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Voters approve no-excuse absentee voting in CT

By Laura Tillman

Connecticut voters last week approved a constitutional amendment that would allow universal absentee voting.

The approval of the ballot measure, which the ACLU called a "resounding victory," will allow lawmakers to introduce legislation to bring "no-excuse" mail-in voting to the state, joining the majority of U.S. states, which allow residents to vote by mail regardless of whether they claim an approved excuse such as being out of town or having an illness.

"The current system doesn't work for everyone from an access point of view," said Representative Matt Blumenthal, D-Stamford. "If you work long hours, multiple jobs, or if you care for someone with a disability, that may prevent you from getting to the polls and deprive you from your right to vote."

Twenty-eight other states, plus the District of Columbia, already allow no-excuse mail-in voting, and eight more states have allmail elections, in which every eligible voter is automatically mailed a ballot.

As results last Tuesday night began to show that the measure was likely to pass - with the Associated Press reporting about 56% in favor at 11:45 p.m. with 28% of the vote counted - Blumenthal said the referendum would "allow us to not only increase voting access across our state but also design a system that's more efficient and secure and serves the people of Connecticut better than the current one does."

"Connecticut has been sorely behind our fellow Americans in its availability of safe, convenient and accessible options for voters to participate in their democracy," said ACLU of Connecticut Rise PAC Chairman David Mc-Guire. "Our people are our power, and when people vote, the people win."

But making the change hasn't been easy. The right to vote absentee is only allowed under certain circumstances, according to the Connecticut Constitution, meaning that voters had to approve the measure so that lawmakers can make the change official.

On Tuesday, the Connecticut Republican Party made a last-minute push to defeat the measure, posting on X, "let's send a message to the politicians in Hartford. Leave our Constitution alone."

After early results suggested the measure would pass, Connecticut Republican Committee Chair Ben Proto said the move was unfortunate and unnecessary.

"I'm leery about continuing to amend our constitution to do things that are the flavor-of-themonth kind of thing," Proto said. "The constitution should really be a sacred document that sets forth

Continued on page 4



A double rainbow caught this fall over Couch Hill Preserve adjacent to Collis P. Huntington State Park. If you have a photo you'd like to see featured here, with credit of course, please e-mail editor@ reddingsentinel.org.

Special town meeting on November 18

Three items to consider and vote upon

By Jessie Wright

Voters in Redding will assemble at Town Hall on Monday, November 18 at 7:00 p.m. for a special town meeting to vote on three items that have been making their way through various municipal boards and budget processes.

The first item is a vote on the acceptance of Costa Lane as a Town road. Costa Lane, a halfmile loop off Gallows Hill Road, is currently a private road, built by developer Costa Stergue. It was not originally built to Town standards and specifications. The estate of Costa Stergue has now completed improvements, necessary including pavement testing, guard railing installation, and stop sign placement. The Planning Commission gave a positive referral for acceptance as a Town

road at its meeting on August 27, which the Board of Selectman accepted on September 16. A town meeting is necessary to accept the road, as the Town would then be responsible to provide essential services like plowing, emergency access, and maintenance.

The second item is to consider and vote upon the expenditure of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding for Town capital purchases. By Federal regulation, ARPA funds must be obligated (e.g., placing an order for products or services or entering into a contract) by December 31, 2024. The Town intends to use these unspent ARPA funds for Town capital needs, including Highway Department equipment purchases.

The final item is to consider and vote upon the creation of an Historic District Study Committee. Property owners on Church Street have petitioned for the creation of an Historic District Commission. as they wish their neighborhood to be designated as an historic district. According to state statute, the first step in that process is to form a Historic District Study Committee which would study the creation of a historic district. Once a Historic District Study Committee completes its work, and if a historic district is established by a vote of property owners in the proposed district, a Historic District Commission is enabled by local legislation to oversee the district.

The special town meeting will take place at Town Hall, 100 Hill Road, at 7:00 p.m. on Monday, November 18. ■

Redding's Big Outdoors

Devil's Den to close some weekdays

Annual controlled deer hunt begins November 20

By Susan Wollschlager



Photo by Jessie Wright

The Nature Conservancy will hold its annual controlled deer hunt at Devil's Den Preserve during the state-designated firearms hunting season for private

The hunt will take place on the following select weekdays only: November 20-21; November 25-27; December 2-5; and December 9-10. Devil's Den will be closed to visitors on these days, and signs will be posted at all public entrances to the preserve. Residents and their families, guests, and tenants should make plans to refrain from entering Devil's Den on these days.

The Nature Conservancy is working with experienced hunters who have knowledge of the preserve and local area and who will

hunt only in select areas of the preserve's interior away from any neighboring properties.

The purpose of the controlled hunt, which has been held each fall since 2001, is to improve and maintain forest health by reducing the deer population. In recent decades, the high density of deer in southwestern Connecticut and associated overbrowsing have caused ecological damage in the region's forests, harming the understory, limiting tree regeneration, and contributing to the gradual loss of native flowering plant

The annual hunt, in combination with additional restoration efforts conducted by The Nature Conservancy and other conservation organizations, contributes to improving and maintaining the resilience of forests in this region. ■

Election turnout over 86 percent

By Jessie Wright

Voter turnout was high in Redding for the general election this fall, with 86.6% of eligible voters casting a ballot. People overwhelmingly took advantage of the early voting option, with 3,122 visiting the polls in the 14 days leading up to Election Day (over half of those who voted in this election), with only 1,868 voting on Election Day itself. There were also 614 voters who voted by absentee ballot.

The turnout rate was higher than in the last two general elections, with 85% of eligible voters casting a ballot in 2020, and 76% in 2016. However, the number of actual voters was higher in 2020, with 6,048 total people voting that

The election also proved to be an opportunity to register new voters in Redding, with 142 people signing up during Same Day Registration, which was available both during early voting and on Election Day. Some voters were also restored to active status after having been inactive.

In the presidential race, 64% of votes cast in Redding were for Kamala Harris and Tim Walz; 34% of votes cast were for Donald Trump and J.D. Vance; and 2% of votes cast were for third party or write-in candidates. Redding totals skewed more heavily Democratic than the state totals overall, with the Harris/Walz ticket receiving 56% of the statewide vote and the Trump/ Vance ticket receiving 41%.

The U.S. Senate race was similar, with Democratic candidate Christopher S. Murphy receiving 61% of Redding votes and 52% statewide, and Republican candidate Matthew M. Corey receiving 35% of Redding votes and 40% statewide.

Democrat Jim Himes won re-election for U.S. Congressman, with 63% of Redding votes and 61% statewide.

Ceci Maher won re-election for her second term to represent the state Senate District 26, which includes parts of Darien, New Canaan, Redding, Ridgefield, Stamford, Weston, Westport, and Wilton. She garnered 61% of votes in Redding, with her opponent Kami Evans receiving 39%, a split similar to the district totals overall.

Anne Hughes won reelection for her fourth term as a representative in the 135th state House district, winning 60% of the vote in Redding, also in line with district

The statewide ballot question, which would allow the state constitution to be amended to allow for no-excuse absentee voting, passed with 58% of the vote statewide. In Redding, support for the proposed amendment was even stronger, bringing in 66% of the vote.

> Voting data and results were taken from Connecticut Secretary of the State report

Index

Sports

Big Outdoors Editorial

2 Letter to the Editor 2

Obituaries Real Estate

Business Spotlight Book Review

8

Library Corner The Natural World 10 **Calendar of Events** 11



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Editorial

Life in a tinderbox

There is a reason we have continued to feature the column "Redding's Big Outdoors" every issue since the Sentinel's inception on our front page - it's because we believe our town's natural beauty and open spaces are among the most valuable resources we have.

As our community continues to restore pieces of our man-made infrastructure following the overwhelming flooding in August, we face another, nearly opposite threat right now to our natural surroundings - the

The brush fire that broke out last weekend on Newtown Turnpike was a sobering reminder of how close Redding is right now to another disaster - one spark, and over two acres of precious Centennial Watershed State Forest were consumed. It took enormous resources – ten fire departments and crews from the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (CT DEEP) - to contain the blaze that was being whipped up the hillside by winds. Residents who called in to report the fire and smoldering spots the following morning did their part too to ensure worse didn't come. Whew, it was a close call. Too close.

All of Connecticut is now classified as in "moderate drought", and the long stretch of dry weather and high winds have prompted several Red Flag Warnings within the last month. These aren't just alerts at the top of your weather app you should scroll past on your way to seeing the high temperature for the day – they are serious, and until this year, relatively rare for October and November in Connecticut.

The entire state is under an emergency burn ban – forest fire danger risk levels oscillate between "Extreme" (the highest) and "Very High" (the second highest) daily. The governor issued a state of emergency at the end of October to help mobilize resources to fight brush fires and prevent further damage. We got a little rain earlier this week, but as Redding Fire & EMS Company #1 wrote on their social media page Tuesday, "Ahh. We got rain. Did it matter? Not really."

So far, there is no real end in sight for a break in the conditions that make wildfires more likely. None of us will be able to make the rain come, but (at the risk of sounding like Smokey Bear), we all can do our part to help prevent forest fires.

CT DEEP is urging the following safety measures:

- Fires on public lands are prohibited: Do not use campfires, grills, or any other open flame. Again, the ban announced today prohibits the use of outdoor grills, firepits, and campfires, and the kindling and use of flame outdoors in all state parks, forests, and wildlife management areas. This prohibition includes smoking and use of lighters outdoors.
- · Properly extinguish smoking materials: Ensure all cigarettes and similar items are fully put out before disposal.
- Avoid equipment that can spark fires: Refrain from using ATVs, chainsaws, or other equipment in dry areas.

If you observe a wildfire, call 911 immediately and provide the location to emergency dispatch. Timely reporting is crucial to containing fires before they spread further.

Frustrated police chief says all stolen cars have been left unlocked

By Donna Christopher

Police Chief Mark O'Donnell responded to concerns about stolen vehicles from Redding driveways with frustration. "They're going around doing it all around the county. Everybody is leaving their cars unlocked. Not one vehicle stolen in the past four or five years has been broken into. They all were unlocked."

O'Donnell elaborated that car thieves show up in rural neighborhoods and steal vehicles with the owners' keys or fobs left inside. Even he has personally experienced attempted theft.

"They showed up with a stolen car at my house," O'Donnell said. "I got them on my camera. They tried to deactivate the camera and tried to enter my police vehicle in my driveway."

In two other incidents, O'Donnell's daughter's car was the target of would-be thieves, also at home. In one of these, his security camera activated and scared the thief off.

"It took him a total of nine

seconds to run from the road in front of my mailbox. The (camera) went off and he ran."

O'Donnell said the police cannot prevent thefts if car owners leave keys in their cars. There have been no live encounters to date between residents and potential car thieves in driveways, but he added, "If you see them, don't approach them."

He urges residents to keep exterior lights on and lock their cars - especially bring the keys or fob inside. He noted that many of the thieves are young, "probably 18 to 20" and pointed out there have also been luxury cars stolen in Greenwich where keys were

"Get the LED lights if you're worried about your electrical bill," O'Donnell offered. "But keep exterior lights on overnight." If you are worried about light pollution, consider installing motion-activated lights DarkSky-approved light fixtures ■

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,

It is always interesting to read an article such as Donna Christopher's most recent one regarding our old building at 3 Side Cut Road.

Calvary Independent Baptist Church was there for nearly 18 years, from October 1995 to April 2013, renting first from Ada Cole (whose husband Fred had run the general store there for years) and then Barry Finch.

One detail your readers might enjoy is that on January 25, 1996, the first winter the church was in the building, an electrical fire developed in the front wall that likely would have burned the place down, had it not been reported by the resident upstairs.

Despite its being close to midnight, the fine volunteers of the West Redding Fire Department responded promptly and beat the fire down. One of them told us he had worked a fire in the very same building 30 years earlier. Heavily charred attic roof rafters attested to his truthfulness.

