

REDDING SENTINEL

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Grants help set restoration work at historic cemeteries in motion

By Donna Christopher

A total of \$10,000 in grant money was recently awarded for repair and maintenance work at the Town's historic cemeteries under the stewardship of the Redding Historic Cemetery Committee (RHCC). The group oversees six historic cemeteries: Ferry, Center, Marchant, Great Pasture, Sanford, and Isaac Hamilton Cemetery, also known as Lonetown Cemetery.

Tree and limb work has now been completed at Lonetown Cemetery, which is the burial place of at least two Revolutionary War patriots and a Civil War soldier of color. The work was funded by a \$5,000 grant through the State Municipalities and Maintenance of Neglected Cemeteries and included the removal of 11 dead or dying trees near the fencing; trimming and cabling a large old maple tree; and replacing the broken fence which had been damaged by a fallen tree.

The tree work was done and overseen by Bartlett Tree in Weston, Redding Tree Warden Charlie Hyatt, Sean McNamara, Joe Bonomo, and Bob Paradise. Bonomo is the Chair of the RHCC assembled by the Town in 2022. Paradise, who mows and maintains the cemetery, used to head a former iteration of the cemetery committee and was instrumental in insisting Lonetown Cemetery top the list of locations in peril of falling dead trees damaging headstones and monuments when the new committee formed.

McNamara, an arborist himself and RHCC member, acknowledged Matthew Corsak of Bartlett Tree for the work his company did in removing several dead and hazardous trees at the Lonetown Cemetery.

"Matt did the work at a considerable discount and spent a great deal of time making sure the trees were removed carefully not to damage the headstones. The Committee greatly appreciates his time and skill," McNamara said. "We also want to thank Redding Tree Warden Charlie Hyatt, who supervised the tree work. There is a very large and beautiful sugar maple in the cemetery that we feared might need to be removed as it was dropping major limbs and damaging stones, as well as being a potential danger to visitors of the cemetery. Charlie and Julia Pemberton pushed to save the tree; and, with the help of Matt, the tree was pruned and cabled so it could be made safe."

Bonomo said that when the RHCC assembled just over a year

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Photo by Susan Clark

Even a modest snowfall can create a wintry feel, as in this scene looking toward Lutz field off Cross Highway. If you have a photo you'd like to see featured here, with credit of course, e-mail editor@reddingsentinel.org

Redding Prevention Council

New group to counter substance abuse, mental health crises

By Rob Sample

In every corner of the country, both substance abuse and mental health issues have reached crisis levels among people of all ages. In December, Redding launched a volunteer organization that aims to do something about both.

This is the Redding Prevention Council, and it's part of a network of more than 150 similar organizations in towns and cities throughout Connecticut. The nascent organization – it has not yet named officers – will hold its very first event on Wednesday, January 31 at the Mark Twain Library, from 7:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

The event will be a roundtable discussion moderated by Kathy Hanley, Behavioral Health Director for the Western Connecticut Coalition, a regional group working to improve mental health, reduce substance misuse, and raise awareness about the resources available to people in need. Feedback from the discussion will help shape the new group's goals and focus areas.

Local prevention councils receive state funding, which is

also expected to be augmented by funds from some of the recently announced opioid case settlements. Members of the councils are volunteers and include people involved in youth services, education, and law enforcement, as well as other concerned citizens.

As the discussion moderator, Hanley will outline some successful ways to reduce substance abuse, prevent suicide, and promote mental health and wellness. Her work – and that of the Western Connecticut Coalition – has also focused on problem gambling.

"The Redding Prevention Council will aim to help residents of Redding who are needing support in the areas of mental health and substance-abuse prevention," noted Meredith Schuchard, Executive Director of the Boys & Girls Club of Redding-Easton. She is among the group of Redding citizens who are helping to spearhead the formation of the Redding Prevention Council.

The current prevention council network includes Connecticut's biggest cities as well as some

small towns. Locally, there are prevention councils in Brookfield, Easton, Fairfield, and Newtown, to name just a few.

Schuchard sees a strong correlation between the missions of the Boys & Girls Club and the Prevention Council. "The Boys & Girls Club is deeply invested in supporting youth in our community," Schuchard said. "Involvement in the local prevention council mirrors our mission of encouraging youth to be the best version of themselves by focusing on mental health and substance abuse prevention."

Schuchard encourages all interested Redding residents to attend the January 31 roundtable – and to get involved. "We will use the listening session on January 31 to help guide the activities and focus of the Council," she said. ■

The January 31 session will take place both in-person at Mark Twain Library and virtually via Zoom. Visit marktwainlibrary.org/ events to register and for more information.

REDDING'S BIG OUTDOORS

A Passion for Place

By Cole Tucker-Walton



Photo by Cole Tucker-Walton

January, I keep going out and it keeps getting colder. My gaze has shifted from softer plants to the char- and periwinkle-, cardboard- and putty-colored trees. Through bare canopy, I see how forest connects to forest in Redding's extensive open space.

I print a list of preserves so I can think about where we'll place the new signs that Redding Land Trust is designing. I drive a jagged circuit, noting how pretty the winter pond is at Lonetown and Putnam Park Roads, stopping

short to marvel at the view from John Todd Way, over Route 53, to Thomas Mountain. I revisit the mini trail that trustee Kevin has cut from the West Redding Post Office to the Saugatuck River under huge tulip trees, in the old Brookside Park.

Down Simpaug Turnpike, I pull into Poliak Pond Preserve. The golden field is spotted with dark, bronzy junipers. I drive past McCormack Preserve, a huge property stretching into Danbury,

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Zoners approve special permit for temporary museum

By Rocco Valluzzo

By a 3-2 margin, the Zoning Commission approved a special permit for a temporary museum at 4 Fox Run Road at its regular meeting immediately following a public hearing on Wednesday, January 10.

Steven Mandel, CEO and president of Aspire One Communications of Cornwall, NY, plans to use a house owned by Ryan Fletcher that is currently under construction as a site for a temporary museum for 12 days over a 17-day period from September 20 through October 6 once construction is complete. During that time, the house will showcase the work of interior designers.

Operations will be limited to September 20-22, September 26-29, and October 2-6. All visitors must drive to a fixed location off-site and will be transported to the property in a passenger van no larger than a UPS, Fedex, or Amazon delivery truck. There will be one van that comes every 30 minutes from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. on weekdays and from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. on weekends.

No food will be served and all visitors must purchase tickets, which will not be sold on-site. Vans will enter from Umpawaug Road and depart from Diamond Hill Road, and organizers will provide traffic monitors at points of entry and egress.

The ticket price of \$60 defrays the cost of the show and a portion of the sale will be donated to the Boys & Girls Club of Redding-Easton, which has already received a donation of \$25,000 from Aspire.

"Show houses for us are never for profit," said Mandel. "The only way we profit from a show house is exposure to the community that we serve. We don't take a dime from the proceeds."

Following discussion at its November 28 meeting, the Planning Commission found the proposed use of the property was not in keeping with the Town Plan of Conservation and Development, in that the use conflicts with the plan's support of maintaining Redding's rural character. The Commission also questioned the proposed use as a museum, finding that it did not fit within the historical and cultural resources articulated in the Town Plan and finding that the proposal was instead for commercial use.

The Planning Commission also decided that the hourly bus traffic proposed by the applicant is not in keeping within the Town Plan, especially given that Umpawaug Road is a Town-designated Scenic Road. Lastly, the Commission

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LEGAL NOTICES

THE SECOND INSTALLMENT OF REAL ESTATE and PERSONAL PROPERTY AND 1st Installment SUPPLEMENTAL MOTOR VEHICLE TAXES ON THE GRAND LIST OF OCTOBER 1, 2022, IS DUE AND PAYABLE JANUARY 1, 2024.

TAXES DUE JANUARY 1, 2024, MUST BE POSTMARKED OR PAID ONLINE, NO LATER THAN FEBRUARY 1, 2024, TO AVOID PENALTY. TAXES ARE DELINQUENT FEBRUARY 2.

Payments postmarked, Paid in Person or Paid online, on or after February 2, 2024, are delinquent and will carry an interest penalty. Interest is charged at the rate of Eighteen (18%) percent annually or one and one-half (1.5%) percent per month, from the January 1, 2024, due date.

Supplemental Motor Vehicle Taxes are due in full January 1, 2024. Failure to make payment in accordance with the above will result in suspension of registration privileges in addition to the interest charges. Delinquent Motor Vehicle Taxes must be paid in cash, certified check, money order or online by credit card, to obtain a registration clearance.

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

Oldest outstanding taxes must be paid prior to paying current taxes. Taxes can be paid or viewed at www.townofreddingct.org. Credit card payments are not accepted in person at the Tax Office. You may call (866) 923-8245 to make a credit/debit card payment.

Town Hall hours may vary due to weather conditions. However, due dates do not. Verify the Town Hall is open and the department you need is open before coming in person. The Town Hall is closed on Fridays. We are located at 100 Hill Rd, Redding, CT; Telephone: 203 938-2706. ■

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

A certified list of 34 Democratic party-endorsed candidates for the Town of Redding for election as Members of the Town Committee At-Large is on file in my office at 100 Hill Road, Redding, CT, and copies are available for public distribution. The number of Town Committee Members to be elected under party rules is 40.

A Primary will be held March 5, 2024, if 10 candidacies (which is at least 25% of the number of town committee members to be elected by such party in the municipality) are filed in accordance with §§9-382 to 9-450, inclusive, of the General Statutes, by persons other than party-endorsed candidates, not later than 4:00

p.m. of January 31, 2024, provided the number of such candidacies plus the number of endorsed candidates, exceeds the number of town committee members to be elected. (If the number of opposing candidacies filed is reduced to less than such 25%, no primary will be held.)

Petition forms, instructions, and information concerning the procedure for filing opposing candidacies may be obtained from Lisa Barto, Democratic Registrar of Voters, 100 Hill Road, Redding, CT. ■

*Michele R. Grande,
Town Clerk
January 17, 2024*

A certified list of 31 Republican party-endorsed candidates for the Town of Redding for election as Members of the Town Committee At-Large is on file in my office at 100 Hill Road, Redding, CT, and copies are available for public distribution. The number of Town Committee Members to be elected under party rules is 31.

A Primary will be held March 5, 2024, if 8 candidacies (which is at least 25% of the number of town committee members to be elected by such party in the municipality) are filed in accordance with §§9-382 to 9-450, inclusive, of the General Statutes, by persons other than party-endorsed candidates, not later than 4:00 p.m. of January

31, 2024, provided the number of such candidacies plus the number of endorsed candidates, exceeds the number of town committee members to be elected. (If the number of opposing candidacies filed is reduced to less than such 25%, no primary will be held.)

Petition forms, instructions, and information concerning the procedure for filing opposing candidacies may be obtained from: Michele Meschi, Republican Registrar of Voters, 100 Hill Road, Redding, CT. ■

*Michele R. Grande,
Town Clerk
January 17, 2024*

Pursuant to Section 7-394 (1976) Revision of the CT General Statutes, notice is hereby given to the Legal Voters and Taxpayers of the Town of Redding, that the Annual Audit of Redding Fire District No. 1 for the fiscal year

ended June 30, 2023 is on file in the office of the Town Clerk for public inspection. ■

*Michele R. Grande,
Town Clerk
January 18, 2024*

At the regularly scheduled meeting of the Zoning Commission held on January 10, 2024 at 7:30 p.m. in person the commission reached the following decision:

1. Application #23-14Z – 4 Fox Run Road (Assessor's Map and Lot #28-34) – Owner: Ryan Fletcher: Agent Donnelly, McNamara & Gustafson P.C. 150 Danbury Road, Ridgefield,, CT 06877 – In accordance with Redding Zoning Regulations Sec-

tion 4.2.3 (f) request for a Special Use Permit for a Temporary Museum on the premises for a period of one (1) month Sept. 20th - Sept. 22nd, Sept. 26th – 29th and Oct. 2nd – 6th 2024. **Approved with conditions.** ■

*Matt Lecher
Chairman, Redding Zoning
Commission*

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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

To the Editor,

Unfortunately, I was unable to attend the December 13 meeting of the Zoning Commission regarding a special use permit for 4 Fox Run Road.

I believe I may have the status of longest resident on Fox Run Road, and in the 45 years I have lived here, this is the first time it is regrettable.

Although this is not the permit issue, 4 Fox Run Road has already caused an extremely dangerous situation with their fencing blocking the visibility when entering Umpawaug Road. It does beg the question how this transgression was allowed when many of the residents of Fox Run voiced concern across boards and to the police department.

Requesting a special use permit for a museum only benefits the Fletchers. If Mr. Fletcher wants to showcase appliances and the interiors, I suggest he build out his showcase in his warehouse on Route 7.

The Fletchers turning 4 Fox Run into a "non-profit" is an opportunity to write off the construction, and in addition receive free appliances, fixtures, etc. This is a vanity project without benefit to the community. Mr. Fletcher is turning his private home build into a commercial enterprise for his benefit. Fox Run Road is not commercially zoned. As to the tax law, it is illegal not to provide public benefit.

Furthermore, if The Fletchers and Aspire are so wealthy, they can show their generosity by making a donation to the Redding Boys and Girl Club or, better yet, since he is in construction business, perhaps he would like to build a new clubhouse and showcase his designs there with no strings attached. The Town should not turn a blind eye and sanction a quid pro quo.

I strongly oppose this application for museum status being sanctioned by the Zoning Commission. ■

*Marguerite Mains
Fox Run Road*

To the Editor,

Why do people around Redding and other areas "tailgate?"

My 80-year-old aunt drove to my house in Redding last December for the first time. Unfortunately, she got a late start and arrived in the area at night. She ultimately called me to come get her at the Redding Country Club parking lot because she was so scared of the "tailgaters."

What are tailgaters? These are drivers that come obnoxiously close to the cars in front of them. My parents taught me to allow AT LEAST two car lengths between your car and the car in front of you.

I constantly observe cars within one car length around Redding and other areas. This situation is particularly bad at night when the tailgater's lights reflect off the rearview mirror and into your face.

I often question this tailgating approach to driving. I partly understand it if I am the only car in front of the tailgater. In that case, I will try to pull over safely and let the tailgater move ahead of me and use them as a rabbit (let them go fast and be at risk of a speeding ticket). More often though, someone tailgates me when there are multiple cars in front of me! This type of driving is just plain dangerous and not strategic.

