



# REDDING SENTINEL

DECEMBER 15, 2022

REDDING, CONNECTICUT

Volume 1 / Issue 15

\$3

## Working Group discusses allocating remaining ARPA funds

By Rob Sample

With almost \$1.1 million left from the Town's original \$2.7 million ARPA grant, the Redding ARPA Funds Working Group met Thursday, December 8 to begin the work of determining what comes next.

The ARPA Funds Working Group usually met two or three times each month during 2022. It plans to step up that pace in the early part of 2023 – with an eye toward wrapping up its grant recommendations prior to next spring's budget season. That meeting schedule and the proposals under consideration will be announced in the next few weeks.

While no discussions have yet been scheduled about potential spending on projects, one likely source for candidates will be items on Redding's capital spending plan. The Town's capital plan currently consists of a dozen highway and facilities projects totaling \$930,000, although the list has not yet been finalized.

The Redding Board of Education maintains a separate capital plan of its own, and one item from that list is likely to be first up for the Working Group's consideration: a proposal to hire a consulting firm for planning and implementing a variety of upgrades at Redding schools. The official title of this project is "educational specifications design", with a price tag still to be determined.

"Our goal is to upgrade fixtures at the schools and bring them into the 21st century," said Chris Parkin, Chair of the Redding Board of Education and a member of the eight-person Working Group.

Jim Sanders is acting as the liaison with the Town on municipal projects. In addition to being a member of the Working Group, Sanders is Finance Director for Redding. The initial focus will be on Highway Department projects, Sanders said, moving afterward to town-wide facilities requests.

"We want to make sure municipal projects are teed up, because they have been the most numerous received to date," Wes Higgins, Chair of the ARPA Funds Working Group, said. Higgins also noted that Sanders's presence as a liaison will help the Working Group prioritize these municipal requests. "Our first charge will be to ensure [a request] is ARPA-eligible. Next, is it a good use of monies? In addition, are we going to receive any other proposals?"

Continued on page 8



Photo by Debora DeCarlo Rosa

Crowds bundled up on Saturday, December 10 to gather for the annual holiday tree lighting on the Redding Town Green. If you have a photo you'd like us to feature here, with credit of course, please e-mail editor@reddingsentinel.org

## Football state champions

By Jessie Wright



Photo by Rocco Valluzzo

The Joel Barlow High varsity football team won the Class SS state championship on Saturday, December 10. This is the first time the school has won a state title in football and their first appearance in a championship game since 2017.

The team finished their 11-2 season with a 61-6 victory over Valley Regional/Old Lyme. Complete details and commentary on the game are on page 4. ■

## REDDING'S BIG OUTDOORS

### Poliak Pond Preserve

By Jeanne Ammermuller

If you're looking for a wide variety of water sources and natural inhabitants, the Poliak Pond Preserve offers streams, ponds, wetlands, and the Saugatuck River, all wrapped up in a two-mile roundtrip walk. It's a great family outing, especially if you enjoy seeing beaver habitat and activity.

The bulk of this preserve was donated to the Redding Land Trust by Saul and Janice Poliak. Longtime residents of Redding, they were active members of the community and generous philanthropists. According to *Redding's Book of Trails*, Saul was also a pioneer in the industrial convention business.

There is parking available for two to three cars at a pull-off on Simpaug Turnpike about a half mile west of the West Redding Post Office. After parking, walk further west on Simpaug until you see a driveway on your right (Do not park in the driveway at 193 Simpaug Turnpike). Carefully cross the tracks at this uncontrolled railroad crossing and enter the open meadow. You will soon see a trailhead on your right, with white blazes. Follow the white blazes, with the pond on your left and the railroad tracks on your right.

In early winter, with the leaves off the trees, there is a great view of the pond. Begin looking for waterfowl and the very large



Photo by Jeanne Ammermuller

Poliak Pond at dusk, with the beaver lodge in the foreground.

beaver lodge visible across the pond. If you're quiet and patient, you might see a beaver swimming across the pond. Don't be surprised if it slaps its tail on the water if it feels threatened. Other evidence of the beaver activity in the area can be seen in the gnawed trees and dams created to slow water flow and create deeper water for protection from predators. Once abundant in New England, beaver were trapped and traded out of existence in the 17th and 18th centuries, according to the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection, but successfully re-introduced in the region in the first half of the 20th Century.

The trail is well maintained by Trail Tender Hope Stefenson, who is responsible for the loop trail around the pond.

As the trail bends around the pond, you'll find a man-made dam with a wooden bridge to help the crossing. As you cross, look to your right for some small beaver dams. Take a moment to admire the full view of the pond.

Just after crossing the dam, look for the white blazes on your right to follow the Furlough Trail away from the pond. This extended trail was created by Redding Land Trust Trustee Kevin Tschudi with his spare time during his pandemic

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## Eversource files request to alter designated scenic road identifies 124 trees for removal

By Donna Christopher

Eversource has submitted a request to the Town of Redding for tree removals on town-owned property along designated scenic road Cross Highway as part of its resiliency program.

The utility states in its application, delivered to the Town on December 6, that it is proposing to remove hazard trees (approximately 124 trees) along a 1.81-mile portion of Cross Highway.

"Hazard trees are ones that are dead, in poor health, or have structural defects and the potential to fall on power lines...Based on reliability performance data and storm outage history over the past 10 years, Eversource has identified Redding as one of at least 13 Connecticut communities to include in the resiliency program," the document says.

Eversource arborists surveyed hundreds of trees, met with town residents, and participated in public information meetings ahead of filing the request, according to the company. Eversource plans to work with the Redding Planning Commission and town Tree Warden "to create and implement a replanting plan along Cross Highway," said Mitch Gross, spokesperson for Eversource Connecticut Media Relations.

In addition to the request filed on December 6, Eversource has also met with the majority of private property owners along its targeted corridors to identify trees for removal on private property.

The next step will be for Redding's Planning Commission to review the proposal. Chairman Dan Barrett said he had not yet reviewed it the day it was submitted. The last Planning Commission meeting of the year is scheduled for Tuesday, December 13 at 7:30 p.m.

Eversource's application contains a list of hazard and non-hazard trees. For each hazard tree recommended for removal, there is information about the defect and a corresponding photograph of the tree for clarification and consideration.

Several Cross Highway residents who have seen the application expressed concern over the number of trees marked for removal and questioned whether the identification of town property lines is accurate.

Garner Lester, who lives on Cross Highway, engages his own tree arborist to come and manage trees on his property. Lester reviewed the Eversource filing and questioned some of the trees marked for removal, including one he claims is on his property,

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## EDITORIAL

By Jessie Wright

My family will be traveling out of state this Christmas, so I planned to ship gifts ahead to our destination to avoid long baggage lines at LaGuardia Airport. This clever plan came with a hitch, however – I needed to complete my holiday shopping by last weekend to ensure it all would arrive on time.

Online delivery windows stretched into next week, and I didn't have the time to make it up to Danbury Fair mall or other large stores nearby. So, I popped into the Redding Artisan Holiday Fair on Saturday, where over 40 local artisans were selling handcrafted wares of all kinds at John Read Middle School. Not only did I complete my shopping list with unique gifts, but I also bumped into numerous friends and neighbors – including one of the Sentinel's reporters whom I had not yet had the opportunity to meet in person.

This experience was a perfect example of how "shopping local" can benefit a consumer – but it also has a profound impact on the local economy. According to the American Independent Small Business Alliance, independent, local businesses recirculate 48% of their revenue locally while chain retailers only recirculate 14%. Businesses keep money circulating within the local economy through wages and benefits paid to local employees, profits earned by local business owners, local sales tax revenue, and contributions to local non-profit organizations.

Research shows that local businesses are much more likely than national brands to contribute to local charities and non-profits – up to 250% more. One need only peruse the sponsorship listings for many of our town's fundraising events and non-profit organizations to see this activity in action. In this "season of giving", your holiday shopping dollars spent at local establishments are more likely to have an impact on the organizations and causes you care about here in Redding.

The environmental footprint of my trip to the Artisan Fair was also far less than the one I would have created by ordering gifts to be delivered by plane and delivery truck, driving further away to a large shopping center, or purchasing items at a chain retailer that uses global logistics systems.

Current economic conditions, including high inflation, supply-chain issues, and elevated interest rates have put a strain on both small businesses and consumers this year. An October 22 survey conducted by The Harris Poll found that 55% of small-business owners say one of the biggest challenges their business is facing right now is finding and/or retaining customers. I urge anyone with more shopping to do this season to consider looking closer to home for ways to check off your holiday gift list. ■



Photo by Debora DeCarlo Rosa

Over 40 local vendors participated in the Redding Artisan Holiday Fair on Saturday, December 10.

## Gun permits in Redding

By Donna Christopher

With state gun laws facing challenges after the Supreme Court's June 2022 decision in *New York State Rifle and Pistol Association v. Bruen*, the Sentinel followed up with Redding's Police Department and researched Connecticut's gun permits process to learn more about gun ownership in town.

"Thousands" of guns are held by Redding residents, said Redding Police Department Chief Marc O'Donnell, though he noted many of those firearms were purchased before 2012 at which time gun permit requirements in the state were made significantly stricter.

In Connecticut, one must first obtain a local permit before obtaining a state permit to carry a pistol or revolver. The local Police Department or First Selectman's office provides the application and serves as the issuing authority.

Applicants must be at least 21 years old and be legal residents of the United States. Persons convicted of a felony or any one of 11 misdemeanor offenses detailed in the Connecticut statute are ineligible to receive a permit.

Before a local permit application is processed, applicants must complete a handgun safety course, including both classroom and live fire education, and provide information for a criminal background check, fingerprinting, and proof of residency. The licensing statute also contains a "suitability clause" which provides that the issuing authority may deny such an application if it determines that the applicant is not a suitable person to possess or carry a pistol or revolver.

"There's an extensive background check on criminal, mental capacity, and suitability before they can get approved for the permit," Chief O'Donnell explained. "It's a pretty lengthy process. It's highly vetted before they can get one. We do occasionally deny a permit if we feel somebody has lied on

the application or has suitability issues."

He noted that three local pistol permit applications had been denied in Redding in the last year.

The local pistol permit application costs \$70 and processing typically takes up to eight weeks. Once a local pistol permit is granted, applicants then apply for a state permit to carry a pistol or revolver. The Connecticut State Police Special Licensing and Firearms Unit is responsible for the issuance of state pistol permits.

"As of today (December 5, 2022), we have 326,574 active Connecticut permits (this is in-state and out-of-state permit holders), and 237 active permits in the town of Redding," said Sergeant Brianna Maurice of the Connecticut State Police Special Licensing & Firearms Unit.

A permit to carry pistols and revolvers is valid for five years unless revoked or suspended.

While pistol permits begin at the local level, permits to purchase or carry long guns are applied for directly with the state. A long gun is classified as any type of firearm that is not a pistol or revolver, like a rifle or shotgun, with a long barrel. It is not legal for civilians to purchase or carry assault weapons in Connecticut.

When a resident tries to purchase a firearm, the seller, known as a Federal Firearms Licensee (FFL), contacts the National Criminal Background Check System (NICS) electronically or by phone.

That background check verifies the buyer does not have a criminal record or isn't otherwise ineligible to purchase or own a firearm.

The FBI is required by law to report National Instant Criminal Background Check (NICS) denied transactions to state, local, or tribal law enforcement within 24 hours.

In Connecticut, an estimated 212,675 National Instant Criminal Background Checks (NICS) were completed from January through November 2022 based on FBI background check data. ■

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

We welcome letters to the Editor. Please be clear, civil and concise. Publication preference will be given to letters that suggest solutions to challenges identified.

To the Editor,

Since we moved to Redding eight years ago, we decided to use the Recycling Center and Transfer Station to deal with our trash and recycling, since we're just two people and don't generate much refuse.

Every week or two we make a visit to the station and are always greeted like old friends by the staff. They are helpful and knowledgeable - guiding us through the difficult decisions of what is bulky waste or what can go to the free table, or where to deposit our paint cans or old electronics.

It's the kind of small-town experience that makes Redding special. Thanks to the entire team at the Recycling Center and Transfer Station for your patience and professionalism!