The fire marshal's investigation of our fire revealed that it had developed in a first-floor electrical box that was supposed to have been disconnected. It smoldered inside the wall for quite some time, never breaking out but making enough smoke that the lady in apartment overhead smelled it and called it in.

Her observation afterward was that if she had not been up late that night but had fallen asleep at her usual hour, the fire may well have broken out of the wall and consumed the building, with herself in it.

We were all tremendously grateful that did not happen!

In listing the various uses of the building, would it not be accurate to include our church? We would certainly appreciate it! ■

> Pastor Ken Brooks Calvary Independent Baptist Church, Redding

Town receives \$20,000 grant for Wire Mill

By Rocco Valluzzo

To help with stabilization for the historic buildings on the former Gilbert & Bennett Wire Mill property in Georgetown, Redding received a \$20,000 grant through the Connecticut State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) last Wednesday, November 6.

The Board of Selectmen had approved an application for the grant at the end of last year. The application also included a resolution by the Town stating it will match the same amount.

"A few months ago, we sent the application into SHPO, and they hadn't met," said First Selectwoman Julia Pemberton on November 6. "So today was the first meeting they had in some time."

A report for building stabilization, exterior/interior restoration, and fit out needs for some of the buildings was done in 2015 with an estimated cost of \$400,000. In the Gilbert & Bennett Wire Mill Advisory Committee's annual report to the Selectmen last October, that figure was adjusted to \$500,000.

"I don't think we'll be able to get all the buildings done," said Pemberton. "But what we're going to do is update the 2015 report, starting from scratch and

be very specific of what we want in deliverables."

She added that there are buildings intended for demolition under an Environmental Protection Agency grant that the Town has received. These will not be included in the study.

In addition to the SHPO grant, the Town has also been approved for a Brownfield Area Planning (BAR) grant, which will allow it to find a planning consultant for the work approved under this grant. It must now do a request for proposal to select a consultant for the work for the new SHPO grant study.

Roof work at Redding Community Center is now complete



Roof work that began last week at the Redding Community Center is now complete, according to Chief Building Official Shaun Donnelly. The pitched roof section, which covers the Heritage Center and office areas, was completely ripped off and replaced, while certain areas over the gymnasium were repaired for the HVAC system. According to Donnelly, a complete replacement of the gymnasium roof likely will take place in the next one to two years as well.

Please join Julia Pemberton, First Selectwoman

for

COFFEE & CONVERSATION

Sunday, November 17, 2024 3:00 - 4:30

Redding Town Hall

Reporters: Anne Young Albanese Justin Reynolds Rob Sample Pamela Brown

News and Views of Redding, Connecticut

Creative Director, Debora DeCarlo Rosa

Assistant Graphic Designer, Connor Feeney

Marketing Operations Manager, Nicole DuBois

Rocco Valluzzo

Redding Sentinel Ltd

Publisher, Susan Clark

Donna Christopher

Managing Editor, Jessie Wright

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Contact us at: editor@reddingsentinel.org advertise@reddingsentinel.org subscribe@reddingsentinel.org publisher@reddingsentinel.org legalnotices@reddingsentinel.org

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

After months of denials, insurance approves young mother for surgery

By Donna Christopher



A photo of Meghan Ely and her family from her GoFundMe campaign page.

recounted.

Ely said.

Hospital.

the symptoms of a stroke," Ely

Not knowing why she felt this

way, she put the baby in the crib

and put on the TV for her older

daughter to watch so she could

rest. She recalled trying to ask

her daughter, "What do you want

to watch? Mommy needs to lay

down," but couldn't form all the

words. "It still sticks in my head...

I could not form the word Bluey,

and so I put the TV on and laid

down for a little bit. That was it,"

Year's Eve when seven-and-a-

half months pregnant with her

third child, that she experienced

symptoms again. This time, Ely

was driving with her children

locally and experienced a visual

disturbance. "I couldn't see the

car in front of me. The visual

disturbance got bigger and bigger,

so I pulled over in Newtown and

called my husband," she recalled.

suggested she was having a stroke

because her face was drooping.

"You're slurring your words. You

seem like you're having a stroke,"

he said, so they went to Danbury

Ely found out that she would

need cardiac testing. She was

suffered a migraine that presented

discharged having

At the emergency room,

possibly

William, who is a former EMT,

It wasn't until last New

Meghan Ely received a triple whammy of bad news this year, staring just a month after her third child was born. A small hole in one of the walls in her heart (called a patent foramen ovale, or PFO) was likely causing a series of transient ischemic attacks (TIAs), three of which she suffered this year. The 32-year-old mother of three, who lives in Redding with her husband William, also discovered she has thyroid cancer, which has already affected her lymph nodes.

Her doctors decided that before cancer treatment could begin, she needed heart surgery to close the PFO. Then, came the third unbelievable piece of bad news: her insurance company didn't agree.

Following months of tests, repeated denied claims, and a GoFundMe campaign in which community members rallied around Ely, Blue Cross/Blue Shield of Massachusetts notified Ely last week that they had overturned their denial and had approved her appeal to cover the surgery.

The saga first began while she was newly postpartum with her second daughter, when her older daughter was four. She was at home when she experienced symptoms of what she now knows was a TIA.

"All of a sudden, I couldn't talk. I had a facial droop. I had all

followed up at Stamford Hospital for cardiac testing. Further testing was done in March including a bubble test to diagnose the PFO.

as a stroke, according to Ely. She

This is when saline solution is injected into the body as the cardiologist watches the heart on an echocardiogram. "I found out that I had a bubble that went from one side to the other. They said, 'You have PFO' so they tried to get it covered under insurance to close it," Ely explained.

The procedure was denied at that time because, according to her insurance company, "30 micro bubbles need to go through the hole (PFO). That's what they're standing on," she said in an interview last week.

Ely's doctor told her he'd not heard of this. "He said nobody counts bubbles, he never heard of this," Ely said.

She followed up, calling other area hospitals and was told "nobody counts bubbles".

"I ended up getting an ultrasound of the carotid arteries, and they found there was a nodule on my thyroid. My endocrinologist said, 'Maybe your thyroid is very inflamed. Maybe it's just because you're pregnant. So, we waited until after and I got another ultrasound of just the thyroid. The inflammation went down but there's still a bunch of nodules on my thyroid. I had that biopsy in July, and it turned out to be cancer. It's all over my thyroid, so they're going to take the whole thyroid out, but it's also spread to my

lymph nodes." In September, Ely had another TIA, so her doctors sent a new pre-authorization to insurance for coverage, based on the recent TIA, but that too was denied, she said.

Ely works part-time at the Georgetown Fire District and is involved with the Democratic Town Committee. Determined to move forward with the surgery

Continued on page 8

Brush fire contained on Newtown Turnpike

By Jessie Wright and Donna Christopher



Photo by Cole Tucker-Walton

The brush fire along Newtown Turnpike was still smoldering in spots the morning of Saturday, November 9.

The smell of burned wood and singed leaves filled the air on Saturday afternoon as local and state crews continued their containment efforts of a brush fire on Newtown Turnpike that claimed two-and-ahalf acres of Centennial Watershed State Forest.

The fire broke out in the early hours of Saturday, November 9, according to fire officials. Georgetown Volunteer Fire Company reported working for four hours alongside units from nine other fire departments to contain the fast-moving fire.

"All responding units did an extraordinary job getting ahead of the fire and preventing a situation that could have been much worse," the Georgetown Volunteer Fire Company wrote in a release. "Crews battled strong winds and steep terrain for the duration of the operation."

According to a Redding firefighter on the scene around 12:30 p.m. Saturday, the area was under control, with no active fire remaining. The crews, including those from the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (CT DEEP), were then focused on "hot spot" control.

"Sometimes embers can get in the spaces under the cliff," he explained. "So, we're making sure all of those are out and nothing gets going again."

The hillside, adjacent to Route 53 and the Saugatuck Reservoir, was covered in ash. The fire was one of nearly 150 brush fires that have broken out in the state since October 21, following an historic stretch of dry weather.

A Red Flag Warning, the National Weather Service's alert of elevated fire danger, was in effect in Connecticut both Saturday and Sunday, with the entire state under an emergency burn ban.

"No fires of any kind should be burned. Even a spark from your chimney can set off a brush fire," an announcement from the Town of Redding Facebook account urged Saturday.

"Until Connecticut receives a soaking rain of at least 2-3 inches, it will not be sufficient to lower the fire risk, and the public is urged to maintain a cautious approach to any activities involving fire or equipment that could spark a blaze," according to CT DEEP on November 8. ■

For the current forest fire danger level, visit portal.ct.gov/ deep/forestry/forest-fire/ forest-fire-danger-report



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SPORTS

Falcons fly to Class M semifinals

Girls volleyball | By Rocco Valluzzo



Photo by Rocco Valluzzo Joel Barlow High's Claire Rodrigue (left) and Mia Roberts go for the block during a state Class M girls volleyball quarterfinal match on Friday, November 8. Barlow won

While some tougher competition undoubtedly awaits the Joel Barlow High girls volleyball team later in the state Class M tournament, up until now it has been a different story.

Fresh off another South-West Conference championship, the fourth-ranked Falcons have made relatively short work of their opponents in the first three matches, winning all by 3-0 sweeps. The most recent came against fifth-ranked Guilford in the quarterfinals at home on Friday, November 8. Although the Wolverines did not go down without a fight, Barlow never lost control in taking all three sets (25-21, 25-23, 25-16).

"We knew their defense," said Barlow Head Coach Carol Asplund. "We knew that their middle hitter (Kierra Neilson) was tall, and one of their outside hitters (Abigail Matheson) was really good. "

Barlow, which defeated Notre Dame Prep and Lewis Mills earlier in the tournament, was in good shape in the first set, taking a 14-9 lead on a block by Olivia Sickinger before the Wolverines called timeout. Paced by the strong net play of Neilson and Matheson, the Wolverines cut the lead to one (19-18) on Rebecca Marsh's serve.

But after scratching on their next serve, they lost the next three points, including one on a kill by Barlow's Claire Rodrigue, who later added another before the hosts took the first set.

While things started well enough for Barlow in the next set with a 7-3 lead, it scratched on a number of serves to help fuel a threat from Guilford later on. In fact, the Wolverines came as close as 24-23 on a block by Neilson, but it too had some serving difficulty with another scratch on set point to fall behind 2-0.

"We missed ten serves tonight," said Asplund. "That's not like us."

Barlow took control early in the final set, going on a six-point service run that also featured kills by Sofia Benitez and Rodrigue for a 7-1 lead. Guilford never really posed a threat the rest of the way, as it had to deal with several hitting and passing errors while the Falcons stood their ground for the victory.

Should the Falcons defeat topseeded Seymour this week, they will play the winner of the Sacred Heart Academy/Granby Memorial match on Saturday, November 16 at East Haven High at a time to be determined.

Olympic-style youth boxing event this Saturday

By Rocco Valluzzo

The local boxing scene will take on an international flavor with The Battle at Bethel on Saturday, November 16.

A team of amateur youth boxers from Greece will face American opponents in Olympic-style matches held at Bethel High School. Doors open at 5:00 p.m. with the first match starting at 6:00 p.m.

"What I'm bringing is the full, authentic Olympic-style boxing," said event promoter George Hatzi. "I wouldn't bring in blood-hungry fighters. That's important for people to know. We're putting on a nice show."

A type of amateur boxing that is characterized by its technical skill, speed, and physical fitness, Olympic-style differs from the professional boxing often seen on television. Judges use a point system to score rounds based on the number of quality blows landed, technical and tactical superiority, and competitiveness.

The event will feature nine matches with different weight divisions. Coaching the Greek team is Stelios Petroutsos, a well-known boxing coach in Athens.