Can we all work together to stop the tailgating? ■

*Tate Sullivan
Newtown Turnpike
Redding resident and parent of middle school student*

To the Editor,

We would like to thank the writer of a letter to the editor published on January 11, 2024 who posed a number of questions about the Redding Historical Society. It affords us an opportunity to provide some exciting preservation and education developments that are underway and planned for 2024.

- The newly refurbished Lonetown Farmhouse and Museum will be open at regular hours beginning in March. This past summer and fall we reassessed our collections and archives creating new displays. From last year's successful Rock 'n Roots fundraising event, the Society met needed funding to repaint much of the interior farmhouse/museum to complete this preservation project.
- A student history prize will be awarded in 2024. The annual openhouse at Umpawaug Schoolhouse, a popular event with young and old, will take place this November.
- The Society's document archives accumulated over many years are being reorganized, indexed, and will be digitized.
- A 2024 Lecture Series including authors and other experts on historical figures, events, and items of interest will launch in the spring.
- Restoration work on the Zalmon Read Barn will begin in Spring 2024. Thanks to a positive vote from Redding residents, an ARPA award will cover partial restoration work for this historical structure. The Society will launch a fundraising campaign to complete this restoration, preserving this historic landmark for future use by the Society as an event venue and tool museum.

The Redding Historical Society will continue its long tradition of preservation and advocacy of three significant landmarks in Redding: the Lonetown Farm & Museum, the Zalmon Read Barn, and the Umpawaug Schoolhouse. The initiation of the 1714 Guild renews the Society's commitment of advocacy for preservation of historically significant homes and landmarks in Redding.

We take this opportunity to invite anyone interested in Redding's history, its historic structures, and heritage to join the Redding Historical Society as members. Your membership donations help the Society meet its goals of preservation of Redding history. We can be contacted by e-mail: info@reddinghistory.org or at P.O. Box 1023, Redding, CT 06875 or phone: 203 938-9095. ■

*Bert Webbe
Director of Communications, Redding Historical Society*

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A look at some CT laws taking effect in early 2024

By Gabby DeBenedictis

A slate of new laws is being implemented at the beginning of 2024, ranging from a minimum wage increase and income tax cut to early voting requirements and expanded access to contraception. Here's a look at some of the laws that go into effect early this year.

Minimum wage increase

Connecticut's minimum wage was raised from \$15 to \$15.69 on January 1, the result of a 2019 law that requires the state to automatically raise its minimum wage each year based on the Employment Cost Index, a measure of wage growth calculated by the federal Bureau of Labor Statistics. The annual automatic raises took effect January 1, following a series of \$1 minimum wage increases from 2019 to 2023.

10-cent bottle and can deposit

Bottles and cans sold in Connecticut now carry a 10-cent deposit, redeemable at designated locations. Consumers pay the 10 cents when they buy the beverage and get the money back upon returning its container.

The deposit and return amount had previously been five cents, and retailers can continue to sell bottles labeled with a five-cent deposit that they procured prior to the January 1 deposit increase. Consumers can redeem those empties for 10 cents.

Some retailers have self-service machines — known as reverse vending machines (RVMs) — that receive empty bottles. As of January 1, consumers are limited to redeeming 240 empties in an

RVM at a time.

The deposit increase was part of a 2021 law that also expanded the types of bottles and cans that qualify for the deposit and return.

Pharmacists can prescribe birth control

Pharmacists in Connecticut can now prescribe hormonal and emergency contraception, meaning patients are no longer required to visit their doctor for a prescription. Pharmacists who wish to prescribe contraceptives must undergo new training.

Early voting

Beginning April 1, Connecticut municipalities will be required to offer 14 days of early voting for general elections, as well as seven days for state and local primaries and four days for special elections and presidential primaries.

Voters opened the door to early voting in fall 2022 by allowing an amendment to the state constitution, which had previously limited in-person voting to Election Day. Following that referendum, lawmakers passed the early voting measure last spring.

The law initially required municipalities to offer early voting for all elections held after January 1, but legislators changed the cutoff date to April 1. Jillian Hirst, Press Secretary at Connecticut's Secretary of the State's Office, said the first election to implement early voting will be the presidential preference primary on April 2.

That means voters who cast their ballots in Bridgeport's new

Democratic primary election and West Haven's special election, both scheduled for January 23, cannot vote in-person early.

Income tax cut

The tax rate imposed on the first \$10,000 earned by singles and the first \$20,000 earned by couples has dropped from 3% to 2%, and the rate imposed on the next \$40,000 earned by singles and the next \$80,000 by couples dropped from 5% to 4.5%.

Additionally, the income threshold for a tax exemption on pension and annuity earnings has been raised. Those earnings will continue to be 100% exempt for single filers whose total adjusted gross (AGI) income is less than \$75,000 and for couples whose total AGI is less than \$100,000. But beginning in the 2024 tax year, singles making between \$75,000 and \$100,000 and couples earning between \$100,000 and \$150,000 will qualify for an exemption as well — though they will receive a partial exemption, which shrinks gradually as income increases. Details on those exemptions can be found in the table below.

General pension and annuity, IRA exemption income thresholds

The tax exemptions in the table below will take effect beginning with the 2024 tax year. ■

This article was originally published in CT Mirror

Single, Married Filing Separately, or Head of Household	Married Filing Jointly	Percent Deducted
Under \$75,000	Under \$100,000	100.0%
\$75,000-\$77,499	\$100,000-\$104,999	85.0%
\$77,500-\$79,999	\$105,000-\$109,999	70.0%
\$80,000-\$82,499	\$110,000-\$114,999	55.0%
\$82,500-\$84,999	\$115,000-\$119,999	40.0%
\$85,000-\$87,499	\$120,000-\$124,999	25.0%
\$87,500-\$89,999	\$125,000-\$129,999	10.0%
\$90,000-\$94,999	\$130,000-\$139,999	5.0%
\$95,000-\$99,999	\$140,000-\$149,999	2.5%
\$100,000 or more	\$150,000 or more	0.0%

Table: Gabby DeBenedictis/CT Mirror
Source: Connecticut Office of Legislative Research

Two "vehicle vs. tree" crashes result in serious injuries

By Donna Christopher



Photo provided by Redding Fire and EMS Company 1

January 16, 2024 – Church Hill Road

Police and Redding Fire & EMS Co. 1 responded to a 911 call on Tuesday, January 16 at 9:00 a.m. where a first-arriving firefighter identified a box truck vs. tree crash on Church Hill Road with one injured occupant trapped in the vehicle. At the time of the 911 call, it was reported that one vehicle was involved, and the operator was injured, according to Captain Tim Succi of the Redding Police Department.

The driver was promptly extricated and treated on scene by emergency medical services, and transported to a local hospital with trauma alert, according to the Fire Department's press communications. Later in the day, the driver was transported to Yale New Haven Hospital for further treatment, according to police.

The first responders were also assisted by the West Redding Volunteer Fire Department, the Redding-Bethel Paramedic, and the Redding Highway Department. Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection and Aquarion Water Company were both notified due to diesel fuel being spilled from the truck.

The box truck was traveling eastbound on Church Hill Road. As the vehicle rounded a downhill curve, it slid on the snow-covered roadway and traveled off the right side of the road where it struck a tree, according to the initial investigation.

The weather conditions, which included a mix of snow and freezing rain, were a major factor in this crash, according to police. The investigation was still ongoing the next day, January 17.

January 21, 2024 – Lonetown Road

Another 911 call was made at approximately 2:14 am on Sunday, January 21, 2024, from a passenger in a vehicle which was involved in a motor vehicle crash on Lonetown Road. The caller reported that the vehicle struck a tree, and he was trapped in the passenger front seat of the vehicle, according to a release from Redding Police Department.

Fire, EMS, and police were all immediately dispatched to the scene. The front seat passenger was trapped in the vehicle, which required extrication by the Fire Department. Both operator and passenger were transported to Danbury Hospital. The passenger sustained serious injuries, and the operator was still being evaluated.

The initial on-scene investigation showed the vehicle was traveling northbound on Lonetown Road. As the vehicle rounded a curve, it continued straight, traveled off the right side of the road, where it struck a tree. The investigation is ongoing by the Redding Police Department's crash investigation team. ■

UConn offers glimpse of development for Wire Mill site

By Rocco Valluzzo

A re-use assessment report by the University of Connecticut's Technical Assistance to Brownfields (TAB) program is providing an indication of what future development of the former Gilbert & Bennett Wire Mill property in Georgetown could look like.

Available at no cost to the Town, the report has produced renderings of housing and other potential uses and suggestions for the former factory buildings.

According to Gilbert and Bennett Wire Mill Committee Chair Amy Atamian, Redding applied to the program to help envision what could possibly be done on the site. Finding that the project was too complex to complete during the summer session, the TAB program extended the report through the fall and into the coming spring semester.

"It's an exercise to see what's a potential use of the site," said Atamian at a Committee meeting on January 11. "The idea was focused on municipal-type uses to give us some guidance on some potential ideas for the site. It's a good example of a residential-type option with some other types of uses, some of which I haven't thought of. There's a variety of things that can happen."

Student Dominic Anziano provided an update on the West Pond area, which could consist of 13 buildings and 26 units of housing. Each unit would be about 1200 square feet with these figures based on the recommendation of 600-square-feet-per-person-in-household. Each unit would have two parking spaces.

The OMS area could consist of apartments. There could also be 12 units here, and each unit would be about 1,200 square feet.

This calculation was also based on the household size square footage recommendation. Each unit also could have two parking spaces. The parking area would also provide access to the factory pond.

Anziano added there are other possibilities that could be looked at for redeveloping the mill center area. He provided, as an example, the historic Pawtucket Mill, which was redeveloped in 2013 to house a greenhouse building that showcases a variety of plants. He felt something like this would work in the Sawtooth Building with its windows and natural light.

"The chapel building — it seems almost perfect, given its name — could be a wedding venue," he said. "It provides open light as well as high ceilings. The 1914 building would also be a great place to incorporate a waterfall side restaurant with the potential for more outdoor seating towards the area immediately above the dam wall. Another possible example would be a brewery."

TAB Program Director Marisa Chrysochoou said the traffic study is still pending and should be completed this semester.

Committee member Robert Dean advised against using Redding's existing zoning parameters as a basis for the Gilbert & Bennett property. As a guide, he suggested looking at the actual built density setback configurations in Georgetown village itself, particularly Portland Avenue and Church Street.

"This is a Town center," he said. "You don't have to go to a low-density suburban set of parameters. Think about what you as planners would like to see as the zoning parameters." ■

Park and Rec budget includes needs assessment, fee increases

By Rocco Valluzzo

To help justify a significant investment that will help individual residents and community groups, the Park and Recreation Department has included a recreational needs assessment in its proposed operating budget for the 2024-25 fiscal year.

The study, which is expected to cost \$80,000, would include all Town recreational facilities, such as buildings and fields.

"As you know, many of the sports in town that utilize our fields and buildings are run by outside organizations, and their need is our need," said Park and Recreation Director Rob Blick at a Board of Selectmen budget workshop on Friday, January 12. "I don't want any perception that this is going to favor Park and Rec."

According to the proposed budget, the Town needs additional space to satisfy the community's growing needs, especially with use of school facilities being uncertain. Currently, Extended Day programming is held in Redding Elementary School and is only guaranteed use of the cafeteria. Blick noted there are nine days a year in which the school needs use of that area in that time slot as well.

In addition to the proposed operating budget, the Department also has two upcoming capital items. One is the fence at the Community Garden on Lonetown Road, which is 20 years old and is starting to fall down. Replacing it would cost about \$36,000.

"It's time to replace it, and we've also got quite an extensive wait list to get into the Community Garden," said Blick. "Usually, we give out two to four plots a year when people don't renew them. During Covid, almost nobody gave up their plots."

The wait list is currently about 12 deep to get a plot for the season. The Community Garden currently has 23 plots, and Park and Recreation is hoping to increase its capacity by 50% or even doubling it.

"We think gardening is very

popular," said Blick. "People want to do it. We had to raise prices the last couple of years due to increased costs. The fence is just something we couldn't raise costs to do."

Doubling the size of the Community Garden, in addition to replacing the fence, may increase the Town's chances of receiving a state grant for the project. If Redding receives a grant, Blick hopes to purchase a pressurized storage tank at a cost of between \$9,000 and \$10,000. The tank could fill up at its own pace and take stress off the well, which is currently shared with the Redding Historical Society at the Lonetown Farmhouse next door.

Another capital item is the completion of the Redding Community Center walking path. According to the conditions of the Small Town Economic Assistance Program (STEAP) grant which was granted to help fund the project, Redding's share of the financing is 20% (about \$62,000).

Other budget drivers include rising wages. The current minimum wage of \$15.69 per hour for the Department's starting part-time staff is expected to increase again with the cost-of-living increase. Program supervisor wages need to be increased from \$21-\$23 per hour to \$23-\$25.

"The biggest challenge for us in our program is finding qualified supervisors," said Blick. "Next summer, every lifeguard is going to make \$16.50 (per hour)."

Participation fees have been proposed to increase in most program areas, such as basketball camp, extended day kindergarten, and for use of Topstone Park.

The Department has also added a \$13,000 line item for potential staff reorganization. A full-time position during the school year may move to year-round.

Given the limited time available during Friday's budget workshop, the Selectmen expressed that they hope to have a more in-depth discussion about the proposed budget at a future meeting. ■

SPORTS

Wildcats out-shoot Falcons

Girls basketball | By Rocco Valluzzo



Photo by Rocco Valluzzo

Sarah Ashgar scored six points for the Joel Barlow High girls varsity basketball team in its game against Bethel on Wednesday, January 17. Barlow lost 31-47.

The opportunities were definitely there for the Joel Barlow High girls varsity basketball team in its game against Bethel last week. The host Falcons managed plenty of shots on Wednesday, January 17; however, relatively few hit the mark in a 31-47 loss.

“We just didn’t finish,” said Barlow Head Coach Joe Carollo, whose team had many good looks at the basket. “You can’t beat a good team by missing that many shots.”

Despite shooting less than 30% from the field for the first quarter, the Falcons kept things close early in the night. The Wildcats were adept at shooting from the perimeter, sinking eight three-point shots on

the night, the first coming from Emma Hoedenpohl to give her team an early advantage.

Barlow had to wait until 3:22 remained in the first quarter to get on the scoreboard, as Avery Vanderburg sank a free throw to make it 5-1. It also marked the beginning of an 8-0 run for the hosts and a strong finish to the quarter.

Vanderburg followed with a field goal less than a minute later, and Barlow tied it up when Mia Tartaglia drove the lane for the score with 1:35 left. Fouled on the play, she added a free throw to give her team the lead and Vanderburg scored off an in-bounds pass down low with five seconds left to make it 8-5.