Ralph Braun and Jeanne Ammermuller  
Redding Road

To the Editor,

As a much-traveled, long-time Redding resident whose work has made it difficult to devote the time and energy to the community so many others have, I am extremely grateful to the Redding Sentinel for its coverage of all the town's organizations which are so faithfully and tirelessly served by its residents.

I am also grateful that Redding now has a weekly paper which is so informative. I look forward to seeing the paper as it matures and the range of stories it covers expand to reflect the ever-changing population of the town.

Frank Doelger  
Redding Ridge

## LEGAL NOTICE

At a meeting of the Redding Conservation Commission on 12/06/2022, the following actions were voted:

App'l #22-13, Paola Benitez, 440 Black Rock Tpke. Approved with conditions an application to add bedrooms to existing house, install new roof, add front and rear deck and erosion control

stonework on "Little River", to install new septic system, install natural stone wall around property line, add sunroom. To install a new bridge across "Little River", install swimming pool and underground propane take within the regulated area.

App'l #22-15, Mark Atterbury, 14 Shady Lane. Approved with

conditions an application to install at 16'x39' fiberglass inground pool and retaining wall within the regulated area.

The above-referenced files are available for inspection at the Redding Land Use Office. ■

David R. Pattee  
Chairman

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## GET TO KNOW THE SENTINEL TEAM

Donna Christopher, Reporter | By Jessie Wright



Thirty-five years ago, while Donna Christopher was earning her bachelor's degree in political science, she worked for the United Nations assisting the delegate from Malta. He often sent her in his stead to the General Assembly meetings, asking her to write up and brief him on what had transpired. "Basically, he made me his reporter," Christopher explained. "That's where that all started."

Christopher's career went on to include work in many different industries, but she eventually

found her way back to reporting, becoming a full-time journalist in 2004. One of the projects that launched her into the field was freelancing for the Redding Pilot newspaper back in the early 2000's. "I liked writing stories about the community," Christopher explained. She then went on to work as a staff writer and news assistant for the News-Times, a reporter for Verdict Search, a content producer for Daily Voice, and a reporter for New Canaan Advertiser, before becoming a freelancer in 2020.

Over the last twenty years, Christopher has covered communities all over the greater NYC-metro area, but she says Redding stands out as a favorite. "I can't believe how kind people in Redding have always been, in terms of covering people and writing about them," she said. "I feel like they're welcoming. It's just a different experience."

A long-time resident of Fairfield County, Christopher was raised in Brooklyn and Queens, moving to Connecticut thirty-five years ago to raise her own family.

In addition to her own career as a journalist, she serves as an adviser to the student newspaper club at Norwalk Community College, leading the transition of their publication online at the start of the Covid-19 pandemic. She is also the judge of the high school category for the Connecticut Press Club's annual journalism contest.

Sentinel readers who enjoy her recurring Movie Series are reaping the benefits of one of Christopher's favorite hobbies – watching film. "I do go every weekend to a movie," she said. "I like romantic comedies, I like romantic dramas, I like dramas in general, artsy films, I like foreign films."

Her many years of experience reporting on breaking news alongside features and local businesses inform her approach to writing for a small-town, local paper.

"It's an important part of the community to learn about where you live," she said, "but if the paper's doing a good job, it's also telling you about the world that you're in." ■

Redding Sentinel Ltd  
News and Views of Redding, Connecticut

Publisher, Susan Clark  
Managing Editor, Jessie Wright  
Creative Director, Debora DeCarlo Rosa  
Assistant Graphic Designer, Connor Feeney

Reporters:  
Donna Christopher Justin Reynolds  
Rocco Valluzzo Pamela Brown  
Robert Sample

Printed by Trumbull Printing  
Telecommunications provided by CCI Voice  
[www.reddingsentinel.org](http://www.reddingsentinel.org)  
203.938.3800

Contact us at:  
[editor@reddingsentinel.org](mailto:editor@reddingsentinel.org)  
[advertise@reddingsentinel.org](mailto:advertise@reddingsentinel.org)  
[subscribe@reddingsentinel.org](mailto:subscribe@reddingsentinel.org)  
[publisher@reddingsentinel.org](mailto:publisher@reddingsentinel.org)

Single copy price \$3.00 / Annual subscription \$85.00

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

# PopUpBagels eyes national expansion after latest funding round

By Justin Reynolds



Photo courtesy of PopUpBagels

One day during the pandemic, Westport resident Adam Goldberg decided to have some fun in his kitchen and bake some fresh bagels. They were very tasty, so Goldberg decided to bake another batch the next day.

“We decided we were making too much of a mess,” Goldberg said. “So, we went to a bagel shop to get bagels the next day. That’s when we realized what we were making was so much better than what you could buy in a store.”

Lo and behold, PopUpBagels was born. The bagel shop — which has won “Best Bagel” awards at Brooklyn Bagelfest in 2021 and 2022 — currently serves customers in Redding, Westport, Greenwich, and New York City.

After a second seed funding round recently attracted big-name

celebrity investors — including Michael Strahan, Paul Rudd, Michael Phelps, and JJ Watt, along with other angel investors — Goldberg and his team, which includes five full-time employees and 10 to 12 part-timers, have their sights set on expansion.

“Ultimately, we’d like to have our bagels available in communities across America,” Goldberg said.

The funding round will be used to fuel that expansion; Goldberg hopes to open storefronts in five new communities every three months. Initially, that expansion will occur in the northeast.

Due to the recent success of PopUpBagels, Goldberg wasn’t surprised by the investors who contributed to the latest funding round.

“There’s a lot of people who love our product, and I went through and networked with a bunch of those fans and ended up with a great team of investors,” Goldberg said. “If you asked me two years ago, I would absolutely be surprised. But today, I’m not surprised with what we’ve put together.”

The sales model for PopUpBagels is different than a traditional brick-and-mortar bakery. Customers place an order online and select a time to pick up their bagels and schmears the next day. For folks in Redding, the pick-up location is at 8 Main Street in Georgetown, right next to Bloom Breads. Currently, bagels can be picked up on Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays.

PopUpBagels sells bagels by the dozen, with each order coming with two “schmears” — cream cheese-based spreads that come in a variety of flavors, including dill pickle, maple honey butter, scallion, and plain. If you’re a seafood fan, you can also tack on some smoked salmon, whitefish salad, trout roe, or Fjords dip.

“If you want bagels tomorrow, you can order them right now,” Goldberg said during a Saturday afternoon interview. “You can’t wake up and order. We prepare dough for every order specifically. All of our bagels are baked fresh for the customer.”

Why has PopUpBagels been able to achieve such massive success in such a short period of time?

“Most bagels suck. Most bagels are just dense pieces of bread with a hole in it,” Goldberg said. “We brought back the original texture of the bagel and serve them fresh only.”

# Goats seized from Redding property now in permanent custody of the state

By Jessie Wright

Dozens of goats seized in March 2021 from a Redding property on Cross Highway are now in permanent custody of the State of Connecticut and available for adoption, according to a December 6 announcement from Attorney General William Tong. Sixty-five goats had been initially evaluated and treated by a veterinarian following the seizure; many were pregnant at the time and have since given birth, bringing the total to over 90.

The animals have been in temporary custody of the Department of Agriculture at the “Second Chance” Large Animal Rehabilitation Facility at the York Correctional Facility in Niantic since the seizure. The state sought permanent custody of the goats in 2021 and was eventually granted it this year.

“These goats suffered extreme neglect and have been in state custody for well over 500 days. They deserve this chance for permanent, loving homes.”

Attorney General Tong said in a statement.

Prior to the seizure on March 10, 2021, the Redding Police Department had received over 120 complaints regarding the goats and violations of local ordinances, and the Department of Agriculture had received five complaints related to the animals’ condition and lack of care. During the seizure, authorities observed signs of neglect and injury among the animals and discovered numerous deceased goats on the property.

The goats will be available for adoption through an application process facilitated by the Department of Agriculture. Parties interested in adopting any of the goats should contact [AGR.adoptions@ct.gov](mailto:AGR.adoptions@ct.gov) for more information. “We are seeking adopters who can provide the goats with caring homes to ensure their health and well-being,” said Agriculture Commissioner Bryan P. Hurlburt. ■

## Short Survey

Dear reader,  
Please point your mobile device’s camera at this QR code to take a short survey about the Redding Sentinel. We’d like to make sure we’re covering what you want to know.



# Tighe & Bond conducts additional analysis of Wire Mill property

By Rocco Valluzzo

With Stage 1 of the environmental site assessment of the former Gilbert & Bennett Wire Mill property now complete, the engineering firm Tighe & Bond is now addressing the next phase of work at the 44 acres of Redding-owned land in Georgetown.

Several members of the Middletown-based firm met with the Gilbert & Bennett Wire Mill Advisory Committee on Thursday, December 8 to discuss additional consulting services to be completed by April 2023. These will include an environmental data gap analysis, a hazardous building materials review, and a building structural evaluation, among other services.

“We’re working on all these concurrently,” said Project Manager James Olsen. “Some have to be completed before we move on to the next task, but we do have a number of these underway right now.”

According to Nick Granata, a licensed environmental professional, the environmental

data gap analysis is now underway, and all the information that exists on the site has been reviewed.

“As you may be aware, there is a lot of information,” Granata said, “There are a lot of investigations that were done on the site.”

He added that they will be looking to follow the process set forth by the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP)’s site characterization guidance document.

Senior Compliance Specialist Philip Hutter said that Tighe & Bond has initial data for the site asbestos sampling that was conducted on the property in 2005, and some follow-up sampling is also being done. There does not seem to be any matter of polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBS) sampling at this point, but he is still reviewing the documents.

“The time frame of when the sampling was previously done, a lot of the sampling wasn’t industry-standard” he said. “Times have changed particularly

with PCBS. We’ll do a full data gap analysis.”

As far as the structural part of the project is concerned, Principal Structural Engineer Craig French said there are approximately ten buildings that are due to be reviewed by a high-level walk-through. This walk-through will identify areas that have deteriorated to a point of eventual collapse and provide information on buildings that are in good condition.

“Basically, what we’re planning to do is go through the buildings and provide a report and our recommendation on whether or not the building seems suitable for reuse, whether it can be repaired with minor or normal repairs, and whether or not it seems to have deteriorated to a point where it’s not worth trying to save,” he said.

If a building that the town wants to save is determined to be in poor condition, Tighe & Bond can then conduct a more in-depth review of that building and provide a list of the items that need addressing, all

of what the wall conditions are currently and what would need to be done if there are any immediate actions that are recommended.

The long-term goal is to have a base set of data for the possible reconfiguration of the height or stability of the walls, in unison with hopefully a future master plan with the town of Redding, according to White.

“Coming out of the data gap analysis, we will be recommending some additional site investigations,” said Olsen. “We have to basically complete the site characterization, which is the purpose of the grant you have.”

In addition to the Brownfield grant the town has received, it has also applied for an EPA multipurpose grant. Recipients for that grant should be announced in the spring and funds will become available within about six months, perhaps sooner, according to Olsen. ■

Structural engineers will provide an assessment report



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## SPORTS

## Barlow fall sports season in review

By Rocco Valluzzo

Three state championships, one league title, and one undefeated season were among the remarkable achievements of the Joel Barlow High varsity sports teams during the fall 2022 season.

## Girls Volleyball

This fall marked the best season in history for the girls volleyball team. The Falcons added to their long list of South-West conference championships, winning their 13th overall, and ninth in the past 11 seasons.

The top seed in Class L, they won their second state crown and finished the first undefeated season in team history at 24-0.

Barlow was led by a strong senior class that included Emmy Asplund and Sarah Mauro, both of whom were named to the All-SWC team. The former was also named the Most Valuable Player for the state Class L tournament.

Rounding out the senior class were Libby Grob, Katherine Czerkowski, Maisie Straborny, Eve Simons, and Lilly Wenig. Juniors included Mackenzie Sickenger, Elyssa Kalamaras, Molly Besancon, Sydney Hawks, and Lily Condosta. Also on the varsity squad were sophomores Sofia Benitez, Amanda Meschi, and Ella Anderson.

## Football

Barlow's football team also accomplished a first this season – it finished second only to Newtown in the South-West conference standings.