Originally from the northern part of Greece outside of Thessaloniki, Hatzi came to the United States at age nine and grew up in Norwalk. He returned to Greece at age 31 and spent 19 years there, eventually becoming a well-known event promoter for concerts and kickboxing organizing shows in major cities there.

Long before becoming an event promoter, Hatzi had years of experience in the restaurant industry. His uncle owned and operated Dmitri's Diner in Ridgefield.

"He took me under his wing when I was 17," he recalled. "I know the business."

In January, he opened The Greek, a restaurant on P.T. Barnum Square in Bethel and is continuing to do renovations. Featuring authentic Greek cuisine, food is prepared in a wood-fired oven and 80% of the ingredients come from Greece.

Although not a boxing promoter per se, Hatzi presented the idea of an international competition nearly two years ago to friends affiliated with USA Boxing, which has sanctioned the event. He also enlisted the aid of Johnny Callas, a 25-year professional boxing referee with the World Boxing Council and CEO and founder of the Charter Oak Amateur Boxing Academy in Hartford.

"I threw the idea at them," said Hatzi. "We've been working on it at least a year-and-a-half."

However, Hatzi ran into some resistance concerning where to hold the actual event. Some of the organizers preferred having it in Danbury or other areas that have a boxing club.

"This one was a hard one," he said, "Up until a month-and-a-half ago, the fight almost did not take place."

Next May, Hatzi plans to promote a professional boxing event in Greece. If all goes well, a similar event for American boxers could be in the works next.

"We will see how things go," he said. "Boxing is a beautiful sport." ■

Bobcats shut out Falcons in homecoming loss Football | By Rocco Valluzzo



Photo by Rocco Valluzzo

Joel Barlow High's Kaden Holub forces Brookfield's Peyton Grabko out of bounds during the homecoming football game on Saturday, November 9. Barlow lost 0-27.

Putting points on the scoreboard was an elusive goal for the Joel Barlow High varsity football team in its game against undefeated Brookfield on homecoming weekend.

The host Falcons, who had scored an average of nearly 28 points per game going into the contest, ran into some exceptional defense in their homecoming game on Saturday, November 9. Held to a little more than 100 yards on offense, the Falcons fell 0-27, marking their first shutout loss of the season.

"We kind of ran into a little bit of a gauntlet in our schedule," said Barlow Head Coach T.J. Cavaliere, whose team fell to undefeated Killingly the previous week. "With Brookfield, they're big. They're physical."

The Bobcats wasted no time in moving the ball. After taking the opening kickoff to their own 35-yard line, they picked up two first downs before Matt Ackerly found some room to run on a 49yard sweep down the left side and into the end zone. Ethan Chaber's extra point kick was good, and the visitors led 7-0 with 9:19 left in the first quarter.

"They spread the ball around well," said Cavaliere. "We kind of expected that hard-nosed running. The question was could we stand up to it for four quarters?"

The Falcons made progress on runs by Luke Bishop, Scott Romano, and Braylon Bennett on their first series, getting as far as the Brookfield 36 before fumbling. Their defense then took over and the Bobcats were soon forced to punt.

Unable to move the ball enough, Barlow also had to punt early in the second quarter. What followed was a 71-yard scoring drive by Brookfield, highlighted by a 10yard pass from Thad Balzi to Dan Ciriello to get to the Falcon 37. Mike Walters capped off the drive with a six-yard run, and with the extra point the Bobcats led 14-0 going into halftime.

A Falcon fumble on their first series of the second half proved costly, as the Bobcats took over on the Barlow 35. The result was another touchdown, this one on an 11-yard sweep by Walters. Although the extra point was blocked, Brookfield led 20-0 with just under five minutes to go in the third quarter.

Forcing Barlow to punt on its next two possessions, the Bobcats started on their own 48 following the second and then began their final scoring drive of the day. Balzi's pass to Ackerly was good for 24 yards, and the visitors were later helped by a Barlow penalty that moved the ball to the six. Tyler Buttendorf's one-yard run was good for a touchdown, and with the extra point the score was final at 27-0.

Romano, Bishop, and Gilbert ground out the yards on what would be Barlow's final series, which got as far as the Brookfield 24 before stalling. Taking over on downs, the Bobcats ran out the clock for the win.

"I thought our defense 85-90% of the time did a job and made plays," said Cavaliere. "They had one big run early. They wear you down. I thought our kids fought hard."

The tough part of Barlow's schedule continues as it hosts Newtown on Friday, November 15 at 7:00 p.m. ■

New inductees to **Athletic Hall of Fame**



Photo by Rocco Valluzzo

Represented by former coach Jim Dolan (center) as well as a few players, the 1990, 1991, and 1992 state Class M champion Joel Barlow High boys soccer teams were among the list of school Athletic Hall of Fame's inductees that were recognized during halftime at the football team's homecoming game on Saturday, November 9.

Voters approve no-excuse absentee voting in CT / continued from page 1

our principals of why our government exists, and to continue to run these amendments time and time again to continue to gain political and electoral advantages seems to me to be contrary to what the constitution is all about."

Members of the Republican party have expressed growing distrust in the electoral process. In a recent Connecticut Mirror poll, about 79% of Democrats who responded said they supported the measure, and 81% of Republicans opposed the expansion of absentee voting.

That distrust was fomented by the ongoing absentee ballot abuse scandal in Bridgeport, in which Wanda Geter-Pataky, the Vice Chairwoman of the city's Democratic Party, was charged, along with three others, with allegedly helping voters to fill out absentee ballots during the city's 2019 mayoral race and illegally taking possession of those ballots before the election.

The referendum comes after a similar ballot measure in 2014, which failed. Blumenthal said that, in that case, "overly complicated and confusing" phrasing was to

Former Secretary of the State Denise Merrill, who was behind that 2014 attempt, said the issue looked different 10 years ago. For one, it was coupled with a referendum to allow early voting, an issue that was subsequently considered

by voters on its own terms, and took place for the first time this

"Its time hadn't come. It wasn't a huge issue as it is now," Merrill

The change in the mentality around absentee voting is partially a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, Merrill said, when the state allowed all eligible voters to mail in their ballots, due to concerns about contagion. "About a third of the electorate used absentee voting, and they loved it."

Nearly 80% of Connecticut's eligible voters participated in the election, the most in the state's his-

"People overwhelmingly reported it to be a positive experience," Blumenthal said. "We waited a little longer for the results than we normally do. But things went smoothly."

Secretary of the State Stephanie Thomas said last week that she hoped that voters would weigh in on the ballot measure.

"Part of the issue with ballot questions, sometimes, they're not well advertised. Voters aren't quite sure what the issue is," Thomas said. "I know, in 2014, a lot of people left that question blank. So for me, a successful result is that everyone actually answers."

> This article originally appeared in CT Mirror









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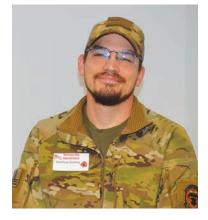
Redding Elementary School honors veterans on November 11 | By Anne Young Albanese



Richard Sills served in the Army from 1968 to 1973. He is joined by his grandchildren, Jonah and Benjy, and his daughter Traci Greenberg.



Dr Jason McKinnon, Superintendent of Easton, Redding, and Region 9 schools, joined Neil Parker, a veteran of the British Army who served from 2002 to 2010 in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Africa, and Nathan Ethier, who served in the Army National Guard in Iraq and Afghanistan from 2002 to 2023.



Matthew Keating served in the Air Force in Afghanistan and Djibouti from 2015 to 2021.

On Veterans Day, November

11, Redding Elementary School

honored students' family members

and friends who have served in the

military with a special assembly.

The program allowed students to

learn about the Army, Navy, Air

Force, Marines, and Coast Guard.

Representatives from the National

Guard and the British Army also

the school community singing "America the Beautiful." Student Council members then shared information with their classmates, including Veterans Day facts and information about the five branches of the military. There was a sing-along, with each grade singing a song recognizing each

Students were also taught ways The ceremony started with to honor veterans. They handed each veteran in attendance a red the Pledge of Allegiance and



Ralph Rosa, who served in the New York Army National Guard from 1965-1970, joins Lou Loban, who served in the US Army during the Vietnam War from 1966-1969 as a Sergeant.

poppy, which recognizes veterans' sacrifices and hopes for a peaceful future. The ceremony concluded with all students singing "This Land Is Your Land."

Redding School District recognizes that honoring veterans on Veterans Day is a chance to educate the students about the military and the sacrifices veterans make for our country. The district uses Veterans Day as an educational opportunity, rather than a day off from school. ■



New initiative pairs teens and seniors in fight against loneliness

By Rob Sample



Loneliness as a health issue has been in the news quite a bit lately. Both pundits and public-health officials have pointed to social media overuse as spawning a generation of disconnected young people, while a newfound lack of family cohesiveness has brought about increased isolation among seniors.

U.S. Surgeon General Dr. Vivek Murthy has described loneliness and social isolation as a public health crisis. The consequences, as outlined by Murthy in a health advisory last year, can be dire: a 29-percent increased risk of heart disease, a 32-percent increased risk of stroke, a 50-percent increased risk of dementia in older adults, and an increased risk, by 60-percent, in premature death.

To combat loneliness among both seniors and teenagers, Redding native Tessa Higgins has launched STAR Connections, an organization that pairs teens with older adults. Its goal is to foster a sense of connection – and combat loneliness among both.

"These two demographics self-report the highest levels of loneliness and isolation," noted Higgins, a graduate of Danbury's Wooster School and a sophomore at Wesleyan University. "I'm interested in understanding and improving the health of communities, and there is a rapidly growing body of evidence demonstrating that social connection is a crucial component of mental and physical health."

STAR Connections is currently in its pilot phase, with two teen volunteers and three senior participants. Each pair will meet at least once per week. Through these regular visits, participants visit and learn about each other. Older adults have a wealth of skills and knowledge to share with young people - and, likewise, seniors are often eager to pick young people's brains about topics such as technology and popular culture.

Early on, Higgins reached out to Redding's Social Services Department, Mark Twain Library, and the Heritage Center. "We have many seniors who are interested in participating - what we really are in need of are teens," said Higgins, who is studying biochemistry and neuroscience and recently earned EMT certification. "I reached out to Joel Barlow High School and got one volunteer. We are also reaching out to the Boys & Girls Club as well."

The weekly visits are a bit unstructured by design: Higgins encourages both cohorts to identify areas of common interest, and then pursue them. That can be a simple activity such as working on a puzzle while chatting. More ambitious pursuits might involve preparing a dessert or, in warmer months, planting flowers in a garden. The emphasis is on social connection, not in providing a caretaking type of service, Higgins



"For their part, seniors are very excited about getting to know a young person," said Higgins. "From the teens' perspective, it's a great opportunity to feel valued and appreciated for their interests and ideas, and for what's going on in their lives."

The formation of STAR Connections was a bit serendipitous for Higgins. Since high school, she has worked as a volunteer at Mark Twain Library and in caring for animals at farms and individual households. "I worked for an older woman in town, taking care of her animals," said Higgins. "As a result of that relationship, she became a very important person in my life," said Higgins.

Through her friend, Higgins learned that a lot of older people in Redding live alone and feel quite isolated. Young people, on the other hand, are often looking for something worthwhile to do.

The solution to loneliness is to create simple ways for people to connect, noted Doug Renfield-Miller, a retired financial services executive from Redding and a contributor to the Heritage Center newsletter. "It's simply a matter of re-adopting methods of social engagement that bring people together," Renfield-Miller wrote in a recent Heritage Center newsletter. "We are extremely fortunate to live in Redding, a town which offers many programs and resources to bring seniors and others together."

Others in Redding agree on the need for a program like this and applaud Higgins's initiative. "It's still in the beginning stages, but there is a big demand for this in a community like Redding," said Angelica Fontanez, Director of Social Services. "There is a large cohort of seniors in town who are isolated and at the same time don't want to come to the programs at the Heritage Center. It's a great dynamic to have young people connecting with seniors."