Bethel, however, did not wait long to answer, outscoring the Falcons by a better than 5-1 margin for the rest of the half. Aiden Gill’s free throw with 7:07 left in the half marked the beginning of an 11-0 scoring run that also featured three-pointers by Hoedenpohl, Summer Wish, and Hayden Chrezeinik. Mackenzie Sickinger’s free throw with 2:45 left stopped the run, but Barlow would trail 18-9 at the half.

Although the Falcons’ offense picked up a bit once the second half got underway, Bethel continued to pull further out of reach. A five-point run got Barlow within ten (26-16) with 4:34 left in the third quarter, only to have the visitors counter with eight of their own, capped off by another three-pointer by Wish as the Falcons eventually trailed 34-17 going into the final frame.

Offensively, the Falcons would save their best performance for the last quarter, helped in part by some accurate three-point shooting by Agnes Davis. Strong rebounding by Sarah Ashgar also helped, as the Falcons outscored their opponent 14-13 the rest of the night but ultimately came up short.

Davis led Barlow in scoring with nine points, all on three-pointers. Vanderburg was next with eight, and Tartaglia sank seven. Ashgar scored six, and Sickinger sank one free throw.

Now 5-6 overall, Barlow has already matched its wins total from last season. It still needs three more wins to qualify for the state tournament.

“We’re not where we want to be yet,” said Carollo. We have to get there soon.”

Barlow visits Immaculate in Danbury Thursday, January 25 and is at Newtown on Monday, January 29. Tip-off for both games is at 7:00 p.m. ■

Bobcats overpower Falcons

Wrestling | By Rocco Valluzzo

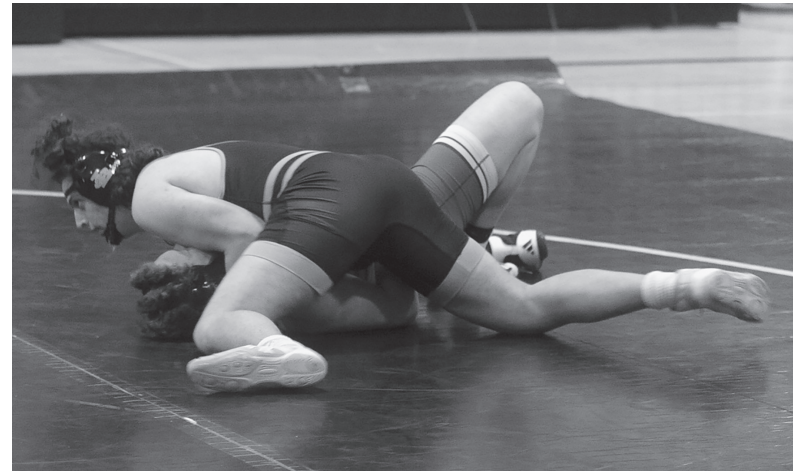


Photo by Rocco Valluzzo

Joel Barlow High’s Chad Pranzo pins Brookfield/Shepaug’s Logan Lavery in the 215-pound class at a wrestling match on Wednesday, January 17. Barlow came up short in a 21-54 loss.

It was a battle in most of the weight classes for the Joel Barlow High wrestling team in its match against Brookfield/Shepaug last week.

The host Falcons claimed victory in three of the 14 bouts on Wednesday, January 17 (as well as a double forfeit), putting them far short of catching the competition in a 21-54 loss.

The Bobcats dominated from the start, taking six of the first seven weight classes. The 106-pound match lasted 32 seconds before Brookfield/Shepaug’s Matt Bray pinned Ben Azzara.

Jake Hamlin’s 113-pound match against Brookfield/Shepaug’s Lucas Calemno was perhaps the closest of the night. The former managed several takedowns and escapes over three periods but came up short, 10-7.

At 120 pounds, the Bobcats’ Evan Gross pinned Kai Lee in 54 seconds. Neither side could produce an eligible wrestler at 136 pounds, resulting in a double forfeit.

Brookfield/Shepaug’s James Feather got the win at 132 pounds, pinning Ryan Knobb in 2:43. It was a similar result at 138 pounds, with the Bobcats’ Danny Carrozza

pinning Anthony Azzara in 31 seconds.

Another pin victory went to the Bobcats at 130 pounds, with Nate Smith beating Alex Kraiss late in the first period. Trailing 30-3 after seven matches, the Falcons got their first when Scott Romano took the 150-pound class by forfeit.

The Bobcats then picked up where they left off, getting the pin at 157 pounds when Kip Faison beat R.J. Gaspar in 18 seconds. Barlow followed with a forfeit win by Dimo Gallindo at 165 pounds.

With the Falcons having no wrestler at 175 pounds, Brookfield/Shepaug got the forfeit win. At 190 pounds, Barlow’s Dylan Cooke lasted until the second period before getting pinned by Trey Parker in 2:32.

One last win went to the Falcons at 215 pounds, when Chad Pranzo pinned Logan Lavery in 47 seconds. Ending the night with a win, the Bobcats took the 275-pound match by forfeit.

Now 1-4 overall, Barlow competes in the Brookfield Invitational on Saturday, January 27 at 9:30 p.m. and hosts Weston on Wednesday, February 1 at 6:00 p.m. ■

Falcons take fifth, eighth in opening race

Skiing | By Rocco Valluzzo

With respect to the weather, it was good timing for the Joel Barlow High ski teams in their most recent race at Mount Southington last Thursday, January 18.

The snowstorm two days earlier made for improved conditions when the Falcons took to the slopes in what would be their first race of the season. The Barlow boys faced some stiff competition early, as they placed fifth out of eight teams with a total time of 305.08 seconds.

Weston was first with 275.22. Wilton was second with 287.62, and Cheshire was third with 291.65.

Barlow’s fastest time came from Jack Gustavson. A combined 44.81 seconds after two runs put him fourth overall in a field of 112 skiers who finished the race.

Three Barlow skiers posted times within the span of less than two seconds. Taking 27th, Tom Colby had a 49.58, a tenth-of-a-second behind Cheshire’s Jack Lengyel.

Two would then place back-to-back, as Andrew D’Amaro was 33rd in 51.11 and Luke Mutuski was one spot later in 51.39.

It was a close finish for 42nd. Barlow’s Matt DeLuca edged Amity’s Michael Audie, both posting times of 53.23.

Completing the scoring for the Falcons, Sam Walker was 53rd in 54.96, edging Hand’s Cooper Burke by 0.01 seconds.

Also in the varsity race, Alex Dyar took 58th in 55.6. Another set of consecutive finishes came from Sebastian Cowles and Nate Dyar, the former taking 64th in 57.05 and the latter 65th in 57.75. In 69th was Barrett Commisso in 58.48.

The competition was even keener in the girls race. Finishing in 332.71, the Falcons were eighth out of nine teams.

Daniel Hand High School was the winner (292.68), followed by Wilton (301.71) and New Canaan

(314.94).

The Falcons had two skiers in the top 20. Ava Kulikowski led the way for her team in 48.58. Next came Helena Zima in 12th with a 50.43.

Third in the Barlow order and 31st overall, Lucille Zima clocked a 53.66. Gabby Boehlert was 47th in 55.56, just 0.02 seconds behind Lauralton Hall’s Lane Pinto.

In 66th was Na’ama Klein with a 61.45. Katharine Stowell completed the scoring for the Falcons, taking 70th in 63.03, just beating Cheshire’s Kaela Wethern, who had the same time.

Also in the varsity race, Hailey Watson took 82nd in 64.31, three places ahead of Sophie Peterson (65.31). In 103rd was Holly Landa in 84.13.

Barlow returns to Mount Southington on Thursday, January 25 for a race at 3:00 p.m. ■

Rough start for ice rink



Photo by Susan Clark

A few hours after the Park and Recreation Department announced the opening of its annual ice rink at the Redding Community Center on Friday, January 19, they issued a notice that it wasn’t safe to use and closed it again. The Department noted that it had observed people using the rink on two to three occasions the week prior before it had been officially opened, and those sections that had been skated upon had frozen chunks of ice that weren’t permitting a thick layer of ice to form. By Sunday morning, the rink was again safe to use and re-opened, though a warm front this week will likely force closure again until further notice. Those wishing to use the rink should call the cancellation line (203) 938-5036 extension 3 to check the rink’s status.

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Board of Education kicks off 2024-25 budget planning By Anne Young Albanese

The Redding Board of Education has started its budgeting process for the 2024-25 fiscal year for the Redding school district, which includes John Read Middle School (JRMS) and Redding Elementary School (RES). They held their first budget workshop on Thursday, January 18, presenting a preliminary introduction to the plans for the school year starting in August.

The budget will cover the entire 2024-2025 school year. Budgeting is a complicated process starting with budget requests from teachers that are submitted to RES Principal Melissa Labroschiano and JRMS Principal Jennifer Desmarais. Once the principals from both schools submit their requests, these budgets are reviewed and then edited by the Superintendent, Dr. Jason McKinnon. The preliminary budgets are then presented to the Board of Education by Dr. McKinnon. While the numbers are far from final, the January 18 presentation and workshop provided a glimpse into the district's priorities for the upcoming year.

The total proposed budget is currently \$25,687,643, which represents an increase of 4.65% from the 2023-24 fiscal year. The budget includes all costs for JRMS and RES, as well as Redding's contribution to the tri-district costs that are shared between the three school districts: Redding, Easton, and Region 9. Medical insurance, where costs have increased by 11%; Redding certified and non-certified staff, where costs have increased 4.18% and 6.52% respectively; electricity, where costs have increased 10%; and transportation, where costs have increased by close to 7%, are the main drivers for this increase.

Once again, this year Dr. McKinnon and the Redding schools are developing a budget to help accomplish six priorities within their strategic plan. These include:

1. High quality teaching and learning

2. Developing a culture that promotes a nurturing and welcoming climate and deeper, more engaged learning

3. Improving school facilities to ensure student safety, long-term sustainability, and enhance student learning

4. Meeting the needs of all learners

5. Developing a K-12 portrait of a graduate that emphasizes real-world experiences and innovative learning

6. Promoting effective operations and skillful staff

The overall budget is further broken down into eight different cost centers. The largest percentage of the budget is for districtwide expenses. The proposed contribution is \$6,707,031 which is 26.1% of the school budget. This includes transportation, medical insurance, utilities, and legal services. This proposal is an increase of 6.85% from last year, which comes mainly from cost increases in transportation, medical insurance, and legal services. While electricity has increased in cost, fuel oil is decreasing.

The second largest cost center is pupil personnel services. The proposed total is \$6,152,474 which is 23.9% of the total budget. This cost center includes salaries and insurance for some administrators, some educators, some paraprofessionals, and tuition and outplacement for special education students that are better served outside of the local school district. Also included are mental health professionals and preschool teachers. The total is a decrease of 1.49% from last year.

The next largest cost center is RES. The total proposal is \$5,664,062, which is 22% of the overall budget. RES expenses include teachers and paraprofessionals that aren't covered by the pupil personnel

services and healthcare providers within the school. This proposal is an increase of 5.99% from last year. The addition of a kindergarten and a first-grade teacher to add one more section to each grade level and the addition of a part-time nurse have increased costs. This is offset partially by four student cuts in the Open Choice program and a decrease in kindergarten paraprofessionals.

After RES, the next largest segment of total expenditures is JRMS. The total proposed budget is \$5,000,289 which is 19.4% of the total school district budget. Expenses that fall into this category include educators, paraprofessionals, dues and fees, instructional supplies, furniture, and repairs. This estimate shows a percentage increase of 4.57%. The key budget drivers here include an additional fifth grade teacher, additional instructional paraprofessionals, dues and fees for various subscriptions, the addition of an intern, a raise in prices for instructional materials, and the repair of eighth-grade science chairs and tables.

A much smaller share of the budget is for the central office, where the administrators that are shared between Redding, Easton, and Region 9 work. The proposed budget for the central office is \$776,423, which is 3% of the total budget. This proposal represents a 6% increase from last year and includes a new human resources manager and the position transition. Central office is currently exploring decreasing the position of director of digital learning to a technology integration manager.

Another cost center is technology. The proposed budget is \$737,926, which makes up 2.9% of the total budget. This includes management and software services, as well as hardware, and software for the Redding school district. This is up 30.84% from last year because of the need to purchase laptops for RES teachers

and the development of a STEM lab at JRMS.

The seventh cost center is facilities. The proposed budget is \$608,539 and makes up 2.4% of the total budget. This includes all cleaning and repair services and is up 19.98%. The elements contributing to this increase include more costly maintenance contracts, power washing the exterior of JRMS, disposal services, an increase in the cost of supplies, and a potential paving project. The paving project may be removed from the Redding school district budget and funded through money available at the end of the year or as a capital project.

Finally, the smallest cost

center is curriculum and instruction. The proposed budget is \$66,290 and makes up 0.3% of the budget. This includes all personnel and supplies to develop and improve the schools' curriculum. This budget has decreased by 45.8%. The school district is proposing the removal of a kindergarten through eighth-grade math coordinator. In addition, the need for professional services and professional texts has decreased.

Redding residents interested in following the progress of budget planning should visit sites.google.com/er9.org/redding-budget/home. The site includes the entire proposed 2024-25 budget, a schedule of upcoming meetings, and an opportunity to submit questions about the budget. ■

Zoners approve special permit for temporary museum / continued from page 1

expressed concern that granting a permit for the proposed use would set a precedent for other long-term events in residential zones with questionable benefit to the community. A negative referral was then sent to the Zoning Commission.

The Planning Commission later received a request by Robert Jewell, the applicant's attorney, to reopen discussion and reconsider the negative referral at its January 9 meeting. The vote that followed ended in a tie, so the original negative referral stood.

"The only thing I think would become precedential is the fact that we've recognized that this

might be a museum use, which gives somebody the recommendation or the ability to make that argument before you," said Jewell. "If this became a precedent and somebody wanted to do this on an annual basis at a different house each time, either specifically for the Boys and Girls Club or not, I think that's a good precedent."

Land Use Director Aimee Pardee said she would consult Town counsel to determine whether Redding's zoning regulations require a super majority (4-1) vote by the Zoning Commission to overturn a negative referral by the Planning Commission. She confirmed on Tuesday, January 23 a super majority was not needed and the vote would stand. ■



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REMEMBERING REDDING

Winter travel in 1950 | By Bruce Nelson



Taking snow chains on and off car tires was a frequent task during the winter in the 1950s.

