

State’s indexed minimum wage increasing to \$16.94 in January

By Mark Pazniokas

Connecticut’s hourly minimum wage will increase from \$16.35 to \$16.94 on January 1, based on the third annual adjustment since the State pegged the wage to the federal employment cost index, Governor Ned Lamont announced last week.

The adjustment will keep Connecticut among the states with the highest minimum wages, a consequence of a law signed by Lamont in 2019 that gradually raised the \$10.10 minimum until it reached \$15 in 2023, then shifted to the index.

“Nobody who works full-time should have to live in poverty,”

Continued on page 4

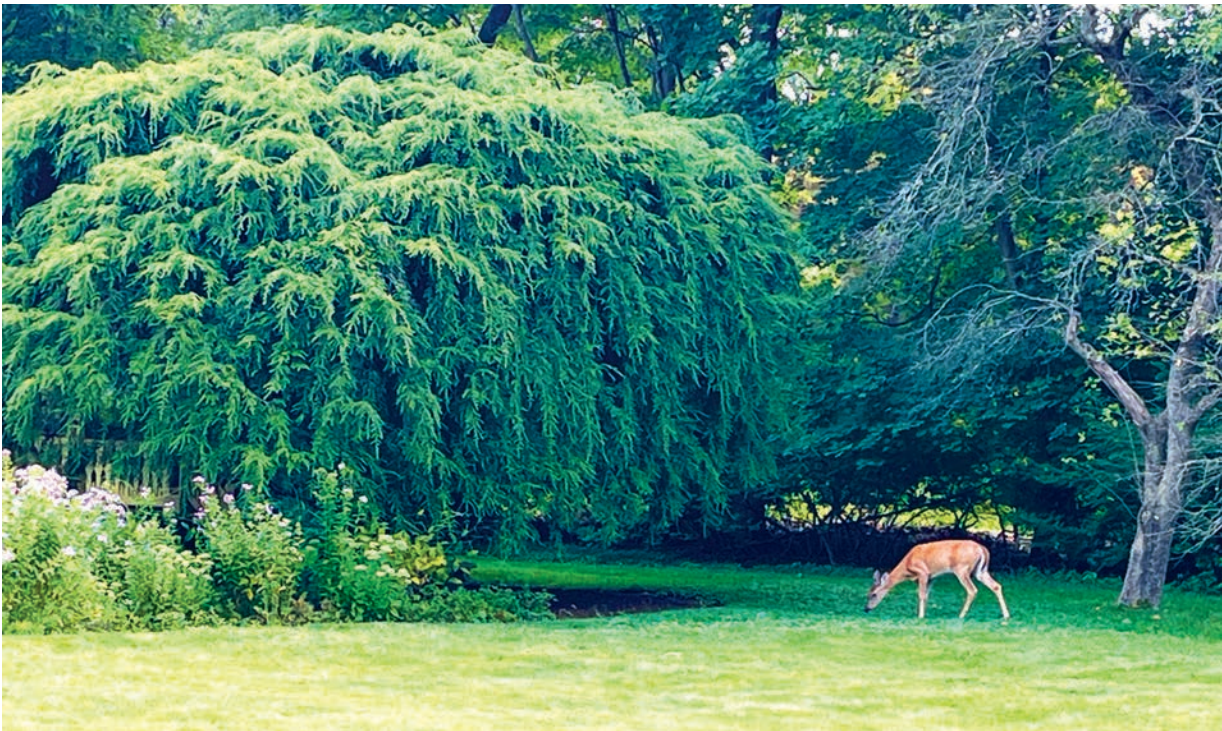


Photo by Laurie Heiss

A deer stops by to munch on an enormous weeping hemlock in the Georgetown Historic District. If you have a photo you’d like to see featured here, e-mail editor@reddingsentinel.org.

John Read Middle School to enhance recess offerings *Parent petition for a playground prompts conversation on options*

By Anne Young Albanese

A petition started by parents concerned about students’ recess activity options at John Read Middle School (JRMS) prompted school administrators to meet with student council members to gather feedback on what improvements they would like to see made.

“At a recent event for incoming new and fifth-grade families earlier this year, parents brought up the idea of a playground to provide activities for kids at recess. As the conversation ensued, parents were encouraged to bring up their concerns to the Board of Education and to make their voices heard,” explained Beatrix Eriksen, John Read Middle School PTA President. “At that same meeting, school administrators also committed to meeting with students to assess what types of activities would best serve their needs. While the dialogue continues, this is positive advocacy at its best – with parents identifying an

issue, engaging decision makers, students given a voice to provide their input, and everyone working towards the best outcomes for our kids.”

Across the country, middle schools typically serve students grade six through eight, though districts in Connecticut determine their own configurations. John Read Middle School is somewhat of an outlier with students entering in fifth grade. For many parents, orientation is the first time the differences between Redding Elementary School and John Read Middle School are discussed in detail.

Following the orientation event, Joanna Horodyska was one of the parents who worked to create a petition on change.org titled “Ask Board of Education for JRMS playground funds.” It mentions a “lack of a dedicated space to engage in physical activity or socialize freely.” Horodyska quoted

multiple research studies that show that “students who have opportunities for physical activity during school hours perform better academically and exhibit improved behavior.”

In an update to the petition on August 29, Horodyska clarified that a “playground” can mean much more than a swing set or structure meant for younger children.

“What we are really asking for is an age-appropriate outdoor fitness/recreation space, like many middle schools, high schools, and even colleges already have. These areas can include climbing structures, balance challenges, workout stations, and team play equipment. They’re designed for older kids, not little ones, and help with fitness, focus, and even reducing bullying,” she wrote.

Mercedes Kriesel was one of the parents who signed the petition.

Continued on page 5

REDDING’S BIG OUTDOORS

Confessions of “not a nature guy” *Bogus Brook Preserve*

By Luke Fiscella



Photo by Luke Fiscella

Even though it was a bit of a drive, I wanted to give the Bogus Brook Preserve a chance. I chose it for several reasons: the name (obviously); a lack of details online meant the trail had a sense of mystery to me; and it was close to

Danbury Fair, which made for a fun outing afterwards.

I must admit, I am not a nature guy. My idea of a good time is watching TV with a blanket covering me – but it was too beautiful a day to sit inside. I live in Norwalk,

so the trail was about 30 minutes away. I packed some sunscreen, bug spray, and some sodas for the trip, and brought my twin brother along. That guy likes nature even less than I do, so it was a battle trying to get him into the car, but I was successful in the end.

The trail sat at the end of a small cul-de-sac, with little parking, no signs, and barely any indication that a trail was there. I almost felt like turning around, but instead I parked, trying my best not to block any of the nearby driveways. After bathing ourselves in bug spray, we entered the trail. It reminded me of a jungle, with low-hanging foliage, branches blocking the path, and bugs everywhere. Gnats and mosquitoes were the true rulers of the Bogus Brook Preserve, so we were thankful for our earlier dousing of bug spray.

Continued on page 4

Potable water remains elusive at certain Town buildings

By Rocco Valluzzo and Jessie Wright

Thirsty visitors and staff at Town Hall, the Community Center, and the Building Department / Redding Center Post Office don’t turn on the tap to quench their thirst – they look to bottled water stations as Building and Health Department officials try to solve various potability issues.

Due to the presence of heavy metals, water at Town Hall and the Building Department remains undrinkable. According to First Selectwoman Julia Pemberton, a filtration system will not solve the problem.

“It’s just unfortunately what comes out of the ground,” said Pemberton at a recent Brown Bag Lunch. “Probably 11 years ago we drilled a new well here to try to get better water quality but to no avail. There is no filter apparently that will make our water here drinkable.”

She noted that about two years ago a new sink was installed in one of the bathrooms. The drain is now completely oxidized due to the metals in the water.

“We have high iron and manganese here (at Town Hall),” said Health Officer Chris Wegrzyn. “If you look at some of the fixtures, you can see that high content. Even the filters get clogged right away.”

Chief Building Official Shaun Donnelly confirmed that there are two different filtration systems in place at Town Hall, but they struggle to keep up with all the iron and manganese content.

A different issue has cropped up at Redding Community Center – coliform bacteria has shown up in water testing in the last two years.

“We haven’t been able to find out exactly why – it could be sediment in the tank. The State thought it could be, so we tried flushing that out,” said Wegrzyn. “It could be interior piping issues with the different pumps. It’s a pretty complicated system.”

Donnelly said the Community Center is served by just one well, and they haven’t been able to trace the source of the elevated coliform.

In the meantime, visitors to the Community Center use drinking water from three bottled water stations. While the water from the taps is safe for handwashing, it is not potable nor should be used for dishwashing or cooking.