Margherita Pilato, Program Coordinator for the Heritage Center, said STAR Connections is ideal for a community such as Redding, where older people who are in relatively good health live alone and are isolated from their neighbors. "They have their twoacre lots and they are used to going it alone," Pilato said. "During the Covid pandemic, we began reaching out to check on people to make sure they were doing OK. We learned that there are a lot of people out there who need programs such as this that help them to stay connected." ■

> To learn more or get involved, contact Tessa Higgins at redding.star01@gmail.com or by phone at (203) 501-8298

Library to debut outdoor space

military branch.

Ribbon cutting ceremony on November 20 By Lisa Goldstein



A rendering from Seventy Acres of the new outdoor space at Mark Twain Library.

On Wednesday, November 20 at 2:30 p.m., Mark Twain Library will hold a ribbon cutting ceremony to officially open its newly created outdoor patio space.

"Redding is a town known for its commitment to offering public, open space. I am thrilled that the Mark Twain Library's loggia project now reflects that value" said Mark Twain Library Director Erin Dummeyer.

Members of the Library's Board of Directors, staff, First Selectwoman Julia Pemberton, and elected officials will be present for the ribbon cutting

"We're very fortunate in Redding to live in a beautiful and outdoorsy town," said Board member Eric Rubury, who spearheaded the project as part of the Library's Building and Grounds Committee. "So, what better thing to do than to provide an outdoorsy environment for the community?"

Interest in an outdoor space first came to the attention of the Library when conducting a survey of the community in 2019. The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic further emphasized a need to create a comfortable outdoor space for Library patrons.

To design the patio, which Mark Twain liked to refer to as a "loggia," the Library looked to Redding's own Nancy King of Seventy Acres Landscape Architecture & Design for her experience as a landscape architect and also for her connection to the building and the town as a longtime Redding resident and patron of the Library.

"The round drum building to me is really unique, and I wanted to embrace that, (and) I wanted it to be comfortable for a couple of people to sit out there or a whole class," said King, who got excited at the thought of holding a yoga class on the new patio. She said she's thrilled with the way it turned out, noting that the pergola gives it a cozy feel and reflects the ambience of the surrounding woodlands. "It's going to be fun to see how it evolves!"

The project was funded in part by a grant from the Town's American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds as well as through private donations including a gift from the Thomas R. and Terry S. Flagg Fund. ■



Stuart Chase: Redding's "mysterious, revered sage" | By Carter Wiseman



Stuart Chase with his cat Boots in 1953.

Even people who are up on their American history assume that the term "New Deal" was coined by Franklin Delano Roosevelt, the U.S. President whose program of the same name became synonymous with the triumph over the Great Depression. In fact, the term may well have been the invention of a Redding resident.

His name was Stuart Chase. He was born on March 8, 1888 in Somersworth, New Hampshire. He started college at MIT, but transferred to Harvard, and graduated (with a degree in accounting) cum laude in 1910. His classmates included the poet T. S. Eliot, the future journalist Walter Lippmann (originator of the term "Cold War"), U. S. Representative Hamilton Fish, and John Reed, the young communist who wrote a controversial account of his time in Russia, Ten Days that Shook the World.

In 1931, Chase and his wife, Marian, a violinist and writer, moved from their home in Croton, New York, to a remodeled 18thcentury barn on Redding Road, where they lived for nearly 50 years. Chase and his wife were two of a cluster of artists and intellectuals who gravitated to the Redding area in the 1930s. Among them were the photographer Edward Steichen and the prolific cultural critic Van Wyck Brooks, who lived down the road in Weston before moving to Bridgewater. In his long career, Chase wrote 35 books on subjects ranging from semantics to religion, economics, and population control, including The Tragedy of Waste, The Proper Study of Mankind, and The New Western Front, in which he argued against American entry into World War II.

His writing, which included a book on economic policy titled A New Deal, brought him to the attention of Franklin Roosevelt, who was then governor of New York. When Roosevelt became President, he included Chase in his informal group of advisers known as the "kitchen cabinet".

Chase advocated some views that would today be considered dangerously socialistic. He was committed to a planned national economy, and even speculated about some form of "planetary government". But he stopped short of endorsing the Communist Party USA, with which many intellectuals of his day sympathized, but which he described as made up of "a high proportion of frustrated neurotics and plain crackpots as well as some high-minded idealists - a tragic group, this last." He also outlined some visions for the country's future that seem prescient in retrospect. Primary among them was protection of the natural environment.

Those views played a part in Chase's role in local preservation. He served as secretary of the Redding Planning Commission for 20 years, supporting efforts to "keep Redding green," and wrote columns for the Redding Pilot, the predecessor of this newspaper. In one of those columns, addressed to Redding's schoolchildren in 1978, he wrote: "You have two homes: the house where you live here in Redding, and the planet earth on whose surface you walk, whose air you breathe, whose water you drink, and that provides all your food from its fields, forests and waters... Your house must be kept aired and clean or you may get sick from poisons and infections. Your planet, which is your other home, must also be kept healthy, clean

and livable. If this fails, we shall

all get sick before too long." Chase was an enthusiastic tennis player, and often joined his Harvard classmate, Ernest Angell – for many years the chairman of the American Civil Liberties Union on his court in nearby Newtown. In his spare time, Chase took to carving walking sticks, peeling the bark in geometric patterns that suggested Native American designs. A former neighbor remembers that Chase loved cats, and as an accomplished amateur artist, drew pictures of them.

In 1974, on the eve of his 90th birthday, Chase was interviewed by Rick Honey, then the 31-yearold editor of the Pilot.

When Honey interviewed Chase, he still played tennis (doubles, no longer singles), and went snowshoeing on Umpawaug

Honey recalls that Chase, toward the end of his life, was still "a bit of a man of mystery," but was also considered a "revered sage". As Honey remembers him, "He wasn't outspoken, but people listened to him." This may have helped Chase in debates over local land-use issues, which reportedly grew heated when developers pressed for building permits that threatened the Town's open space.

In the course of the interview. Chase gave Honey a list of books he felt that educated Americans should re-read on a regular basis. (He had his own separate shelf dedicated to them.) Some of the authors' names have faded from today's canon (John Marquand, Norman Douglas), but others are still read: Hemingway, Faulkner, Tolstoy, and Redding's own Mark

In the interview with Honey, Chase downplayed his authorship of the "new deal" brand, saying that the term was common in the early 1930s. Honey, who retired from a career in corporate communications and now lives in Weston, attributed this selfdeprecation to what he remembered of Chase as "a courtly gentleman," and "a humble man."

Perhaps, but Chase seems to have remained very outspoken about the environment, especially the one that included his adopted hometown. Discussing the conservation of natural resources for the Redding Remembered Oral History Project, he noted proudly that in the 1960s, Redding had a mere 1.3 acres of Town-owned open space, and that by 1978, that total had increased to more than 3,000 acres. He declared: "It has been a great privilege to work with my fellow citizens on these goals over the years here in this beautiful, unspoiled New England town... May it never become 'Levittown-on-the-Saugatuck!""

He had a point. Levittown's "ticky-tacky" mass-produced housing units would have affronted anyone who treasured the quirky clapboard farm buildings that defined Redding in those days. Of course, the soldiers returning from World War II - for whom Levittown was intended, and who could never have afforded a renovated barn in rural Connecticut - might have disagreed. So might some current residents looking for housing for teachers, firefighters, their grown children, and aging parents. But Chase was a man of his time and class, and it seems that his heart was in the right place. Chase died in his Redding home at 97 on November 16, 1985. If he were still alive, might he come up with a new "new deal?" ■

OBITUARIES

George Allan Cohen

April 19, 1942 - November 2, 2024



George Allan Cohen died peacefully on November 2 at Danbury Hospital, where he served as a beloved gastroenterologist for over 40 years. Born on April 19, 1942 in Denver, CO and raised in Great Neck, NY, he graduated from Dickinson College with a degree in art history, then went on to medical school at the University of Buffalo, with a residency at Yale.

George met Jinny (Hayman), the love of his life, in 1967 at Martell's, a pub in Amagansett, NY during the summer before his final year of medical school. His opening line was "nice culottes." They were married the following June, and over the next several years, had two boys, Gregory Andrew

and James Alexander.

After serving as a doctor in the army, stationed at Fort Huachuca, AZ, he moved his family east to Redding, where he opened a private practice with offices in Ridgefield and Sandy Hook.

George - a devoted husband, father, grandfather, brother, and uncle - was an expert fly fisherman, avid birder, world traveler, and accomplished bagpiper. His love of flyfishing took him to his favorite rivers around North America, among them the Restigouche and Miramichi in Canada, and the Delaware in the Catskills of New York, to which he, his sons, and dearest friends have made an annual pilgrimage every Memorial Day Weekend for the last four decades, to catch the elusive Green Drake hatch (and perhaps a few trout while they're at it).

George was a true "renaissance man." He bestowed his interests in art, film, history, nonfiction, nature, and esoteric trivia on his two sons and anyone else he came into contact with. And he was never without a hobby, among them natural stonewall masonry, painting miniature bagpipers and soldiers, and yes, tying trout flies. His two greatest passions came with a pedigree. George was an esteemed member of both The New York

Angler's Club and the Celtic Cross Pipe Band.

George loved living in Redding. He enjoyed taking long walks down Valley Road with his dogs Max and Woody, attending events at Mark Twain Library, and inviting his many friends over to watch birds and tell stories over cigars and Lagavulin in his gazebo beside the pond.

He and Jinny would often stray far from their home in the woods of New England. For five decades, they enjoyed traveling the world together, from the Red Sea to the Dead Sea, from Dublin to the Galapagos, and almost everywhere in between.

Most will remember George for his personality. He was kind, generous, and a true character. Adored by patients, neighbors, and his children's friends. He was facile with wit, as droll as they come, and could tell a joke or story like no other. Especially if it was long, and you've heard it before. He very well may still be telling that last one.

He is survived by his wife of 56 years, Virginia, his two sons Gregory (Robin Reiser) and James (Amanda Cruz), and his grandchildren Sullivan, Wyatt, and Des. A memorial service will be held in December. For details, please visit georgeacohen.com ■

Anne Darling Hamar

December 3, 1936 – November 4, 2024



Anne D. Hamar, 87, of Redding, passed away peacefully on November 4, 2024 at Danbury Hospital.

Anne leaves behind her cherished husband of 66 years, Martin R. Hamar, who loves her beyond measure. They first met in 1953 when they were both teenagers and a few years later, they were married. She also leaves behind two sons, and five grandchildren: Roderick and Lillian (Sister Ber-

nadette-Marie F.L.M. (née Alexandra), Daniel and Abbe Zachary); and Douglas and Bola (Michelle and Rachel).

Born on December 3, 1936 in Bryn Mawr, PA, Anne was the first daughter of her deceased parents, Robert and Grace Darling of Short Hills, NJ. She is survived by her beloved sister, Edith Dixon and her husband Charles, as well as numerous nieces and nephews, extended family, and friends.

Anne supported Martin in founding Hamar Laser Instruments, Inc. in 1967, and served as its secretary for many years. She eventually became the Vice President of Finance and a board member.

Anne was a longtime member and secretary of the Wilton Women's Club, Encore of Wilton, Daughters of the American Revolution, and Wilton Garden Club,

and sang for years in the Treblemakers singing group.

She was a wonderful wife, mother, grandmother, sister, and was a warm, caring, and loving woman. She created a beautiful family home with manicured gardens in Wilton and loved watching the baby swans grow up on Kent Pond. She had a passion for jigsaw puzzles, needlepoint, and doing the NY Times crossword puzzle in record time! She enjoyed many vacations sailing the "high" seas on Long Island Sound on Martin's Erickson 27 sailboat. She will be dearly missed by all.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made in her name to: Family and Children's Agency, Wilton, CT familyandchildrensagency.org

To offer online condolences, please visit boutonfuneralhome.