The Falcons qualified for the state tournament for the second time in five seasons, winning the first state Class SS title in school history and finishing with an 11-2 overall record.

The Falcons made good use of their triple-option offense this season, quarterbacked by senior Danny Shaban, an All-SWC selection who amassed more than 2,000 yards rushing and more than 30 touchdowns. Classmate and All-SWC selection Evan Corazzelli led the team in receiving and had seven touchdowns.

Senior Mason Leavitt and juniors Cole Peterson and Dylan Taylor were a big part of Barlow's rushing game, as was sophomore Scott Romano. All contributed defensively, as did senior Charlie Basta.

Handling the kicking duties this season was senior Cooper Zuccerella. Also a big part of Barlow's success on both offense and defense was its senior front line of Kyler Cartmel (All-SWC), Aidan Skidmore, Colin Furrer, Tristan Counter (All-SWC), and Andrew Zaia.

## Boys Cross Country

Winning state championships is nothing new to the Barlow boys cross country team. Despite graduating several key runners last year, the Falcons managed to repeat as state Class M champions, marking the team's seventh state title.

During the regular season, the Falcons posted an 11-2 record. They finished third overall at the SWC championship.

The Falcons were led by senior Mathias Galban. An All-SWC selection, he was ninth overall at the league race and fourth in Class M.

Junior Jackson Sobelman, also an SWC selection, had his team's best finish at the league race (eighth) and was seventh in Class M. Classmate Devon Tala made the All-SWC second team by taking 16th at the league meet and senior Ryan Schmid was 18th there to make the All-SWC second team as well.

## Boys Soccer

A perennial presence in the post-season, the Barlow boys soccer team finished with a 9-6-3 overall record and was second in the SWC Patriot Division. All but one of its losses was surrendered by just a one-goal margin.

Qualifying for the SWC tournament, the Falcons were seeded third but were upset by eventual champ Pomperaug in the quarterfinals. They also made the state Class M tournament as the 19th seed but lost to 14th-seeded Cromwell.

Also a young team, Barlow had only four seniors. These included Jack Baer (All-SWC), Nick Collins, Adam Hoeing, and Griffin Ellis.

Juniors included Grayson Vanderburg (All-SWC), Damien Mirwald, Thomas Colby, Alek Ochman, Jordan Horowitz, Jack Gustavson, John Samon, Aidan Haddad, and James Schrade.

## Girls Soccer

The Barlow girls soccer team also qualified for both post-season tournaments. With a 6-7-3 overall record, the Falcons were the eighth and final seed in the SWC tournament, losing to top-ranked and eventual champ Notre Dame of Fairfield.

Barlow was the 21st seed in the state Class L tournament and lost to fellow SWC opponent Masuk in the first round.

Offensively, the Falcons were led by senior forward Sydney Keegan (All-SWC). She was their top scorer with 11 goals and led in assists with five.

Classmate and forward Emma Bourgeault was second in both categories with eight in the former and four in the latter.

They were part of a large senior class that also included forward Charlotte Beihl (four goals), midfielder Samantha Navin (two goals) and forward Ava Bartlett (two goals).

Junior forward Keira Gillon also scored two goals, as did midfielders Chloe Elton and Amelia Winter.

Sharing time in goal this season were senior Drew Williams (20 saves) and Lauren Klein-Wassink (three saves).

## Field Hockey

It was a bit of a rebuilding year

for the Barlow field hockey team. Finishing with a 3-9-1 overall record, the Falcons finished in fifth place in the Colonial Division of the SWC. Four of those losses were by a mere goal.

The Falcons were led by senior captains Teagan Hurlbut, Olivia Jones, and Marin Kalamaras. Also from the senior class were Brooke Bishop and Bella Rosa. Juniors included Annika Swabsin and Isabella Olsen.

## Girls Cross Country

Finishing with a 4-9 overall record, the girls cross country team was sixth in the Colonial Division of the SWC. Barlow was tenth out of 11 teams at the SWC meet.

The Falcons fared better at the state Cass MM meet with a 14th-place finish in a field of 20 teams.

Leading the Falcons this season was frontrunner and junior Sydney Borofsky, who had her best finish at the league race (19th overall) and was named to the All-SWC second team. She finished 34th in Class MM to lead Barlow there as well.

Classmate Eleanor Walker was second for Barlow in both races taking 47th in the former and 79th in the latter. Sophomore Sophie Peterson was third in both races for the Falcons, placing 54th and 82nd overall. Senior Emily Wyszynski was fourth in Barlow's order in the SWC (62nd).

## Girls Swim

A small group this season, the Barlow girls swim team had only nine members. Yet the Falcons finished just under .500 with a 5-6 overall record and came on strong toward the end of the season, winning four of their last five meets.

At the league meet Barlow finished seventh out of 11 teams and it was eighth in a field of 20 at the state Class M meet.

Competing in a variety of events were seniors Zoe Skidell and Grace Bujdud and juniors Brookley Gil, Sofia Sannella, and Brooke Serlin.

Sophomore Audrey Gil was an All-SWC selection, taking first in the 100 and 200 freestyle events and won the 50 and 100 free in Class M. Also swimming for Barlow were sophomore Grace Blawie and freshmen Olivia Kotula and Abby Bonoff.

## Boys Golf

With an 8-7 overall record, the Barlow boys golf team finished in fourth place in the Patriot Division of the SWC. It later went on to finish 11th out of 15 teams at the state Division II tournament.

One of three seniors on the team, Alex Ilie led Barlow at the state meet, shooting a 79 to finish tied for tenth. Classmate Carter Jarvis followed with an 84 to finish tied for 24rd.

Senior Tommy Kane; sophomores Tyler Ramirez, Joe Bonanno, and Jack Lippoth; and freshman Milo Lee also played for Barlow. ■

## Falcons capture first state Class SS championship

By Rocco Valluzzo



Photo by Rocco Valluzzo

Quarterback Danny Shaban led the Joel Barlow High varsity football team with five touchdowns in the state Class SS championship on Saturday, December 10. Barlow won 61-6 for its first-ever state title.

Perhaps it was only fitting that the Joel Barlow High varsity football team would save its best offensive performance of the season for the state Class SS championship.

The Falcons scored a season-high nine touchdowns on Saturday, December 10. Defensively, it was also one of their best performances as they trounced Valley Regional/Old Lyme 61-6 at Central Connecticut State University's Arute Field to end the season.

It marked Barlow's first-ever state championship and its first appearance in a title game since 2017.

"I don't know if I would have predicted this," said Barlow head coach T. J. Cavaliere, citing the lopsided score. "A couple of breaks went our way, and we took advantage of them."

Although the Falcons fumbled on their first possession, the mistakes were few after that. Late in the first quarter, they got on the board courtesy of a five-yard touchdown run by Danny Shaban, his first of five that night.

"We have a great team, I think the best in Barlow history," said the senior quarterback. "We came out here, we wanted it, we executed."

Barlow also took advantage of a few missteps by its opponent. One came early in the second quarter. Cole Peterson blocked a punt and Liam Kiernan recovered the ball in the end zone. Cooper Zuccerella kicked the extra point and the Falcons were up 14-0.

Barlow's next series turned out to be a 92-yard scoring drive, culminating in a 12-yard run by Shaban with 3:53 left in the half, and with the extra point it was 21-0.

The Warriors then committed another mistake, which ultimately resulted in more Barlow points on the scoreboard. A fumble on the inside kick-off was recovered by the Falcons on the Valley Regional/Old Lyme 45 to set up another scoring drive.

An 11-yard run by Dylan Taylor got the Falcons to the 16. Two plays later, Shaban scored from the five and it was soon 28-0 going

into halftime.

"I think the blocked punt for a touchdown was big, and right before the half when they fumbled the inside kick-off and we went in and scored," said Cavaliere. "I thought that kind of took a little bit of the momentum from them. They played hard, they gave it their all, but I think our guys were ready to go tonight."

The rout continued in the second half. Charlie Basta returned the kick-off to the Falcons' 16 and on first down Shaban made it all the way to the Warriors' 24 before he was stopped by a tackle by Jacob Rand. It only delayed another Falcons touchdown, however, this one on a 20-yard run down the right side by Shaban followed by an extra point with 10:36 left in the third quarter.

A short punt by the Warriors gave the Falcons good field position on the next series. The highlight was a 34-yard pass from Shaban to Mason Leavitt that got them to the two-yard line. The former then scored his final touchdown of the night for what was soon a 42-0 lead after another extra point.

Taylor's interception set up Barlow's next score, this one on a 22-yard run by Scott Romano with just under four minutes left to go in the third quarter. The extra point was blocked, but the Falcons were in command 48-0.

Barlow continued to give the Warriors fits in the fourth quarter. Early in the fourth quarter, Basta returned an interception 65 yards for the score.

Taylor would score Barlow's final touchdown of the game, coming on a 29-yard run with 7:12 left to play, followed by an extra point. It was little consolation to Valley Regional/Old Lyme, but it did avoid a shutout when quarterback Grady Lacourciere completed a 20-yard touchdown pass to Nick Cox with just under two minutes to play, finalizing things at 61-6 before the title officially belonged to Barlow.

"It's the best feeling in the world" said Shaban. "I'm just happy to celebrate." ■

## Barlow Beat

By Griffin Ellis

On November 30, Joel Barlow High School's National Honor Society (NHS) held its induction ceremony for new members. The National Honor Society is a nationwide organization for high school students in the United States and selection for membership is based on four criteria: scholarship, leadership, service, and character. Forty-two new students were inducted into NHS this year, which is one of the largest cohorts,

and an impressive feat given that not as many activities were available during the pandemic. Math teacher Joseph Sopko, who is Joel Barlow's Teacher of the Year, was the keynote speaker at the ceremony.

Barlow also has French and Spanish National Honor Societies which honor students who attain excellence in the French and Spanish languages. On December 2, the language societies hosted

a "Café Internacional" at Joel Barlow where students prepared authentic meals and served them to Redding residents and other customers. All funds raised from the event went to the Sandi VanAusdal Travel Scholarship, in remembrance of Sandra VanAusdal who was a Redding resident, an active member of the First Church of Christ Congregational, and a world language teacher at Joel Barlow for twenty years.

Following "Café Internacional" was "Coffee House", which occurs every two months and is a great opportunity for student artists, musicians, and comedians to showcase their talents in front of a live crowd. "Coffee House" and Barlow's superb theatre program are reasons for Barlow's excellent performing arts department.

Joel Barlow athletics are equally great, too. Boys cross country and girls volleyball

both won state championships this fall. The football team also made it to the CIAC Class SS State Championship Game on December 10, winning it for the first time ever.

Holiday recess starts on December 23, and students don't return to school until the new year on January 3. The first semester of the school year ends in late January. ■

## Middle School music ensembles bring cheer to the community

By Jessie Wright



Photo by Jessie Wright

Students in the JRMS chorus sang at the Heritage Center holiday luncheon on Thursday, December 8.



Photo provided courtesy of JRMS

Antoinette Peters and Sophia Tian perform in the JRMS strings ensemble.

The rhythmic sounds of “Carol of the Bells” filled the room on Thursday, December 8 as attendees of the Heritage Center holiday luncheon finished eating at tables adorned with floral centerpieces and bright red and green décor. Students in the chorus from John Read Middle School stood along the front wall, the source of the live, festive soundtrack.

“We’ve been performing for the Heritage Center seniors for probably close to 30 years,” said Dave Ebert, the chorus’s director and General Music/Chorus teacher at John Read Middle School (JRMS).

The students’ visit was one of several community outreach performances the JRMS music department has given this December. In addition to the

chorus and string ensembles performing at the Heritage Center, they also performed at the town Tree Lighting event on Saturday, December 10 and are scheduled to perform at Danbury Hospital on Wednesday, December 14.

“Part of what we do, a school goal, is to interact with the community,” Ebert explained. “I think this is certainly an important part of that. It’s an opportunity for us of course to do performance, but it’s also an opportunity for us to be working with the community and doing some outreach.”

Outreach has been a part of the music department’s programming for several decades. Performances at Danbury Hospital have also been longstanding, with student groups performing there annually for close to 25 years.

“When you go to Danbury Hospital, it’s ‘Where do you need us to go? What would you like us to do?’” Ebert explained. “We’ve sung everywhere from the lobby to the Praxair Center (the cancer treatment area) in Danbury Hospital.”