Donnelly said that the Building Department is looking at installing a special chlorination system at the Community Center as a long-term solution.

“What we are looking at for the Community Center is a type of chlorination injector system,” Donnelly explained. He noted that the design for such a system would have to be approved by the State Health Department before installation. The water would then require daily monitoring of bacteria levels. ■

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EDITORIAL

A little help from a friend

Occasionally, *Sentinel* readers might notice a tagline at the end of one of our news articles “This article originally appeared in *CT Mirror*”. While the bedrock of our coverage is hyperlocal, with reporters attending Redding’s municipal meetings, school events, and community gatherings, there are state level policies and developments that have a direct impact on our town’s residents we wish to cover. Our current team doesn’t have the capacity to attend sessions in Hartford or build connections with every legislative player – which is where our syndication relationship with *CT Mirror* comes in.

CT Mirror was born from the same need for trustworthy, local journalism that the Sentinel was. Started in 2010 by a small group of Connecticut residents concerned about the reductions in newsroom staff and watchdog journalism in the state, *CT Mirror* provides deep reporting on public policy, government, and politics. It is a non-profit, non-partisan digital news platform (accessed without fees at ctmirror.org). Its leaders and many of its staff have been working as reporters, editors, or photojournalists in Connecticut for several decades.

We appreciate their balanced and thoroughly researched approach to a host of topics relevant to Redding residents, from electricity rates to housing policy to education funding. Transparency is a core tenet to their approach – all their audited financial statements are easily available to review on their website, and their reporting is often tied to in-depth data analysis.

It takes a village to build back community journalism. Friends with expertise and trustworthy content are important ones to have. ■

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POLICE BLOTTER

Police activity September 1 – 7

By Donna Christopher

Police assisted two operators of disabled motor vehicles and assisted in 14 emergency medical service calls and two fire department calls.

Traffic

There were 101 motor vehicle stops with two misdemeanor summonses issued, 28 tickets, 27 written warnings, 41 verbal warnings, and three cases when no action was taken. The infraction rate was 30%.

On September 3, a two-car motor vehicle accident on Redding Road resulted in property damage but no injuries.

On September 6, a one-car motor vehicle accident occurred on

Pine Tree Road. The operator received an infraction.

Fraud

On September 2, someone on Redding Road complained of their phone number being fraudulently routed to Verizon.

Other matters

On September 6 on Lonetown Road, police responded to a family matter involving a custody disagreement, which was resolved.

On September 7, police responded to a call on Parsons Lane regarding a Bethel landlord/tenant issue. ■

LEGAL NOTICE

The Brunissen Trust for Redding Senior Citizens, Inc. will meet at 10:00 a.m. on Saturday, September 13, 2025 at the Redding Community Center, 37 Lonetown Road, Redding, CT. ■

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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,

To our wonderful town: thank you for the best Book Fair in our entire 64-year history. YOU are the reason for our success, from your generous donations of books and puzzles to the more-than-generous donation of your time. Proceeds from your work are added to Meadow Ridge’s sponsorship grant, and every dollar made at the Fair goes directly to the Mark Twain Library’s operating funds.

For eleven-and-a-half months every year, townspeople donate treasures; the “Back Room Gang” sorts, prices, and boxes them; the Redding Transfer Station crew picks up and stores the volumes; and then a positive wave of volunteers (about 300 this year) moves them into the Community Center and arranges them in irresistible configurations. We take a deep breath – and open the doors. Then the volunteers hand out maps, count up purchases, accept payments, and help customers out to their cars. We are completely beholden to every one of you.

Thank you all so very much for your support of the Library, whose vision is to be the cultural crossroads of Redding. You are making that happen. ■

Midge Loery and Catherine Riordan
Mark Twain Library Book Fair Co-Chairs

Land Trust showcases open space with donation of photos at Town Hall

Photo by Susan Clark

(Left to right): First Selectwoman Julia Pemberton with Redding Land Trust trustees Marjorie Derven and Cole Tucker-Walton at the newly installed digital frame at Town Hall. Redding Land Trust has donated a digital frame for Town Hall which showcases photographs of open space in Redding. The images, captured by area residents, were entered into the Land Trust’s first annual Photography Show earlier this year in honor of the organization’s 60th anniversary and displayed at Mark Twain Library. Redding Land Trust plans to host a second annual Photography Show next year, with selected submissions showcased again at the Library in June 2026.

Household items need fixing?

HRRA Repair Café on September 20 | By Rob Sample

Broken household items are a given in modern life – and many of us lack the fix-it skills that were second nature for our parents and grandparents. So, we reluctantly haul them to the dump or transfer station, adding more solid waste to an already-strapped ecosystem.

Wouldn’t it be great if there were an alternative? Well, for Redding residents, now there is. On Saturday, September 20, the Housatonic Resources Recovery Authority (HRRA) will host a regional Repair Café, from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m., at the Disabled American Veterans Hall, 25 Segar Street in Danbury.

Redding is one of the 14 municipalities served by the HRRA, the regional waste management and recycling authority.

“Residents can bring broken

items to have them repaired on-site with the help of volunteers,” said Paige Silva, Administrator for the Highway and Public Works Departments. “Instead of tossing items out, let’s see if they can be fixed.”

Jennifer Baum, Assistant to the Director for HRRA, pointed out that the Repair Café can help with a host of household items, including bicycles, textiles, small electronics, jewelry, small furniture, computers, and others.

“Repair Cafés can prolong the life of household items, reduce waste, and help you save money,” said Baum.

There are a few important caveats. You must be able to carry it in for an item to be eligible for the Repair Café. Items with gasoline engines are not allowed. And,

if your fix-it item requires gluing, please plan to arrive early to allow for drying time.

Pre-registration is not required, but if you do pre-register, you’ll get a specific appointment time. Walk-ins are welcome, but you may need to wait in a queue. To pre-register, go to <https://form.jotform.com/251474816064055>.

In addition, Baum encourages people with fix-it skills to volunteer. The more volunteers who sign up, the more items can be repaired. If you are interested, contact Baum at JenniferBaum@hrra.org by e-mail, or by phone at (203) 775-4539. ■

For complete details on the event, visit hrra.org/repaircafe

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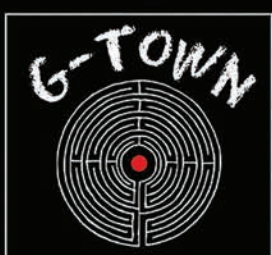
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New Daisy troops launching for kindergartners and first graders

By Rob Sample



Photo courtesy of Kaitlyn Tagarelli
Scouts in one of Redding’s previous Daisy troops visit a maple syrup program and “springtime on the farm” program at New Pond Farm.

Back to school means lots of new beginnings for kids and parents alike. In Redding, that includes the start of a new Daisy Girl Scouts program for kindergarten and first grade students.

Daisies function as a child’s first introduction to the Girl Scouts. Girls in Daisy troops learn the principles of Scouting and the Girl Scouts oath. The Daisy program also helps to build students’ interest in the higher levels of Girl Scouts, noted Kaitlyn Tagarelli, the new Service Unit Leader for Redding and Easton.

Tagarelli has high hopes for the launch of the two new Daisy troops in Redding – including a troop at the kindergarten level and another for first graders. The inaugural event will be an invitational “camporee” at Sturgis Park in Ridgefield on Saturday, September 13. The event promises a day-long series of fun events in the outdoors.

The Girl Scouts will also be recruiting new members – both for the new troops and the higher levels – at back-to-school events at Redding Elementary School.

“We didn’t have a Daisy troop here in Redding last year, but we had a first-grade troop two years ago,” Tagarelli pointed out. “We started a kindergarten troop in January of 2022, so this will be our first kindergarten troop in almost four years.”

Tagarelli said the Covid shut-downs of 2020 and 2021 dampened

people’s enthusiasm for community activities, including the Girl Scouts, because of people’s lingering fears about the virus and the possibility of new Covid variants.

“People are finally coming out of the Covid cloud,” said Tagarelli. “I think parents with younger children are now more interested in getting out and getting involved in the community.”

There are six levels in the Girl Scouts: Daisies; Brownies (second and third grades), Juniors (fourth and fifth grades), Cadettes (sixth through eighth grades), Seniors (ninth and 10th grades), and Ambassadors (11th and 12th grades). The program is designed so that members stay with the same group of girls through all levels.

Kristin Abraham, who is co-leading the first-grade Daisies troop with Bethany Carroll, said the Daisies share some similarities with the older Brownies level. “However, it is designed to be age-appropriate at the younger levels,” Abraham said.