Looking back just seventy-five years, Redding's winter travel landscape was much different than it is today.

Studying historical records, it is surprising to see there is nothing that indicates consistently higher annual amounts of snow during the middle of the 20th century than we see today; but then again, society wasn't able to clear the snow away as quickly as we can now. To start with, Redding's highway crew was hard pressed to keep the roads clear during any storm with accumulating snow, having only four dump trucks equipped with plows and a measly three sand spreaders at their disposal. In 1950, the Town maintained just under seventy miles of roads, of which only forty-six miles were hard surfaced. Many of Redding's unimproved roads weren't plowed at all until after the snow stopped falling.

An unusually large snowfall sometimes saw the Town's Allis-Chalmers road-grader put into winter action to help clear some of the roads. That machine was primarily used to grade and level Redding's nearly twenty miles of unimproved roads each spring after the mud dried. During winter storms, the unlucky operator had to sit in the open air. The only heat generated by that gangly machine emanated from the engine that sat behind him, offering him no comfort at all.

Without the widespread use of chemicals to melt the snow, most roads quickly became caked with frozen snow and ice that lasted at least until the daytime temperatures rose above the freezing mark, which in many instances meant a week or more. Sand was used rather sparingly, normally only spread at intersections and on the hills. In 1950, Redding's total expenditure for snow removal was \$4,884. Prior to 1948, snow removal wasn't even listed as a separate item in the Town's budget!

To be fair, it should be noted that the State managed more roads in Redding in the 1950s than it does today – over 22 miles worth. In addition to the roads the State maintains still today, Cross Highway, Meeker Hill Road, and a good deal of both Newtown Turnpike and Umpawaug Road were all owned and maintained by Connecticut during those years. If you've ever wondered why some of those roads are considerably wider than most of the others in town, that is the reason. During the early part of the 20th century, the State built their highways to rigid specifications, while the Town simply managed roads that had evolved over the years from wagon trails, only making improvements out of absolute necessity.

Redding didn't pave its roads seventy-five years ago, it tarred them. During the summer, thick black petroleum was heated in a tank on the back of a large truck and then spread through a series of nozzles along a horizontal bar that hung close to the road surface. Dump trucks would follow behind, spreading copious amounts of sand that would mix with the hot tar to form a permanently hard road surface once it was traveled on. The result was far from a perfectly smooth surface, so when winter came and it needed to be plowed, there were often ruts and hollows that the plow missed. In addition,

Town roads seldom had drains, so any standing water became an annoying problem as it froze.

Vehicles of that era were not the all-wheel-drive models we are so accustomed to driving today. Pre-1957, there were only two commercially built 4-wheel-drive pickup trucks on the market – one built by Dodge, and the other by International Harvester. Willys sold some 4-wheel-drive Jeeps as early as 1949, but they were so under-powered and harsh riding, that they had very few takers. Passenger cars of the day were exclusively rear-wheel drive.

Snow tires didn't become widely available until 1952 when Goodyear introduced its "Suburbanite" cleated tread. Even then, the added cost of buying extra tires and/or rims prevented many families from using them.

Chains were the order of the day for almost everyone. Difficult to install and then properly adjust so that they would not come loose and bang against the wheel wells, they nonetheless were used by the majority of the population who needed to travel on Redding's roads between late November and early April. The problem was that they couldn't be driven very far on dry pavement, so that meant taking them on and off the wheels on a rather frequent basis. Getting dirty and wet often was the norm for many drivers.

In 1950, there were only a couple of options for clearing the driveway of the family home. There were no commercially available snowblowers yet. Toro introduced their "Snowhound", the first mass-marketed residential snowblower, in 1953. Unlike the powerful machines available today, the Toro couldn't handle more than a foot of powdery snow, and it only cleared a maximum of 17 inches on each pass.

Finding a landscaper with a 4-wheel drive pickup and a plow would have been extremely rare. A few may have used surplus WWII Army Jeeps, but the plows of that era were usually just the up-and-down variety. Angling a plow generally meant getting out of the vehicle, pulling a steel pin, and manually swinging the blade from side to side to select the proper angle, and then reinstalling the pin to hold the blade in place.

The traditional method of snow removal from a rural driveway generally required a strong back, a healthy heart, and a snow shovel. If the driveway was flat, clearing the snowbank deposited by the Town plow was often enough to allow the family car to get off the road and at least partway to the house.

Ambitious kids in the 1950s often earned a fair amount of their spending money by shoveling out their neighbors. Parents of these would-be entrepreneurs needed to be extra vigilant to make certain that both their snow shovel and its operator cleared the family walks and driveway before heading off the property to earn some cash.

Something most people today will have a difficult time grasping is the fact that school usually remained in session even when the roads were covered in snow. In snowy weather, the rear wheels of the school buses were always chained-up before the buses headed out to pick up the children. In 1950, Redding only had four school buses to pick up and deliver the entire contingency of kids



Redding's Allis-Chalmers grader vehicle was brought out to help clear the roads after particularly heavy snowfalls.

attending grades one through eight at Redding Elementary and the Hill School – which was still needed to accommodate the sudden explosion of toddlers during the early baby boomer years.

Four buses resulted in some long runs, even in ideal conditions. But unlike today, children were often required to walk long distances to meet at their assigned bus stops. Many of those stops had between 10 and 15 kids waiting to be picked up. Some of the children at the stop at the bottom of Meeker Hill had to walk in excess of a mile before they caught the bus to school. Nobody froze to death, because everybody was sensibly dressed to survive the elements – heavy coats, woolen hats and mittens, and always a pair of rubber boots covering the shoes. However, unless the snow had started late in the afternoon or early evening of the previous day, school was seldom cancelled. Delayed openings occurred naturally whenever more than one bus was late in getting to school; they were never planned and announced in advance.

There were also fewer accidents than one might imagine. First, there were far fewer cars on the road, since most families only owned one vehicle, and in many cases, only one member of the household had a license to drive. Second, since most people who lived in Redding during the winter months had grown up here, the vast majority of them had been instilled with enough common sense to install their tire chains before venturing out onto a snow and ice-covered road. Those who didn't were soon on foot after their car became stuck in a snowbank or couldn't make it up a hill. For most folks, experiencing that misery just once was more than enough to make them change their ways. If you lived in New England, you were accustomed to dealing with the harsh winters, so adjustments were made, and life went on despite the weather.

Today, municipalities have the equipment to keep most of the roads in passable condition in anything short of a full-blown blizzard. Roads are down to bare pavement within hours, not days or weeks. Homeowners either have a good snowblower, a small tractor with a plow, or a contract with a capable landscaper who likely can move more snow with his one-ton 4-wheel-drive pickup fitted with an eight-foot hydraulic V-plow than any one of Redding's late 1940s Mack dump trucks could in 1950.

Our personal vehicles are mostly all-wheel drive with heated seats and steering wheels. Our anti-lock brakes prevent us from skidding and allow us to steer even under heavy braking on slippery roads. Our remote starters allow those who don't garage their vehicle to warm up the interior and defrost the glass without even leaving the comfort of their house. No one must get up early to put the chains on the car.

Yet today, we close businesses and schools with the mere forecast of anything more than a couple of inches of snow. Schools are regularly delayed even if the roads are dry, but it's colder than normal, and the kids catch the bus in front of their house rather than a half-mile away at some randomly designated bus stop. While erring on the side of caution is probably the wise thing to do, our parents and grandparents would surely shake their heads and wonder how we became so soft. I know that I do. ■

Bruce Nelson is Co-Historian for the Town of Redding

OBITUARY

Gail Nicholas Schneider 1938 – 2024



Gail Nicholas Schneider died peacefully at her home in Wilton, Connecticut on January 6, 2024. She was born in Los Angeles, California, in 1938, the second of four children of William Howard Nich-

olas and Elnora Whitney Nicholas. In good health till the end of her nearly 86 years, she is survived by her companion Frank Mabley; by her four children: Whitney, Justin, Tracy and Stuart; by her nine grandchildren; and by her siblings Ruth and Whitney.

Throughout her life, Gail touched many people. She was a dreamer and a free spirit who loved the arts, music and the natural world. She will be deeply missed by her family and many friends.

For more details and information on her memorial service, please go to: boutonfuneralhome.com/obituary/gail-schneider ■

Film review: Maestro of inner worlds | By Shannon Woolfe



Photo courtesy of Netflix
Bradley Cooper as Leonard Bernstein in *Maestro*

There were exactly two records I played as a child 'til the grooves wore away, 'til the needle just slid across the vinyl when you set it down, no more sound would they produce. The first was Walt Disney's *Jungle Book* and the second was Leonard Bernstein's *The Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra*, which included Prokofiev's "Peter and The Wolf". I never tired of its album cover, a full animal kingdom orchestra. Mr. Bernstein's voice became a friend to me, and because of him and the story, the oboe (the duck) and the French horn (the wolf) remain my favorite instruments.

Fifty years later, *Maestro* has rekindled my love for Mr. Bernstein. While I was listening to records in my room in our little house on a hill in Fairfield County, Mr. Bernstein, his wife Felicia, and their children were just a few miles away. Fairfield County has been home to so many celebrated artists in the past couple of centuries and it has inspired novels, films, and plays. This is this very thing that draws me to films such as *Maestro*, the glimpse of home, and a window to a unique past.

Maestro lived up to all my expectations. I walked into *Maestro* armed with my admiration of Bernstein, Aaron Copeland, Jerome Robbins, 20th century art, and thankfully, a listen to David Remnick's enlightening interview with Bradley Cooper on *The New Yorker's* Radio Hour. Cooper's portrayal of Bernstein is more than a role – making this film was a profound obsession, a journey of six or seven years.

"Life is in color, but black and white is more realistic," said American director and screenwriter Sam Fuller, and so it goes with *Maestro*. The film opens in color, 70-something Bernstein leaning over the piano, television cameras filming him in his living room; he speaks of Felicia's ghost roaming their house and suddenly, everything goes to black, with only a square outline of light – is it a Rothko? No, it's the shade pulled in 27-year-old Bernstein's studio apartment in New York City. A phone rings, Bernstein is just a shadow in the corner. His big break has arrived, the shade goes up, and this beautiful young man seizes the light. The operatic staging instantly takes you by the

hand, you are in his world now, the inner world of a very public figure.

But if you are expecting Lenny to be the focus, you are in for a surprise. This is the story of Lenny and Felicia, slightly star-crossed lovers who will teach us about marriage, acceptance, sacrifice, and tragedy. If you are game, look at this film as something larger than a biopic about the first American conductor of note – it's a love story. It traverses a treacherous territory that so many of us were witness to in that time, the taboos of homosexuals living outwardly in the 20th century. Lenny and Felicia personify the arrangement that so many couples chose and endured during that time. And yet, their love is so apparent and true, something I think that is unexpected but shouldn't be. Their marriage isn't a lie really, they truly adore one another, and their travails, arguments, and tragedies are no different from heterosexual couples. Some may see Felicia's acceptance and sacrifice as being the result of marrying a gay man, but in reality, it's because she married a brilliant, self-centered celebrity.

Carey Mulligan's Felicia matches Cooper's Bernstein in perfection. "Inner Life" and "Public Life" collide during a live interview with Ed Sullivan. Cameras, again in the living room, Sullivan's voice booming in from *TV Land*, the children safely scuttled away with the housekeeper. Felicia rattles off Lenny's schedule and copes gracefully with the fact that she's now the wife and mother and no longer a tour de force as an actress – she's taken a back seat to Lenny. Lenny discusses his inner life as a composer and his outer life as a conductor and going to parties, and quips that he's some sort of schizophrenic because of this double life. The things left unsaid loom large because this is the *Ed Sullivan Show*.

The movement to and from Connecticut, New York City, and Long Island is an unmistakable thread in the story, a familiar track to those of us from Fairfield County. As their marriage unravels and repairs in the most loving and astounding way, the sense of place holds hard. Be especially aware of the sound in this film; the sound technicians mic'd everything, including the trees for wind next to the Bernstein house on Greenfield Hill. The soundtrack is a feast. Watching the film once with your eyes closed would be just what Lenny ordered – listen.

Close to the moment the film goes from black-and-white to color, Felicia warns Lenny to live life more authentically at her own risk, and his too, and I think Lenny resents that she gets him better than any of his lovers. But in the end, she haunts him, she was his one true muse. *Maestro* is, after all, an opera – and that makes it the highest tribute possible to Mr. Bernstein. ■

Talking cents: A look back, and forward

By Randy Beeman

As we enter the new year, I think this is a good time to take stock of the year that was and try to get a sense of how the upcoming year might be different – and the same. This is a process I try to undertake at the start of each year. Hopefully, I can learn a thing or two from the past so I can apply the lessons learned in the coming year. I will admit, some years I seem to be better at the learning part than others. But I believe the process is just as important as the result – and 2024 being an election year in an age of chaos, every lesson we can master will prove invaluable to our success as investors.

Let's start out by looking at what we lost in 2023. We did lose some very good people in the past year. Looking first at the investment world, we lost Charlie Munger. He passed away at the age of 99, and for 45 years, was Warren Buffett's longtime right-hand man at Berkshire Hathaway. During their time at the helm, the price of a single Class A share of Berkshire stock went from \$285 to \$560,500 as of the date of this writing (January 10, 2024). Yep, that's not a typo folks! In those 45 years, the stock price only had seven years in which it was lower at the end of the year than where it started. Quite a feat indeed. There's a lot I can learn from this example of investing and business management success.

In the world of financial academia, we lost Harry Markowitz, who passed at the age of 95. He was the author of the 1952 paper titled "Portfolio Selection", which earned him the Nobel Prize in Economics. This essay laid the groundwork for the practice of portfolio selection known as Modern Portfolio Theory, which is employed by many individual and institutional investors. Again, lots to learn here about managing risk over time in the investment portfolio.

Outside the financial industry, we saw many well-known personalities leave this world in 2023: Matthew Perry from *Friends*, Tom Smothers (one half of the Smothers Brothers comedy act), Ryan O'Neal (maybe best known for his roles in *Love Story* and *Paper Moon*), Norman Lear (producer of *All in the Family*, *The Jeffersons*, *One Day at a Time*, and more), Richard Roundtree (*Shaft*), Suzanne Somers (*Three's Company*), Dick Butkus (Chicago Bears linebacker), Jimmy Buffett (singer and businessman), and many others too numerous to name. I'm sure there is much

good to learn from many of these personalities, but also many lessons about what pitfalls to avoid as success magnifies.