In past years, the students have also paired their hospital caroling with a trip to a local nursing home, but due to Covid restrictions, were not able to include that this year.

Ebert has been teaching music at JRMS for 35 years and heads up the chorus and general music programs.

“Mr Ebert is a master,” said Margherita Pilato, Senior Program Coordinator at the Heritage Center. “He was actually my teacher when I was in middle school with the clarinet.”

Ebert’s partner in the Music Department, Kevin Duffy, is in his second year at JRMS and is responsible for the instrumental program at the school. “I can’t say enough about having Mr. Duffy here,” Ebert said. “He’s got a great jazz background which is going to pay big dividends for the kids. I have a great partner in school.”

The two instructors work with students in grades 5-8 in a variety of different classes and specialized ensembles. Many of the students performing in the chorus on December 8 also played in the instrumental ensembles earlier during the luncheon.

“Almost all of the kids in the school population are involved in a music class of some kind, whether it be a performing group or general music class,” said Ebert.

While the students are excited for the opportunity to leave school during the day and have lunch “off campus,” Ebert says the performances have an impact on them as well.

“The kids understand that this is really an outreach thing that we are doing,” he said. ■

## Community Carol Sing at Joel Barlow High School

By Jessie Wright

Ring in the holiday season (and celebrate the start of Winter Break) with the student musicians of Joel Barlow High School next week. For the first time since 2019, the Joel Barlow High School chapter of the Tri-M Music Honor Society is inviting all families, friends, and community members to a Community Carol Sing on Wednesday, December 21 from 6:30 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.

This event will feature performances by the Concert Band, Concert Choir, String

Orchestra, Jazz Band, Chamber Singers, A Chaired Taste, Nothing But Treble, and Guitar Class. Community members are invited to bring their instruments and join the Concert Band in a performance of Sleigh Ride, and singers can join the Concert Choir for a performance of Carol of the Bells.

The Community Carol Sing will take place in the auditorium of Joel Barlow High School at 100 Black Rock Turnpike. For more information, visit [joelbarlowps.org](http://joelbarlowps.org) ■

## Last call for Letters to Santa

By Jessie Wright



Photo by Jessie Wright

Need a direct line to Jolly Ol’ Saint Nicholas? The Redding Park and Recreation Department has set up a special mailbox outside the Redding Community Center for special deliveries going straight to the North Pole.

Drop your letters off at the

mailbox no later than Sunday, December 18 and you are sure to receive a reply from Santa himself. Please ensure that your letter includes a return address.

The Redding Community Center is located at 37 Lonetown Road. ■

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PRE-K THROUGH 8TH GRADE

## A farmer's life

*Managing one of the last working dairy farms in Fairfield County* | By Pamela Brown



Photo courtesy of New Pond Farm Education Center  
Rachel Staffier and Mike Murray manage the farm and Dairy Annex at New Pond Farm Education Center.

Cows mooing in the background provided the perfect backdrop for an interview with Mike Murray, Farm Manager at New Pond Farm Education Center, who manages one of Fairfield County's last working dairy farms.

"Everything I do has to do with farming. I grew up my whole life in agriculture, dairy and grain farming, so I've done it for many years," said Murray, who has lived and worked at the 24-acre farm for nearly 20 years. His wife, Ann, is the farm's beekeeper.

Despite a demanding profession, Murray loves it all. "There's an old saying, 'If you enjoy your job, it's not work.' That's how I've always looked at it," he said. "I'm doing something that I enjoy. And the long hours and physical labor, if you enjoy it, it doesn't bother you."

A walking encyclopedia on farms, farm animals, and the world of agriculture is how Ann Taylor, Executive Director of New Pond Farm Education Center, describes Murray. "Mike's an experienced farmer – the real deal," she said.

Murray learned it all from his parents, dairy and grain farmers in the Finger Lakes region of New York. One of six children, all of

his siblings eventually pursued careers in the dairy industry. "I was born into a farming family. I learned how to work a farm from the time I was born," said Murray who bought a farm after graduating high school and has been working in the field ever since.

He enjoys working in Redding. "It's a good town – a little different from where I grew up. I'm used to wide open spaces, but there's agriculture here," he said. "We get along very well with the town and the people, so it's a good combination."

The variety of tasks keeps his days interesting, and he has excellent support from Rachel Staffier, his Assistant Farm Manager. "Our relationship is very good," said Murray. "She's a very capable, hard-working young girl and has taken to this job very well."

Staffier has worked at the farm since 2019. "Mike and I work great together. He's an amazing mentor and much more than my boss. He's like a father figure to me," said Staffier, who shares Murray's love of the farm at New Pond Farm Education Center. "We're a beautiful piece of property with equally beautiful animals where

you can buy fresh milk and meat while enjoying the fresh air. You're seeing which cows this milk came from, the farmers that got it from cow to fridge, and the land these beautiful creatures live on," she explained.

Their daily chores begin at 5:00 a.m. "We milk, feed all the animals, and clean up after them. If we're bottling a dairy product that day that gets taken care of, and throughout the day until chore time at night, it runs the gamut of harvesting crops, moving pasture fences for the cows, property maintenance. You name it – we do it," Murray said. They also harvest 3,000 bales of hay each year from the New Pond Farm property and others nearby to feed their livestock.

Murray and Staffier also oversee the Dairy Annex, a store that is open to the public at New Pond Farm Education Center. New Pond Farm is considered a Dairy Farm of Distinction by the CT Department of Agriculture based on the quality of its products, cleanliness, and beauty of the property. The Annex sells farm products, including pasteurized whole and chocolate milk and yogurt made on the premises; farm-raised meat; yarns from its flock of Romney sheep; and maple syrup from the property's sugar maples.

New Pond Farm Education Center has five areas of programming: environment, agriculture, science, local history, and the arts. "Our animals are here because of our educational programs. The high-quality farm products that we offer are a wonderful byproduct of our educational programs," said Taylor.

Murray is living his dream. "This life is something I chose to do, and I enjoy it," said Murray who has plans to retire down the road – but for now, he's content. "When that gets here, we'll take care of it." ■

## The Georgetown Holiday Fair returns this weekend

By Jessie Wright



Photo courtesy of Bill Dexter

Santa arrives at the end of the parade at a past year's Georgetown Holiday Fair.

The Georgetown Holiday Fair had humble beginnings back in 2009. "The first year we did it, it was really pretty a small operation – it was just myself, and a donkey, and a donkey with pack baskets with presents on it," laughed Bill Dexter, one of the fair's organizers. The event has grown over the last twelve years, now a festive annual tradition bringing families and businesses together along Main Street in Georgetown.

This year's fair takes place on Sunday, December 18. The day kicks off with a holiday parade at 11:00 a.m. down Main Street, featuring community groups, vintage cars, tractors, carolers, miniature horses, and Santa (played by Dexter himself). Following the parade, Santa will settle in with the North Pole's Senior Elf at Lombardi's to visit and take photos with kids. Meanwhile, families can enjoy crafts, face painting, games, story readings, and shopping.

Parking will be available across from Main Street near the Georgetown Post Office and in the public parking spots across from the Georgetown Package Store.

Attendees can also enter a raffle to win various prizes donated by businesses in the area, from a cord of firewood to restaurant gift certificates to art pieces. "All of the stores on

Main Street, all of the restaurants contribute gift certificates for the raffle. So it really does become a neighborhood event," said Heidi Holzer, a member of the fair's planning group.

Dexter started the annual tradition to bring people together in Georgetown as well as raise money for those in need. A small planning group including his family members and other local business owners come together each year to put on the event.

"I've lived here since I was 19, in Georgetown," Dexter said. "In years gone by, there were often parades in Georgetown, there was a Memorial Day Parade, there were other parades... and it just seemed like that whole concept had gone away. And it was nice to honor Georgetown a little bit by doing what we started to do. Every year it's gotten a little bit bigger and a little bit better."

The holiday fair activities are all free, but the photographs with Santa do have a suggested donation. All the money raised both from those donations and tickets for the raffle will go to support families in need this holiday season.

"It's really a small-town event – and those don't happen much anymore, so it's really kind of neat to come and see local people doing things," Dexter said. ■

## HOMES THAT MAKE REDDING SPECIAL

### The house at the corner of "Ump & Pea"

By John Karrel



The "house at the corner of Ump & Pea" in 2022.

In March 1953, I was born in Norwalk Hospital and raised by Frances and Oscar Karrel for the next 16 years in a small stone house on the Georgetown end of Umpawaug Road, at the corner of Peaceable Street, Route 107, and Goodsell Hill Road.

The well-known New Yorker and Playboy cartoonist Richard Taylor (who signed his work "R. Taylor") and his wife Maxine had built the house in 1947 before deciding to sell it to my parents five years later and move a bit further north on Umpawaug. Richard and Maxine had scouted out wooden timbers for the house's construction from an early 19th-century barn. The house was built on a stone base, on a hillside sloping down to a pond, which would require extensive restoration after the Great Flood of 1955.

The house sat – and still does – on just under six acres, an anvil-shaped wedge of land at the "corner of Ump & Pea". There were trees everywhere you looked, a giant play space for a kid and two



Oscar and Frances Karrel, and baby John, next to the pond in 1953.

dogs to roam freely without his parents having to worry, except for the occasional bee sting. A modest, red two-car garage sat next to the driveway entrance off Umpawaug. The house would become known at some point over the years as the "Black Pond House".

My parents were active in Redding life, my mother serving on the Planning Commission for years with Stuart Chase, among others, my father on the Board of Finance with Jim Thompson. I attended Redding Elementary School, John Read Middle School – entering midway through 7th grade, when construction on the school was complete – and then Joel Barlow High School for two years, before going away to school.

Remarkably, the house and the property in 2022 still evoke images I recall from more than half a century ago. Through the ensuing decades, there has been no demolition, no "McMansioning", and no subdivision, admittedly a difficult proposition given the configuration of the property as well as wetlands restrictions.

At a few different times since I sold the house in 1990 after my mother's death, major improvements have been done on the home and the property, including needed thinning of trees on the Umpawaug and Peaceable corner and adding a deck to the existing terrace overlooking the pond, as well as many interior improvements, such as a finished walk-up attic. In my view, those changes have only enhanced the inherent character of the property, without overwhelming it.

Shirley and Stuart Sax, a generous couple with many birds and two dogs, did some of the first upgrades after buying the house in 1990. They were also kind enough to invite me over for visits, with

our two small sons, who enjoyed the playdate potential of the house's quirky nooks and crannies, let alone the raucous aviary and canine environment. Shirley and Stuart relocated to the Pacific Northwest in 2005, and the house changed hands two additional times over the ensuing 17 years, before finding its current owners earlier this year.

Ginny Beasley, a long-time Redding realtor who was also the Co-Chair of the annual Mark Twain Library Labor Day Weekend Book Fair for many years, has kept an eye on the house and monitored its listings for decades. Now a Ridgefield resident, Ginny still recalls the distinctive charm of a "stone cottage" set on 5.88 acres.

When you looked out over the pond, "you could always envision a snowy winter day," she said when I met with her recently for coffee in Branchville. For her, the house is emblematic of what makes Redding special.

I have lived in Westport with my family for decades and have no expectation of leaving. That said, when I drive through Redding now – and I still love driving the full length of Umpawaug Road in either direction – I am constantly reminded of how Redding has maintained its legacy of open space, with unwavering commitments to two-acre zoning and the preservation of many homes that might no longer be standing in neighboring towns. ■



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# Wreaths Across America Day

ceremony to take place at Umpawaug Cemetery | By Jessie Wright



Photo courtesy of Louise Wagner  
Redding Ridge Cemetery during last year's Wreaths Across America Day.

The Drum Hill Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution, the Redding Historical Society, and the Redding Historic Cemetery Committee will present a Wreaths Across America Day ceremony at Umpawaug Cemetery on Saturday, December 17 at 10:00 a.m.

"We will honor the veterans by placing flags rather than wreaths and 'Say the Names' of veterans interred at the cemetery," explained Louise Wagner, one of the event's organizers. "Anyone wishing to bring a wreath is welcome." The Marlborough Junior Ancient Fife & Drum Corp will also attend and perform patriotic music.