There is a relatively small class of first graders at Redding Elementary School this fall – though there are plenty of kindergartners. The smaller group size will make recruitment more of a challenge for Abraham and Carroll. “However, once our troop gets started, we expect excitement will build and other girls will sign up to be Daisies,” said Abraham.

Abraham’s daughter will be

among those first graders. “She keeps asking me, ‘when are we going to get started?’” added Abraham. “I tell her to be patient while we get through the startup process – but that I know it’s going to be so much fun for both of us.”

Some examples of Daisies activities include outdoor skills and safety, money management and marketing, leadership skills, technology basics and cybersecurity, engineering and robotics, protecting the Earth, and giving back to the community.

For her part, kindergarten co-leader Ali Diskin said her troop will emphasize community building, exploring the outdoors responsibly, and gaining confidence and pride in their newly achieved abilities. She is co-leading the kindergartners with Kate Sparks.

“Although girls can join at any age, Daisies will be a supportive space to make new friends, learn new skills, and truly be themselves,” said Diskin.

Both kindergartners and first graders will focus on “Daisy petal” activities, which are specific to each grade level. Once they complete all the petals, girls can also earn Daisy badges. Akin to badges among higher-level scout troops, Daisy badges are affixed to their sashes.

Both grade levels of Daisies will also take part in the Girl Scouts’ signature fundraising program: the annual cookie sale. In addition to helping Scouts to build ties with the community, the cookie sale helps girls develop key business skills – including marketing and money management.

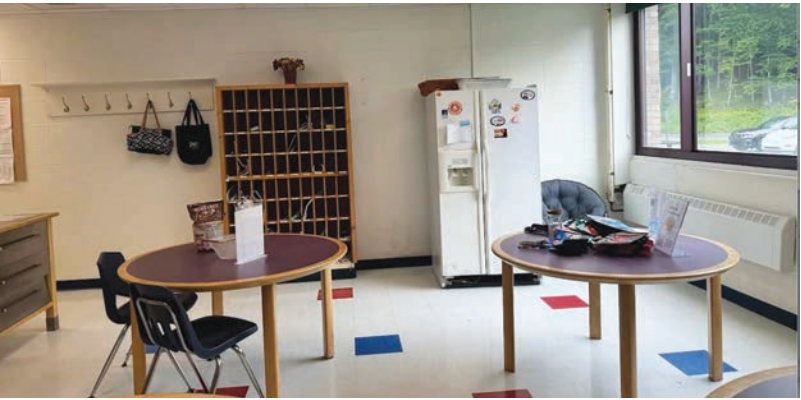
“We’re very excited to get our new troops up and running,” said Diskin, “and both troops have room for more girls if anyone is interested.” ■

For more information about the new Daisy troops – or about all levels of Girl Scouts – reach out to Girl Scouts Unit Leader Kaitlyn Tagarelli by e-mail, kaitlyn.tagarelli@gmail.com, or phone at (914) 714-3213

Teachers welcomed back with lounge transformation

PTA spearheads renovation at John Read Middle School

By Anne Young Albanese



Photos courtesy of Regina Leahy / Simply Staged Home Staging Service
Before and after the renovation of the JRMS teachers’ lounge.

This summer, the John Read Middle School (JRMS) PTA renovated the school’s teachers’ lounge. The lounge had become a shabby room, which they say resulted in many teachers staying in their classrooms during break times.

The updated lounge features a new coffee bar, updated appliances, new furniture (including café seating and a sofa), refurbished cabinetry, and quartz countertops.

The transformation proved to be a true team effort. Donations and volunteers from local businesses helped create the new space. PTA membership funds and “stock the lounge” donations rounded out the project. Kori Gawrych donated the kitchen cabinets, and Regina Leahy of Simply Staged Home Staging Service donated her design services and time. May Campbell and Rings End donated paint, primer, countertops, wallpaper, and design services. Victoria Cole donated wall sconces, a coffee console, and design services. Dylan Hughes of Fine Touch Services painted the room and kitchen cabinets. Pete Huszagh volunteered to install the kitchen cabinets and sink. Joe Query from We Do Wallpaper installed

the wallpaper. Amy Whittle managed all the project components to ensure it stayed on time. The JRMS Head Custodian and Mike D’Agostino, Director of Facilities and Operations for Easton-Redding-Region 9 oversaw the work to ensure the project was completed on a very tight schedule. Heather Massimo, JRMS PTA staff appreciation lead, stocked the lounge and managed all the donations.

“A huge thank you goes to (these) businesses and individuals who made it all possible,” Beatrix Erikson, President of the JRMS PTA said. “The vision for this project was to create a space where teachers could come, take a breather, collaborate with colleagues, and enjoy a meal or beverage before heading back to their classrooms. We wanted it to be an oasis that allows them to reset before resuming their very hectic day. The generosity of members of our community who so willingly donated their time, talents, and goods and services has left me in absolute awe and is a brilliant reminder of what it means to be Redding Strong – a community that shows up for each other.” ■

John Read Middle School to enhance recess offerings / continued from page 1

“Right now, our middle schoolers don’t have many options. They’ve outgrown the elementary playground, but they’re too young to drive or legally work. That leaves them in a tough spot – with too much energy and not enough healthy outlets. These kids deserve a space that’s theirs: somewhere safe, age-appropriate, and within walking distance, where they can be active, social, and supervised,” Kriesel said.

According to Kyla Dunn, Assistant Principal of JRMS, in addition to recess, students have gym class every other day. Each student also participates in Project Adventure – which offers students team-building activities through athletics – for one semester, every other day.

“We are always pleased to see community members express support and interest in improving the learning environment for our students. And particularly as it relates to our annual capital and operating budgets, community feedback is a critical element in the decision-making process,” noted Laura Worosz, Chair of the Redding Board of Education.

Once students returned to school, Superintendent Dr. Jason McKinnon met with the John Read Middle School student council to discuss the parents’ concerns and ideas. (The meeting included student representatives from sixth, seventh, and eighth grade – the fifth graders had not yet held their elections, so representatives were not yet on the council. The students who did attend also gave their own perspectives from when they were in fifth grade.)

McKinnon shared some of the key takeaways and direct feedback from the student meeting at the September 2 Redding Board of Education meeting. All comments were presented anonymously.

One student said, “As a fifth grader, I may have liked a swing set. I wouldn’t use it now as an eighth grader. Focus on the basketball hoops. Add more recess balls.” Another student added, “We are fine with now, but extend options. What we have is pretty good...”

Another student added, “Most students are satisfied with recess. We need more balls and equipment.” A different student added, “The soccer goals were a good investment... perhaps add more soccer goal (sic).”

Some students suggested additional recess options: “Redo the baseball field. It is overgrown (we could use it for kickball and wiffle ball).” One soccer fan suggested painting lines on the field for a half-soccer field. Another student suggested adding more picnic tables for talking and hanging out (perhaps with checkers and a chessboard).

A popular game at the middle school is 9 Square in the Air. One student suggested making it a permanent option to increase student participation, and another suggested adding another two-way volleyball net and a four-way volleyball net. A student summed up the conversation by saying, “These may be better options than swings, because they include more people and are safer.”

When approached after the Board of Education meeting,

McKinnon said, “We are incredibly grateful for the strong community support of Redding’s schools. After hearing that some parents were exploring the idea of a playground at John Read Middle School, we met with the student council to gather student input. The student council representatives are thoughtful and enthusiastic advocates for their peers. Overall, students expressed satisfaction with current recess options but also shared several ideas for improvements, which Mrs. Desmarais (Principal of JRMS) and I have passed along to the Redding Board of Education... We look forward to working with the Board of Education and the school to bring these ideas to life and enhance the recess experience for all JRMS students.”

Jennifer Desmarais, Principal at JRMS, said, “I remain impressed by the thoughtful approach of our students. Their suggestions focused on activities that allow students to play together and make new friendships. We are starting the process to add ‘9 Square in the Air’ and ‘Four-Way Volleyball’ courts. Our student council members will assemble an additional soccer goal and work with Park and Rec and our custodial staff to add field lines. Additional playground balls have been ordered. I know that our student council members will continue to advocate for their classmates.” ■

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Redding Flower Farm invites you to “grow something beautiful together”

Fall Flower Social on September 27 | By Pamela Brown



Photo by Jen Harvey

Redding Flower Farm, located at 130 Picketts Ridge Road, is scheduled to host its inaugural Fall Flower Social – A Golden Hour Celebration on Saturday, September 27 from 4:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m. The Farm, which specializes in organically grown cut flowers and farm-to-table gatherings, began operations in West Redding last year. According to owner Jen Harvey, the Fall Flower Social was inspired by her desire to introduce more people to Redding Flower Farm and provide an entertaining way for neighbors to experience nature.