Among those names, I feel the need to take a moment to comment more fully on the success of Jimmy Buffett. Buffett achieved international fame and left a lasting legacy in 1977 with his breakthrough hit, "Margaritaville," which will be proudly played in bars and homes around the world for all time. Of just as much significance to me as an investor and businessman is that he managed to turn what could have been a "one hit wonder" career into a business behemoth. He went on to launch several retail stores, a collection of hotels, the Cheeseburger in Paradise restaurant chain, and T-shirt and footwear lines. There are even retirement communities with his name on them now.

Pretty amazing, considering the song about wasting away on a beach, originally inspired by a trip to Key West, FL with a friend in 1971, launched a billion-dollar empire. It's a testament to how making the most of even an unlikely opportunity can realize great results with hard work and business acumen.

The losses in 2023 weren't limited just to people. Several well-known companies gave up the ghost this past year. Home retailer Bed, Bath & Beyond filed for bankruptcy protection in 2023 closing all its remaining stores. But, in a lesson of possibilities, its assets were bought by online retailer Overstock and the company dumped its old name, revamped its website, and re-launched under *BedBathandBeyond.com*. Its advertising promises the same great bed, bath, and kitchen products found in the shuttered retail stores, but adding "a much better beyond" as well. It's a bold move of retail restructuring, and I guess we'll learn in 2024 whether consumers are buying the new pitch.

In a story that has yet to find a successful ending, Rite-Aid, one of the largest pharmacy chains in America, also filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection. According to the filing, heavy debt, declining sales, and more than 1,000 Federal, State and local lawsuits claiming it filled thousands of illegal prescriptions for painkillers were the drivers of its demise. They recently received approval by the court to sell their pharmacy benefits manager firm (Elixir) for \$575 million, which will provide

some funds for the coffers toward their overwhelming obligations. Lots of lessons to be learned from this decline, almost too many to list here.

However, one of the factors that undoubtedly have allowed companies like Bed, Bath & Beyond and Rite-Aid to last (probably) much longer than they otherwise would have, was the Federal Reserve's policy on interest rates. Following the Great Financial Crisis (GFC) and then the Covid pandemic, the Federal Reserve kept their target interest rate near zero for an extended period. That allowed companies with weak business models to cling to life by accessing low interest loans. However, when rates increased, and the business models hadn't been improved, they faced the inability to service the massive debt loads on the balance sheet.

While the Fed's actions distorted the cost of capital, encouraged bad decision-making, and essentially rewarded failure for several years, Bed, Bath & Beyond and Rite-Aid failed because they weren't able to compete with more innovative rivals like Amazon, which had been encroaching on their turf for years. In a free-market economy, business failures are part of the creative destruction that pushes us forward. Weaker competitors die off, allowing stronger ones to gain market share. That's how it's supposed to work, and we all benefit from the resulting lower prices and better service. That's capitalism. It's not always pretty, but it works.

Maybe that's the overall lesson from 2023. There will always be winners and losers. There will always be some level of uncertainty and chaos. With 2024 being an election year, and one that looks to possibly have more turmoil than usual, as investors we need to bring our A Game. Let's begin 2024 ready and welcoming that challenge. ■

Randy Beeman is a Redding resident and has more than 25 years of experience managing financial assets for individuals, retirement plans, and businesses.

Randy currently serves as the Director of Wealth Management for Glass Jacobson Wealth Advisors. He co-hosted a popular live, call-in radio show (The Wise Investor Show) on WMAL 630 AM and 105.9 FM in Washington, D.C., for 15 years. He is the co-author of "Value Returns: Wise Investing for the Next Decade and Beyond"

Dry January and beyond

Local zero-proof options to start the year off right | By Pamela Brown



Photo by Aurora Photography

The Bottle Shop at Cross Culture Kombucha in Danbury.

Put the wine glass down – at least for the remainder of the month. Dubbed "Dry January", this is the month that has gained traction around the world since Alcohol Change UK, a charity, launched the campaign in 2013. Rather than anti-alcohol, the charity seeks alcohol change with a mission of having every person live a full life free from alcohol harm. January is a month when many people make a commitment to being sober, or at least limiting their alcohol intake.

"It's wonderful to see Dry January become so popular. It's a great time to try new and different beverages, and especially to take note of how it feels to replace alcohol with healthier drinks," said Liz Ceppos, owner of Cross Culture Kombucha with her husband, Ian. The taproom and brewery are located at 60 Shelter Rock Road in Danbury. "Cross Culture Kombucha came about because of our desire to offer a healthier alternative to alcohol. When we got started in 2017, the non-alcoholic menus at almost all restaurants were predictable and boring," said Ceppos.

Kombucha is a fizzy, fermented tea that's a bit tart, slightly sweet, and is packed with beneficial bacteria, healthy organic acids, antioxidants, and vitamins to help maintain gut health. "Beneficial bacteria in your body are great for the digestive system and immunity. Kombucha is high in B Vitamins, and it provides a natural energy boost without the jolt or jitters associated with coffee or energy drinks," said Ceppos.

Cross Culture Kombucha offers a rotating variety of kombucha on draft (eight flavors, often seasonal and limited edition). Throughout the year, they make over 60 flavors, and the flavors offered on tap are often exclusive to the taproom. For example, this month they are making Blood Orange Hops while

blood oranges are available. A best-seller is Hibiscus Elderberry. "Guests can sample or enjoy a flight of kombucha to see what appeals to them the most. We also have a fridge stocked with both bottles and cans of a wide variety of flavors," Ceppos said. The most popular limited-edition offerings are Hopped Peach, Apple Chai, Blue Agave Mojito, CranMa, Blueberry Ginger, and Grow a Pear. The kombucha is made using local ingredients including pears, apples, peaches, blueberries, beets, mint, and more from local farms and throughout Connecticut. Cross Culture Kombucha also has a non-alcoholic bottle shop stocked with spirit alternatives, alcohol-removed wines, non-alcoholic beers, ready-to-drink mocktails and apertifs, and mixers.

If you're struggling with Dry January, take a page from Liz who stopped drinking four years ago, or Ian, who stopped over 14 years ago. "These days, both Ian and I are grateful for a sober lifestyle. Overall, it completely improved our well-being. We wouldn't trade it for a lifestyle of drinking (even moderately or infrequently)," Ceppos said. "Anyone doing Dry January should focus on what they gain from not drinking instead of focusing on what they're restricting – such as hangover-free mornings, more clarity, better sleep, memories of the conversations, saving money, reduced anxiety, more time for other endeavors, and of course, better health."

The taproom and brewery are open Wednesday through Friday, 10:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m. and Saturday 11:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. Light snacks and occasionally a food truck in the parking lot are available. Guests are welcome to bring their own food. ■

Learn more at crossculturekombucha.com

Grants help set restoration work at historic cemeteries in motion / continued from page 1



Tree work was recently completed at Lonetown Cemetery to protect the historic headstones from damage. The project was made possible through a \$5,000 state grant secured by the Redding Historic Cemetery Committee.

ago, they wanted to prioritize what needed care.

"Big kudos to Sean McNamara and Charlie Hyatt for getting all the stuff coordinated. The next step is we are in the process of designing and getting a preliminary quote for an appropriate type of fence to put at the Lonetown Cemetery," he said.

Under consideration is a barrier of ten granite pillars and a linking chain system for the cemetery to dignify those interred, particularly those who fought for America's freedom. It would also indicate to visitors, "This is a special place. Don't come in here with a wheeled vehicle," Bonomo said.

Paradise mows the six histor-

ic cemeteries and handles spring and fall cleanups, as well as storm cleanup if necessary. He credits the current committee members for their efforts in moving along with the preservation work he deems important. "The people buried there are people that built this town," he said. "This group has been far more active in planning funding and getting work done than we were able to do in the past."

A second grant awarded in October through the State Historic Preservation Office will be used to detect unmarked buried remains at Lonetown Cemetery using Ground Penetrating Radar (GPR) remote sensing capabilities.



Photos by Louise Wagner
Tree Warden Charlie Hyatt discusses maintenance to save a large maple tree.

"A GPR system works much better when the ground is hard, because it is denser and (the signals) get bounced back," Bonomo explained. "We're going to find out exactly where any graves, marked or unmarked, are in there. Over time, 250 to 300 years, markers disintegrate. They made them out of wood and limestone that crumbles and dissolves. If you were of greater means, you got granite, but even that after 250 years (wears down). My job is to have GPR in there to find out where the grave is, get them marked appropriately, and go on to the next cemetery."

The Committee has mailed the GPR proposal requests to contractors for the project, which is

scheduled to take place in late winter or early spring. They have also prepared Veteran Administration claim forms to replace, as needed, patriot/veterans' headstones and markers.

Once the work is complete at Lonetown, the RHCC will then move on to the Sanford Reed Cemetery (Redding Center) behind the police station to conduct a GPR study and then set their sights on the four other historic sites.

The oldest grave at Lonetown Cemetery dates back to 1815. Charles R. Hale, *Collection of Connecticut Inscriptions*, a W.P.A. project ca. 1932-5 of Connecticut cemeteries, lists 39 inscribed headstones there. There are unmarked graves yet to be counted. The two Revolutionary War patriots buried there are Calvin Jenkins, who served in Captain Catlin's Company, and Isaac Bartram, who served in Captain Horton's Company. Charles Thomas, a soldier of color, fought in the Civil War with the Connecticut 29th Colored Infantry. Several Thomas family members are interred within the fenced parameters.

Additional research, documentation, and inventory work on the cemeteries has been conducted by Terrie Roese, Bonnie Ensor, and Bruce Nelson. Nelson, the Town's Co-Historian and Co-Founder of the Redding History Project, offered this perspective on the historical significance of Lonetown Cemetery.

"The condition of Lonetown

Cemetery's headstones is among the worst in any of the abandoned town burial grounds other than Ferry on Poverty Hollow Road," he said. "The 1937 Hale survey identified 39 marked graves, at which time only two headstones were identified as having 'fallen'. The fallen, buried, or missing headstones currently exceed at least 15. A 2021 report compiled by Terrie Roese also indicates that there are at least four people of color interred here whose graves were never marked with a headstone. Given the size of the cemetery, it is entirely possible that the number of graves greatly exceeds the 39 that Hale identified, and the four that cemetery records clearly show were unmarked. A GPR study will greatly aid the Committee in determining if there is indeed a higher number of interred bodies than is currently known, and where some of those bodies are located on the grounds."

Donations to help with the cemetery projects are greatly appreciated and can be sent to the Town of Redding's Historic Cemetery Special Fund located at the Redding Town Hall, 100 Hill Road, Redding CT 06896. ■

BUSINESS SPOTLIGHT

Brandstrom Instruments: Technological innovations from aerospace to bioscience

By Justin Reynolds

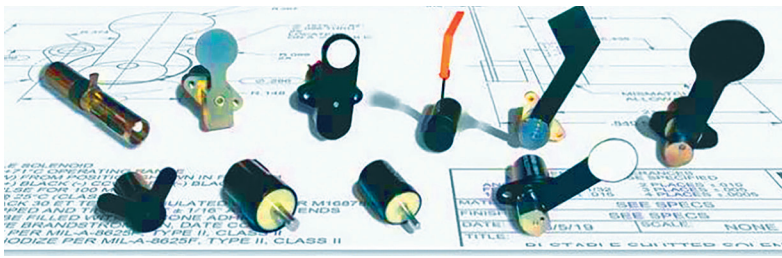


Photo courtesy of Brandstrom Instruments

With the recent focus on aircraft manufacturing following the door plug failure on Boeing's 737 Max, it's interesting to note that there are some highly technical aerospace and aircraft instrument experts working right here in our own backyard.

Since 1972, Brandstrom Instruments has been serving the aircraft industry by designing and manufacturing warning indicators for cockpit panel instruments. Since March 1975, the company has been carrying out its mission from its headquarters at 85 Ethan Allen Road in Ridgefield and has

expanded its customer base from aerospace to tier-one defense, scientific laser systems, bioscience, and high-tech companies delivering state-of-the-art imaging products to the U.S. Military, Department of Homeland Security, and commercial industrial markets.

"We see ourselves as the innovator in solenoid and optical shutter design, providing sub-system engineers with new levels of reliability in increasingly constrained envelope spaces and power specifications," said Thomas G. Allard, Vice President of Brandstrom Instruments.

Assuming you, dear reader, aren't familiar with this market, let's get some terminology straight. According to Wikipedia, a solenoid is a "type of electromagnet formed by a helical coil of wire whose length is substantially greater than its diameter, which generates a controlled magnetic field."

Got it?
"Today, Brandstrom Instruments is a preeminent industry manufacturer of robust precision optical shutters," Allard continued. "Our corporate headquarters and manufacturing facilities are well-equipped with extensive and continuously expanding production capacities for both short- and long-run requirements."

According to Allard, building on the company's strong brand and customer loyalty, Brandstrom Instruments has "focused its efforts on the development of a line of highly reliable electro-optical shutters for thermal imaging and laser applications."

Clearly, Brandstrom Instruments operates in a sophisticated, niche category. The company has a robust slate of products that includes flag indicators, thermal imaging shutters, laser shutters, Aerospace, dual-band, and fused-image shutters, and medical, optical, and spectroscopy shutters.

"Our innovative designs for high torque and lower-power consumption and reputation of unmatched quality and customer satisfaction have always been the key factors in the success of the company," Allard said.

Not content to rest on its laurels, Brandstrom Instruments is committed to ongoing research and development. Currently, they are working on new solenoid designs, including lower power, lighter weight, smaller space, lower profile, lower noise, and higher torque solutions.

Brandstrom Instruments has two buildings in Ridgefield with more than 15,000 square feet of

space. Currently, they have plans to expand one of their buildings, adding an additional 18,000 square feet.

In addition to its own line of products, Brandstrom Instruments delivers custom solutions to clients.

"We're available for direct communication with your engineers," Allard said. "We provide custom designs per customer specifications and supply 3D models for fit check. We provide solenoids with customizations for rotation angles, shutter attachments, shutter finishes, voltage, holding torque, and mounting, and we also have low-out-gas versions."

What does Allard like most about working in the area?

"The small businesses and shops are great — everyone is friendly," he said. ■

To learn more, visit brandstrominstruments.com

From Pope John Paul II to LeBron James, Marc Mellon casts greatness

World class sculptor calls Redding home

By Justin Reynolds



Mellon sculpting *Cassandra Rising* in his studio with model Cassandra Trenary, Soloist, American Ballet Theatre.