In addition to the ceremony at

Umpawaug Cemetery, Redding Ridge and Umpawaug Cemeteries will have a vertical banner and display of eight wreaths with Armed Forces and American flags. Hull Cemetery will also display the eight flags.

Wreaths Across America is a national organization whose mission is to remember fallen U.S. veterans, honor those who serve, and teach children the value of freedom. They are coordinating over 3,400 wreath-laying ceremonies throughout the United States on December 17, including at Arlington National Cemetery. ■

## Eversource files request to alter designated scenic road

Continued from page 1

not the town's.

"There's one they call a cherry tree," Lester said in a phone call. "It's not a cherry tree. It is a tree on our property. It's a small tree wrapped up in the lines. There's no need to kill it, just trim it. That should be done, but they (Eversource) have not come or talked to me."

Lester said the list of hazard trees on town land in some instances doesn't appear to him to correlate with the photos in the report. "It's confusing," he added.

Members of the Redding Tree Conservancy (RTC), a group formed in early summer 2022 in response to the proposed resiliency program, said that if someone is confused about their property boundaries, they can contact the RTC to assist.

"This is a report that needs very careful study," said Janice Rotchstein, member of the RTC and resident on Cross Highway. "We question the identification of town property boundaries."

"The town has a right of way, and it may not match their A-2 (property survey)," added RTC founder and Cross Highway resident, Laurie Heiss.

"We are frustrated to see the row of healthy sugar maples lining Cross Highway in front of

our house marked for removal by Eversource," said resident Ed Staunton. "From the beginning, Eversource has assured they need permission to remove any tree on private property. But neither Eversource nor the town ever specify how these boundary lines are determined. We recently completed an A-2 survey of our property, and the property line includes healthy trees marked in the Eversource report as 'owned by town' and planned for removal. So, what's going on? This whole clear-cutting campaign is a disaster. There are dead and dying trees by the power lines all over town. Eversource should focus instead on selectively removing those."

Members of the RTC met with First Selectwoman Julia Pemberton at her monthly Brown Bag Lunch on December 7 to discuss the application. Pemberton suggested John McLeran, Open Space Manager, would also be a resource if residents are unsure of their property boundaries.

The RTC also questions the definition of hazard trees, according to Rotchstein.

"We plan to get a TRAQ-certified arborist to walk with Sam (Eversource Arborist Sam Berg), Julia (First Selectwoman

Julia Pemberton), and our Tree Warden... to walk with RTC to tour the route," Rotchstein said.

Sean McNamara is Redding's Deputy Tree Warden for the Eversource resiliency plan. McNamara had not seen the report but said he would make time in the following week to inspect the trees that are noted in the application.

"My feeling is there are probably some trees that should come down because they are a hazard or potential hazard, but there are other trees that are healthy and should remain," McNamara said. "I also feel that there are some invasive species, such as Norway Maple, that should be removed for the health of our forests. I have always felt that there is a balance between maintaining the beauty of Redding and the safety of the roads and power lines."

"McNamara did a tree inventory that focused on diseased trees this past year," Pemberton said on December 7. "There are a lot of trees on those roads that were perfectly in good health that were also marked."

Among next steps, Pemberton said the Tree Warden will work with the Highway Department to review trees identified to come down. ■

### The hazard trees in the application include:

Ten locusts and five maples at 94 Hill Road

Five maples at 15 Cross Highway

Two maples at 1 Lonetown Road

One cherry, twelve maples at 20 Cross Highway

Three cherry, four maples at 37 Cross Highway

One maple at 45 Cross Highway

One maple at 51 Cross Highway

Three maples at 38 Cross Highway

One maple at 46 Cross Highway

One oak at 48 Cross Highway

Three oaks, two maples at 55 Cross Highway

One sassafras at 59 Cross Highway

Three maples at 65 Cross Highway

Two maples at 67 Cross Highway

One maple at 60 Cross Highway

One maple at 70 Cross Highway

One poplar, one maple, two ash, one elm at 93 Cross Highway

One hickory at 76 Cross Highway

One pine, one sycamore at 84 Cross Highway

Three maples, four ash, and one oak at 99 Cross Highway

Three maples at 105 Cross Highway

One poplar, three maples, one ash at 100 Cross Highway

One ash, one cherry at 112 Cross Highway

Five ash, one maple at 123 Cross Highway

Three maples at 147 Cross Highway

Two elms, one cherry, three maple, two birch at 148 Cross Highway

Three maples at 147 Cross Highway

Five maples, one elm, one ash at 148 Cross Highway

One hickory at Cross Highway/Newtown Turnpike

Two maples, one elm at 160 Cross Highway

Two maples at 171 Cross Highway

One oak at 241 Black Rock Turnpike

One cherry at 168 Cross Highway

# MOVIE SERIES

## The Noel Diary features Connecticut locations, a familiar face

By Donna Christopher



Photo credit Netflix

From the cozy, wintry landscapes to a snow-globe-quiet village scene, locals will recognize Fairfield County locations and perhaps a familiar face in recently-released *The Noel Diary*.

*The Noel Diary* is a tug-at-your-heart romantic and nostalgic story starring TV actors Justin Hartley (*This is Us*) Barret Doss (*Station 19*), Bonnie Bedelia, Essence Atkins, and James Remar. It was released on Thanksgiving this year and was the number one most-watched Netflix movie of the week from November 28 to December 5.

The movie is based on a novel by Richard Paul Evans and was co-written and directed by Charles Shyer. It follows a famous author named Jake Turner who returns to his childhood home in Bridgeport to settle his mother's estate after she passes away. While cleaning out the house during Christmastime, a young woman named Rachel knocks on the door, looking for her birth mother. Soon, Jake comes across a secret diary that holds the answers to questions about his past and that of Rachel as well.

There is a holiday segment in the film that features a small-town gathering on a village green in the fictional town of Maple Falls when the main characters sit on a park bench and watch an outdoor screening of *It's a Wonderful Life*.

Location buffs from our area will easily recognize the Town Hall in New Canaan and Redding neighbors may recognize an extra – Sherry H. Arell. Seen briefly at the midway part of the movie, Arell appears wearing round glasses and a Hudson Bay blanket ahead of the scene with dancing and Christmas music playing in the background.

"They had a big outdoor scene," Arell explained. "There was fake snow on the ground and tons of people in the scene. It must have been 100 people. I was there eight hours that day. It was June 2021, 95 degrees and we were in coats, hats, boots, and gloves."

Arell has lived in Redding for 26 years. Her late husband, Hugh Karraker, was also an actor and grew up in town. The couple moved into Karraker's childhood home and created a B&B there for several years, eventually selling it and moving to another house in Redding, where Arell still lives.

Arell is the founder and a board member of the Redding Historic Review Committee. Her acting

credits include *Paracosm* (2019), *The Word* (2013), and *Elementary* (2012). "I was the Shushing Lady in the pilot," she said in a phone call.

For many years, she went into New York City to work in films, but likes it when the small parts she does are closer to home, like *Paracosm*, which filmed in Rhinebeck. She also traveled to Rhode Island for a small part in *Brotherhood*.

An actor since college, Arell and her husband met when they both worked in summer stock theater. She said she hadn't heard anything about *The Noel Diary*'s release until someone mentioned seeing it and has no knowledge of where scenes were shot except for the one she is in.

"This movie started at Thanksgiving," Arell said. "My tai chi teacher at the senior center saw it and said, 'I saw you!'"

There has been speculation about the movie with some wondering if there are Redding scenes. The Sentinel reached out to Netflix and the film's Location Director to confirm, but hadn't heard back at press time. There is a pivotal scene in which the two main characters pull over to a field in their jeep. The dog runs out of the car and out onto a field to chase a rabbit. That could be a field anywhere, though Arell suggested that it looks like the one at Lonetown Farm. Someone on social media thought it could be Karraker Field on the corner of Cross Highway and Black Rock Turnpike. According to media reports, there were scenes filmed in Westport, Stamford, and Essex.

"Film companies come to Connecticut to shoot Christmas films because of the state's classic holiday locations and our competitive tax credit program," said Mark Dixon of Production & Location Services for the Office of Film, Television & Digital Media at the Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development. "We've had 20 Christmas Films filmed here since 2014." The list can be reviewed at [https://portal.ct.gov/DECD/Content/Film-TV-Digital-Media/01\\_Producing\\_in\\_Connecticut/Filmography](https://portal.ct.gov/DECD/Content/Film-TV-Digital-Media/01_Producing_in_Connecticut/Filmography).

Two additional holiday films were shot in Connecticut in 2022: *The 12 Nights before Christmas* (Synthetic Cinema) and *The Ghosts of Christmas Always* (Hallmark / Synthetic Cinema). ■



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Photo by Debora DeCarlo Rosa

The Redding Garden Club decorated the Community Center for the holidays.

## BUSINESS SPOTLIGHT

# BackwoodBuilders: Your local source for custom, hand-made furniture

By Justin Reynolds



Photos courtesy of BackwoodBuilders



In 2015, Summer Dachenhausen was working a full-time job as an event planner traveling all over the United States when she decided to start a side hustle: building custom furniture out of reclaimed wood.

Fast-forward to today, and that side hustle, a business called BackwoodBuilders, is now Dachenhausen's full-time job.

"BackwoodBuilders is a custom furniture-making business that was launched when the reclaimed wood movement just began to surface," she explained. "We also sell barnwood, live edge wood slabs, and rough-sawn lumber, now with capabilities for milling and kiln drying."

In 2015, Dachenhausen – who grew up in Redding and still has family in town – was living on a farm with a big barn when her friend wanted to throw a rustic wedding and baby shower on the property.

"She suggested I build some farm tables and benches, which I had dabbled with in the past," explained Dachenhausen, a self-taught furniture maker. "The amount of guests grew, and so did the amount of tables. At the end of the build, I think I had about 13 farm tables and 26 benches."

After the wedding was over, the guests purchased most of that furniture, and Dachenhausen knew she was on to something. Shortly afterwards, she left her event planner gig and became a full-time entrepreneur.

"I've always had a drive when it comes to challenges and learning new things," Dachenhausen said. "I thrived on wanting to learn trades most girls would not have a clue about nor would want to learn, and I wanted to indulge more in my creative freedom. My family is also all self-employed, so picking up tools or trying new things wasn't foreign to me. I was

always learning how to use tools, run machines, and work on cars. It taught me how to be very well-rounded."

In 2017, her hobby officially became BackwoodBuilders, offering one-of-a-kind handmade furniture. In addition to farm tables, Dachenhausen also builds bathroom vanities, hand-hewn barn beam mantels for fireplaces, desks, tables and benches for restaurants, coffee tables, bookcases, couch and hallway tables, countertop slabs, and much more.

"I tell people that if they see something on Pinterest or at a store or in a magazine, just send me the picture and I'll be able to mock it, no problem, to their dimensions," Dachenhausen said, adding that while her company sources barnwood and reclaimed wood, most of her furniture is built from milled hardwoods, including maple, oak, walnut, and ash.

"We've been milling our own wood for many years on the Redding-Newtown line," Dachenhausen said. "All the logs come from local jobs around the area. Any of the barnwood and reclaimed beams are sourced from old barn teardowns that have reached out to us to try and salvage any wood. We've done full barn demos all over Fairfield County."

While most of Dachenhausen's clients live in Connecticut, she's also sold to customers in New York and New Jersey. "Social media and word of mouth have been powerful for my business," she said. "I've never created a website. It's all been business pages on Facebook and Instagram as BackwoodBuilders."

When BackwoodBuilders started, Dachenhausen would throw open houses and display a variety of pre-made products for purchase. Since then, she's gone in a new direction. "I've noticed

that everyone wants different dimensions or colors, and it was just easier to go full-time custom work," she said.

Last year, Dachenhausen's business had a setback that would derail most companies. One night, she smelled smoke at her 5,000-square-foot shop, which was housed inside a converted animal barn. Immediately, she went outside with her dogs and began investigating the cause of the smoke but didn't see any fires.

"It wasn't until we went back inside, and I started to notice what looked like smoke coming from the bathroom, which also had a door to the interior of the shop," Dachenhausen said. "At that point, you go into fight or flight mode. The front door was open, so the minute I opened the bathroom door to the shop, it ignited the fire and blew back in my face."