“The event falls right during golden hour – the most magical light of the day. And it’s one-night-only, making it a truly special experience,” said Harvey. “People don’t just want to buy flowers – they want to see where they’re grown, learn, and feel part of something bigger, especially organically grown. With my events

background, hosting a gathering like this felt like the perfect way to connect our growing community.”

Harvey describes the event as more than just a visit to the farm. “For anyone juggling work, family, or creativity, it’s an invitation to slow down, celebrate the season, and grow something beautiful together.”

The evening will be filled with activities, information, and music. Two special guests include local floral designers Jessica Bowen, owner of Botanicals by Jessica in Ridgefield, and Stephanie Sanderson, owner of Lily Astraea in Georgetown, who will be providing creative floral demonstrations and design workshops.

“Stephanie will be creating whimsical flower crowns and offering demos for guests, while Jessica will be designing a stunning fall centerpiece,” said Harvey. There will be a do-it-yourself bouquet bar, field tours of the farm, a tent

filled with farm-fresh floral design, and low-key music from DJ Nature, Boy.

Attendees can browse vendor tents featuring local makers and flavors, including jewelry by Bandit Kat. Redding’s Mycelium Farm and Uncorked Georgetown will be offering refreshments, including botanical drinks, spicy agua frescas, organic wine, and seasonal food like lobster lollipops.

“Add in a cozy firepit and fall treats, and it’s the perfect way to celebrate the season. I hope everyone finds joy here with no precursor – from finding your new favorite dahlia type to simply learning something about arranging, or just being there to soak in the festivities,” Harvey said.

The event aligns with Redding Flower Farm’s vision of bringing people together through flowers, experiences, and education. “This event is a natural extension of that vision – blending

beauty, learning, and community in one place,” said Harvey.

Harvey is looking forward to the event and beyond. “For our first Social, capacity is limited, and we’ve designed it as an adult-focused evening experience. But creating family-friendly events is really important to us, and we’re planning to host open farm days and kids’ activities in the near future. Stay tuned,” she said. ■

For more information and to purchase tickets, visit reddingflowerfarm.com

Notes from a neighbor

A seat for all seasons | By Carter Wiseman

As New Englanders, most of us are likely to have ordered something, over the years, from the L. L. Bean catalog. The Maine Hunting Shoe? The Hudson’s Bay blanket? The classic boat shoes? Maybe a puffy bed for Bean’s official househound, the Golden Retriever?

In any case, there was always an implicit guarantee that the product was authentic, tested by real people over time, and not in a lab. If you have ever called Bean’s customer service line, you have probably been greeted, not by a robot, but by a patient person with a Down-East accent that AI has yet to replicate. The last one I spoke to about returning some too-large pajamas actually lived in-state, not in Jaipur. I confess that I have strayed from time to time to Eddie Bauer or Land’s End, but paging through the Bean catalog has become almost a scriptural practice.

So, I was rattled to receive one of its issues earlier this year. On the cover was a pair of Adirondack chairs, as much a symbol of Northeast summers as an Old Town canoe. Every fall, one of my rituals has been moving our aging teakwood Smith & Hawken veterans under cover to protect them from winter weather. But just as canoes have gone from (pre-Bean) birchbark, to aluminum, to fiberglass and carbon fiber, so has outdoor seating. Once made of wood, Bean’s chairs are now made of PLASTIC!

Well, not exactly. As the catalog writers explain, the chairs are fabricated from something called high-density polyethylene (HDPE). I have always been wary of substitute materials claiming to improve on the originals: polyester creeping into cotton sweatshirts, Naugahyde posing as leather,

stretch waistbands replacing belts and suspenders. Now we even have to worry about hot dogs shedding forever chemicals!

But these Bean chairs seem like a genuine step forward. (Bean is not alone; other manufacturers provide similar products.) The catalog reassures us that they are made of 20-percent recycled material, and that has to be good for the planet. They cost less than the wooden ones from Thailand, which is probably good for the jungles and our budgets. And they don’t have the fake-grain patterns that made earlier outdoor seating look, well, fake. Then there’s color. It’s hard to believe that the sober folks at Bean HQ in Freeport, Maine, would pitch a piece of furniture tinted “Sunset Red,” but times change. I’m OK with that as long as they don’t issue a camouflage pattern for their bow-hunting customers and call it SEAL-Team Teal.

So, against all my retrograde instincts, I ordered a pair of the new Bean chairs (dark green) as a gift to my wife, who had been pressing me for years to repair the increasingly wobbly woodies we bought when we got married. (L. L. Bean is not paying me for this tribute.)

When the boxes containing the new chairs arrived, I noticed that some assembly is required. Happily, I have a couple of sons who worked with me on that once the weather warmed up enough to sit outside. Meanwhile, I hate to admit that I look forward to leaving the chairs out this winter without feeling that I have betrayed my principles – or my New England loyalties. ■



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On the (back to school) menu with...

Rachel Staffier at New Pond Farm | By Pamela Brown



Photo by Rachel Staffier

Part of many families' morning routine as students head back to school is eating a healthy breakfast. It's not always easy finding something that is simple to make, tastes good, and is nutritious, especially with a morning time crunch and picky eaters. That's where Rachel Staffier's creativity comes in.

"You want kids to start off the day with enough protein and energy-rich foods that will help them beat the morning grogginess and give them the nutrients they need to promote healthy growth," said Staffier, Assistant Farm Manager at New Pond Farm Education Center. Her two delightful morning recipes that serve all these purposes are homemade cream cheese featuring

New Pond Farm milk, and homemade bagels with New Pond Farm yogurt for the base. "It's the perfect pairing," she said.

According to Staffier, the recipes are a healthier alternative to store-bought bagels and cream cheese because of their simple, wholesome ingredients. "Using yogurt as the base for the bagels boosts the protein content to about 9-13 grams per bagel, compared to the 8-11 grams in most store-bought versions," she explained. "The carbs and healthy fats provide lasting energy, while the extra protein helps keep you full longer."

Staffier also noted that dairy from local farms, like New Pond Farm, tends to be pasteurized at a

lower temperature, which allows certain nutrients like some B vitamins to be preserved and alters the proteins in the milk less, which can improve digestibility for some people.

The recipes are easy and fun to make. "With a little supervision at the stove, even the youngest kids can get involved. It's a perfect way for families to meal prep together, bake bagels, and whip up your own cream cheese. Kids can even get creative by making their own flavors, like strawberry, blueberry, honey, or garlic and herb," said Staffier, who noted they also can be savory. "If you want to turn your yogurt-based bagel into a pizza bagel, it would be perfect for dinner, or you can use your homemade cream cheese in your favorite cheesecake recipe."

In 2007, New Pond Farm became one of Connecticut's Dairy Farms of Distinction and has a Dairy Annex where residents can purchase freshly pasteurized milk, yogurt, and eggs. "By offering freshly pasteurized milk and yogurt, vegetables straight from our garden, and even hosting cooking classes for little chefs, we're helping to promote healthy habits, encouraging families to eat local and make the most of what we have to offer," Staffier said.

A bagel with cream cheese is the ideal duo. "It's perfect for on-the-go mornings for kids and adults. Once you spend time making them, it's as easy as spreading your cream cheese on a bagel and running out the door. As a farmer, sometimes mornings can be busy and the easiest thing to grab is something that I can take with me," said Staffier. "Pair your homemade bagel and cream cheese with eggs or fresh fruit, and you've got a balanced, satisfying start to your day." ■



New Pond Farm Cream Cheese

- Ingredients:**
- 4 cups New Pond Farm whole milk
 - 2 cups heavy cream
 - 1/4 cup vinegar or lemon juice
 - Salt to taste

- Instructions:**
1. Line a colander with a few layers of cheesecloth; set aside.
 2. Heat milk and cream to 190 degrees (just before boiling). Then stir in vinegar or lemon juice and turn off the heat and let mixture curdle.
 3. Pour curds and whey through the cheesecloth. Drain in the refrigerator for up to six hours.
 4. Put strained curds into a blender or food processor and blend until smooth. Add salt to taste.
 5. Store in an airtight container in the refrigerator for up to a week.

Optional:
Add flavorful mix ins such as garlic and herbs or fresh fruit.

