groups, and others connect and thrive together.

A gay man who has himself navigated social stigma, Rick’s journey of self-acceptance has influenced his work with others. He shows people how to embrace complexities as well as vulnerabilities – and how to grow from these experiences. ■

Learn more at gaysonsandmothers.org/documentary

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BUSINESS SPOTLIGHT

From EMT to trauma therapist

Helping first responders heal

By Justin Reynolds



Bonnie Rumilly has recently expanded her practice, located on Old Mill Road in Georgetown.

When she was 17, Bonnie Rumilly was responding to emergencies as an EMT. After studying psychology at the University of Connecticut, becoming a social worker after graduation, and then stepping away from the workforce as a stay-at-home mom, she felt called to action after the Sandy Hook tragedy in 2012.

“I was 30 minutes away and knew I had to do something to help,” Rumilly said. “Three days later, I was doing crisis counseling and realized this is long-term work – people need long-term help for this trauma.” That epiphany led her to pursue trauma therapy as a career, with a particular focus on supporting first responders. “I realized that this is what I’m supposed to be doing,” she said. “It was my two worlds colliding but also marrying.” In 2017, Rumilly — a former EMS captain with New Canaan EMS — launched her own practice, A Greater Me, which specializes in trauma and eye movement desensitization and reprocessing (EMDR) therapy. Her office is located at 16 Old Mill Road in Georgetown. “I’ve been on my own for nine years and recently decided to expand,” Rumilly said. “I’ve brought

on two therapists and another’s coming very soon.” While the practice specializes in therapy for first responders, clients also include civilians who’ve experienced significant trauma. “We see people who’ve lost children, who’ve been through medical trauma, had miscarriages,” she said. Rumilly said her background in emergency services helped her connect with first responders naturally. “There was such ease,” she said. “They didn’t have to explain what it was like to be on a scene or call, because I’d been there.” According to Rumilly, first responder communities remain underserved by mental health services. Stigma around seeking help is still high despite increased trauma exposure, mental health struggles, and rates of suicide. “First responders see dozens, maybe hundreds of critical incidents in a career, and that absolutely

impacts mental health,” she said. “The average person might have one or two traumatic events in their lives, and [first responders] can have one or two in a day sometimes.” Rumilly encourages prospective clients to reach out through agreatermellc.com and fill out a form or call the office at (203) 957-1810. “They’ll go through an intake with a therapist and we’ll ask, ‘What is the presenting problem – what is bringing you to therapy?’” she explained. “The therapist will build rapport with the client in those first sessions and decide the path forward. We get to work and have tangible goals to reach with clients. We identify targets to just get on, get relief of symptoms – just get to a better place quicker.” In addition to running her practice, Rumilly stays busy co-hosting the Responder Resilience Podcast and serving

as clinical director of the Fairfield County Trauma Response Team. She is also co-author of a book, *Helping the Helpers: The Clinician’s Guide to First Responder Mental Wellness*. Rumilly, who lives with her family in Wilton, moved her practice to Georgetown in 2024. “I love this village,” she said. “I love this community. Everyone that I meet – small business owners – we all have a sense of pride and want to help each other. It’s a special place. I love being here.” Rumilly said her team will have a booth at Georgetown Day on Sunday, June 7. She encourages attendees to stop by and say hello. ■

Learn more at agreatermellc.com

The Natural World

The Goldilocks Principle of watering your garden

By Terry Karpen



Photos by Terry Karpen

Plants need water to survive. Water plays an essential role in photosynthesis. It is important for plant growth, and it's the essential ingredient for root development, and helps plants produce flowers, fruits, and seeds.

The Goldilocks Principle of watering advises that your garden soil should never be too dry or too wet, but just right. Watering looks simple, but doing it properly requires a delicate balance of timing, depth, and technique.

Papa Bear: Too little water. Photosynthesis ceases, plant roots fail to absorb nutrients, growth becomes stunted, and vulnerability to pests and disease increases.

Mama Bear: Too much water. Plant roots need oxygen. If the soil is constantly waterlogged, the roots drown, rot, and die.

Baby Bear: Just right. The deep soak method saturates the soil, making plants more drought resilient, and better able to access nutrients. In contrast, shallow watering fails to reach the root zone.

Goldilocks: You reap the benefits of finding the perfect middle ground for your garden – thriving, healthy plants that result from optimal soil moisture.

How and when to water

How to water plants is just as important as watering often enough. Water needs to reach the roots, so it is crucial to water deeply. Where-as early morning is the best time to water, late afternoon is the next best choice, and even if the timing is not perfect, any time is better than letting your plants suffer from neglect.