Luckily, Dachenhausen wasn't burned and was able to save her two dogs, one of which was burned but has since recovered.

"I lost many finished client builds along with every single piece of equipment, all my housing and family heirlooms, and most importantly a large sum of cash that was just taken out to purchase some land," Dachenhausen said. "How does the saying go? I literally lost everything but the clothes on my back that night."

After losing much of the business's assets to the fire, 2022 has been a catch-up year for BackwoodBuilders.

"I'm just starting to get my name back out there and let people know, hey, BackwoodBuilders is still here and building full-time between shops," she said. "We have been pretty busy, steadily, which has been amazing."

Dachenhausen also works with her brother, a welder, to create steel bases for custom furniture, and her father, who owns a local excavating business, to help dismantle barns to repurpose.

"We try to keep everything local and utilize other entrepreneur friends' talents," she said. "It's all about supporting small businesses. You might end up paying more, but it will always be quality work that will last." ■

For more information, visit Facebook or Instagram @ BackwoodBuilders or e-mail Dachenhausen at backwoodbuilders@yahoo.com.

# On the menu with...

Frank Lombardi | By Pamela Brown



Photo courtesy of Lombardi's Trattoria

We hope Sentinel readers enjoy this new series and cook along with local chefs and restaurant managers as they share their favorite recipes.

"Having been born and raised on the island of Ischia just a boat ride from Naples Italy, a love of food has always been a huge part of my life," said Frank Lombardi, Owner/Manager of Lombardi's Trattoria on Georgetown's Main Street. He has shared that passion with customers for over 22 years, serving up classic southern Italian dishes and Neapolitan-style pizza in the family-friendly, homey spot.

"Fresh, high-quality, seasonal ingredients make the difference and play a great role in this process. I've been making pizza since I was about 14 or 15 years old and there has been a huge evolution in both the return to the classic woodburning oven as well as the variety of ingredients used for both crusts and toppings," he noted.

One of Lombardi's favorite entrées to prepare for the holidays is his famous Lombardi Chicken Caprese. "It's a classic Italian inspired dish using ingredients locally grown, such as the sliced tomatoes and fresh basil, as well as white wine. I remember helping my father make it every September growing up," recalled Lombardi, noting home cooks can effortlessly replicate it in their own kitchen. "It's quick and easy

to cook and to serve and/or keep warm in a chaffing dish on a party buffet, and the chicken can be cut into much smaller pieces for easy serving either as an appetizer or for a luncheon/dinner portion."

Lombardi answered a round of the Sentinel's holiday questions:

### Favorite Christmas memory involving food?

The traditional Italian Christmas Eve fish dinner with my family and a great linguine with fresh clam sauce.

### Best tip for holiday entertaining?

Keep your menu simple and use fresh ingredients and lots of great wine!

### Favorite dish on your menu?

My homemade Gnocchi Bolognese made with ricotta cheese. They are light as air, baked in our brick oven with our three meat Bolognese sauce.

### If you weren't a chef, what would you be?

Since I've been making pizza from the age of 14, I have no idea. Running a restaurant at this point seems as natural to me as breathing.

### Eggnog or hot cocoa?

Neither. Mulled Wine! Happy Holidays! ■

### Lombardi's Chicken Caprese

Serving size: 4

#### Ingredients

- 4 boneless, skinless chicken breasts
- 2 Tablespoons vegetable oil
- ½ stick of butter
- ¼ cup white wine
- ½ cup chicken stock
- 4 slices ripe tomato
- 4 fresh basil leaves
- 8 slices provolone cheese, sliced
- Kosher salt and pepper, to taste

#### Directions

Note: If you start with thicker chicken breasts, you can cut them horizontally through the middle to make thinner cutlets.

- Pat the chicken dry and evenly season with kosher salt and black pepper on both sides.
- In a large skillet, heat the vegetable oil over medium-high

heat and add the chicken breasts.

- Cook for 3 to 5 minutes on each side. Use an instant-read thermometer to check for doneness (165°F)

- Remove the chicken from the skillet and drain the hot oil; set aside, covered.

- Deglaze the pan by adding the wine and chicken stock and using a wooden spoon to scrape the bits from the bottom and sides of the skillet. Cook for about 5 minutes then add the butter to melt.

- Place the chicken breasts in the sauce and top each with a slice of tomato, fresh basil, and a slice or two of provolone cheese.

- Simmer 3 to 4 minutes or until the cheese is melted. Serve.

### Working Group discusses allocating remaining ARPA funds | Continued from page 1

The ARPA Funds Working Group is the "first stop" for ARPA proposals. From its start, the Working Group prioritized requests from community and non-profit organizations, although several of the projects approved thus far have been municipal or educational in nature. In contrast, many neighboring communities devoted the bulk of their ARPA funds to municipal projects.

"We wanted to develop a sense

of community in Redding," said Working Group member Mary Dale Lancaster.

About \$1.6 million in ARPA funding has been approved thus far by Redding voters. Higgins pointed out that one of the very first items approved by the Working Group – and subsequently by the Board of Selectmen and town voters – was a \$50,000 ARPA grant to the Department of Social Services.

That funding was specifically

designated for a fund to make grants to residents who had fallen behind on rent or mortgage payments during the Covid pandemic. Those first grants are now being made.

"In addition, the Boys and Girls Club of Redding just purchased its new mower," Higgins said. "People from all of these organizations are thrilled with the funding they've been able to get." ■

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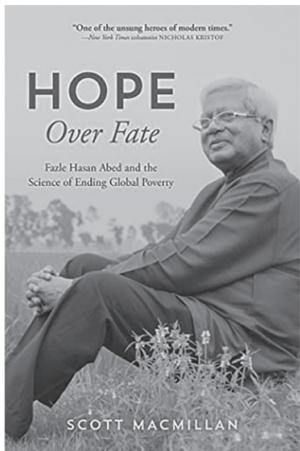
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## BOOK REVIEW

### Hope Over Fate

*Fazle Hasan Abed and the Science of Ending Global Poverty* | By Scott MacMillan

312 p.p. Rowman & Littlefield. \$29.95



As book titles go, *Hope Over Fate* may seem a bit loftily seductive in its suggestion that humans can triumph over what seems impossible. The subtitle, however, “Fazle Asan Abed and the Science of Ending Global Poverty”, offers a grounded promise that the heroic subject of the book will not only inspire, but inform us as to *how* such a suggestion can do just that. Former journalist Scott MacMillan presents a beautiful account of how one man’s faith in the potential of self-empowered humanity can – with use of effective business practices – overcome misery and suffering in the world’s ultra-poor. This book honors both the man and the organization he created fifty years ago to make this happen.

Currently a director at BRAC USA, the US affiliate of BRAC (originally the Bangladesh Rehabilitation Assistance Committee), and former speech writer for Abed before his death in 2019, MacMillan introduces us to the 35-year-old accountant in the early 1970s as he responds to a devastating cyclone in East Pakistan (soon to become Bangladesh). With no disaster-relief experience, Abed organizes friends and workmates to combat flooding, hunger, and sickness – attracting others to help launch and grow a humanitarian institution that today serves over 100 million people in Asia and Africa.

For readers unfamiliar with the development world, the book is a stunning lesson in how mammoth in scale extreme poverty needs are. But, *Hope Over Fate* is not a textbook. It is an engaging read, well-documented, and with an

excellent index and photos of some beneficiaries of BRAC and of family and friends who became its leaders and devoted supporters.

As MacMillan’s storytelling skills make heady development topics accessible and interesting, readers meet a brilliant visionary, not without flaws, whose tenacious, strategic efforts to eradicate poverty brought him deep respect in his field, but whose humility kept him fairly unknown otherwise. The book shows how Abed’s mother, first love, and three supportive wives – two of whom contributed much to BRAC before their deaths, and a third still doing so – taught him to trust women, indeed, to champion them as teachers, community leaders, and, in rural areas especially, as humans with unrealized potential. Landless women, often widowed or abandoned, proved to be the neediest, lacking the self-esteem and skills to sustain their lives and those of their children. Made powerless and almost invisible by cultural and religious traditions, they motivated Abed and his teams to pilot and oversee a variety of humanitarian initiatives – some failing, many succeeding – all subject to fluid revision and improvement.

Today, BRAC’s exemplary oral rehydration program finds women teaching other women how to prevent their children’s deaths from diarrhea, once the greatest cause of child mortality in Bangladesh. Ongoing literacy programs and micro-financed training in livestock maintenance further empower women to live independently. Such investments, among others described in this uplifting book, allow *hope* to nurture and sustain people who have learned how – in Abed’s words – “to be fully human” and to believe that “one’s destiny is, at least partially, in one’s own hands...” ■

Review by Joan Campbell.  
Campbell is a former teacher and writer.

Macmillan lives on Redding Road with his wife and daughter. He will be giving an author talk on “*Hope Over Fate*” at Mark Twain Library on Thursday, December 15 from 7:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.

#### Answers to last week’s Redding logic puzzle:

Julia was at the Boys and Girls Club at 12:00 p.m.

Tommy was at Topstone at 5:00 p.m.

Lily was at the Mark Twain Library at 9:00 a.m.

Jared was at New Pond Farm at 3:00 p.m.

Sarah was at Putnam Park at 7:00 p.m.

## LIBRARY CORNER

By Erin Shea Dummeyer

Mark Twain Library is an association library, meaning it is privately governed and maintained by the Mark Twain Library Association’s Board of Trustees, rather than the Town of Redding. This also means we are responsible for raising about 40% of our budget every year, which we always hope to accomplish through fundraisers and our Annual Appeal. This is in keeping with the vision of our founder, Mark Twain, who enlisted friends and neighbors to raise money for the original library building and its collections.

Unlike our neighbors in Easton

and Weston that are municipal libraries, we apply for a grant each year from the Town of Redding that allows us to purchase books, fund programs, and pay our utility bills. Compared to nearby association libraries like Wilton, Newtown, and Ridgefield, Mark Twain Library leads the pack in the percentage of our budget that is privately raised. Most nearby towns fund their association libraries at or around 75%.

The reason a town has a municipal or association library has to do with history. Public libraries began spreading in earnest after the

Civil War, as they were thought to bring educational opportunity to the masses. Association libraries often sprung up from a special interest group like a women’s group or committee of neighbors in want of a lending library. In our case, it was Mark Twain himself who declared that Redding was deserving of a fine public library. We strive to honor this vision and support his legacy through the wonderful programs and collections offered at Mark Twain Library. ■

Erin Shea Dummeyer is Director, Mark Twain Library

## Good books for good readers

By Margi Esten

Here are some of the best Scandinavian crime writers you should be reading:

Swedish author Stieg Larsson is probably the most well-known in the U.S. for his Millennium trilogy (*The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*, *The Girl Who Played with Fire*, and *The Girl Who Kicked the Hornet’s Nest*). If you have seen the film adaptations (both Swedish and American versions), then you know they are not for the faint of heart. I encourage reading the books versus just watching the films! Larsson is a wonderful writer who left us way too early.

Norwegian Jo Nesbo isn’t just a crime writer – he’s also an accomplished musician, economist, former soccer player,

and reporter! He is responsible for the original and utterly believable character of Harry Hole, the detective featured in most of his books. Harry is a genuine anti-hero and it’s virtually impossible not to like him. A few of my favorites are *The Snowman*, *The Bat*, *The Redbreast*, *The Thirst*, and *Knife and the Leopard*. And try not to miss his most recent, *The Son*.

The Swedish writer Lars Kepler is actually the pseudonym of the husband-and-wife team Alexandra and Alexander Andoril, authors of the Joona Linna series. The Lars Kepler books are breathtakingly scary but difficult to put down. Some of the best: *The Hypnotist*, *The Fire Witness*, *The Nightmare*, *The Sandman*, and *Stalker*.