- Yogurt Bagels**
- Ingredients:**
- 2 ½ to 3 cups flour or gluten-free flour
 - 4 teaspoons baking powder
 - 1 teaspoon salt
 - 2 cups plain New Pond Farm yogurt, or any brand of yogurt
 - 2 eggs
- Instructions:**
1. Preheat oven to 375 degrees Fahrenheit.
 2. In a bowl, combine flour, baking powder, salt. Add yogurt to dry ingredients and mix well.
 3. Slowly add more flour in ½ cup increments until dough is formed and not too sticky.
 4. On a lightly floured work area, knead dough 15-20 times. Divide dough into eight equal portions.
 5. Roll each ball into a ¾ inch rope, form into a circle, and attach at the ends.
 6. Beat the eggs in a bowl and coat each bagel in an egg wash. (Optional: sprinkle seasonings on top as desired.)
 7. Place bagels on a parchment paper-lined baking sheet and bake for 20-25 minutes.
 8. Let cool before slicing and enjoy with your homemade cream cheese.

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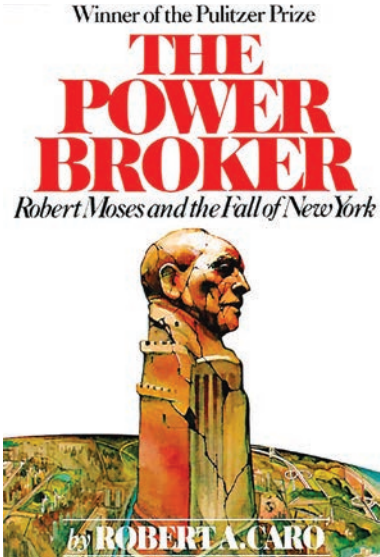
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BOOK REVIEW

My summer of Robert Caro
The Power Broker
The Years of Lyndon Johnson:
The Path to Power; Means of Ascent;
Master of the Senate; The Passage
of Power | By Robert A. Caro / Published by Knopf

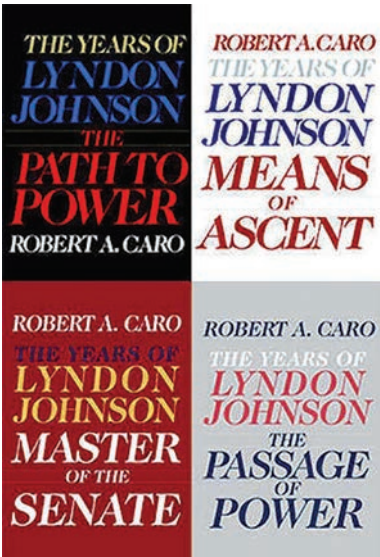


The Power Broker was first published in the summer of 1974 and won the Pulitzer Prize in 1975. The book was the first instance of what was to become Caro’s signature approach to writing non-fiction. Dig deep, get to the truth, and write as long as you must to tell the story convincingly.

The book is long at 1,296 pages but could have been longer. Apparently 300,000 words were cut during editing. (There are recurring rumors that the cut sections might be published as a separate book – unlikely now that Caro is 89.)

The Power Broker is exhaustively researched, hence the length, and clearly and elegantly written. More than a biography of Robert Moses, the book is also a dramatically told history of 20th century New York. Caro holds – and doesn’t shy away from conveying to readers – a definite opinion about his subject, Robert Moses. In the introduction, Caro tells us that Moses, even as a young man of wealth attending Yale, cooked up unethical schemes to achieve his goals. While he seems to have started out as an idealist, for example wrestling control from oligarchs of great tracts of land in order to provide parks for regular folk, he became something close to evil by the end of his career.

Moses was an unkind, mean-spirited, and hugely ambitious man who did a few good things at the beginning of his climb to power. But, he ultimately caused far more damage than those good deeds were worth. He was the architect of the plan to keep parkway bridges low enough to prevent buses from



taking people without cars to his public beaches, for example. His name is inextricably linked with the phrase “slum clearance.” And his answer to traffic congestion, always, was to defund public transportation to build more highways.

The Years of Lyndon Johnson tell the story of another flawed man, President Lyndon Baines Johnson. There are four volumes in the series so far, and Caro is still working on the final installment. These books are also behemoths, totaling 3,520 pages.

In the first volume, *The Path to Power*, Caro lets us know that Johnson started cheating in elections in high school. By the fourth volume, we understand that cheating was a way of life for Johnson. He did whatever it took, at whatever the cost, to gain and hold on to power.

In contrast to Moses, Johnson used some of his power to make life better for ordinary citizens. We have Johnson to thank for the Civil Rights Act, Medicare, Head Start, the Voting Rights Act. While he failed the country during the Vietnam War, resulting in his decision not to run for re-election in 1968, his impact on the nation was profound.

Reading these five books sequentially was a lesson in power – who craves it and why, how they get it, how they use it. Caro is the perfect guide, settling his examination of power in the context of the personal stories of men who shaped our country – for better or for worse. ■

Review by Susan Clark

LIBRARY CORNER

Preserving the past | By Erin Shea Dummeyer

Every spring, we receive a few internship requests from local college students. If we have a worthwhile project for them that matches their academic interests, we can usually accommodate requests like this. I felt lucky this spring when James, a graduate student at Simmons University studying library science, approached me with a particular interest in digital archives.

Mark Twain Library has had a relationship with the Connecticut Digital Archive (CTDA) for several years. The CTDA is a program hosted by the University of Connecticut Libraries in collaboration with the Connecticut State Library that provides long-term

preservation services for non-profit Connecticut based institutions. Basically, they let us use their cloud-based software as an online repository for our digital archive... for free. James has been chipping away on this project all summer, scanning physical items from our archives, uploading, and tagging, so that they are searchable and viewable to anyone with WiFi and a computer screen.

Since coming to work at Mark Twain Library, I have been very impressed with our archives, particularly the scrapbooks and memories that have been preserved to record the history of the Library and our fundraisers. Currently,

James is hard at work making these items available to the public in a digital format. There is a button on our homepage labeled “Digital Archives” which will take visitors to these collections. Highlights include a box of personal photos and letters once owned by Mark Twain’s granddaughter Nina Gabrilowitsch and a binder containing mementos from the Library’s “new” 1970s addition. I look forward to seeing what else James comes up with while interning for us as part of his Introduction to Archival Theory and Practice class this fall. ■

Erin Shea Dummeyer is Director, Mark Twain Library

Nod to the pod
Strangers: “Alaska Bingo” | By Amy Maloof

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

I got an e-mail this week that accomplished, in part, its goal: I remembered – fondly – the podcast its sender, Lea Thau, created, and I started to long for its glory days. But I didn’t move past that and subscribe to her new platform (Substack? Medium? It’s all a blur these days...) in order to hear some promised new stuff and reach the archives held captive behind a paywall. I was tempted, but ultimately, I knew it wouldn’t pan out. Like all things, podcasts have a lifespan, and this one is dead.

But when it was alive, it was so alive. I loved *Strangers*. It was a constant companion to me 10 years ago, when I moved from Redding to Brooklyn in the midst of a

divorce. I needed something different and life-affirming in my ears while I stared down a brand-new life, and it provided. Created and hosted by the clever (reclusive, and unreliable) Thau, it told real stories about the surprises we discover when we connect with those outside our usual circles. While most of *Strangers’* archives aren’t public, Thau has kept a few episodes up, and I am thankful. This one, short and sweet, is a perfect example of the show’s brilliance. We follow Sam on a solo, post-breakup trip to Alaska, and his experience there is relatable, funny, and life-affirming. I also liked hearing a show from 2014; there was a lightness and joy in Sam’s voice that I don’t hear so much these days.

After my mini journey through

the podcast grief cycle, I found a Reddit thread dedicated to this subject. It was fascinating and a little grim reading all these love letters to dead-and-buried pods. Some shows went down in flames, rife with HR/PR controversy, some got canceled for financial reasons, and some (most) just petered out. Keeping up a high quality show is difficult, which is why I feel such respect for the work horses that keep going. One of my very favorites – *The Pod F. Tompkast*, too weird to highlight in this column – just disappeared one day in 2013. I realized a full eight-ish years later that I was still, like a sea captain’s widow, checking my feed for new episodes. Acceptance ain’t easy. ■

Microplastics and public health
Presentation on September 30 | By Redding League of Women Voters

“Plastics, Benjamin.” Back in 1967, this provocative and memorable advice was delivered to Dustin Hoffman’s character in *The Graduate* as the path to a lucrative career.

Today, as we graduate into a new era of environmental consciousness, we know the plastics industry and consumers must also graduate to a new model of sustainability.

On Tuesday, September 30 from 6:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m., the League of Women Voters of Redding will host a fall kick-off event at New Pond Farm Education Center featuring

a presentation by Tim Keyes on “Microplastics and Public Health: What Citizens and Communities Can Do.”

Keyes is a consultant, educator, and explorer. He is the founder of Evergreen Business Analytics, LLC, in Redding, which supports financial institutions and non-profits and citizen science projects, and is active as lead researcher for The Sierra Club Connecticut, recently focusing on outdoor air and water quality. Keyes also teaches in the Master’s in Business Analytics programs at Sacred Heart

University and Wake Forest University, is a member of The Explorers Club, and serves on the Board of New Pond Farm Education Center.