Janice DiPietro

Passed away November 8



Janice Perrotta DiPietro, 78, of Redding, passed away peacefully early Friday, November 8, 2024,

at Regional Hospice in Danbury. She was married to Joe DiPietro for 58 years.

Born in Norwalk, she was the daughter of the late Joseph and Betha (LaRose) Perrotta. She attended Brien McMahon High School and was a long-time administrative assistant at St. Patrick Church in Redding and Shaker Real Estate in Bethel.

Janice is survived by her husband, Joe, children, Marcie Rouman (Chris) of Seattle and Joseph DiPietro (Xochitl) of Redding, granddaughters, Joanna and Carina DiPietro, sister Vicki Napoleone of Norwalk, and many nieces and nephews. She was predeceased by her parents and sisters, Carole Reid of Norwalk and Chrissy Ellis of Cape Coral, FL.

A graveside service was held for Janice on Wednesday, November 13 at Umpawaug Cemetery. In lieu of flowers, donations can be made to St. Jude Children's Research Hospital or a charity of your choice. To offer condolences online, please visit boutonfuneralhome.com ■

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Real Estate

October 2024 real estate report A look at trends in the local housing market

By Bill Whitehead and John Talley

The sellers' market continued in the month of October, where good values at fair prices garnered multiple bids, brief days-on-market, and sale prices at, near, or over asking. Twelve properties sold in Redding last month, bringing the total for the year so far to 92, one-shy from the amount from the same period last year. Days-on-market are averaging around 100 versus 80 from one year ago. The current average price of houses sold in Redding remains around \$1 million, which is a 10% increase over 2023. The average price-per-square-foot of houses selling is \$306 versus \$347 a year ago. Interest rates have crept back up to the 7% range. ■

Bill Whitehead and John Talley are REALTORS® with Berkshire Hathaway Home Services

						O	ctober 2024						
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 11/7/24	October	2024	October	2024	October	2024	October	2024	October	2024	October	2024
Redding	26	12	92	120	102	\$1,020,917	\$1,069,658	\$1,025,083	\$1,065,404	0%	0%	\$415	\$306
Ridgefield	21	20	203	56	90	\$1,153,195	\$1,131,424	\$1,166,175	\$1,159,149	1%	2%	\$419	\$407
Weston	24	10	112	81	85	\$1,429,680	\$1,442,847	\$1,408,397	\$1,491,634	-1%	3%	\$388	\$401
Wilton	29	18	197	80	101	\$1,158,939	\$1,253,225	\$1,180,111	\$1,319,055	2%	5%	\$394	\$415
Easton	7	3	64	70	103	\$1,016,667	\$1,021,629	\$994,000	\$1,029,408	-2%	1%	\$283	\$301
Bethel	14	13	118	83	91	\$484,038	\$521,538	\$490,185	\$526,981	1%	1%	\$283	\$271
Newtown	59	28	232	92	79	\$699,018	\$691,630	\$710,221	\$698,560	2%	1%	\$302	\$290
Average	26	15	145	83	93	\$994,636	\$1,018,850	\$996,310	\$1,041,456	0%	2%	\$355	\$342

REDDING SOLD - October	Sale Price	List Price	%/ List Price	Price/Sqft	Days on Market
68 Portland Ave	\$505,000	\$495,000	2%	\$526	83
80 Old Stagecoach Rd	\$675,000	\$665,000	2%	\$406	92
144 Seventy Acre Rd	\$728,000	\$749,000	-3%	\$242	67
79 Cross Hwy	\$750,000	\$715,000	5%	\$378	344
35 Putnam Park Rd	\$799,000	\$799,000	0%	\$394	52
235 Redding Rd	\$872,500	\$865,000	1%	\$345	121
45 Picketts Ridge Rd	\$877,500	\$875,000	0%	\$283	135
70 Limekiln Rd	\$949,000	\$949,000	0%	\$409	97
51 Old Mailcoach Rd	\$1,100,000	\$1,250,000	-12%	\$345	137
46 Blueberry Hill Rd	\$1,350,000	\$1,199,000	13%	\$381	40
17 Dan Beard Ln	\$1,495,000	\$1,495,000	0%	\$385	149
60 Topstone Rd	\$2,200,000	\$2,195,000	0%	\$886	117
Average	\$1,025,083	\$1,020,917	0%	\$415	120

REDDING CURRENTLY FOR SALE	List Price	Price/Sqft	Days on Market	REDDING CURRENTLY FOR SALE	List Price	Price/Sqft	Days on Market
457 Black Rock Tpke	\$350,000	\$255	54	99 Cross Hwy	\$1,659,000	\$344	37
376 Newtown Tpke	\$495,000	\$491	39	61 Marchant Rd	\$1,695,000	\$452	67
649 Redding Rd	\$640,000	\$354	115	34 Lonetown Rd	\$1,695,000	\$306	162
32 Mountain Rd	\$709,000	\$506	2	56 Cross Hwy	\$1,750,000	\$500	35
94 Hopewell Woods Rd	\$899,000	\$272	23	279 Black Rock Tpke	\$1,750,000	\$389	122
45 Great Pasture Rd	\$899,000	\$226	108	65 Umpawaug Rd	\$1,895,000	\$474	826
59 Sidecut Rd	\$999,999	\$347	67	273 Newtown Tpke	\$1,945,000	\$329	145
145 Mountain Rd	\$1,050,000	\$370	76	34 Fox Run Rd	\$1,995,000	\$255	90
18 Goodsell Hill Rd	\$1,094,000	\$544	26	207 Poverty Hollow Rd	\$2,150,000	\$360	63
99 Old Stagecoach Rd	\$1,145,000	\$333	112	4 Longwood Dr	\$2,795,000	\$397	126
961 N. Park Avenue Ext	\$1,290,000	\$329	111	241 Black Rock Tpke	\$5,995,000	\$403	539
87 Sherman Tpke	\$1,375,000	\$341	19	229 Umpawaug Rd	\$8,500,000	\$1,265	894
47 Chestnut Woods Rd	\$1,395,000	\$462	56				
710 Redding Rd	\$1,575,000	\$423	2	Average	\$1,836,154	\$413	151
	Li	stings continue on	right side of table				

Art and craft fairs kick off the holiday shopping season | By Pamela Brown

As the holidays near, many people are starting to look for the perfect gifts for everyone on their list – and gift giving can be even more rewarding by shopping local. Redding is host to several upcoming events to help you get into the holiday spirit, enjoy some good food, and shop 'til you drop while supporting community artisans and non-profits.

Holiday Art Bazaar at The Granite Saturday, November 16

9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. The Granite, 5 North Main Street thegranitechurch.org/events

Granite's inaugural Holiday Art Bazaar is a special event that puts the spotlight on the talent and skill of over 15 creative artisans in the community. The free event, open to the public, will feature a curated collection from local talent, many of whom are volunteers at The Granite. A range of handmade goods will include paintings, pottery, sculpture, woodworking, crochet and fiber arts, artisan cookies, handmade candles, natural skincare products, jewelry, essential oils and home décor. Food will be available for purchase from Old Mill Market, including sandwiches, coffee, tea, and small treats.

According to Robert Mars, Creative Director of The Granite, the non-profit's mission is to build up the community through the arts focusing on music, visual arts, dance, and performance. The event serves as a way for creatives to partner with The Granite to fulfill that mission. Mars hopes

people who attend appreciate and recognize the immense talent in the local area and how The Granite is a space that offers positive and engaging ways to bring the local creative community closer together.

Redding Garden Club's Holiday Boutique Saturday, November 16 $10:00 \ a.m. - 2:00 \ p.m.$ Redding Community Center, 37 Lonetown Road reddinggardenclub.org/ upcoming-events

The Redding Garden Club's annual event is a delightful holiday shopping experience with items that are all handmade by Garden Club members. According to Garden Club member Randy Thomas, this year's event, one of the group's major fundraisers, will feature a greater variety of items than ever before. "Bernie-Style" mittens made from old sweaters, festive holiday aprons made from vintage tablecloths, all-natural body creams and scrubs, handthrown ceramic trinket dishes, hand-knitted face cloths, beaded jewelry, knitted bowls, lighted boxwood trees, and clothespin people can all be found there, among other holiday treasures.

Karen deFriesse, Holiday Boutique Chair, noted all the materials and time are donated by Garden Club members, so prices are reasonable. Proceeds from the Boutique support the group's civic activities and projects, including the maintenance of various planters and gardens in public spaces around town.

The Collective @ MTL -A Community Pop-Up Market Thursday, November 21 2:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m. Mark Twain Library, 439 Redding Road marktwainlibrary.org

Make a special trip next week to Mark Twain Library, not only to pick up a book or two but also to do some local holiday shopping. The Collective @ MTL: Community Pop-Up Market, now in its 6th year, turns the upstairs Mark Twain Room into a warm and inviting boutique where the community can shop small independent vendors and artisans from Redding and surrounding towns. The market will feature unique, locallymade holiday items, including a selection of handcrafted jewelry, one-of-a-kind home décor items, personalized gifts, gourmet treats, unique clothing, accessories, and more. There is no entry fee; everyone can feel free to drop in and browse. Light refreshments, including sparkling water and wine, will be served.

According to Elaine Sanders, Adult Program Coordinator, the market is a fun and engaging way to bring the community together. She added that the market has become not only a time to shop but also allows people to mingle with neighbors while supporting local artisans. It encourages community pride and togetherness and is an annual event both the vendors and local community look forward to every year.

Redding Artisan Holiday Market Saturday, December 14 10:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. John Read Middle School, 486 Redding Road facebook.com/reddingartisanfair; instagram.com/ reddingartisanmarket

The popular annual Redding Artisan Holiday Market returns in December for its 9th year. Inspired by old-fashioned outdoor Christmas markets but held indoors at John Read Middle School, the community event will feature more than 50 local artists, including the work of some new talented local artisans. Some of the items include handmade jewelry, pottery, fine art, knits, clothing, skin care, candles, soaps, toys, stationery, cookies, wood turning, glass art, Christmas ornaments, home décor, and local food. In addition, about 15 student artisans, half from Redding and others from neighboring towns, will be showcasing and selling their work. Food vendors will be on-site, including D's Kitchen, Grumpy Dumpling Co, Tumu Cucina Mexicana, Turtle Moon Health Teas & Honey, and Bethel Organics & Specialty Market. Quartertone Coffee of Ridgefield will provide beverages.

According to Marion Unangst, the event's organizer, the market is a great place for shoppers to start their holiday shopping while supporting local vendors and the arts in Redding schools. A popular highlight is the raffle, featuring amazing handmade items donated by the local artists. All proceeds benefit the arts at JRMS.

Gaudete Christmas Market at Georgetown Oratory Sunday, December 15 $9:00 \ a.m. - 3:00 \ p.m$ Georgetown Oratory. 30 Church Street georgetownoratory.org, (203) 544-8245

The Georgetown Oratory is celebrating its 3rd annual holiday shopping event for a faith-filled Christmas. The third Sunday of Advent is special day, as it honors the penitential season on the liturgical calendar. The Church pauses to "rejoice" on Gaudete Sunday and celebrate the coming of Christmas by offering a unique and joyful shopping experience. The free event, open to the public, takes place at Pryor-Hubbard Hall on the Oratory campus. A warm, welcoming, and festive atmosphere creates a jovial holiday spirit where shoppers can browse a wide selection of beautiful gifts made by more than 25 talented and creative local craftsmen, curated artisans, and bakers. Items will include an extensive array of merchandise including artwork, iconography, jewelry, seasonal cards, greeting cards, stained glass, books, Christmas ornaments, wooden items, religious articles, candles, gift baskets, jellies and jams, hats and gloves, and novelties of all

There will also be raffles, with proceeds going toward purchasing new altar linens. A popular bake sale will feature home baked items along with a food truck. Coffee and tea will also be available. ■

On the Thanksgiving menu with...