I think my first introduction to Scandinavian crime fiction was Swedish author Henning Mankell. He is best known for his series of mystery novels featuring his brilliant creation, Inspector Kurt Wallander. You may know this character from the PBS Wallander series starring Kenneth Branagh. As is true with most of the best crime detectives, Wallander is a flawed and troubled character simply following his passion for solving crimes. There are too many to list, but a few favorites include: *Faceless Killers*, *The Dogs of Riga*, *The Man Who Smiled*, *Before the Frost*, and *The Troubled Man*. Sadly, Henning Mankell died at the age of 67 in 2015. ■

## Joy to the world

By Lisa Tancredi

Back in 2000, I took a ten-day silent meditation course to learn a type of meditation called Vipassana. This technique teaches the art of “seeing things as they really are.” The goal of this process is to lead you to have direct experience of the true connection between mind and body, because it is through this direct experience that you ultimately liberate the mind from its mental impurities.

I looked at the daily schedule (which I swear had breaks for shuffleboard), signed up, and went to the course. As you probably have guessed by now, I was not paying too much attention. I had truly just glazed over the daily schedule and completely ignored the “Code of Discipline”. I was on a mission, and these things were insignificant. Right.

Turns out, these courses are held in what they call “Noble Silence”: no reading, no writing, no talking, no physical contact, no phones, no computers, no TV, no email. Nothing. Just you, yourself, and you for ten days.

This was the schedule: we got up at 4:00 a.m. and meditated in one-hour to one-and-a-half hour sessions from 4:30 a.m. until 9:00 p.m. with breaks for meals and instructions. So, I dove in and spent ten days in silence, watching people’s shoes and paying more attention to my nose than I had ever done before.

It was absolutely excruciating. So of course, I had to do it again.

In the last 22 years, I’ve done nearly one retreat per year. At one point, I even stayed at a center and did one course after the other for several months. As I spent more time there, I developed a routine where after lunch, I would sit on my bed for 15 minutes and then go take a walk around the walking loop.

It was on one of these walks in 2018, that this thought came into

my mind: “Lisa, you don’t have to do things if you don’t want to. You are allowed to actively choose to do things in life that you like.”

This sounds so basic it’s almost embarrassing to write, but it was a revelation for me. A real a-ha moment. It stopped me in my tracks. I stood still and just mulled it over: I had so often just gone along with what was handed to me, done things out of obligation, taken on other people’s goals, and tried to meet their expectations. What I wanted didn’t even enter the picture.

Although I had clearly learned this as a child, here I stood now, decades later, witnessing what I was still doing to myself. And it had taken me 18 years of meditation and stillness to figure it out.

At first, all I could think was: What a slow learner. Eighteen years to get to a philosophy that most people have by default. But, as I recovered from my own chagrin, questions popped up: Was I really allowed to actively, consciously choose to do things I enjoyed? At all times? Could I actually, if I allowed myself to think this boldly, always choose joy? I’ve come to understand that the answer for me and for all of us is “Yes.”

Joy does not come from an external situation. Joy is an inner state. And we all have access to it at all times. Our inner state is the only thing we truly have control of. So, we can choose to remain in this state, no matter what happens around us. But it takes practice. A lot of practice.

The problem is, we forget that we can bring ourselves here and that we’re allowed to stay here.

We’ve been taught to give others joy, to do things for others, to sacrifice ourselves for others, but then we watch them not accept the joy we’re trying to share. And we

blame them for not understanding.

If we really want to bring peace and joy to the world, if we want to be the change, we have to manage our own inner state. To share peace, you must be at peace. To share joy, you must be in joy. We cannot share peace and joy from a state of resentment and judgment.

You who are reading this – you already know this. You have already had this experience. Think back to a time in your life when you felt true joy. Not just excitement or giddiness or fun, but a true sense of joy and calm. Maybe it was at the birth of a child, or while listening to beautiful music, or just in the simple beauty of a summer’s day. Everyone has had the experience of joy at least once in their lives.

And, if you reconnect with that time for just a moment, you will recognize this: At the time that you felt true joy, there was no one and nothing in this world you wanted to harm. Not for any reason.

These two things cannot co-exist. You cannot be in true joy and want to hurt anyone. No matter their politics or their beliefs or their actions. You may try to rectify and heal the situation, but it is done without blame or accusations. True joy transcends all of this.

It’s when we take ourselves out of joy that we want to control others. Make yourself and your joy your first and main priority, and you will change the space that you are in, just by who you are. You will change those around you because you don’t ask them to be who they are not.

So this is my wish for you in this holiday season:

May you all reconnect with that spirit of true inner joy. May you be the force that remains calm in the center of a storm. May you be the giver of compassion and acceptance. And may you do this for yourself first. For that is how you reach the world. ■

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# THE NATURAL WORLD

## Ticks: a year-round risk | By Jessie Wright



Photos courtesy of the CDC  
Blacklegged Tick, *Ixodes scapularis*.



Two adult female blacklegged ticks on a hiking boot.

Last week, my son's babysitter texted me while my husband and I were out with friends: she had found a tick behind my son's ear. Added to our immediate parental anxiety about the risks of tick-borne diseases was also a note of disbelief: a tick? In December??

After two and half years of living in Redding and watching tick sightings all but disappear after Thanksgiving, I naively thought our autumnal vigilance could relax with the coming of hard frost. How wrong I was – not even 24 hours later (and our vigilance again restored) we found another tick that had attached moments earlier to my husband's earlobe.

While there are certain seasons when ticks are most plentiful, the species of ticks found in Connecticut can survive year-round, particularly if they have access to insulating leaf litter or snowpack. On any day with temperatures above freezing, ticks can become active and pose a risk to you and your animals. In October 2022, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration predicted a warmer than average winter for Connecticut, a trend that has held for the last seven winters, posing more opportunities for year-round tick bites.

Redding's Health Department provides both online resources and free in-person drop-offs for tick testing. After removing the ticks

from my son and my husband, we filled out the tick drop-off form found at [townofreddingct.org](http://townofreddingct.org) and placed the tiny culprits into Ziploc bags.

The Health Department will then send the specimens off to the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station (CAES), a component of the state government that conducts scientific research and public outreach in agricultural fields. CAES conducts tick testing and studies across the state each year, tracking the prevalence of both ticks and tick-borne diseases in Connecticut.

Redding Health Officer Christopher Wegrzyn indicated that this fall had been "a busy one" for tick drop-offs. Thumbing through a stack of submitted tick testing forms while I sat in his office, he counted 16 ticks in October and over a dozen in November that had been submitted to the Health Department. My two ticks were the third and fourth for the month of December.

The CAES reported receiving 191 ticks from Redding in 2021 and testing 157. Thirty-one percent were positive for the pathogen which causes Lyme Disease.

According to CAES, the pathogens that cause Lyme disease, human babesiosis, human granulocytic anaplasmosis, a relapsing fever *Borrelia*, and Powassan virus are spread by the

bite of the blacklegged tick, *Ixodes scapularis* (commonly called the deer tick). The American dog tick, *Dermacentor variabilis*, can transmit the agents of Rocky Mountain spotted fever and tularemia, and can cause tick paralysis. The lone star tick, *Amblyomma americanum*, has long been considered mainly a nuisance pest and locally, the tick can be extremely abundant.

Symptoms of these diseases often surface weeks to months following a bite and are often confused with other illnesses. Whenever possible, preventing a tick bite is always preferred to testing and treating a tick-borne disease.

The Redding Health Department provides the following guidance for preventing a tick bite:

### How to Dress to Avoid a Bite

- Ticks are picked up on lower extremities; concentrate efforts there.
- Wear light colored clothing. This makes it easier to spot ticks on clothes.
- Wear long pants and long sleeve shirts.
- Tuck pants into socks to prevent ticks from crawling inside. Tuck shirt into pants, this creates a barrier.
- Tuck hair under a hat, long hair

should be braided.

- Check clothing and skin very carefully (especially thighs, groin, arms, underarms, legs, and scalp) after being outdoors.

- Uses an EPA-approved tick repellent and wash it off when you come home.

### Tick Check

- Brush clothing off outside and check for loose ticks.
- Put clothes in plastic bags until

taking them to the laundry—do not leave clothes on the floor. Ticks can live in the house for a few days depending on humidity.

- Put clothes in a dryer on high heat for 15-20 minutes. Ticks can survive the washing machine, but they cannot tolerate the heat.

- Comb out hair with a fine toothcomb.

- Use your fingers and feel for ticks, especially in the hair.

- Take a shower or bath and blow dry hair with high heat.

- Check again the next morning, ticks take several hours to feed and may be easier to see or feel as they become engorged with blood.

A day or two after our family's tick invasion, I took my dog Bodie to the vet for a check-up. As she examined him, she plucked off a tiny brown dot that was crawling across his furry eyebrow and told me something that, at that point, I already knew: "They are bad this year," she said. "Ticks are a real year-round problem." ■

### Poliak Pond Preserve | Continued from page 1

furlough. This trail will take you to George Hull Hill Road and the McCormack Preserve.

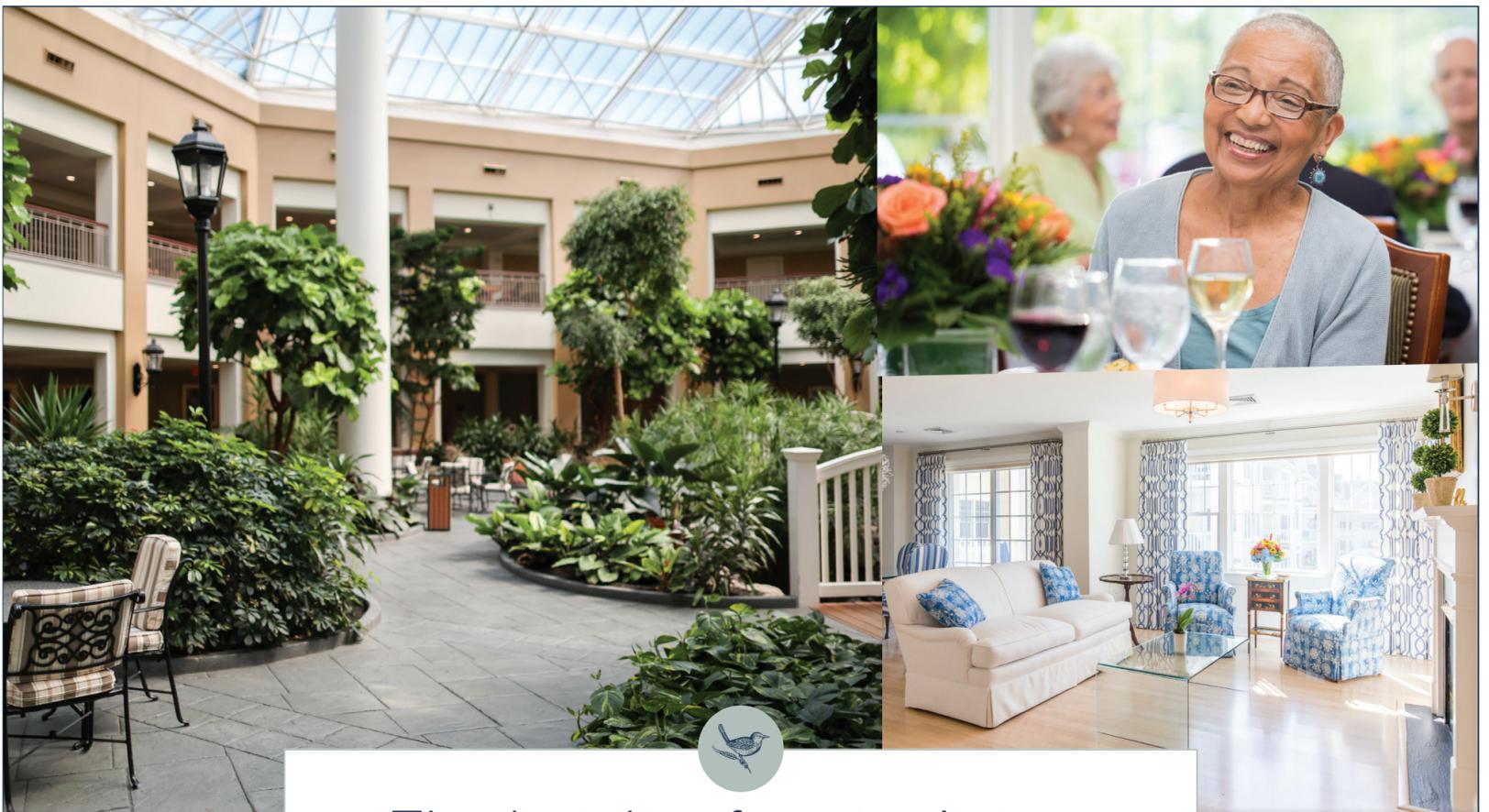
If you are hiking with a dog, be sure to stick to the white-blazed trail and don't take any shortcuts, otherwise you will enter Centennial watershed property where dogs are not allowed. This section is in deep, quiet woods and crosses a substantial boulder field.