The presentation will be followed by a casual mix and mingle gathering, giving attendees the opportunity to learn about the League of Women Voters of Redding, its mission, and how the group supports informed, active participation in democracy. The evening is free and open to the public. ■

Register for the event by e-mailing lwvreddingct@gmail.com

OBITUARY

Judith Kagan March 12, 1942 – July 24, 2025



Judith Kagan, 83, of Redding, died peacefully at home on July 24, 2025. She was the loving wife of the late Harvey Harris Kagan.

Judy was born on March 12, 1942, in Lonsdale, RI, a cotton mill town where her paternal grandfather, who had emigrated from Blackpool, England, worked in the bleachery.

Judy’s parents, Garvin Morris and Helen (Buffinton) Morris, met while students at the Rhode Island School of Design. Helen’s family had been in Rhode Island for generations, tracing their roots back to the founder of Rhode Island, Roger Williams.

When Judy was one, her father enlisted in the Air Force to fight in World War II. He was away from his family for several years, flying a cargo jet in the South Pacific. When he returned from the war, he opened his own design studio, providing illustrations for advertisements. Judy’s three younger brothers, Garvin, Robert, and John, were born over the next several years, and the family moved to Cumberland, RI in 1953.

At Cumberland High School, Judy sang in the choir and performed in plays. She received an

associate degree from Green Mountain College in Vermont in 1960.

After college, Judy worked as a “ski bum” at a resort in New Hampshire and held several receptionist positions before landing a job in the advertising department of Imperial Chemical Industries, a chemical company with an office in Providence, RI. It was there that she met Harvey Kagan.

Harvey and Judy were married in 1967 and built a house in Redding in 1969. There they raised two children, Sarah and Jacob Kagan. Judy was a stay-at-home mother for many years, and devoted herself to volunteering in the town, including for the local Garden Club and the Redding schools. She ran teacher appreciation lunches, taught kids about art and nature as a parent lecturer, hosted exchange students, and chaperoned many, many field

trips. In her free time, she pursued numerous artistic endeavors, including ceramics, woodworking, sewing, and knitting. She loved reading mysteries and birdwatching, and was an extraordinarily talented, endlessly creative cook.

When her children were in college, Judy went back to work, as the assistant director of the Wooster Community Arts Center. There, she found a community of like-minded creative people that she loved. After retirement, she continued her work in the artistic community as a docent at The Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum in Ridgefield.

In their 60s and 70s, Harvey and Judy together pursued their shared passions for gardening, attending opera and classical music performances, traveling, watching sports, and spending time with their beloved grandchildren, Leo and Scrap

Kagan and Emma and Eli Brenner. Judy was a devoted grandmother who was never happier than when making art with her grandchildren and attending their sports and performing arts events.

Judy was predeceased by her parents and husband, and is survived by her brothers, her children, her son-in-law, Jason Brenner, and her grandchildren.

Family and friends will be received on Saturday, September 13, 2025, from 10:30 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. at Kane Funeral Home, 25 Caatoonah Street, Ridgefield, CT. This will be followed by a funeral service at 11:00 a.m. and an interment in Umpawaug Cemetery, Redding.

Contributions in Judy’s memory may be made to the Alzheimer’s Foundation of America, 322 Eighth Avenue, 16th Floor, New York, NY 10001. ■

August 2025 real estate report *A look at trends in the local housing market*

By Bill Whitehead and John Talley

Nine properties closed in Redding in August reflecting a traditionally quieter month in real estate. Year-to-date, the average price of houses sold for the year continues to hover around \$1MM+ in line with the same period in 2024. This could indicate that the rise in market values has plateaued in terms of price. The price per square foot is averaging at \$349 versus \$340 in 2024. There are currently 17 properties under contract. Year-to-date sales for 2025 are 73, same as last year at this time. Current inventory is 28, versus 26 for the same time period in 2024. Average days-on-market is 99 versus 102 one year ago. ■

Bill Whitehead and John Talley are realtors with Berkshire Hathaway Home Services

August 2025													
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 Sept 5	August	2025	August	2025	August	2025	August	2025	August	2025	August	2025
Redding	28	9	73	91	99	\$1,088,222	\$1,092,679	\$1,072,667	\$1,091,601	-1%	0%	\$327	\$349
Ridgefield	37	27	150	71	77	\$1,105,993	\$1,172,387	\$1,147,133	\$1,239,004	4%	6%	\$431	\$448
Weston	31	14	94	80	96	\$1,337,457	\$1,506,239	\$1,323,194	\$1,547,730	-1%	3%	\$440	\$425
Wilton	21	21	142	75	79	\$1,436,762	\$1,367,708	\$1,517,810	\$1,457,396	6%	7%	\$447	\$441
Easton	19	9	59	30	93	\$923,111	\$1,056,132	\$931,694	\$1,066,954	1%	1%	\$340	\$337
Bethel	21	18	102	77	76	\$535,278	\$590,394	\$542,750	\$596,249	1%	1%	\$319	\$288
Newtown	73	34	199	78	83	\$778,138	\$714,470	\$779,809	\$721,305	0%	1%	\$294	\$293
Average	33	19	117	72	86	\$1,029,280	\$1,071,430	\$1,045,008	\$1,102,891	1%	3%	\$371	\$369

REDDING SOLD - August	Sale Price	List Price	%/ List Price	Price/Sqft	Days on Market
16 Howes Ln	\$745,000	\$745,000	0%	\$308	58
22 Woods Way, Unit #22	\$790,000	\$865,000	-9%	\$391	56
9 Brick School Dr	\$865,000	\$880,000	-2%	\$328	95
12 Winding Brook Ln	\$884,000	\$879,000	1%	\$293	103
33 Great Pasture Rd	\$955,000	\$950,000	1%	\$419	64
19 Pheasant Ridge Rd	\$1,075,000	\$1,157,000	-7%	\$336	89
98 Hopewell Woods Rd	\$1,250,000	\$1,249,000	0%	\$331	177
99 Cross Hwy	\$1,390,000	\$1,399,000	-1%	\$288	88
135 Limekiln Rd	\$1,700,000	\$1,670,000	2%	\$253	93
Average	\$1,072,667	\$1,088,222	-1%	\$327	91

REDDING CURRENTLY FOR SALE	List Price	Price/Sqft	Days on Market	REDDING CURRENTLY FOR SALE	List Price	Price/Sqft	Days on Market
71 Picketts Ridge Rd	\$385,000	\$414	50	16 Black Rock Tpke	\$1,300,000	\$314	108
296 Black Rock Tpke	\$529,000	\$557	83	23 Goodsell Hill Rd	\$1,350,000	\$523	86
18 Great Meadow Rd	\$689,000	\$498	99	34 Fox Run Rd	\$1,550,000	\$198	280
12 Granite Ridge Rd	\$749,000	\$248	99	61 Marchant Rd	\$1,565,000	\$377	9
22 Lonetown Rd	\$769,000	\$313	74	33 Peaceable St	\$1,599,000	\$346	2
45 Wayside Ln	\$779,000	\$263	28	56 Cross Hwy	\$1,625,000	\$464	143
86 Pocahontas Rd	\$789,000	\$359	76	65 Umpawaug Rd	\$1,895,000	\$474	1124
1 Long Wall Rd	\$795,000	\$279	25	2 Longwood Dr	\$1,995,000	\$319	18
3 Great Pond Ln	\$850,000	\$362	4	32 Beeholm Rd	\$2,250,000	\$918	107
283 Redding Rd	\$949,000	\$403	38	29 Goodsell Hill Rd	\$3,200,000	\$582	2
118 Sanfordtown Rd	\$999,000	\$321	107	241 Black Rock Tpke	\$4,650,000	\$313	837
22 Ledgewood Rd	\$1,030,000	\$288	56	229 Umpawaug Rd	\$7,495,000	\$1,116	116
15 Tunxis Trl	\$1,065,000	\$346	105	63 Turney Rd	\$10,750,000	\$1,141	67
51 Farview Farm Rd	\$1,095,000	\$290	2				
28 Sunnyview Dr	\$1,299,000	\$353	59	Average	\$1,928,393	\$442	136
Listings continue on right side of table							

“A window into their world” *Jeff Cochrane paints the stories behind local homes*

By Justin Reynolds



Photo by Brenna Cochrane

Jeff Cochrane, originally from New Zealand, moved to Redding last year.