When Marc Mellon went to college, he planned on becoming a doctor. But once he enrolled, he felt the pull of history and philosophy. Other pursuits interrupted his schooling serially; he chased a girlfriend to the Midwest only to return and then leave again to work on a political campaign. The losing campaign, says the future artist, "burned me out." In trying to "figure it all out," Mellon returned to school with a focus on art.

Fast forward some 50 years, and Mellon is one of the country's best-known representational sculptors. His works have included the NBA and WNBA MVP Trophies, bronze busts of icons Tony Bennett, Muhammad Ali, Albert Einstein, Elie Wiesel, and Winston Churchill, and the *Jackie Robinson-George Shuba Handshake For The Century Commemorative Statue*, which celebrates the famous home plate handshake that marked the integration of baseball while heralding the modern civil rights movement.

"At Brooklyn College, I worked with renowned painter Philip Pearlstein, who was a fabulous drawing teacher," Mellon said. "I loved the studio survey class and then discovered that I had a special facility working figuratively in three dimensions. I went on to post-graduate classes at the Brooklyn Museum Art School and the Art Students League. At the Brooklyn Museum, I copied the Rodin masterworks on view in the rotunda. At the league, my understanding of artistic anatomy grew greatly. From there, things just took off."

To please his mother, Mellon had completed his BA in Fine Art and got his teaching degree for New York City high schools. But instead of becoming an educator,

Mellon took a job at the Brooklyn Museum where he wrote grant proposals and press releases. After that, he worked for a private art dealer in Manhattan; sales of his own artwork came sporadically.

"Everything I did while making rent money was basic training for any artist," Mellon said. "The museum and gallery jobs helped me understand the art world and taught me how to talk pricing without stuttering."

When not at his day job, Mellon worked virtually every evening, including weekends and vacations, developing a body of work.

"I was very lucky that people saw my talent," he said.

A well-known collector committed to purchasing one bronze cast of whatever Mellon produced, allowing him to focus on art full-time. An art patron loaned him money to cast work, and then held a party at her Park Avenue apartment, selling his bronzes to her art-loving friends, which allowed Mellon to repay the loan. He then approached a foundation to cast a body of larger works, and "like manna from heaven" was granted the funds.

With two years of sculpting full-time, Mellon "jumped the line," working from life on a commissioned bust of George H.W. Bush and exhibiting his sports bronzes at the 1984 Summer Olympic Games in Los Angeles.

"I met my wife, fellow sculptor Babette Bloch, just before the Olympics," he said. "On my return, we began a friendship, taking things very slow."

Five years later, Mellon and Bloch — by then married and expecting a child — moved to Redding.

Beyond his portrait busts and statues, Mellon is well-known for



Mellon's bust of Volodymyr Zelensky.

his sculptures of figures in motion and at rest, including works inspired by modern dance, ballet, and the sports world.

"I've been privileged to work with amazing dance artists since 1980," Mellon said. "Over the last 10 years, I've developed balletic bronzes, including pas de deux works and a wonderful series done in collaboration with American Ballet Theatre principal dancers. I've also worked on a pas de deux series with homegrown talent, including Redding's own modern dancer and choreographer Isaac Lerner and dancer Margaux Amara, who was raised in Ridgefield."

Mellon takes numerous studio shots with his dancer models and then reviews the images one by one with his model. In collaboration, they pick out projects the dancer and artist are each excited by. The dance artists assist in explaining nuances of gesture — things they've learned through many years of study.

"I'm totally dependent on each model's unique artistry," Mellon continued. "They've each helped me develop an educated eye for the myriad subtleties inherent in

modern dance and ballet."

Mellon's sports bronzes are now on 20 university campuses across America, including a bust of UConn's legendary basketball coach, Jim Calhoun. A host of sports legends also own his work: Michael Jordan, Chris Evert, LeBron James, Larry Bird, Mariano Rivera, Steph Curry, Simone Biles, and many more.

In 2023, his over-life-size gymnastic bronze, *L-Straddle*, was added to the collection of Brookgreen Gardens, one of the world's finest collections of American figurative sculpture located in South Carolina. In November, Mellon celebrated seeing his bust of dancer, choreographer, and educator Jacques d'Amboise unveiled at the National Dance Institute in Manhattan. Throughout the year, his bust of Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky was broadly exhibited, with a cast on loan to the Ukrainian Institute of America.

"When I work on a portrait bust, capturing the likeness is never enough," Mellon said. "Working with Tony Bennett, who sat for his portrait in my National Arts Club studio, I sought to capture his warmth and the pleasure he took in singing, creating art, and schmoozing with fellow artists. The same grace he projects on stage — the same genuineness — is what he was like in person. He made every individual in the theater feel that he wanted to engage with them, and that's what I tried to project in his portrait."

While working with Bennett, Mellon got to a moment where he was in the zone "making little adjustments."

"Suddenly, the likeness and the spirit jumped right out at us,"

Mellon said. "Tony looked at me, with his signature grin, and said, 'Now, it's smokin'.'"

While every project is different, larger statues usually take two or more years to complete.

"I have to become a bit of a biographer for the busts and statues and understand the depth of the individual's achievement," Mellone explained. "Why is this person being honored with a statue?"

Mellon attributes his success to a combination of things: what artists call "a good eye" and the hand-eye coordination to go with it, a solid broad education in both the humanities and the sciences (he interacts with achievers in virtually every field), and the fact that he "knocks himself out" over each project.

"Nothing leaves my studio until I'm 100% happy with it," he said.

Mellon's work can be found across the country and the world, starting with works in three of the museums of the Smithsonian and seven bronze busts displayed across Manhattan. It can also be seen in The British Museum in London, the ChiMei Museum in Taiwan, and at the Vatican, where a bust of Pope John Paul II lives.

"It's been a very gratifying career," Mellon concluded. "After almost 50 years of casting into bronze, I am always working on meaningful projects, more and more conceptualized by what I consider important. I feel like I'm getting better, which is a great feeling. Michelangelo worked into his nineties, and I intend to do the same." ■

For more information on the artist and his work, visit marcmellon.com



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BOOK REVIEW

A look at seed catalogs ahead of spring

By Susan Clark



Although I try not even to think about my garden during the month of January, in one sense it is the very best time of the gardening year. For the whole month, I don't need to weed or water or worry – just dream big dreams about perfect vegetables, stunning flowers, and a complete lack of pests and disease.

Aiding in those dreams are the catalogs that arrive almost every day in the mail. The first ones come before Christmas. Rather than reviewing a book this week, I thought I'd share some thoughts about my favorite general seed catalogs. This overview includes only printed catalogs, not the ever-more-frequent offering of pdfs. I prefer paper catalogs, because it's hard to curl up in front of a fire with a pdf, and not easy to mark them up for later reference.

With some exceptions for specialty seeds, I use catalogs from New England companies, as they understand the needs of Connecticut gardeners more than those from, say, Oregon. My favorites include *Johnny's*, *Pinetree*, and *Fedco* from Maine; *High Mowing* from Vermont; *Row 7* from New York, and *John Scheepers* from Connecticut. Also a favorite is *Southern Exposure Seed Exchange* from Virginia.

Catalogs may seem to offer much the same seeds, tools, and supplies, but the devil is in the details. Some have a greater range of organic and non-GMO seed. Some concentrate on vegetables and offer very few flowers. Most offer multiple sizes of packets from which you can choose, although some specialize in bulk quantities. Shipping costs and how they are calculated vary significantly. Pre-

sentation differs a lot – Some have extensive and high-quality photography, others charming drawings. Some offer in-depth germination and planting guides, while others offer recipes as well as homespun planting advice.

I usually do my biggest buy from *Johnny's* and then fill in from others for special varieties. *Johnny's* has excellent photos of each variety they sell, and growing guides I refer to all summer long. Their shipping costs are unfortunately at the high end.

Fedco is both a comprehensive and very folksy catalog, with whimsical drawings of plant categories, recipes, and historical information. They donate a percentage of profits to Native American and Black organizations in recognition of the role those groups played in early seed saving. They have an excellent product range, including a Mark Twain tomato I'll certainly buy this year.

High Mowing gets a bit of my business every year because they offer smaller quantities of seed in their packets at a commensurately lower cost. Sometimes you really don't need 1,500 carrot seeds with a short storage life. In reviewing this year's catalog, I noticed they sell mushroom inoculation kits, and I'll definitely be ordering those.

Row 7 is a fairly new company created by chef Dan Barber who works in collaboration with Cornell to develop seeds specifically for flavor. They have a very small selection of choice vegetables. Their Robin's Koginut winter squash is outstanding, as is their Midnight Roma tomato. Their Upstate Abundance potato is the best I've eaten.

John Scheepers Kitchen Garden is also a small catalog, although not as small as *Row 7*. Every year, I find some treasure in it. They have one of the better selections of European vegetable varieties.

Southern Exposure is a cooperative with an extensive array of seeds that do well in the mid-Atlantic and Southeast. I shop there to support their initiative and for hard-to-find vegetable varieties.

And for the rest of my seeds? The Redding Grange seed swap! It will be on again this year, date yet to be announced. Hope to see you there. ■

Nod to the pod

Missing Richard Simmons, Episode 1: "Where's Richard?"

By Amy Maloof



Each week, a one-episode recommendation from a podcast you might love.

In February of 2014, unbeknownst to his followers, celebrity fitness coach Richard Simmons made his last public appearance. After decades in the spotlight, sweating his way into people's homes and making millions from his fitness videos, Simmons had continued to teach an in-person fitness class at his Slimmons studio in Los Angeles. But on February 15, he didn't show up for his scheduled class. He has not been seen in public since.

Back in 2013, filmmaker Dan Taberski was delighted to learn he could roll up and – for just \$12 – take a class from Richard Simmons himself. He grew to love the class, the Slimmons community, and his growing connection with the famous instructor. So, when Simmons vanished without

explanation, Taberski was baffled. Three years later, Taberski made this six-episode podcast series, looking for answers.

I first listened to this series when it was released in 2017; I was riveted. But many others criticized the series for invasive journalism, for prying into Simmons's personal life after he repeatedly asked for privacy. *The New York Times* called the episodes "morally suspect" and other major publications agreed.

I've thought about these six episodes surprisingly often over the years, and I wanted to revisit the series to see how they felt today. The ways in which we discuss mental health have changed in the past seven years, and celebrity culture has also shifted. And yet, I still find this show compelling in 2024. Taberski may have crossed lines, but I think his intentions were good. Plus, the man knows how to tell a story. No matter what you feel after listening, you will not be bored.

There's a new biopic of Simmons's life in the works. He recently made a rare public statement expressing his disapproval and asking to be left alone. Anyone can decide at any time to change their life, but after 40 years of intense involvement with his fans, many are still struggling with his abrupt departure and are still missing Richard Simmons. ■

LIBRARY CORNER

By Erin Shea Dummeyer

The American Library Association recently published a report on the reading habits of Gen Z and millennials and how they use the public library. The results may surprise you. Fifty-four percent of them visited a physical library location within the last twelve months. They also bought *twice* as many print books in the past year than digital. In fact, print books are the number one preferred book format for Gen Z. This may come as no surprise to the parents of Gen Z reading this right now, but that generation often gets the reputation of preferring everything to be digital and accessible via their phone.

Interestingly enough, although these generations prefer to read a print book, they typically find out about these print books through

social media on their phones. The study found that 92% of Gen Z and millennials check social media every day, and a third of respondents said they buy books based on reviews on apps like Instagram or TikTok.

When it comes to the digital books that they do borrow, 75% of Gen Zers and millennials say that a wait time of one week or less is "long." In a world of Amazon Prime and Instacart, these generations are accustomed to speed and convenience. This doesn't bode well for digital library collections, where there is often a wait time of several weeks (or more!) to borrow a popular book. This may explain why 30% of Gen Z and 38% of millennials subscribe to Audible, a proprietary subscription service for audiobook listeners. The

Mark Twain Library offers apps like Hoopla and Libby for our audiophiles, but because of rules surrounding digital licensing, we can't offer every book in digital audio format, and our wait times are often longer.

Licensing for digital material in libraries is a quagmire that I've written about before, but I'm pleased to know that our physical book collection is still a huge draw for our patrons, no matter what generation they belong to. At Mark Twain Library, we like to stress that "books are just the beginning," but they're also our brand. ■

Erin Shea Dummeyer is Director, Mark Twain Library

Good books for good readers

By Margi Esten

At a Christmas party last month, a good friend recommended I read *Deacon King Kong* by James McBride. Now, I have read James McBride in the past, but boy-oh-boy I haven't loved a book like I love this one in quite a while. And that's saying something.

Published in 2020, it has elements of a mystery story, a crime novel, an urban farce and, most importantly, a sociological portrait of late 1960s Brooklyn projects.

It has plot, setting, and a cast of characters difficult to describe here with names like Sportcoat, The Governor, and Hot Sausage. It's partly comic but deeply poignant, beautifully written and profoundly humane. *Deacon King Kong* was listed in *The New York Times* top books of 2020, and James McBride won the inaugural Gotham Book Prize for it, given for outstanding writing about New York City. He also won the Anisfield-Wolf

fiction award, given to a book that addresses racism and diversity, and a Carnegie Medal for fiction.

James McBride is an American writer and musician and was chosen by American composer, producer, and jazz legend Quincy Jones to write his biography. His landmark memoir, *The Color of Water*, was published in 1996, sold millions of copies, and spent more than two years on *The New York Times* bestseller list. ■

MOVIE SERIES

Maestro

By Donna Christopher



Leonard Bernstein's former country home on 51 Fox Run Road in Redding.

Leonard Bernstein, the celebrated conductor whose life is the focal point of the movie *Maestro*, once called West Redding his home-away-from home with his country property on Fox Run Road in the early 1960s. Bernstein eventually sold the property in 1964 and bought a larger country home in Fairfield.

The film's story centers on the relationship between Leonard Bernstein and Felicia Montealegre. They married, had three children, and lived in Manhattan across from Carnegie Hall and in the Dakota near Central Park, in addition to their time in Connecticut.

While their Redding country home was not part of the film, Bernstein's eldest daughter, Jamie Bernstein, mentions it in *Famous Father Girl: A Memoir of Growing Up Bernstein*. There are some scenes in *Maestro* that were filmed at the Bernstein Fairfield family home.

Co-Historian for the Town of Redding Bruce Nelson recounted the history of their Redding house built in 1938.

"In 1955, it was the home of Edward Phoenix and his wife Veronica when they both perished as their car was swept off the bridge on Diamond Hill Road during the October 15 flood. They were returning from a dinner party at the home of Matthew and Betty Blair on Great Pasture Road," he said.