The Baldanzas of Baldanza at the Schoolhouse | By Pamela Brown



The warm feelings of Thanksgiving are not only felt in the food at Baldanza at the Schoolhouse in Wilton, but in the personalities of Angela and Sandy Baldanza, its owners and Redding residents. The couple's welcoming and kind nature translates to their food. "It's important to us to make people feel like they're coming into our home. We're both hands-on, and we want them to have an amazing experience," said Sandy.

It is only fitting that Thanksgiving is the Baldanzas' favorite holiday. "It's a pure, non-superficial holiday with a focus on family getting together and celebrating. It brings everybody together," said Sandy. "We have a group of customers, our Thursday weekly crowd, who became friends and celebrate Friendsgiving here."

Open for brunch and dinner, the restaurant's creative and contemporary menu is filled with farm-to-table American comfort food year-round. "We've curated the menu around what we like. With us both being Italian, the menu is really American cuisine with a slight Italian twist using the finest ingredients. Everything is fresh and made to order - all our sauces, soups, pastas, desserts are made from scratch. It's very clean, healthy, organic and all-natural eating," said Angela, who won the Food Network's Cooks vs. Cons competition show and develops and makes all the restaurant's desserts. Local ingredients are used when possible, such as herbs from Gilbertie's Farm in Easton. "Both of us contribute to the menu and recipe preparation and we also have chefs who execute our vision," said Sandy who creates

the soup recipes.

While food has always been a huge part of their lives coming from Italian families with exceptional cooks, the Baldanzas both enjoyed successful careers in the fashion industry for 45 years before becoming restaurateurs. Sandy operated a fashion apparel business and Angela was an executive at Jones Apparel Group. Both see a connection between fashion and food. "In our showroom, there was always food. And like fashion, we learned early on that quality is key and people eat with their eyes, so the plate, itself, and the food has to be beautiful," said Sandy. Before opening Baldanza at the Schoolhouse in 2021, the couple ran Baldanza Café in New Canaan for eight years and a second location in Darien for two years.

When they have downtime from the restaurant, the Baldanzas appreciate their home base in Redding. "We've been living here for two glorious years. We love it. It's quiet. I love the community," said Sandy.

To add to your Thanksgiving meal, here is their recipe for Cranberry Orange Pound Cake. ■



Baldanza Cranberry Orange Pound Cake

Ingredients:

- 8 oz of organic cream cheese, softened
- 3 sticks of organic unsalted butter, softened
- 3 cups of organic sugar
- 2 tablespoons of vanilla
- 2 tablespoons of orange zest
- 6 organic eggs at room temperature
- 3 cups of organic cake flour
- 2 cups of fresh organic cranberries

Directions:

- 1. Pre-heat oven to 325 degrees Fahrenheit.
- 2. With a paddle attachment on your mixer, blend the cream cheese, butter, and sugar for 4-5 minutes on low speed until blended and fluffy.
- 3. Alternate adding the eggs, vanilla, orange zest, and flour into the above mixture.
- 4. Fold cranberries into the batter.
- 5. Pour into a greased 16 x 4 loaf
- 6. Bake for an hour-and-a-half until tester comes out clean.

Enjoy!

Business Spotlight

Home décor that makes a difference

Rustic Roots Co. By Justin Reynolds



Photo courtesy of Rustic Roots Co.

When Chad Greiter and his wife Courtney were renovating their home in 2017, they realized they didn't want to fill their house with particle board furniture and décor purchased from places like IKEA and Wayfair. So, they decided to teach themselves how to build furniture using local reclaimed wood, and Rustic Roots Co. was

"We're a farmhouse-style home decor company focused on the use of sustainable materials," Greiter said. "We love combining reclaimed wood and metal."

The company - which sells things like shelves, salvaged steel shelf brackets, and all-natural soy candles - is run by the husbandand-wife team who live next to Collis P. Huntington State Park.

"We don't have any employees and have tried to keep it a small operation since we want to be involved with every piece going out the door," said Greiter, adding that they are looking to expand in the future as they add more products to their portfolio.

Greiter's background is in digital technology; he works fulltime in marketing tech.

"Rustic Roots has been my passion project and allows me to flex a different creative muscle that is a nice contrast to the tech work that I do," he said.

Rustic Roots delivers the hightouch service only a small business can, Greiter explains.

"We win against big-box retail and e-retail options because of our commitment to perfection," he said. "We are there every step of the way, pre- and post-purchase, in a way that bigger companies can't be - and this is our advantage. We've grown to significant scale on Etsy and our direct-to-consumer website but haven't lost sight of the importance of the customer

experience and delivering best-inclass products."

The business has an ecofriendly mission, sourcing sustainable and recycled material to build their products. Reclaimed lumber comes from local barn teardowns, and steel is salvaged from metal yards on the coast of the Pacific Northwest. The company also uses some new wood, which is a mix of upcycled boards procured from a transfer yard in Newtown and local lumber yards.

"We're really worried about how climate change is affecting our world and want to set an example for our two little girls that even small positive action can compound and enact change," Greiter explained. "That's what we're trying to do. We offer sustainable products that leave a smaller carbon footprint in comparison to Amazon, Walmart, and Wayfair, and, in turn, shift some attention to local small businesses."

With each order, Rustic Roots plants a tree in regions of the world impacted by deforestation and forest fires.

"We've donated over 1,000 tree plantings through One Tree Planted and are proud to offer a few products that are made with 100% sustainable material," Greiter said.

Rustic Roots also takes on custom projects.

"We do onsite visits to scope out the space for your project and bring our experienced eye to help with interior design, color matching, and customization to build an heirloom piece for you," Greiter continued. "Our past custom projects can be seen on our website, and we've been told our builds are the conversation pieces whenever someone visits."

"This is a labor of love and we're not really focused on revenue growth," Greiter continued. "We'd love to help local residents update their space and shift some focus back to small businesses in our beautiful community." ■

Learn more at rusticroots.eco and etsy.com/shop/rusticrootseco





catering.caraluzzis.com

BETHEL 98 Greenwood Ave

203-748-3547

NEWTOWN 5 Queen St

203-270-7500

WILTON 920 Danbury Rd

203-544-7021

DANBURY 102 Mill Plain Rd 203-743-8003

After months of denials, insurance approves young mother for surgery / continued from page 3

as soon as possible so her cancer treatment could begin, she and William published a GoFundMe campaign to help raise money for the procedure. The community immediately offered support, with the campaign raising \$41,000 from 291 donors.

contacted local Ely also representatives when her first appeal was denied for assistance in getting it overturned.

State Representative Anne Hughes told the Sentinel that she had brought the case to the attention of the Office of Attorney General, Congressman Jim Himes, Office of Healthcare Advocate, CT Insurance Commissioner, and a liaison with Stamford Hospital.

"They all are struggling with the lack of authority over an outof-state insurer, Blue Cross/Blue Shield of MA. We are working to collaborate on some sort of pressure point or workaround that compels or shames the insurer into doing the right thing," said Hughes. "This is why I fiercely advocate for universal health care, a public option, and Medicare for All. No family should be subject to the casual denials of healthcare claims, from in- or out-of-state insurance companies that make these cruel denials their default practice... GoFundMe should never be the default healthcare policy of a civilized country."

On November 7, Ely received a call from Blue Cross/Blue Shield that they had overturned their original denial. In a letter to Ely it states, "Our physician reviewed the additional information you supplied and was able to authorize coverage." The Sentinel, which had been seeking comment from Blue Cross/Blue Shield on the matter when the appeal was

approved, also received an e-mail confirming the updated status of the claim.

In response to the news that Ely's PFO repair had finally been approved, Hughes said, "These denials of self-insured plans are so normalized and common, their practice counts on not getting a coordinated pushback like this, to keep on making profits over people's health."

The news was a relief to Ely, immediately scheduled her heart procedure for this week. Though she has ended the GoFundMe campaign and has asked the company to return all the donations, many neighbors have urged her to keep their contributions as a gift as she undergoes her treatments. ■

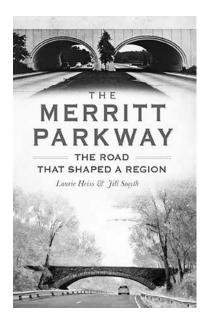


BOOK REVIEW

The Merritt Parkway The Road That Shaped a Region

By Laurie Heiss and Jill Smyth

162 pages / History Press / \$18.84



The Fairfield County Planning Association (FCPA) was chartered in 1924 to ask questions that rarely needed to be asked about road construction: "Who will pay? Who plans the path of a road? Which state agency is in charge of building roads? Where does it go, and why? To what does it connect?" Naming the road type was also important, and the FCPA defined terms in 1934. "A parkway is a public road through public or park property." Citizenry was opposed to commercial traffic; hence, the Merritt Parkway was free of commercial traffic. (Factoid: in the New York area, if the roadway has a name, rather than a number, it is closed to commercial traffic; i.e., the Saw Mill River Parkway, the Bronx River Parkway, the Hutchinson River Parkway, the Merritt Parkway, etc.)

In the first decades of the 20th century, there were few highways and few airport runways. Most roads were dirt or gravel, and most airports were grass fields. That changed quickly. The first international commercial airline passenger flights were made in luxury flying boats from harbors in the 1920s and 1930s, and the 27-mile Hutchinson River Parkway was built from 1924-1938 to accommodate the growing presence of automobiles, 240,000 of which were registered in New York and Connecticut by 1920. In 1934, construction on the Merritt Parkway commenced.

Throughout the complicated construction effort, artistic purpose carried often nearly equal weight to engineering. It was part of a larger plan. As authors Laurie Heiss and Jill Smyth wrote: "The Merritt Parkway captured the beauty of Connecticut's surrounding landscape and drew the traveler into nature with fleeting views of farms, woodlands, lakes and rivers."

Heiss and Smyth tell a powerful story of Connecticut's visionary personalities meeting

the challenges of great change as it swiftly came. Published local, detailed histories are important sources; they provide accurate information and statistics that broaden understanding and make an area comprehensive in the mind and imaginations of locals and visitors alike. And there are interesting parallels. The United States highway system evolved in the 1950s at the same time that passenger jets and color television saw a modern population settle in with acceptance of changes that kept coming. Seat belts and well-maintained highways with speed limit enforcement standards underscored considerations of safety as automobile ownership and use exploded.

Aesthetic vision during parkway construction was carefully curated. "Of the nearly 70,000 trees and shrubs required to landscape the parkway, 47,000 were mountain laurel...The blending of the road and countryside was seamless, inviting thousands of drivers to experience the beauty of Fairfield County."

The Merritt Parkway has found its way into literature. In the first paragraph of J.D. Salinger's short story, "Uncle Wiggly in Connecticut," Mary Jane explains to her former college roommate, Eloise, that driving up from Larchmont she had "remembered the way exactly, until she had turned off the Merrick Parkway. 'Merritt Parkway, baby...'," Eloise corrects her. And Salinger begins to set exquisitely the atmospherics for his narrative.

This history is an important document of record. It is written in a clear prose. It celebrates the work done as important to Depressionera financial suffering, and as a necessary answer to growing congestion on traditional routes across southern Connecticut. It is also a fascinating story of vision and political resolve (and some chicanery). The ongoing efforts to sustain and improve the Merritt Parkway continue, and many changes currently afoot are detailed here.

> Review by Tom Casey, author of **Human Error**, Strangers' Gate, and a new novel, Unsettled States, available now



LIBRARY CORNER

By Erin Shea Dummeyer

Participating in the Mark Twain Library's strategic planning process has allowed me to have many in-depth conversations about Redding and its future with a wide range of community members with diverse backgrounds and experiences. A common theme I have heard during the process is that Redding is a place where people with political differences can still be civil with each other. This has been a boon during a time when much of our nation feels so divided.