Jeff Cochrane has been “mucking around” with art for as long as he can remember. Growing up in New Zealand, creativity was “just part of life,” he said. “From Māori flax weaving to oils on canvas, it was all around me.” Today, Cochrane continues to tap into that creativity using watercolors and ink to create custom house portraits that capture people’s homes, describing his style as “a mix of childhood nostalgia and a bit of organized chaos. Think: sketchy, flowing lines with bold colors.” “I’m drawn to the kind of visuals you’d see in Pokémon, Super Mario, or even old-school Space Invaders – colorful, playful, and outlined with a black pen to pull

it all together,” said Cochrane, a career and tech ed teacher at Trumbull High School by day, who moved with his family to Redding last year. Cochrane’s parents were both teachers, and the house was always full of art supplies growing up. “I’d hang out after school waiting for them to finish meetings, filling sketchbooks with doodles and designs,” he recalled. “At school, I got into all sorts of media, but I was especially into technical drawing – I loved 2D and 3D house plans.” After high school, Cochrane studied digital media design and ended up working closely with architecture, industrial, and landscape design students.



Photo courtesy of Jeff Cochrane

Cochrane describes his work as "a mix of childhood nostalgia and a bit of organized chaos."

“That really sparked a love for form, structure, and how humans interact with space,” he explained. In his watercolor paintings, Cochrane is inspired by homes that feel lived in. “I love American-style houses – the shingles, textures, and quirky windows,” he said. “They’ve got so much character. I’m always chasing the angle that says something about the people who live there – signs of life, little details that tell a story.” One of the best parts of painting houses is getting to meet people where they live, Cochrane said. “It’s personal. You get a window into their world.” In addition to watercolor, Cochrane also sketches, does black

pen work, and dabbles in wood-working. He’s even built self-watering gardens, arcade machines, and furniture. “I’ve always had this drive to make things; it helps me feel grounded,” he said. “Watercolor pulled me in because it has a mind of its own. It flows and blends and behaves in unpredictable ways, which I love. I chase it around with a black pen, trying to harness that energy.” Primarily, Cochrane’s work is commissioned, though he occasionally creates something just for himself. “Those usually end up sitting in my sketchbook until my wife tells me to do something with them,” he said. While Cochrane does have a

website, you won’t find him on social media. “For me, it’s about staying present,” he said. “I used to be deep in the digital world – running campaigns, building websites, running my own media business. But somewhere along the line, I realized my phone was eating my time and attention. So, I pulled the pin. No more social media. Best move I’ve made.” While he misses the occasional cat video and distant cousin updates, he now has more time for painting, building stuff, hanging out with his kids – and “just being.” Cochrane’s wife is originally from New York, which is part of the reason he ended up in Redding. “With our two kids rocking little Kiwi accents, it felt right to spend time with their American family,” he said. “New Zealand will always be home, but there’s something magical about Connecticut – the mix of new and historic architecture, the forests, the lakes, and the sense of community.” He said something about the vibe of Redding seems to attract creative souls like himself. “I’m just stoked to be a part of it,” he said. ■

Learn more at <http://sites.google.com/view/jeffreycochrane>

THE NATURAL WORLD

Ice cream made with invasives? *Discover the possibilities at the Forage-to-Table Nature Dinner*

By Pamela Brown



Photo courtesy of Open Farmhouse

An upcoming culinary event will take “farm to table” one step further, bringing attendees on a foraging hike that will result in a gourmet meal crafted with the very ingredients they collect.

Herbaceous Catering Co. is presenting a “Forage to Table Nature Dinner” on Saturday, September 27 (rain or shine) at Open Farmhouse at 11 John Read Road. The event is the last installment this season of the Milford-based company’s Foraging Hike & Nature Dinner Series and will feature foods grown on the property, which is also home to Warrup’s Farm. Master forager Amy Demers of Connecticut Foraging Club will lead participants on a 60-90-minute foraging walk on the property, followed by a five-course dinner prepared by Chef Genee Habansky of Herbaceous Catering Co.

“We believe food is medicine and nature is healing. Events like this allow us to invite the public to our farm to engage with the land in a meaningful way,” said Cody Jacobs and Lincoln Hill, Founders and Managers of Open Farmhouse. “Having a foraging expert and talented chef lead the way is an amazing way to honor this land we’re fortunate to steward. It’s cool to learn about what native foods you can forage for, and it helps us to build community resilience.”

Demers describes foraging as finding wild food in nature.

“This can include plants, mushrooms, and seaweeds that are used for edible and medicinal purposes. For the forage-to-table experience, we will discuss identification and processing of wild ingredients that will be utilized in the dinner. Typically, in organic farms, we can expect to find lamb’s quarters, wood sorrel, sheep sorrel, pepperweed, curly dock, stinging nettle, wild carrot, amaranth, lady’s thumb, and pineappleweed,” said Demers, adding, “The walk will be both informational and fun – tasting the raw ingredients, seeing where they grow, then getting to taste the wild ingredients in a curated five-course meal.”

Habansky calls it a “nature dinner,” as it marries cultivated and wild foods. “This dinner will be special because I’m basing the menu not only on foraged ingredients, but also ingredients Cody and Lincoln are growing, like winter squashes, kales, onions, potatoes, and more,” she said.

The five-course menu is still in its planning stages. “I’m working with Amy and recipe testing. We’re hopeful for some rain so we can get more mushrooms,” said Habansky. “Amy sends me a list of what may be available, and I start working on menus. We also try to go out and forage together at least once before the dinner. As a chef, the series and working with Amy have opened up a new world of flavors. It’s been a

new creative journey each season, and I’m constantly recipe testing and pairing foraged ingredients with cultivated ones. I’m making sodas out of roots, ice creams out of the most invasive weeds, and pasta doughs out of wild dockseed. It’s been a wild time in the kitchen – I love it.”

The dinner also will include a foraged cocktail and mocktail. “This has been really fun! We’ve been working with Kelly of Bewilder Bewild Whiskey who creates the most magical foraged cocktail/mocktail using her foraged mushroom whiskey,” said Habansky.

According to Demers, more people have been gaining an interest in foraging to know better where their food is coming from and how their food is grown. “More people are learning to forage in this part of the country and passing the knowledge on to their children. Local, organic food is not cheap. People can find wild food, many times in their own backyard, that’s nutritious and delicious. We also have many invasive and non-native edible and medicinal plants. Collecting and eating these can help to improve the environment by making room for natives to move in.”

Habansky praises the Open Farmhouse setting. “That place is pure magic. From the moment you pull onto John Read Road to walking through their welcome barn, to the back of the kitchen garden, to the inside of the beautiful ballroom,” said Habansky, adding, “These dinners are truly a foodie experience like no other. We want diners to embrace the magic of the farm and enjoy the company and the food in a true farm-to-forage-to-table experience.” Demers adds: “I hope people will come away with an appreciation for wild ingredients and the knowledge to safely and sustainably start foraging for their own wild ingredients.”

Jacobs and Hill agree. “We hope to provide a one-of-a-kind experience deeply rooted in nature and our interconnectedness. Genee is an expert at weaving together a culinary story and her food is phenomenal. Our hope is that guests leave feeling inspired, well fed, and with stories they’ll never forget.” ■

For more information, visit openfarmhouse.com or to order tickets, visit herbaceouscateringholidaystore.com

If trees could talk

An apple a day | By Janice Rotchstein



A basket of apples, grown at Redding's Hilltop Farm by Michelle Sandone and Mike Procaccini.



Photos by Janice Rotchstein
A backyard apple tree on Cross Highway.

Juicy. Crunchy. Lush.

There is nothing like biting into a just-picked apple. Surprisingly, the source of this deliciousness isn’t much to look at with its stout crooked trunk, scaly bark, and meandering branches. Yet appearance hasn’t stopped the apple tree from symbolizing good health, fidelity, and immortality – nor living to 100 years.

In spring, the genus delights with fragrant pink or white blossoms, the essence of which has often been distilled into perfume.

In fall, the bounty – once dubbed “forbidden” – reigns as Connecticut’s most commonly grown fruit. In fact, the Black Gillflower, known for culinary uses, may have kicked off our industry during the 1700s. Today, we can select more than 60 varieties from late August through November.

That success can never be attributed to Johnny Appleseed! Apparently, he didn’t sow in Connecticut, favoring Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Indiana. Ironically, many of the fruits of his labor were axed during Prohibition. It seems teetotalers felt cider was as corrupting as gin and bourbon.

Sadly, Connecticut’s crop was also affected. As the fermented juice lost its customers, orchards were abandoned. Fortunately, once Temperance ended, our farmers created new types and better grove management.

Today, one such entrepreneur is Reddingite Michelle Sandone. She and her boyfriend, Mike Procaccini, have planted more than 50 apple trees on her family’s Hilltop Farm. They selected those that would grow well locally: Goldrush, Enterprise, Redfree, Liberty, Pristine, and Cortland.