Bernstein later bought the house then sold it to John C. Clarens, an investment manager in New York

in 1964. At the time, the four-acre property contained a six-room house, a small guest cottage, and a 35-foot-long swimming pool. Clarens and his wife Françoise lived in the home during the summer until she died in 2005. It has since been purchased by Dick and Marcia King who live across the street, according to Nelson.

Maestro is directed by Bradley Cooper, who co-wrote the script with Josh Singer and who also portrays Bernstein. Carey Mulligan stars as his wife, Montealegre. The story follows their lifelong loving relationship along with pivotal scenes from his musical life, including Bernstein's much lauded conducting of Gustav Mahler's *Resurrection Symphony* at Ely Cathedral in England in 1973 with the London Symphony Orchestra.

Another scene depicts Bernstein sitting between Montealegre and Tommy Cothran (played by Gideon Glick), during the opening night of his musical *Mass*. While Bernstein had relationships with men throughout his life, he was never explicitly stated as a homosexual in the film. The storytelling suggests his wife knew of these affairs and that they were part of their complex, loving relationship.

"A lot of people believe (the movie) played down his interest in men," said film critic Joe Myers, the Director of Programming for the Focus on French Cinema Festival and Co-host of Spotify podcast *Now a Major Motion Picture!* "Towards the end of

Felicia's life, they had a complete break (marriage separation), and he came back."

Maestro depicts Leonard and Felicia's marriage from 1951 to 1978 when she died from cancer.

The plot skims through the '70s and leaves out important parts of Bernstein's musical and political career, according to Myers.

"Bernstein was such a complex character and had a far-ranging career. You can take a number of different approaches to his life. I thought Bradley Cooper's episodic view of his life was not very satisfying. It left out things that to me would have been biographical," Myers said.

Among the missing parts, said Myers, was Bernstein's hosting of a fundraiser for the Black Panther Party in 1970 and the ensuing controversy that followed with the publication of satirist Tom Wolf's "Radical Chic". The incident was "hugely influential" in coining the term "Leonardise Liberal", explained Myers.

"People didn't realize they supported a group that would destroy them. I was puzzled why that wasn't in there... You can make a whole movie around that fundraising cocktail party," Myers said.

He also feels the conductor's contributions to theater deserved more attention in a movie about Bernstein, citing *West Side Story* as "a milestone of American musical theater" and *On the Town*. "I thought (the movie) gave a short shaft of his contribution to American Musical Theater," said Myers. He also would have liked to see more attention paid to Bernstein's contribution to education in classical music in his televised *Young People's Concerts*.

"I think Cary Mulligan was fabulous. There's a reason she's billed above Bradley Cooper," Myer continued. "In some ways, this is more the story of Felicia Montealegre. I have found it's one of those films that have a divided response. I know people who adore it, and others are lukewarm about it, and other people are disappointed it didn't cover more of his career in the theater." ■

THE NATURAL WORLD

A four-season garden

Part three | By Terry Karpen



Photo by Terry Karpen

Containers for the four-season garden

Why container gardens? They are easy and versatile seasonal displays that create spots of color, focal points in the landscape, and can enhance the architecture of the house. Containers can be placed on porches, patios, terraces, decks, and in window boxes, garden beds, or entryways.

A four-season container can be started in any season. The best containers for year-round planting should be frost-resistant and have a drainage hole in the bottom. Containers can be made of wood, metal, fiberglass, resin, concrete, cast stone, and frost-proof terracotta and glazed pottery.

To provide essential drainage needed for plants living in pots, use a potting soil mix made for use in containers. Always begin by placing a shard from a broken

clay pot over the drainage hole to prevent the potting soil from draining out—but make sure the water can still drain. Never add a layer of rocks to the bottom, because this makes it harder for water to drain out rather than helping.

If the container is large, the bottom can be filled with packing material such as bricks, plastic water or soda bottles, milk jugs, or a plastic container or empty pot turned upside down. A layer of landscape fabric can be placed on top of the addition of any of these. Do this prior to adding the potting soil.

Design formula for containers

- Consider making small evergreen trees or shrubs the centerpiece for winter interest and beyond. Select a variety that is at least two zones hardier than your zone to ensure overwintering success. Then underplant with colorful flowers and foliage plants to fill the empty space around the base. Plan for a container large enough to accommodate a variety of plants.
- Choose plants with a gradation of heights - taller plants surrounded by mid-height plants, and smaller ones closer to the edge. Also use plants that trail or billow over the rim.
- Aim for variety of forms and textures in flowers and foliage.
- Select plants with similar needs for light and moisture.

Plant recommendations for four-season containers

Centerpiece trees and shrubs ideas - Junipers, Boxwood, Pieris, Pines, Spruces, Ilex, or Arborvitae.

As the seasons change, replace the underplants with plants to match the seasons, such as bulbs, annuals, perennials, ferns, and ornamental grasses. For a succession of plants, a few great choices for early spring fillers are bulbs, hellebores, ivy, and pansies. These can be followed in succession with late spring-blooming perennials, plants that thrive in summer, like geraniums and fuchsias, fall mums, asters, and daisies, and winter-inspired decorations.

A unique idea is to keep the centerpiece tree or shrub in the pot it came in and place it undisturbed inside the container. Then add potting soil to cover the top. Underplants can still be incorporated into the potting soil. This procedure can also be adapted, year-round to any plants placed in containers that remain in their original pots. If you need to raise the plants up so they are the perfect height, simply put the packing material previously described in the bottom of the container.

Containers for the four-season garden can be started in any season - you don't have to wait until spring to begin. ■

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

Redding Big Outdoors: A Passion for Place / continued from page 1

then take Mountain Road to Peaceable, past the Mary Evelyn Scott Preserve. On Wayside Lane, as twilight winks out, I admire the first four acres donated to Redding Land Trust in 1966.

A few days later, I return to McCormack. After five transitional winters, the Preserve is finally open year-round. Wide, flat trails, comparable to Huntington's, bring visitors up to the peak of Picketts Ridge and down to the banks of the Saugatuck - but I'm interested in plants near the Danbury entrance.

Steps from the lot on East Stars Plain Road, former dog training fields provide just the place to train my winter eye. With wildflowers reduced to a limited range of greys and rusted steel, grasses to a creamy backdrop, I look more closely at the trees and shrubs. The shape and arrangement of winter buds, the texture of the twigs, fuzz or no fuzz... all clues become more distinct the more I look. Blackjack oaks have wide-lobed leaves and sharp buds; scarlet oaks have sharply pointed leaves and buds misleadingly warped by galls. I touch the strange, waxy fruits of bayberry, the candy-red buds of highbush blueberry, and the scalloped pods of tick-trefoil. I drag myself away.

Stopping at Land Trust property on Olmstead Road, I notice a small grove of unfamiliar trees with warty, warm grey bark and opposite branches: mountain maple. Next to a boulder by the road, I pull some woody debris from the smooth, matte-black branches of another unfamiliar species. Artful, pale rings are incised around its dark joints; lines up and down its dark trunk seem to have been scribbled in green crayon. Aptly, striped maple.

A day or two later, it snows. Along Robin's Trail, ice suppresses the thorns and makes the swamp more tempting. My winter tree-vision delivers more new species. First, I see the blackened, cone-like fruits of speckled or European alder. Then I peer at a large bush with reddish twigs and flaking bark, like blueberry, but thinner buds and clusters of small, dry seed capsules. Some poor plants seem to have been named on a Friday before closing; the beautiful shrub I've found, *Lyonia ligustrina*, is commonly called maleberry - a bargain bin name if ever I heard

one. Next morning, I meet one last new tree; "nannyberry" is none too evocative either.

At last, cold becomes too cold, and I stay inside. I pull a Blu-ray player out of the drawer, drop in the DVD I picked up at the Land Trust's annual meeting, and wrap myself in a blanket on the couch. A Passion for Place starts unsurprisingly, with Mark Twain's adoration of the Redding seasons and the fight for Lonetown Marsh.

Then, the narrator says that kids study the Marsh every day - and suddenly, the nine-year-old in my head is seeing the nine-year-old face of my classmate, Cary. I sit bolt upright. Were we folded up in that cardboard sleeve this whole time? They file down the boardwalk: Cary, Charlotte, Will, Ben, Wiley, Kevin... And there, glancing at the camera before reaching out for the hem of Christina's shirt: my friend Lizzie, three years before I ever had a class with her. A couple I have to squint harder, look for an expression, a contextualizing friend - but most of the names come quickly. I want to recite them all.

I know some of the grown-ups in the movie, too, some only as names, some from my childhood, some from my life now. There's Sam Hill, the name attached to Little River Preserve, who fifty years ago wanted to protect a quarter of the land in Redding. I take a minute to check the numbers and see that by 2018, we'd blown past that, with over 37% of Redding protected by the Town, Redding Land Trust, The Nature Conservancy, Connecticut Audubon Society, Aquarion Water Company, or the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection. (I look up Ridgefield and Weston; 25% open space in 2021 and 29% in 2020, respectively.)

More names: Joan Ensor, a reporter, former Land Trust president, longtime trail-maker, and Redding native. I search her face for her great-grandfather, Nathaniel Hawthorne, and smile at her accent, almost too fabulous to be placed, as she talks about "hossback ridahs" in Stormfield.

Here's Mary Anne Guitar, president of Redding Land Trust at the time of filming and former First Selectperson; she recalls that in 1971, when some people

suggested Redding buy Edward Steichen's estate to form Topstone Park, opponents called the Conservation Commission, Land Trust, and the League of Women Voters "the cocktail party set." Guitar smiles: "Trying to save it for everybody - nothing elitist about that!"

At Warrups Farm, I see Bill Hill, Sam's son and one of the Redding folks I'm getting to know 20 years later, because I stayed around. He quotes the poet W. S. Merwin, trimming the line into an imperative to live by: "On the last day of the world, plant a tree."

A simple shot of a road under September yellow chokes me up - Redding, my home! "I'm a nature boy all the way," says land donor Lauren McCreedy, an older man in a sweater and a bucket hat. "A treehugger, a bird lover, and all that. I even talk to the bees." I laugh. How could you explain it to someone who didn't feel the same? The woods are family, where you belong.

Faces keep coming in a dizzy, sustained epiphany: here's William Cram, my neighbor's father, sitting next to Mary Anne Guitar with a map. There's the outline I've gotten used to drawing, there's where we blazed Robin's Trail, and there's the swamp. They were working it out in front of a camera while I played with sticks next door; my family, my friends, and everyone I knew were all there too, just out of frame.

Near the end of the film, there's footage of the vote to purchase properties by the Saugatuck Reservoir and the nascent Centennial Watershed State Forest. I lean forward, scanning the Redding Elementary School cafeteria for my father's face. No luck, but I do spot one friend in the crowd, who turns after the vote with his wry grin, making surely a wryer comment; hey, Wally.

Then a half-hour is up. Mary Anne Guitar says, "Being the model isn't the end of the road." The stewards of all this open space must teach a new generation, manage the woods, and "make people understand that this didn't just happen." I'm in my thirty-third winter, looking at maps drawn in other summers; my thirty-third winter, still learning my neighbor's names. ■

Donate your professional wear and give others a leg up

By Pamela Brown



Photo courtesy of WCSU

The Professional Clothing Closet is a volunteer-run initiative at WCSU.

As the new year begins, it can be a good time to clean out your closets and start letting go of gently used clothing that you are no longer wearing. Despite today's prevalence of remote work and the use of Zoom, there are still many jobs that require in person interviews and day-to-day on-site hours. Several local organizations offer budget conscious clothing to help candidates look professional on job interviews or make a good impression on a call. As you turn over your own wardrobe, consider donating your business casual and professional clothing to a worthy cause to help someone in need.

WCSU Professional Clothing Closet

In 2020, the National Society of Leadership and Success at Western Connecticut State University (WCSU) established a Professional Clothing Closet with the support of the Student Government Association. "We started this just prior to the pandemic to provide students with professional attire as they embark on their professional journeys, internships, jobs, etc.," said Kathleen Lindenmayer, Director of Career Services. "There has been a national trend to 'dress down,' which really gave students signals to dress mostly in 'comfort clothing' - therefore, many don't own clothing that's workforce-ready. We saw a broad need for this for students from all schools, from the musician who needs formal dress, to the suits for those that want to go into law of financial services, or even khakis for the Health Promotion Science internship clinics." At least ten students visit the closet weekly. "These are students who are starting out in their professional journey, and they have extremely limited resources, given their investment in education. They are most grateful for the donations."

Open to WCSU students free of charge during school hours, the closet provides a variety of business attire in all sizes, including suits, blazers, pants, dresses, sweaters, and skirts, in addition to a limited number of accessories, such as scarves, ties, professional shoes in new condition, and coats. The clothing must be clean, up-to-date, with no damage.

The closet is an all-volunteer-effort by students and student-run organizations, including the Ansell Marketing Club. "We could not do this without them," said Lindenmayer, who added the students also receive an added bonus. "A student may come for the clothing, but they'll leave having a better sense for the extensive services that the Career Success Center offers. We offer top-shelf, comprehensive services that help students design their lives through activities that assess

and explore their interests, build professional skills, manage their network and personal brand, find jobs and internships, improve their personal marketing documents, prepare them for interviews, and more."

To arrange a donation, e-mail: thePCC@wcsu.edu

Save A Suit

This non-profit organization provides veterans and transitioning service members, both men and women, with business suits, professional attire, and other clothing resources to help them achieve job security. Items accepted include gently used suits, blazers, dress shirts, dress pants, tops, and coats, in addition to accessories such as shoes, ties, scarves, handbags, and belts.

Drop off at Save A Suit's new Bethel headquarters at 2 Park Lawn Drive. Open Monday-Friday, 9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.; no appointment is necessary. For more information, call (203) 456-6801.

Connecticut State Community College - Norwalk

The NCC Clothing Closet provides professional clothing for students who need appropriate attire for interviews, internships, and other professional events. Items include pants, dresses, skirts, blouses, blazers, dress shirts, suits, and accessories including shoes, ties, bags, and belts.

Donations are by appointment only at the College's West Campus, 188 Richards Avenue, W101A, Norwalk; e-mail Courtney Anstett at: canstett@ncc.comnet.edu

Dress for Success Mid-Fairfield County

If you're up for a drive, you can donate to DFSMFC, an affiliate of Dress for Success Worldwide that has helped over 10,000 women in Fairfield County since opening in 1998. The organization offers a suite of career development programs to help women move toward self-sufficiency by addressing their social and economic needs in relation to work, home, and community. A clothing boutique is located at the Bridgeport branch to provide women with professional, interview-appropriate attire. Items include suits, blouses, slacks, skirts, dresses, blazers, and jackets, in addition to work-appropriate shoes, jewelry, scarves, handbags, briefcases, and portfolios.