Water trees at the drip line, the perimeter on the ground directly below the tips of the outermost branches. Newly planted trees and shrubs require regular watering for two to three years until roots establish. Large or evergreen transplants may take longer.

"Established perennial gardens only need watering during dry periods. In general, a deep watering once a week in dry weather should be adequate, but always check the soil first," advises Iowa State University Extension and Outreach.

According to an efficient watering guide on Joe Gardener website, "A good rule of thumb for proper moisture is to provide one inch of water each week in the absence of rain. Just remember – that's an inch of water in the absence of rain. When your area does receive rainfall, back off by approximately

how much moisture you think may have fallen. If you don't know the precise amount, don't sweat it. Just remember that it's better to be conservative and provide less supplemental water than too much."

For gauging how much to water, The Morton Arboretum offers this guidance, "The old-fashioned method of putting a can out to collect water still works. An inch of water in the can means that there is enough water to penetrate into the soil five or six inches."

Plants in pots and containers have the highest watering needs of all outdoor plants. In the summer, potted plants usually require daily watering. In the spring and fall it might be sufficient to water container plants every two to three days. Water deeply and slowly until water runs out of the drainage holes. A common mistake is thinking it is unnecessary to water potted plants because it rained. The surface of a container catches only a fraction of falling rain compared to open garden beds. Rainwater typically penetrates only the top portion of soil in a container, leaving the roots without the water they need.

Moral of the story

Get outside. Drag out the hose. Do not wait for the leaves to wilt, brown, or scorch before you take action. Water your plants! And don't rely on an automatic timer – test your soil first. Master the Goldilocks Principle of watering: not too little, not too much, but just right. ■

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

Ask The Redding Gardener

By Sean McNamara



Hi Sean,

We love reading the "Ask The Redding Gardener" section of the paper! Any idea what is happening to our Brown Beauty Magnolia? It is four years old. We thought it was getting too much water, so last year we moved a French drain to avoid run off and it looked healthier. But now here we are in May and it's completely brown. Thoughts??

Kate & Geoffrey, Redding Ridge

Well Kate and Geoffrey, first off – thanks for reading the column and for sending the great photo. I can see exactly why you're concerned. That Brown Beauty Magnolia of yours has gone from looking pretty good last year to looking like it spent the winter in a deep freeze... which, come to think of it, it basically did.

What you've got there is a **Southern Magnolia** (*Magnolia grandiflora* 'Brown Beauty'), a beautiful broad-leaved evergreen that's right at the northern edge of its comfort zone here in Connecticut. These trees love the heat and milder winters of the South. After the tough, cold, windy winter we just had, it got a solid case of **winter burn**. The leaves kept

losing moisture while the ground was frozen, and the bright sun and wind didn't help. The result is exactly what you're seeing – lots of brown, crispy foliage.

The good news? These trees are tougher than they look right now. It will survive and should start pushing out fresh new growth soon. You did the right thing moving that French drain last year – too much water can stress them – but this spring's brown look is mostly from the winter, not water issues.

Here's what I'd recommend while you wait for the new leaves to emerge:

- Give it a light feeding with an acid-loving plant fertilizer (like HollyTone) once the ground warms up a bit. It'll help support that new growth.
- Be patient and resist the urge to prune off all the brown leaves too early. The tree will drop many of them naturally as the healthy new foliage comes in.
- Keep the soil evenly moist (but not soggy) through the summer – consistent moisture helps with recovery.

Bottom line: Your Brown Beauty took a beating from this past winter, but it should bounce back and green up again over the next couple of months. These magnolias can be a little dramatic up here in New England, but once they settle in, they're real showstoppers with those big glossy leaves and gorgeous flowers. ■

Happy (and hopefully greener) spring,
Sean, The Redding Gardener

Got more questions about magnolias, winter damage, or anything else in the garden? Feel free to drop me an e-mail anytime or stop by Redding Nursery at 73 Hill Road.

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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

\$ = fee applies
R = registration required

This Week’s Featured Events

Redding 250 Concert Saturday, May 30 7:00 p.m. Performance by Greater Bridgeport Symphony Orchestra and Joel Barlow High School musicians of patriotic music, including <i>Three Places in New England</i> by Charles Ives Joel Barlow High School 100 Black Rock Turnpike redding250.com \$	Redding Land Trust Open Space Photography Show Opening Reception Wednesday, June 3 5:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m. Refreshments and announcements of prize winners Mark Twain Library 439 Redding Road marktwainlibrary.org R	Georgetown Day Sunday, June 7 12:00 p.m. – 5:30 p.m. Vendors, activities, community celebrations throughout Georgetown Main Street and surrounding areas georgetownct.org/georgetownday	Want to feature an upcoming event? E-mail us at advertise@reddingsentinel.org for more information.
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AMERICA 250