Ask her, and she will say: Fall is perfect to add a backyard apple

tree. It will not only yield produce, but also become a pollinator in the garden by attracting bees and butterflies. If you’re game, Sandone recommends a bare-root semi-dwarf because it holds the ground well. She adds: “place in soil with a pH of 6.5-7.0 and, if possible, site on a slope to encourage drainage and where it will get six to eight hours of sun daily”.

As I indulge in my own property’s pickings, I chuckle at their zany legacy:

“Adam’s Apple” – It is said that men inherited a prominent throat bump, because a piece of apple – served by Eve – got lodged in her husband’s throat.

“Don’t sit under the apple tree with anyone else but me” – These lyrics were sung during WWII to remind couples separated by battle: Be faithful.

“Eat an apple on going to bed and you’ll keep the doctor from earning his bread” – A much misquoted 1866 Welsh proverb.

“Apple for the teacher” – Popularized in Denmark and Sweden during the 18th century when fruit was payment for services.

And finally – whether you’re quoting, picking, or eating, don’t be surprised if you hear someone bragging – as British soldiers did in WWI – “How do you like them apples?” ■

Special note: Meet Michelle Sandone for apples and tips at the Redding Grange Farmers Market on Saturday, September 20: 11:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

If you have a favorite tree, you’d like featured in this column, contact reddingtreeconservancy@gmail.com

RSVP For Tickets:

Join us for a special premiere screening event celebrating national recovery month highlighting community organizations working to change the trajectory of the addiction crisis

September 17, 2025, 6:30-9:00 pm
(Doors open at 6:00 pm)

Joel Barlow High School– Auditorium
100 Black Rock Turnpike | Redding, CT

reddingpreventioncouncil.org

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

\$ = fee applies
R = registration required

This Week’s Featured Events

“Ocean in Space” and “Ecosophy” Opening Receptions Saturday, September 13 4:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m. Solo exhibition by Julie Durkin Marty and a group exhibition curated by Katerina Lanfranco Georgetown Arts & Cultural Center 5 Main Street gtownarts.com	Film Screening: <i>Jimmy and the Demons</i> Saturday, September 13 6:30 p.m. Co-hosted by The Aldrich and The Ridgefield Playhouse Documentary on Jimmy Grashow and creation of “The Cathedral” The Ridgefield Playhouse 80 East Ridge, Ridgefield ridgefieldplayhouse.org	Film Premiere: <i>Tipping the Pain Scale</i> Wednesday, September 17 6:30 p.m. – 9:00 p.m. Celebrate National Recovery Month and learn about community resources Joel Barlow High School Auditorium 100 Black Rock Turnpike reddingpreventioncouncil.org	Want to feature an upcoming event? E-mail us at advertise@reddingsentinel.org for more information.
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ARTS

Thursday, September 11
“In Her Wake” Opening Reception
6:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.
Celebrate the solo exhibition by sculptor Janice Mauro; exhibit runs through November 1
Anonymous Society
268 Simpaug Turnpike
anonymoussocietygallery.com

Saturday, September 13
“Ocean in Space” and “Ecosophy” Opening Receptions
4:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.
Solo exhibition by Julie Durkin Marty and a group exhibition curated by Katerina Lanfranco ; Georgetown Arts & Cultural Center
5 Main Street
gtownarts.com

Saturday, September 13
Film Screening:
Jimmy and the Demons
6:30 p.m.
Co-hosted by The Aldrich and The Ridgefield Playhouse
Documentary on Jimmy Grashow and creation of “The Cathedral”
The Ridgefield Playhouse
80 East Ridge, Ridgefield
ridgefieldplayhouse.org
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Wednesday, September 17
Bread & Puppet Fall 2025 Circus Tour
7:00 p.m.
“Our Domestic Resurrection Revolution in Progress”
Open Farmhouse, 11 John Read Road
breadandpuppet.org/tour
\$

CHILDREN | TEENS

Friday, September 12
DIY Friendship Bracelets
3:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.
Grades 5+
Mark Twain Library,
439 Redding Road
marktwainlibrary.org
R

Sunday, September 14
September Storytime for Children and Adults
9:30 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.
Nature stories and outdoor activities for children ages 1-5
New Pond Farm Education Center
101 Marchant Road
newpondfarm.org
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Monday, September 15
Legos and Build-It with Bus from RES
3:15 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.
Grades K-4
Mark Twain Library
439 Redding Road
marktwainlibrary.org
R

Tuesday, September 16
Slime Making
4:00 p.m. – 4:45 p.m.
Grades 6+
Mark Twain Library
439 Redding Road
marktwainlibrary.org
R

Wednesday, September 17
Parent’s Night Out
5:45 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.
Students K-8 enjoy games, snacks, and fun during RES Open House
Redding Community Center
37 Lonetown Road
reddingct.gov/parks-and-recreation
\$, R

FOOD | WINE

Thursday, September 11
Mastering the Art of Preserving Your Harvest
6:30 p.m. – 7:30 p.m.
Learn more about pickling, canning, dehydrating, and more
Mark Twain Library
439 Redding Road
marktwainlibrary.org
R

HEALTH | WELLNESS

Tuesday, September 16
Seasonal Ayurveda & Yoga Therapy Workshop
7:00 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.
Mark Twain Library
439 Redding Road
marktwainlibrary.org
R

NATURE

Saturday, September 13
NPF Walking Group: End of Summer Sunrise Hike
6:30 a.m. – 8:30 a.m.
Led by Tim Keyes
New Pond Farm Education Center
101 Marchant Road
newpondfarm.org
R

Monday, September 22
Fall Welcome
6:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.
Ring the bell and welcome autumn
Redding Grange #15
399 Newtown Turnpike
reddinggrange.org

SPECIAL PROGRAMS

Tuesday, September 16
Expert Panel & Lunch: Home safety and Accessibility – Maintaining a Healthy Home
12:00 p.m.
Presentation sponsored by AgeInPlace Connecticut
Heritage Center
37 Lonetown Road
RSVP to mstillman@reddingct.gov or (203) 938-9725
R

Wednesday, September 17
Film Premiere:
Tipping the Pain Scale
6:30 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.
Celebrate National Recovery Month and learn about community resources
Joel Barlow High School Auditorium
100 Black Rock Turnpike
reddingpreventioncouncil.org

Wednesday, September 17
GRASP Monthly Meeting
7:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.
Discussion group supporting those with loved ones who have died from substance abuse
The Granite
5 North Main Street
thegranitechurch.org

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, September 12
Shabbat at Meadow Ridge
5:30 p.m.
100 Redding Road
templebnaichaim.org

Please check church and temple websites for holiday and special services

MEETINGS

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

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

Monday, September 15
Board of Selectmen
7:00 p.m.
Town Hall / Hearing Room
100 Hill Road

Tuesday, September 16
Region 9 Finance & Operations Committee
5:30 p.m.
Joel Barlow High School / Library Learning Commons
100 Black Rock Turnpike

Tuesday, September 16
Region 9 Board of Education
7:00 p.m.
Joel Barlow High School / Library Learning Commons
100 Black Rock Turnpike

Tuesday, September 16
Conservation Commission
7:00 p.m.
Town Hall / Hearing Room
100 Hill Road

Wednesday, September 17
Water Pollution Control Commission
7:30 p.m.
Virtual

Thursday, September 18
Historic Review Committee
6:00 p.m.
Virtual

Thursday, September 18
Democratic Town Committee
7:00 p.m.
Town Hall / Hearing Room
100 Hill Road

Tuesday, September 23
Planning Commission
7:00 p.m.
Town Hall / Hearing Room
100 Hill Road

Wednesday, September 24
Zoning Commission
7:30 p.m.
Town Hall / Hearing Room
100 Hill Road

Wednesday, September 24
Board of Finance
7:30 p.m.
Town Hall / Hearing Room
Subject to change to Virtual
100 Hill Road

Wednesday, October 1
Brown Bag Lunch With First Selectwoman
12:00 p.m.
Town Hall
100 Hill Road

Monday, October 6
Park and Recreation Commission
7:00 p.m.
Redding Community Center
37 Lonetown Road

Meeting updates and agendas available at reddingct.gov/events

Grow, Learn & Connect

Adult Education opportunities at New Pond Farm



Sept 17

Bird Walk

Sept 18

Flower Workshop

Sept 20

Soundscape Ecology

Sept 28

Native Landscaping

Explore the outdoors, learn a new skill, unleash your creativity, or discover a new passion! There is something for everyone this Fall at New Pond Farm.

Contact us

newpondfarm.org

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