The boutique accepts donations by appointment only. All items must be freshly dry cleaned/laundered, and preferably on hangers. Drop off at 240 Fairfield Avenue, 2nd Floor, Bridgeport. For more information, call (203) 333-6505. ■

Would you like to see your business advertised here?

e-mail advertise@reddingsentinel.org for rates and schedules

Reach Redding residents and increase sales!

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

\$ = fee applies
R = registration required

This Week's Featured Events

A Black Revolutionary War Experience

Thursday, January 25
6:30 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.
Watch history come to life with historian Kevin Johnson.
Mark Twain Library
439 Redding Road
marktwainlibrary.org

Behavioral Health Roundtable Discussion

Wednesday, January 31
7:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.
Hosted by the Redding Prevention Council to help understand behavioral health.
In person and Zoom
Mark Twain Library
439 Redding Road
marktwainlibrary.org

Lyrics Coffeehouse - New Middle Class

Friday, February 9
7:30 p.m. - 9:30 p.m.
BYOB and enjoy an evening of local, live music.
Redding Community Center
37 Lonetown Road
townofreddingct.org/parks-and-recreation/upcoming-events/lyrics-coffee-house

Want to feature an upcoming event?

E-mail us at advertise@reddingsentinel.org for more information.

ARTS

Saturday, January 20 – Saturday, February 24

Kathy Coe “What We Keep” Art Exhibition
12:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.
Wednesdays-Sundays
Redding resident Kathy Coe and Helena Kiely's exhibition of oil paintings and sculpture.
George Billis Gallery
1700 Post Road, Fairfield
georgebillis.com

Friday, February 9

Lyrics Coffeehouse – New Middle Class
7:30 p.m. - 9:30 p.m.
BYOB and enjoy an evening of local, live music.
Redding Community Center
37 Lonetown Road
townofreddingct.org/parks-and-recreation/upcoming-events/lyrics-coffee-house
\$

Saturday, February 10

Park and Recreation Bus Trip to Spamalot on Broadway
9:00 a.m. Bus leaves Community Center, 2:00 p.m. Show
Redding Community Center (Bus leaves and returns)
37 Lonetown Road
townofreddingct.org/parks-and-recreation/upcoming-events/trips
\$, R

Tuesdays February 13, 20 and 27

Beginner Watercolor Course
11:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.
Free 3-week watercolor course for beginners. Materials will be provided.
Heritage Center
37 Lonetown Road
Register by e-mail mstillman@townofreddingct.org or call (203) 938-9725.
R

CHILDREN | TEENS

Sunday, January 28

Self Defense Clinic for ages 11+
11:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.
Self-defense clinic with Master Fagan, a 5th degree black belt.
Redding Community Center
37 Lonetown Road
townofreddingct.org/parks-and-recreation
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Monday, January 29

The Digital SAT vs. ACT
7:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.
Recommended for current 10th and 11th graders and their parents.
Zoom - Presented by Mark Twain Library
marktwainlibrary.org
R

Friday, February 2

Build-Your-Own History Book Program (Grades 5-8)
4:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.
Celebrate Black History Month with an interactive and fun sticker book program.
Mark Twain Library
439 Redding Road
marktwainlibrary.org
R

Thursday, February 8

The Wizards School of Magic Workshop – Alakazaam Magic
3:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.
Students in Grades 1-4 will learn four magic tricks.
Redding Community Center
37 Lonetown Road
townofreddingct.org/parks-and-recreation
\$, R

CRAFTS

Sunday, January 28

Needle Felting – Middle/High School Students
1:00 p.m. - 2:30 p.m.
New Pond Farm Education Center
101 Marchant Road
newpondfarm.org
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Sunday, February 4

Succulent Wreath Workshop – Middle/High School Students
3:00 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.
Make a heart-shaped succulent wreath in time for Valentine's Day.
New Pond Farm Education Center
101 Marchant Road
newpondfarm.org
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FOOD | WINE

Tuesday, January 30

Nutrabalance Nourish & Feast Cooking Demo
6:30 p.m.
Chef and functional medicine nutritionist Elizabeth DiMeo will offer appetizers, wine, and recipes. Presented by Redding Neighbors & Newcomers.
Private home - address provided to attendees.
reddingneighborsandnewcomers.org/event-5517636
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Saturday, February 3

Junior Chef Saturday
12:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.
Kinds in Grades 3-8 can create an entire meal and learn about food safety issues and food displays.
Not suitable for children with significant food allergies.
Redding Community Center
37 Lonetown Road
townofreddingct.org/parks-and-recreation
\$, R

Saturday, February 10

From Prep to Plate - Dairy Delights
2:30 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.
Hands-on butter making workshop with Registered Dietician Jessica Pelletier.
New Pond Farm Education Center
101 Marchant Road
newpondfarm.org
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HEALTH | WELLNESS

Thursday, January 25

Sleep Tips
12:30 p.m. - 1:30 p.m.
Heritage Center
37 Lonetown Road
Email mstillman@townofreddingct.org or call (203) 938-9725
R

Thursday, January 25

12 Tips to Manage Anxiety
6:30 p.m. - 7:30 p.m.
In person or Zoom
Bethel Public Library
189 Greenwood Avenue
Bethel
bethellibrary.org
R

Friday, January 26

It Takes a Village
9:30 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.
Parents and caregivers support group. All ages welcome.
Mark Twain Library
439 Redding Road
marktwainlibrary.org

Wednesday, January 31

Behavioral Health Roundtable Discussion
7:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.
Hosted by the Redding Prevention Council to help understand community's needs and trends in behavioral health.
In person and Zoom
Mark Twain Library
439 Redding Road
marktwainlibrary.org
R

HOLIDAY

Sunday, February 4

Wilton Chamber of Commerce's Winter Carnival
12:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.
Ice sculptures, bonfire, refreshments, carriage rides, and more.
Wilton Town Green
101 Old Ridgefield Road
Wilton
wiltonchamber.com/events

Saturday, February 10

Valentines for Veterans
1:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.
Make cards with the West Redding Fire Department for military heroes.
West Redding Firehouse
306 Umpawaug Road
Registration recommended at resident@westreddingfiredepartment.org
R

NATURE

Saturday, February 10

Winter Tracking and Tree Identification Walk
10:30 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.
Woodcock Nature Center
56 Deer Run Road
Wilton
woodcocknaturecenter.org
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Tuesday, February 13

Rewilding Your Yard
11:00 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.
New Pond Farm Education Center
101 Marchant Road
newpondfarm.org
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RELIGIOUS SERVICES

Bethlehem Lutheran Church
Sundays at 10:00 a.m. (in person) or 10:15 a.m. (Zoom)
44 Portland Avenue
bethlehemplutheranct.org

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

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

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

Long Ridge United Methodist

Sundays at 11:00 a.m.
201 Long Ridge Road
Danbury
longridgeumc.com

Sacred Heart / St. Patrick Parish

Sacred Heart Church:
Saturday Vigil Mass: 4:00 p.m.
Saturday Eucharistic Adoration: 6:00 p.m.
Sunday Mass: 9:00 a.m. & 10:30 a.m.
12:00 noon LATIN
Weekday Mass: Tuesdays and Thursdays at 8:30 a.m.
Wednesday 6:00 p.m. LATIN
30 Church Street
St. Patrick Church:
Saturday Vigil Mass: 5:30 p.m.
Sunday Mass: 8:30 a.m. & 10:30 a.m., 5:00 p.m.
Weekday Mass: Monday - Friday at 8:30 a.m.
Mondays and Thursdays Eucharistic Adoration: 7:00 p.m.
169 Black Rock Turnpike
sacredheart-stpat.org

SPECIAL PROGRAMS

Thursday, January 25

Fine Wine or Sour Grapes? Let's Talk About Aging
1:30 p.m. - 2:30 p.m.
Co-sponsored by the Commission on Aging
Mark Twain Library
439 Redding Road
marktwainlibrary.org/calendar
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Thursday, January 25

A Black Revolutionary War Experience
6:30 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.
Watch history come to life with historian Kevin Johnson.
Mark Twain Library
439 Redding Road
marktwainlibrary.org/calendar
R

Thursday, January 25

Trash Talk
7:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.
Learn how to reduce waste, save money, and help the planet.
New Pond Farm Education Center
101 Marchant Road
newpondfarm.org
R

Thursday, January 25

National Charity League Prospective Member Social
7:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.
For mothers with a daughter in 6th-9th grade.
The Redding Roadhouse
406 Redding Road
nationalcharityleague.org/chapter/ReddingArea

Tuesday, January 30

ChatGPT: How It's Changing the World
7:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.
In person and Zoom
Mark Twain Library
439 Redding Road
marktwainlibrary.org
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Thursday, February 1

Scrabble Tips: Experts Share Strategies
7:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.
Mark Twain Library
439 Redding Road
marktwainlibrary.org
R

MEETINGS

Tuesday, January 30

Redding Board of Education Joint Meeting with Region 9 Board of Education
7:00 p.m.
Joel Barlow High School
100 Black Rock Turnpike
er9.org

Monday, February 5

Park and Recreation Commission
7:00 p.m.
Redding Community Center
37 Lonetown Road
townofreddingct.org

Monday, February 5

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

Tuesday, February 6

Georgetown Fire District Meeting
5:00 p.m.
61 Redding Road
townofreddingct.org

Tuesday, February 6

Redding Board of Education Budget Workshop
6:00 p.m.
John Read Middle School / Community Room
486 Redding Road
er9.org

Tuesday, February 6

Redding Board of Education
7:00 p.m.
John Read Middle School / Community Room
486 Redding Road
er9.org

Tuesday, February 6

Conservation Commission
7:00 p.m.
Old Town House
23 Cross Highway
townofreddingct.org

Thursday, February 8

Gilbert and Bennett Wire Mill Advisory Committee
6:00 p.m.
Zoom
townofreddingct.org

Thursday, February 8

Redding Fire District #2 Commissioners Meeting
7:00 p.m.
West Redding Firehouse
306 Umpawaug Road
townofreddingct.org

Tuesday, February 13

Redding Fire District #1
7:00 p.m.
Redding Ridge Firehouse
186 Black Rock Turnpike
townofreddingct.org

Tuesday, February 13

Planning Commission
7:30 p.m.
Town Hall / Hearing Room
100 Hill Road
townofreddingct.org

Wednesday, February 14

Commission on Aging
9:00 a.m.
Heritage Center
37 Lonetown Road
townofreddingct.org

Wednesday, February 14

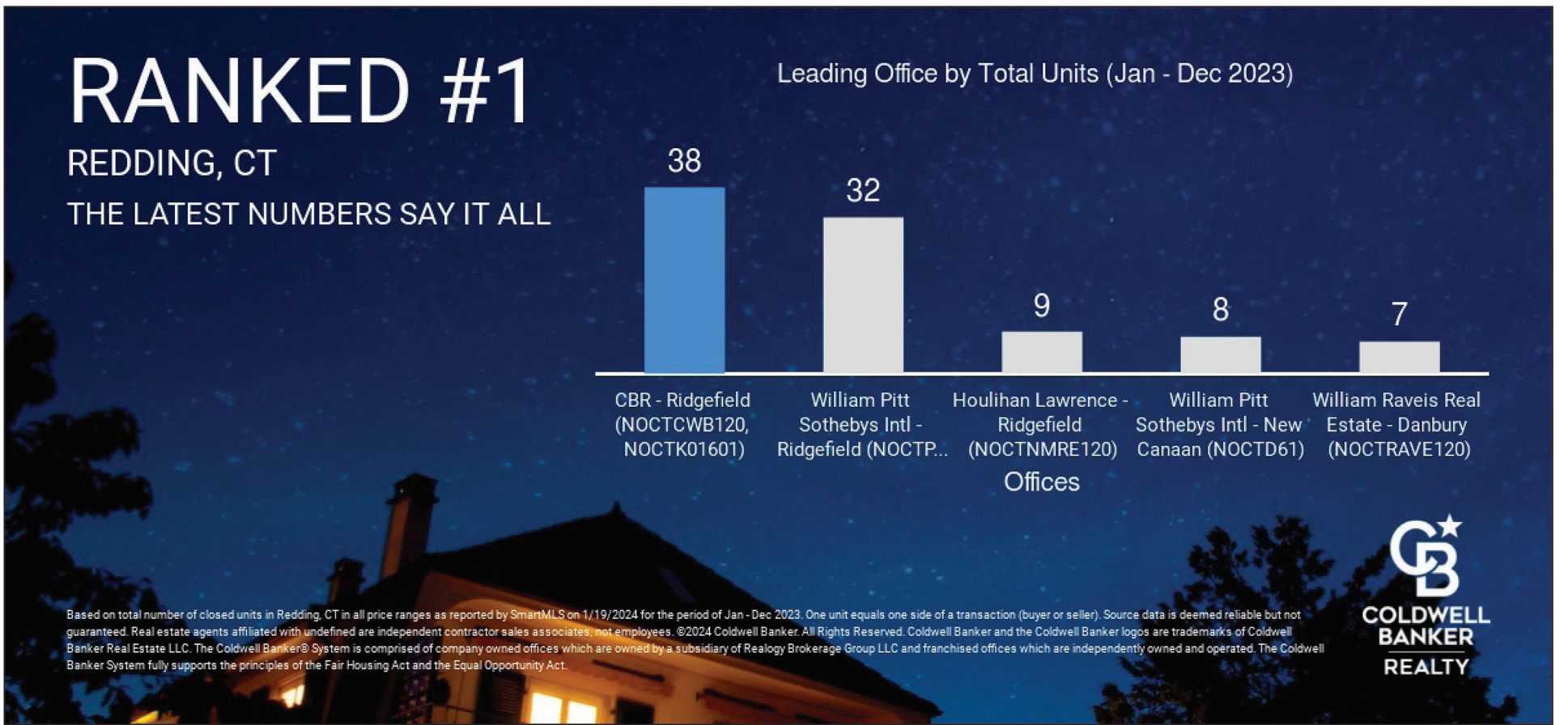
Zoning Commission
7:30 p.m.
Town Hall / Hearing Room
100 Hill Road
townofreddingct.org

*Note: Town offices will be closed on Monday, February 19 for Presidents Day.

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