Saturday, May 30
Redding 250 Concert
7:00 p.m.
Performance by
Greater Bridgeport Symphony
Orchestra and
Joel Barlow High School
musicians of patriotic music,
including *Three Places in New
England* by Charles Ives
Joel Barlow High School
100 Black Rock Turnpike
redding250.com
\$

Tuesday, June 9
**Voices of Independence: The
Declaration – A Special Live
Conversations Event**
6:30 p.m. – 7:30 p.m.
Hear the words of the Declaration
through a blend of performance
and history
Mark Twain Library
439 Redding Road
marktwainlibrary.org
R

Sunday, June 14
Art is Revolutionary
11:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.
Free event for all ages with artist
demonstrations, refreshments, live
music, and hands-on activities
Weir Farm National Historic Park
735 Nod Hill Road
Wilton
ridgefieldct250.org/events/
art-is-revolutionary

ARTS

Thursday, May 28
**The Hermes Art Series presents:
An Afternoon with Grammy-
Winning Artist Dan Pugach &
His Quintet**
3:00 p.m. – 4:30 p.m.
Mark Twain Library
439 Redding Road
marktwainlibrary.org
R

Thursday, May 28
**An Evening of Poetry
with Ira Joe Fisher**
7:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.
Mark Twain Library
439 Redding Road
marktwainlibrary.org
R

Thursday, June 4
**Square Dance with
Bumps on a Log**
8:00 p.m. – 10:00 p.m.
Family-friendly, no experience
necessary square dance with
live string band
The Granite
5 North Main Street
thegranitechurch.org/events
\$

Friday, June 5
**Creative Cocktail Hour –
First Friday**
6:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.
G-Town Arts
5 Main Street
gtownarts.com

Tuesday, June 9
**Fairfield County Symphony
Society’s 50th Anniversary
Concert**
7:30 p.m. – 9:30 p.m.
Concert followed by
celebratory reception
The Granite
5 North Main Street
thegranitechurch.org/events
\$

CHILDREN | TEENS

Saturday, May 30
**Touch-A-Truck at
Ridgefield Academy**
9:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.
All ages welcome,
climb aboard emergency vehicles
and learn more about Ridgefield
Academy programs
Ridgefield Academy
223 W Mountain Road
Ridgefield
inridgefield.com/events/touch-
a-truck-at-ridgefield-academy
R

Friday, June 5
**In the Kitchen: Breakfast for
Dinner (Grades K-4)**
4:30 p.m. – 6:00 p.m .
New Pond Farm Education Center
101 Marchant Road
newpondfarm.org
\$, **R**

HEALTH | WELLNESS

Wednesday, June 3
**Safety Tips from an
ER Physician**
12:00 p.m. – 1:00 p.m.
Safety and injury prevention
strategies
Virtual seminar by the
Wilton YMCA
wiltonymca.org/norwalk-hospital-
health-wellness-suite
R

HOLIDAYS | SEASONAL

Saturday, May 30
**Bethel Pride Parade
and Celebration**
12:30 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.
Parade begins 12:30 p.m.
Municipal Center
1 School Street
Bethel
bethelctpride.com/event-info

Sunday, May 31
Wilton Pride Festival
11:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.
Vendors, performances, and
resources; rain date June 7
Wilton Town Green
Old Ridgefield Road
Wilton
wiltonpride.org

Monday, June 1
Easton Pride Flag Raising
5:30 p.m.
Speakers, ice cream,
music and flag raising
Easton Town Hall
225 Center Road
Easton
eastonctpride.org

NATURE

Saturday, May 30
**Redding Community Hiking
Club – Aspetuck Trail**
7:00 a.m. – 8:30 a.m.
Morning birding hike
Register by May 28
Aspetuck Trail
marktwainlibrary.org
R

Saturday, May 30
**Spring Foraging Walk
for Adults and Teens**
10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
New Pond Farm Education Center
101 Marchant Road
newpondfarm.org
\$, **R**

Wednesday, June 3
**Redding Land Trust Open
Space Photography Show
Opening Reception**
5:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.
Refreshments and announcements
of prize winners
Mark Twain Library
439 Redding Road
marktwainlibrary.org
R

Saturday, June 6
Open Trails Day at Highstead
10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.
Participate in a free printmaking
workshop at 10:00 a.m., explore
the grounds, or go on a guided tour
at 1:00 p.m. of mountain laurel
cultivars
Highstead
127 Lonetown Road
Register by e-mail at
rsvp@highstead.net
R