Another central theme that keeps coming up is "community." Folks see Mark Twain Library as the center of town, a place to go to meet neighbors, attend cultural programs, and engage in a free exchange of ideas. If you are feeling unmoored after last week's election, I urge you to focus on one of the things that makes Redding special: care for one another in spite of our differences. Redding is a place where people pitch in to help one another without expecting

something in return. This "can-do" scrappiness is reflected in the work of our staff (always eager to help), our volunteers (anything for the Library!), and our supporters who spur us on year after year. Mark Twain Library remains an institution that values free expression, support for the common good, and access to information without fear or favor.

> Erin Shea Dummeyer is Director, Mark Twain Library

Masks and more at Libary exhibit on artist W.T. Benda By Lisa Goldstein



Thatcher and Ann Taylor wearing masks from their family's personal collection.

Ann Taylor has been a presence in Redding for 37 years as the Director of New Pond Farm Education Center. Her connection to Redding, however, extends well beyond New Pond Farm - and that history is on display in an exhibit in the Mark Twain Library Rotunda through the month of November. The exhibit showcases the art and life of Taylor's grandfather, Wladyslaw Theodor (W.T.) Benda, a Polish-born artist who spent his summers in Redding and was known worldwide for his illustrations and even more so for his sculpted elaborate paper masks.

"Many of them are well-over 100 years old," said Taylor, "They were so carefully constructed, my grandfather was laborious."

Similar to Norman Rockwell, Benda's artwork was frequently featured on the covers of popular magazines of the time, such as *The* Saturday Evening Post, Ladies' Home Journal, McCalls, and Life Magazine. Appearing on the scene roughly a decade before Rockwell, Benda's illustrations were just as well known. According to Taylor, he started making masks on a whim out of packing tape. "He had such an imagination and a sense of fun!" she explained. While Benda died before Ann was born, his persona and legacy were passed down by his two sisters who lived in Redding and Ann's mother, Eleonora Shimler, who was an artist in her own right and worked



Photos by Lisa Goldstein

W.T. Benda's illustrations were fetured in several national publications in

as the art teacher at Redding Elementary School for more than 30 years.

The masks Benda created were worn in theater and dance productions as well as by celebrities of the time. For instance, Benda made a mask for the actress Katherine Hepburn to wear in publicity shots for one of her movies. One of his masks also inspired the look of the evil queen in the Disney movie Snow White. For the Taylors, the masks were just part of the fabric of their home, hanging on the walls for visitors (including well-known artists who lived and worked at the same time as Benda) and for family members to play with.

"I did my first presentation on the masks in fourth grade," said Ann's son Thatcher, "and I had a handful of my friends wearing the masks, even the gym teacher wore one."

That sense of fun turned into a real passion for Thatcher, who currently works as New Pond Farm's Program and Events Facilitator. Now the keeper of the masks, he did a deep dive into his great grandfather in high school and continued to work with and exhibit the masks in college. He first displayed the masks at the Mark Twain Library nearly 20 years ago.

Earlier this year, Taylor announced that she would be retiring from New Pond Farm and heading north to spend more time with family in Vermont and New Hampshire.

"I love masks! The masks were fabulous then (and now)," said Library Board member and Exhibit Coordinator June Myles. "When I learned that Ann was moving, I thought we needed to see the masks again before it was too late!"

The bulk of the masks, including the premiere masks that are often used for displays, will stay in Redding with Thatcher, where they still hang on the walls of the first floor of their house. There are a handful, however, that Ann said she just could not part with, so some will be traveling with her up north. According to Thatcher, records show Benda made almost 60 masks in his lifetime, and he believes roughly 40 are still in existence. The Taylor family is still in possession of close to 30 of them while the remainder are housed in museums as well as the Kosciuszko Foundation, a Polish organization in New York.

Thatcher and Ann each have their favorite masks, and both share a fondness for one in particular, called "Pestilence," which is on display at the Library; each was given it as a 13th birthday gift by Ann's mother.

You can visit the exhibit during Library hours: Monday and Thursday: 10:00 a.m. – 8:00 p.m.; Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday, Saturday: 10:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.; and Sunday: 1:00 p.m. − 5:00 p.m. ■

Local resources for Native American Heritage Month By Rob Sample

November is Native American Heritage Month, which gives all of us an opportunity to learn about the people who occupied North America for more than 10,000 years before the arrival of the first Europeans. Connecticut is rich with learning experiences and opportunities to explore both close

to home and on a day trip. Native American Heritage Month owes its beginnings to Dr. Arthur C. Parker, a museum director in Rochester, New York and a member of the Seneca nation. He persuaded the Boy Scouts to set aside a day to honor the first Americans. More recently, in 1990 President George H. W. Bush approved the designation November as "National American Indian Heritage Month" - later renamed Native American Heritage Month.

A visit to Mark Twain Library is a great way to start any cultural journey - especially if you're an avid reader. "We are planning a book display highlighting Native American authors," noted Library Director Erin Dummeyer. "My favorite Native American author is Stephen Graham Jones."

Dummeyer noted that Graham Jones's work falls into the "horror" genre (and it is still close enough to Halloween to make his books an enjoyable choice!) Dummeyer's non-exhaustive list of titles includes the following works with more to be put on display at the Library: Wandering Stars by Tommy Orange; I Was a Teenage Slasher by Stephen Graham Jones; The Round House by Louise Erdrich; An American Sunrise by Joy Harjo; and The Serviceberry: Abundance and Reciprocity in the Natural World by Robin Wall Kimmerer.

For a great hands-on experience for the kids, plan a visit to New Pond Farm Education Center's Native American Museum and Encampment. The encampment provides a realistic look at

what a local Native American village might have looked like, with a wigwam, fire circle, and longhouse. Indoors, the museum exhibit includes plenty of native artifacts and gives an educational overview of Native American life prior to the arrival of European settlers.

The site hosted a Native American celebration on November 2 and a similar event may take place in spring 2025. "It is a teaching site, and we often host school groups," noted Emily Ciffone, the Education Center's Program Director. "But individual visitors and families are welcome whenever the Farm is open." For details, go to newpondfarm.org.

Another nearby resource is the Institute for American Indian Studies, in Washington, CT (about 30 miles north of Redding). Founded in 1975 by indigenous and non-indigenous archaeologists, the Institute and its museum bring to life Native American

life with hundreds of thousands of artifacts, special exhibits, and even a popular "wigwam escape room."

Its educational department, offers ongoing special events and talks aimed at teaching Native American lifeways and the contributions indigenous people have made to today's America. For more details, visit iaismuseum.org.

Up for a road trip? Eastern Connecticut is home to two large casinos operated by two Native American groups, the Mohegans and the Pequots. These two groups gave the state its name - originally spelled Quinnehtukqut - which means "beside the long tidal river." What you might not know is that both tribes also operate excellent museums. They're both worth the hour-and-a-half drive.

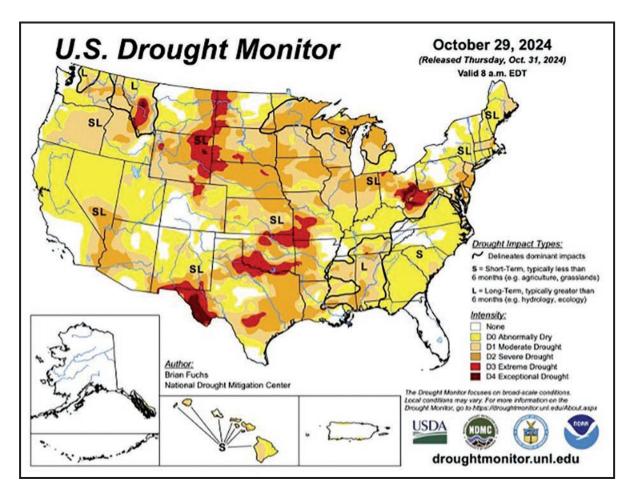
Uncasville's Tantaquidgeon Museum is just over a mile from the Mohegan Sun casino and features daily tours by members of the Mohegan nation. The Museum occupies a hilltop stone structure surrounded by a stockade fence; inside are a dugout canoe, a traditional wigwam village, and garden mounds. Groups of six or more require an appointment. For more details, go to mohegan.nsn. us/explore/museum. You can also call (860) 235-8057 or e-mail museum@moheganmail.com.

About 10 miles farther east is the Mashantucket Pequot Museum, adjacent to the Foxwoods Casino. It's quite large, so allow plenty of time to see as much as you can here. Highlights include a recreated 16th-century Pequot village, an exhibit on the 17th Century Pequot War (in which 600 Native Americans died), a simulated glacial crevasse, and a look at how European settlement changed Native American's lives. For more information, visit pequotmuseum. org or call (860) 396-6910. ■

THE NATURAL WORLD

Over 150 fires, and all of Connecticut now in moderate drought

Why is this happening here? By Jan Ellen Spiegel



Connecticut has faced over 150 wildfires since October 21. One firefighter has died, and others have been injured. The fire magnitudes have varied. The Hawthorne fire in Berlin is the biggest to date – it had reached 127 acres as of November 8 and was 73% contained after breaking out 18 days earlier.

Their causes vary too, but the underlying conditions for each are the same: abnormally dry conditions that has left a landscape primed to burn.

It turns out Connecticut is not the only state that has faced an exceedingly dry October. And it isn't experiencing the worst of it.

Data through October 29 show that except for a thin northern strip and small area in the southern tip of Fairfield County, Connecticut was ranked as "abnormally dry," so not quite in a drought, by the

U.S. Drought Monitor, a joint operation of the National Drought Mitigation Center at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The two northern and southern areas are in moderate drought - the lowest drought level. (Data released on November 7 have since upgraded all regions in the state to the moderate drought level.)

That is a little worse than the week prior, when a portion of central Connecticut still had no designation and only a tiny corner was designated as moderate

NOAA's preliminary estimate based on the new data is that 87.16% of the continental U.S. is now abnormally dry or worse. That would be a record.

National data provided by NOAA from the Southeast Regional Climate Center show there was a small amount of rain in October at the various reporting sites around the state. That is a clear contrast to the big zeros it shows from New York to Philadelphia and across the southcentral U.S.

A ranking map shows that only Connecticut's Stamford/ Bridgeport reporting station has recorded its lowest October precipitation on record - which goes back 77 years. On this interactive map, a monthly record is indicated by the number 1. The other reporting stations, some with longer and some with shorter reporting histories, rank their areas from second to sixth driest Octobers.

But in the New York City to Philadelphia corridor and across the south there are a lot of number ones for October.

That's splitting hairs, to some degree – it is dry here and in many locations. The bigger question may be, what's causing the lack of

According to Allison Santorelli, acting warning coordination meteorologist for NOAA's Weather Prediction Center, there has been a "stark pattern shift" since mid-September that has resulted in a stubborn and strong high pressure - an upper level ridge parked across much of the eastern half of the country.

"That's what's led to the anomalously dry weather in many locations from the central U.S. into the eastern U.S.," she said. "And that has generally blocked any moisture from coming north from the Gulf of Mexico."

Santorelli said there looked to be a bit of a break coming for the central region in November. "But at least in the Eastern U.S., it looks like we're going to be kind of stuck, for lack of a better term, underneath this blocky upper ridge

October does tend to be a pretty dry month for this area, but not this dry, and it's generally not the driest time of the year.

"The fire weather season, if you want to call it that, in the tri-state area, is basically April," said Erica Grow Cei, a meteorologist and spokesperson for NOAA. "You've got all those dry leaves on the ground from last year, and the sun is starting to come up, and it's still dry, and you get a little breeze. Someone flicks their cigarette out the window, and next thing you know, you've got a little fire."