Just past the boulder field, the trail crosses what Tschudi considers the prettiest part of the hike. This property was donated to the Redding Land Trust by Lotte Fields. There is a beautiful old stone wall at the corner, and in the spring, the area is covered

in grass. The trail turns to the left and begins to follow the Saugatuck River for a bit.

After about a half mile, you'll come to a "To McCormack" sign that takes you across George Hull Hill Road and into the McCormack Preserve, which is closed to hikers from October until February due to hunting activity. This is a good place to turn around and head back toward the pond. Once you see the yellow wildlife preserve sign, continue straight, following the white blazes to complete the loop around the pond. ■

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



## The height of senior living.

Our residents are grateful for the enriching community and enduring friendships they have discovered here. They only wish they had moved here sooner to enjoy our beautiful amenities and engaging activities. They've left home maintenance behind and embraced the security of Lifecare, which guarantees their continued care at a predictable cost, even if needs change.

To schedule a private tour, call 203-544-2711 or visit [MeadowRidge.com](http://MeadowRidge.com)



- Independent Living
- Assisted Living
- Memory Care
- Skilled Nursing & Rehabilitation



100 Redding Road | Redding, CT 06896  
Managed by Benchmark Senior Living

# CALENDAR OF EVENTS

\$ = fee applies  
R = registration required

## ARTS

Tuesday, Dec. 20

**Community Messiah Sing Hosted by Music on the Hill**  
7:00 p.m.  
Wilton Congregational Church  
70 Ridgefield Road  
Wilton  
musiconthehillct.org

Wednesday, Jan. 4

**Milestone's Stand-Up Comedy Spectacular**  
8:00 p.m. – 10:00 p.m.  
Milestone  
2 Main Street  
milestonect.com

## CHILDREN, TEENS

Saturday, Dec. 17

**Open Art Studios for Families**  
10:30 a.m. – 2:30 p.m.  
Recommended for ages 5-10 with adult caregivers  
Grace Farms, West Barn  
gracefarms.org  
\$, R

Saturday, Dec. 17

**Winter Stories by the Fire**  
11:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.  
Holiday stories and refreshments at the warming shed  
New Pond Farm  
101 Marchant Road  
newpondfarm.org  
\$, R

Saturday, Dec. 17

**Robotics Workshop: Operation Board Game**  
1:00 p.m. – 2:30 p.m.  
Grades 4-6  
Mark Twain Library  
439 Redding Road  
marktwainlibrary.org  
R

Saturday, Dec. 17

**Robotics Workshop: Create a Tilt Maze**  
3:00 p.m. – 4:30 p.m.  
Grades 5-8  
Mark Twain Library  
439 Redding Road  
marktwainlibrary.org  
R

Wednesday, Dec. 21

**Illuminated Forest Festival / Winter Solstice Festival**  
4:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.  
Mark the turning of the seasons in nature with tree decorating, songs, and reflection  
Westbrook Nature School  
7 Long Ridge Road  
westbrooknatureschool.org  
\$, R

Thursday, Dec. 29

**INDOOR Winter Break Checkout Chat & Chew**  
10:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.  
Mark Twain Library  
439 Redding Road  
marktwainlibrary.org  
R

## CHARITY

Monday, Nov. 21 —  
Wednesday, Dec. 21

**Winter Coat Drive**  
All-hours drop-off  
Men's new or gently-used clothing needed, including L-XL winter coats, sweatshirts, sweatpants, jeans, and size 8-10 work or hiking boots  
Westbrook Nature School in support of Dorothy Day Hospitality House  
7 Long Ridge Road  
westbrooknatureschool.org

Saturday, Dec. 17

**Stuff a Cruiser Toy Drive**  
RES PTA is welcoming new and unwrapped toys to benefit Toys for Tots  
10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.  
Redding Elementary School  
33 Lonetown Road  
rescpta.org

## CRAFTS

Thursday, Dec. 15

**Modern Makers A Winter Wonderland Paperback Workshop**  
10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.  
Mark Twain Library  
439 Redding Road  
marktwainlibrary.org  
R

Monday, Dec. 19

**Make Collage Buttons with Bethel CT Pride**  
3:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.  
Mark Twain Library  
439 Redding Road  
marktwainlibrary.org  
R

## HOLIDAY

Thursday, Nov. 17 —  
Friday, Dec. 18

**Keeler Tavern Holiday Boutique in the Barn**  
Thursdays – Sundays  
11:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.  
Keeler Tavern Museum and History Center  
152 Main Street  
Ridgefield  
keelertavernmuseum.org

Friday, Nov. 25 —  
Saturday, Dec. 31

**A Holiday Wonderland at the Mansion**  
Lockwood-Mathews Mansion Museum  
(Wed. – Fri.) 12:00 p.m., 1:00 p.m., 2:00 p.m., 3:00 p.m.  
(Sat. – Sun.) 12:00 p.m., 12:30 p.m., 1:00 p.m., 1:30 p.m., 2:00 p.m., 2:30 p.m., 3:00 p.m.  
295 West Avenue  
Norwalk  
See website for times  
lockwoodmathewsmansion.com  
\$, R

Saturday, Dec. 17  
and Sunday, Dec. 18

**Christmas Light Show Spectacular**  
6:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.  
Showings every half hour  
Walnut Hill Community Church  
156 Walnut Hill Road  
Bethel  
walnuthillcc.org/events

Thursday, Dec. 15,  
Sunday, Dec. 18 and  
Thursday, Dec. 22

**Christmas at the Coley House**  
Explore Christmas during the 1940's at a WWII-era home  
1:00 p.m., 2:00 p.m. and 3:00 p.m. guided tours  
Weston History and Culture Center  
104 Weston Road  
Weston  
westoncthistory.org  
\$, R

Sunday, Dec. 18

**Georgetown Holiday Fair**  
11:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.  
Holiday parade, treats, and visits with Santa  
Main Street  
Georgetown

Sunday, Dec. 18

**A Christmas Carol: A Performed Reading**  
5:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.  
Bring a pair of new socks to donate to Bethel Social Services  
The Tandem Theatre at WorkspaceCT  
16 Trowbridge Drive  
Bethel  
workspacect.org  
\$, R

Sunday, Dec. 18

**Stew Leonard's Menorah Lighting**  
5:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.  
With Rabbi Yehoshua Hecht of Beth Israel Chabad of Westport/  
Norwalk  
Followed by live music, kosher refreshments  
100 Westport Avenue  
Norwalk  
stewleonards.com  
R

Wednesday, Dec. 21

**Silly Solstice Sweater Celebration**  
All Day  
Just Drop By!  
Mark Twain Library  
439 Redding Road  
marktwainlibrary.org

Wednesday, Dec. 21

**Winter Solstice Welcome Celebration**  
4:30 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.  
Pop-in celebration to mark the arrival of winter - bring a friend and/or a treat to share.  
Redding Grange  
399 Newtown Turnpike  
facebook.com/  
GrangeReddingCT

Wednesday, Dec. 21

**Community Carol Sing**  
6:30 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.  
Join the Joel Barlow Music Department for performances and singing.  
Joel Barlow High School  
100 Black Rock Turnpike  
joelbarlowps.org

Wednesday, Dec. 21

**Winter Solstice Concert with Crystal Cymbalogy**  
7:30 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.  
Open Sky Yoga Barn  
95 Cross Highway  
Register by e-mail to cynsongs@icloud.com  
\$, R

Saturday, Dec. 24

**St. Thomas' Christmas Eve**  
2:30 p.m. Choral music  
3:00 p.m. Worship service  
4:15 p.m. Christmas carols, s'mores and kids crafts  
St. Thomas' Episcopal Church  
95 Greenwood Avenue  
Bethel  
stthomasbethel.org

## SPECIAL PROGRAMS

Thursday, Dec. 15

**Author Talk: Revolutionary Philanthropy – with Scott MacMillan**  
7:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.  
Mark Twain Library  
439 Redding Road  
marktwainlibrary.org  
R

Saturday, Dec. 17

**Wreaths Across America Event at Umpawaug Cemetery**  
10:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.  
Fife & drums  
Sponsored by the Daughters of the American Revolution and Redding Historical Society  
Umpawaug Cemetery  
149 Umpawaug Road  
townofreddingct.org

Saturday, Dec. 17

**December Astronomy**  
5:30 p.m. – 6:30 p.m.  
Family program, bring a flashlight and binoculars if you have them  
New Pond Farm  
101 Marchant Road  
newpondfarm.org  
\$, R

Monday, Dec. 19

**World Affairs Forum: Increasing Income Inequality Around the Globe**  
7:30 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.  
In-person and Zoom  
Mark Twain Library  
439 Redding Road  
marktwainlibrary.org  
R

Monday, Dec. 26

**Redding Land Trust Boxing Day Hike**  
11:00 a.m.  
Saugatuck Trail  
No dogs allowed on Centennial Watershed land  
Meet near 56 Deer Hill Road (don't park on the grass, please)  
reddingctlandtrust.org

## MEETINGS

Thursday, Dec. 15

**Democratic Town Committee**  
7:30 p.m.  
Town Hall / Hearing Room  
100 Hill Road  
townofreddingct.org

Friday, Dec. 16

**ER9 Boards of Education Policy Committee**  
9:00 a.m.  
Live or Zoom  
654 Morehouse Road  
Easton  
townofreddingct.org

Monday, Dec. 19

**Board of Finance (with Boards of Selectmen and Education)**  
6:00 p.m.  
Zoom  
townofreddingct.org

Monday, Dec. 19

**Board of Selectmen**  
7:30 p.m.  
Town Hall / Hearing Room  
100 Hill Road  
townofreddingct.org

Tuesday, Dec. 20

**ER9 Boards of Education DEI Task Force**  
5:00 p.m.  
Live or Zoom  
Joel Barlow High School Room A106  
100 Black Rock Turnpike  
er9.org

Tuesday, Dec. 20

**Conservation Commission**  
7:30 p.m.  
Zoom  
townofreddingct.org

Tuesday, Dec. 20

**Region 9 Board of Education**  
7:30 p.m.  
Joel Barlow High School Library Learning Commons  
100 Black Rock Turnpike  
er9.org

Wednesday, Dec. 21

**Water Pollution Control Commission**  
7:30 p.m.  
Zoom  
townofreddingct.org

Tuesday, Jan. 3

**Economic Development Committee**  
8:30 a.m.  
Town Hall / Conference Room  
100 Hill Road  
townofreddingct.org

Tuesday, Jan. 3

**Conservation Commission**  
7:30 p.m.  
Zoom  
townofreddingct.org

Thursday, Jan. 5

**Freedom of Information Act Information Session**  
6:00 p.m.  
Town Hall / Hearing Room  
100 Hill Road  
townofreddingct.org

Town offices will be closed on Monday, December 26 and Monday, January 2 for the observation of Christmas Day and New Year's Day, respectively.

## This Week's Featured Events

### Stuff a Cruiser Toy Drive

**Saturday, Dec. 17**  
10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.  
The RES PTA is welcoming new and unwrapped toys to benefit Toys for Tots  
Redding Elementary School  
33 Lonetown Road

### Georgetown Holiday Fair

**Sunday, Dec. 18**  
11:00 am - 2:00 p.m.  
Holiday parade, kids activities, raffle, and visits with Santa  
Main Street  
Georgetown

### Redding Land Trust Boxing Day Hike

**Monday, Dec. 26**  
11:00 a.m.  
Saugatuck Trail  
No dogs allowed on Centennial Watershed land  
Meet near 56 Deer Hill Road

### Want to feature an upcoming event?

E-mail us at [advertise@reddingsentinel.org](mailto:advertise@reddingsentinel.org) for more information.

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[joe.porricelli@cbrealty.com](mailto:joe.porricelli@cbrealty.com)

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