Wednesday, June 10
**Nature Book Club – *The
Overstory* by Richard Powers**
1:00 p.m. – 2:00 p.m.
New Pond Farm Education Center
101 Marchant Road
marktwainlibrary.org
R

SPECIAL PROGRAMS

Saturday, June 6
**Household Hazardous
Waste Drop-off**
9:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.
Bring I.D. with Redding address
Bethel High School
300 Whittlesey Drive
Bethel
hrra.org

Sunday, June 7
Georgetown Day
12:00 p.m. – 5:30 p.m.
Vendors, activities, community
celebrations throughout
Georgetown
Main Street and surrounding areas
georgetownct.org/georgetownday

Thursday, June 11
Riding clinic at Sunset Hill Farm
9:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.
Riding clinic with R-rated USEF
judge and exhibitor Lyman T
Whitehead
Beginners through advanced
For information contact Sunset
Hill Farm at
(203) 994.2060
\$, **R**

Thursday, June 11
**Gilbert & Bennett School
Film Night**
6:30 p.m.
Screening of G&B School
vintage films
Hosted by Georgetown
Community Association with
historian Julie Hughes
Wilton Library
137 Old Ridgefield Road
Wilton
facebook.com/Georgetown-
CommunityAssociation

RELIGIOUS SERVICES

Bethlehem Lutheran Church
Sundays at 10:00 a.m.
44 Portland Avenue
bethlehemlutheranct.org

**Calvary Independent
Baptist Church**
Adult and Child Sunday School
at 10:00 a.m. / Worship Sundays
at 11:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m.
Wednesday prayer meeting
at 7:00 p.m.
Nursery provided for all services.
711 Redding Road
cibcredding.org

Christ Church, Episcopal
Sundays at 9:00 a.m.
184 Cross Highway
christchurchredding.org

**First Church of Christ,
Congregational**
Sundays at 10:00 a.m.
25 Cross Highway
firstchurchredding.org

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

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

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

Temple B’nai Chaim
Friday, May 29
Shabbat at Home
7:00 p.m.
templebnaichaim.org

MEETINGS

Monday, June 1
Park and Recreation Commission
7:00 p.m.
Redding Community Center
37 Lonetown Road

Monday, June 1
Republican Town Committee
7:30 p.m.
Town Hall / Hearing Room
100 Hill Road

Tuesday, June 2
Redding Board of Education
7:00 p.m.
John Read Middle School /
Community Room
486 Redding Road

Tuesday, June 2
Conservation Commission
7:00 p.m.
Town Hall / Hearing Room
100 Hill Road

Wednesday, June 3
**Region 9 Board of Education
Curriculum Committee**
8:30 a.m.
Joel Barlow High School
100 Black Rock Turnpike

Thursday, June 4
**Fire District #2 Special Budget
and Mil Rate Vote**
7:00 p.m.
West Redding Firehouse
306 Umpawaug Road

Friday, June 5
**Region 9 Board of Education
Committee on Academic Rigor,
Standards, and Grading**
8:30 a.m.
Joel Barlow High School /
Room A108
100 Black Rock Turnpike

Monday, June 8
League of Women Voters
4:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.
Town Hall / Conference Room
100 Hill Road

Tuesday, June 9
**Georgetown Fire District
Annual Meeting**
7:00 p.m.
Georgetown Fire Department
61 Redding Road

Tuesday, June 9
Planning Commission
7:00 p.m.
Town Hall / Hearing Room
and Virtual
100 Hill Road and Zoom

Tuesday, June 9
Redding Fire District #1
7:00 p.m.
186 Black Rock Turnpike

Wednesday, June 10
Commission on Aging
9:00 a.m.
Heritage Center
37 Lonetown Road

Wednesday, June 10
Zoning Commission
7:00 p.m.
Town Hall / Hearing Room
100 Hill Road

Thursday, June 11
**Redding Safety Committee
Special Meeting**
4:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.
Virtual

Thursday, June 11
**Gilbert & Bennett Wire Mill
Advisory Committee**
6:00 p.m.
Town Hall / Conference Room
and Virtual
100 Hill Road / Zoom

Thursday, June 11
Redding Fire District #2
7:00 p.m.
West Redding Firehouse
306 Umpawaug Road



You're Invited!
Join Us at Georgetown Day 2026!
Sunday, June 7th



Special Open House
12:30 - 4:00PM



Alexis Bennett
203.313.3110



Marilyn Caravetta
203.512.1822



Kim Cuniberti
203.733.6976



Tim Dent
203.470.5605



Margi Esten
203.241.8453



John Frey
203.240.0624



Jefferson Guthrie
203.788.9400



Carol Hanlon
203.240.1233



Sharon Hoverman
203.733.5073



Charlie Knoche
203.731.7770



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