Which begs the big question is the unusual dryness right now related to climate change? That's unknown.

Will we ever know? Also unknown.

Grow Cei explained that systems like the one that is stuck now get stuck because the warm and especially dry air in it is very dense, which just makes it harder to budge. There's also less of a moisture source coming from below because the leaves on the trees this time of year have stopped undergoing photosynthesis, which would release moisture through the leaves.

"It just helps to keep things stuck," she said.

The high winds the area has experienced lately will dry things out even faster.

Logic would tell you a state like Connecticut with an extensive shoreline should provide more moisture. But Grow Cei said this time of year there is less evaporation.

"Our sun angle right now is similar to what it is on Valentine's Day," she said.

To get things moving again, something big like a brewing tropical storm would need to occur - not that anyone is wishing for that with another month to go in the official hurricane season. "There could be some other large enough scale disturbance that rides through the jet that disrupts the pattern," she said.

But that hasn't happened here yet and NOAA's Climate Prediction Center doesn't show much precipitation showing up into mid-November.

For now, the predictions for winter are not too out-of-theordinary for New England.

Temperatures are likely to be a little above normal. And precipitation? Normal.

> This article originally appeared in CT Mirror



This Week's Featured Events

Holiday Art Bazaar

Saturday, November 16 9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. Local artists, craftspeople,

and bakers. The Granite 5 North Main Street thegranitechurch.org/events

Redding Garden Club Holiday Boutique

Saturday, November 16

10:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m. Shop for the holidays and support the Redding Garden Club. Redding Community Center 37 Lonetown Road reddinggardenclub.org/ upcoming-events

New Pond Farm Open Day

Saturday, November 16 1:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m. Explore the farm, its programs, and membership benefits. New Pond Farm Education Center

101 Marchant Road newpondfarm.org

Founding Fathers Lecture Series: Madison

Sunday, November 17 3:00 p.m.

Presented by Redding Historical Society. Free for members, \$10 suggested donation for non-members. Redding Community Center 37 Lonetown Road reddinghistory.org

Arts

Thursday, October 24 – Sunday, November 17

"Igniting Reverie: Works in Wax" A Group Show of Women **Encaustic Artists**

12:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. Thursdays and Fridays 10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m. Saturdays Anonymous Society 268 Simpaug Turnpike anonymoussocietygallery.com

Sunday, November 17

Ridgefield School of Dance presents The Nutcracker

1:00 p.m. Beloved holiday ballet followed by a performance by the Jazz Department. Ridgefield High School 700 North Salem Road theridgefieldschoolofdance.com

Wednesday, November 20

Italian Opera Immersion

1:00 p.m. – 2:15 p.m. Enjoy award-winning soprano Claire Taylor at the Heritage Center. Heritage Center 37 Lonetown Road RSVP to mstillman@ townofreddingct.org or (203) 938-9725

Friday, November 22

On the Trail Album **Release Concert**

7:00 p.m. – 10:00 p.m. New original music and covers on album "Where Do We Go From Here' The Granite 5 North Main Street thegranitechurch.org/events \$, R

Children | Teens

Tuesday, November 19

Topstone Family Story Time 10:30 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. Presented by Mark Twain Library Topstone Park 72 Topstone Road marktwainlibrary.org

Monday, November 25

Books, Crafts, and Snacks & Taking the Bus from RES

R

3:15 p.m. – 3:45 p.m. Grades K-4 can meet Ms. Lisa after school and re-create their favorite storytime experiences at the library. Mark Twain Library 439 Redding Road marktwainlibrary.org R

CRAFTS

Saturday, November 16

Creating a Compelling Photograph

10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. Workshop on composition, perspective, exposure, color, and texture. New Pond Farm Education Center 101 Marchant Road newpondfarm.org \$, R

Sunday, November 17

Needlework Drop-In

2:30 p.m. - 4:30 p.m. Gather around the fireplace and work on needlework projects together. New Pond Farm Education Center 101 Marchant Road newpondfarm.org

Thursday, November 21

The Collective @ MTL -**Community Pop-Up Market** 2:00 p.m. - 7:00 p.m.

Shop small, independent vendors. Mark Twain Library 439 Redding Road marktwainlibrary.org

Tuesday, November 26

Floral Workshop: **Thanksgiving Centerpieces** 10:00 a.m.

All materials are included, but bring floral scissors or garden clippers. Redding Community Center 37 Lonetown Road RSVP by November 21 at mstillman@townofreddingct.org or (203) 938-9725 \$, R

Thursday, December 5 or Saturday, December 7

Wreath Making

6:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m. on December 5 2:30 p.m. - 4:30 p.m. on December 7 Bring work gloves and clippers. New Pond Farm Education Center 101 Marchant Road newpondfarm.org \$, R

Health | Wellness

Wednesday, November 20

Tips For Increasing Happiness: Raising Your Happiness Setpoint 7:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.

Hybrid event Mark Twain Library 439 Redding Road marktwainlibrary.org

Thursday, November 28

The Joyce Allen **Great Turkey Escape**

8:00 a.m. Kids fun run 8:30 a.m. 5K Registration now open. Annual Thanksgiving race, raising money for local non-profits and student groups. Redding Commuity Center 37 Lonetown Road runsignup.com/Race/CT/Redding/ TheGreatTurkeyEscape \$, R

Nature

Saturday, November 16

New Pond Farm Open Day

1:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m. Explore the farm, its programs, and membership benefits. New Pond Farm Education Center 101 Marchant Road newpondfarm.org

Saturday, December 7

Redding Community Hiking **Club - Turkington Falls**

11:00 a.m. Family-friendly hike with optional lunch to follow at Redding Roadhouse. Sponsored by Redding Land Trust, Redding Neighbors & Newcomers, and Mark Twain Library Park at John Read Middle School 486 Redding Road marktwainlibrary.org

Seasonal | Holiday

Saturday, November 16

Holiday Art Bazaar

9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. Local artists, craftspeople, and bakers. The Granite 5 North Main Street

thegranitechurch.org/events

Saturday, November 16

Redding Garden Club Holiday Boutique

10:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m. Shop for the holidays and support the Redding Garden Club. Redding Community Center 37 Lonetown Road reddinggardenclub.org/ upcoming-events

Sunday, November 17

Bus Trip to Radio City Christmas Spectacular

10:00 a.m. bus departs 3:00 p.m. show Seats in 2nd Mezzanine Depart and return to Redding Community Center 37 Lonetown Road townofreddingct.org \$, R

Sunday, November 24

Annual Holiday Cookie Swap 2:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Redding Neighbors & Newcomers Location TBD reddingneighborsandnewcomers.org

Sunday, December 1

Breakfast with Santa Bill

9:00 a.m. - 12:15 p.m. Sign up for a 45 minute time slot for a pancake breakfast and photos. Cannon Grange 25 Cannon Road Wilton cannongrange.org \$, R

Special Programs

Friday, November 1 – Thursday, November 21

Westbrook Nature School **FUNDrive**

All day Donate clothes, shoes, bags, accessories, bedding, towels, pots, pans, dishes, toys, games, books and media. Westbrook Nature School Front Porch 7 Long Ridge Road

Thursday, November 14

westbrooknatureschool.org

Egyptian Revival Architecture in CT 7:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.

Mark Twain Library 439 Redding Road marktwainlibrary.org

Sunday, November 17

Founding Fathers Lecture Series: Madison

3:00 p.m. Presented by Redding Historical Society. Free for members, \$10 suggested donation for non-members. Redding Community Center 37 Lonetown Road reddinghistory.org

Sunday, November 17

Writing With Nora Writing Workshop

4:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m. Writing workshop with author Nora Raleigh Baskin Byrd's Books 178 Greenwood Avenue Bethel byrdsbooks.com \$, R

Thursday, November 21

Conversations on Culture, **Society and Change:** Dani Shapiro

7:00 p.m. (Doors open at 6:00 p.m.) Edmond Town Hall 45 Main Street Newtown edmondtownhall.org \$, R

Monday, November 25

Talking Books: Lady Clementine 1:30 p.m. - 3:00 p.m.

Book discussion on Lady Clementine by Marie Benedict. Heritage Center 37 Lonetown Road Ouestions to Hilda Rhodes at stanrhodes@sbcglobal.net

Religious Services

Interfaith Thanksgiving Service Sunday, November 24

4:00 p.m. Hosted at First Church of Christ, Congregational 25 Cross Highway firstchurchredding.org

Bethlehem Lutheran Church Sundays at 10:00 a.m. (in person) or 10:15 a.m. (Zoom)

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

Sacred Heart / St. Patrick Parish

Sacred Heart Church:

longridgeumc.com

Saturday Confessions: 10:00 a.m. at Pryor Hubbard Hall Saturday Vigil Mass: 4:00 p.m. Saturday Eucharistic Adoration: 6:00 p.m. Sunday Mass: 9:00 a.m. & 10:30 a.m. 12:00 noon LATIN Weekday Mass: Tuesdays and Thursdays at 8:30 a.m. Wednesday 6:00 p.m. LATIN 30 Church Street

St. Patrick Church: Saturday Vigil Mass: 5:00 p.m.

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

Temple B'nai Chaim

Friday, November 15 Violins of Hope Welcoming Shabbat 7:00 p.m. - 8:30 p.m. 82 Portland Avenue templebnaichaim.org

MEETINGS

Thursday, November 14

Gilbert & Bennett **Wire Mill Advisory Committee**

6:00 p.m. Hybrid event Town Hall / Hearing Room 100 Hill Road

Thursday, November 14

Democratic Town Committee

Town Hall / Conference Room 100 Hill Road

6:00 p.m. – 7:30 p.m.

Thursday, November 14

Redding Fire District #2 Commissioners' Meeting 7:00 p.m.

306 Umpawaug Road

Monday, November 18

Special Town Meeting 7:00 p.m. Redding Town Hall

Monday, November 18

Board of Selectmen

100 Hill Road

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

Tuesday, November 19

Region 9 Finance & Operations Committee

5:30 p.m. Joel Barlow High School / Library Media Center 100 Black Rock Turnpike

Tuesday, November 19

Conservation Commission

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

Tuesday, November 19

Region 9 Board of Education

7:00 p.m. Joel Barlow High School / Library **Learning Commons** 100 Black Rock Turnpike

Wednesday, November 20

Water Pollution Control Commission

7:30 p.m.

100 Hill Road

Virtual

Thursday, November 21

Historic Review Committee 7:00 p.m.

Thursday, November 21

Town Hall / Conference Room

Democratic Town Committee

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

Monday, November 25

Board of Finance 7:30 p.m.

Town Hall / Hearing Room 100 Hill Road

Monday, December 2

Park and Recreation Commission 7:00 p.m.

Redding Community Center 37 Lonetown Road

Monday, December 2

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

100 Hill Road

61 Redding Road

Tuesday, December 3

Georgetown Fire District Meeting 5:30 p.m.

Town offices and the Transfer Station will close at 1:00 p.m. on Wednesday, November 27 and remain closed on Thursday, November 28 for Thanksgiving.

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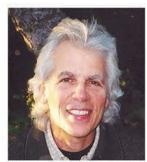
Mike Anderson 203.770.3349



Peri Bartro 203.240.5919



Alexis Bennett 203.313.3110



Kim Cuniberti 203.733.6976



Tim Dent 203.470.5605



Donna DiBartolo 203.858.0597



Margi Esten 203.241.8453



John Frey 203.240.0624



Liz Furrer 203.733.0678



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Call Tim to discuss your mortgage options.

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Tim Martin SVP of Mortgage Lending C: (203) 917-2800

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Joseph Porricelli Branch Vice President 203.515.6310 joe.porricelli@cbrealty.com Ridgefield Office 398 Main Street, Ridgefield, CT 06877 | 203.438.9000 Redding Office 16 Old Mill Road, Redding, CT 06896 | 203.544.9591







