

# Lonetown Road dig promises future finds

By Rob Sample

The backyard of a house on Lonetown Road recently became the site of an archaeological "dig" – yielding no blockbuster finds but offering the potential of more future discoveries.

The dig took place at 232 Lonetown Road, the home of longtime Redding residents Robert and Carole MacInnes. During the summer of 2020, Robert unearthed 11 artifacts while digging up rocks to create a backyard garden. Those 11 objects drew the interest of State Archaeologist Sarah Sportman, who determined they dated back approximately 11,000 years to what is known as the Paleo-Indian era.

The timing of the dig was rather appropriate: Sportman and a team of students and other volunteers from University of Connecticut descended on the MacInnes property in late October. With Native American Heritage Month taking place

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Photo by Jessie Wright

A house decked out in holiday splendor on Black Rock Turnpike. If you have a photo you'd like to see featured here, e-mail [editor@reddingsentinel.org](mailto:editor@reddingsentinel.org).

# Annual Art Show turns Library into gallery

By Lisa Goldstein



Photo by Lisa Goldstein

All next week, art enthusiasts can view and buy special works at the annual Mark Twain Library Juried Art Show. The Library will be transformed into an art gallery from

December 7-15, its walls and additional panels adorned with an array of vastly talented works by local and world-renowned artists.

"Whether you're an avid collec-

tor or a first-time buyer, this show offers a unique blend of art appreciation and community support – making it a truly special event," said Exhibition Co-Chair Melinda Shea. "Plus, with items available both in-gallery and online, there's no excuse not to find that perfect piece to add to or start your collection."

In its 52nd year, the Mark Twain Library Art Show is a juried exhibition that raises much-needed funds for Redding's beloved community hub, the Mark Twain Library. Artwork is judged and juried into the show by contemporary American painter and Redding neighbor, David Allen Dunlop, who also serves as the Juror of Awards.

The art on display and for sale includes original paintings, draw-

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# REDDING'S BIG OUTDOORS

## Hike back in history

Winter Walk at Putnam Memorial State Park

By Pamela Brown



Photo by Jessie Wright

Each December, the Friends and Neighbors of Putnam Park (FANS) put on a hike with a historical twist – the annual Winter Walk, which allows community members to trace the path Continental soldiers took during the winter encampment of 1778.

This year, the Winter Walk takes place on Saturday, December 7 at 11:00 a.m. at Putnam Memorial State Park. "The Winter Walk has been an annual tradition since about 2000. For many years it was led

by Dan Cruson, Newtown's Town Historian and a former teacher at Joel Barlow High School, then it passed to T. G. Henderson, who passed it to me in 2018," said Ellery Thomas Leary, Park Historian and President of FANS. The event is for adults and children of all ages. According to Leary, there's no rain date, but the event has been held with snow on the ground more than once. Admission is free, but donations to support the park are welcome.

With a wealth of historical information on the encampment, Leary is able to keep the presentation captivating and entertaining. "I highlight different themes every year to keep it interesting for those who return year after year. Last year, I spoke about five different people from the 1778-9 encampment, three of whom we learned about through the Forgotten Voices of the American Revolution National Park Service grant project. I'm returning to that format, but focusing on a few different people," he explained. The presentation will draw on

both historical and archaeological research. "I'll also be sharing what we've learned from the latest phase of archaeological research in the Park, much of which has never been shared before."

The Walk, focusing on the Revolutionary War era, kicks off with a one-mile walking tour of the Continental soldiers' encampment after their arrival in 1778. Attendees will see the visible remains of the soldiers' dwellings that are still on-site at the park. "Though it depends on the walking pace of the crowd, it tends to take about an hour for everyone to traverse the mile-long gravel loop, with five stops to listen to different parts of the tour," explained Leary. "We want to spark interest in local history. As we approach the 250th anniversary, I want to inspire people through the stories of those who served in the Revolutionary War and the townspeople who were affected by a military camp setting up in their neighborhood. It's also

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# Town reaches \$2 million settlement over state pension claims

By Jessie Wright

Town leaders have reached a settlement with the Connecticut State Employees Retirement Commission (SERC) after SERC claimed all Town employees must be enrolled in the State's public pension plan and "several years" of back contributions were owed.

Connecticut's Municipal Employees Retirement System (CMERS) is the public pension plan provided by the State for participating municipalities' employees. CMERS covers municipal employees in 107 communities throughout Connecticut, including 46 full-time Redding employees as of last year. It is a defined-benefit plan, which the Federal Department of Labor defines as one that promises a monthly benefit at retirement based on factors such as salary and service.

Some full-time employees in Redding are covered instead by defined-contribution plans, akin to 401(k) plans, which are linked to individual investment accounts. It is those employees that SERC has claimed should have instead been enrolled in CMERS.

"The Town respectfully disagrees and believes that it has, at all times, acted properly," according to a statement from First Select-woman Julia Pemberton's office. "However, in the spirit of fostering a positive resolution and maintaining positive relationships with its employees and the CMERS, the Town has engaged in a constructive dialogue with SERC to reach an amicable and fair resolution."

The settlement, which was approved by the Board of Selectmen on Thursday, November 14 after a joint meeting with the Board of Finance (Pemberton recused herself from both the discussions and the vote), would roll over funds from the defined contribution plan into CMERS, and the Town would then make a cash payment to account for some of CMERS claimed losses, not to exceed \$2 million. SERC members voted unanimously on Thursday, November 21 to approve and execute the agreement.

A town meeting vote, scheduled for Monday, December 16 at 7:00 p.m. at Town Hall, is required to authorize that payment. The funds would be spent from the Town's unassigned fund balance.

"The proposed settlement is budgeted for, minimizes financial impact to our operations, and will not result in a tax increase," noted Ward Mazzucco, Board of Finance Chair.

The Town was represented by Pullman & Comley, LLC. Town Counsel Steven J. Stafstrom, Jr. added, "While the Town's actions are defensible, there was risk that the Town could have faced a judgment of hundreds of thousands of

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EDITORIAL

‘Tis the season to slow down

On Thanksgiving Day, firefighters from all three Redding fire departments assisted at a massive house fire in Weston that destroyed an entire home – reports noted all 40 people who were inside celebrating the holiday thankfully escaped without injury. The event made headlines in several national news outlets, striking a chord with those across the country imagining themselves in this family’s shoes.

Emergency responders battled the blaze for hours, facing dangerous conditions and structural collapse. One line in the Weston Fire Department’s press release on the disaster stuck out:

“In addition, a vehicle drove over the water supply hose on Weston Road, damaging the line, which completely stopped the flow of water for several minutes.”

Who knows if that lost time was a deciding factor in how much of the home was ultimately destroyed. We also don’t know why a driver, heading through an active emergency scene, would proceed over in-use equipment – were they distracted? Lost? Confused? Late to their own Thanksgiving celebrations?

That same morning, my husband had stopped by the Caraluzzi’s in Bethel to pick up a pack of dinner rolls after my homemade version had failed to rise the night before. The parking lot of a grocery store the morning of Thanksgiving was, as expected, a zoo. In the middle of the hustle and bustle, he witnessed a driver pull out of a parking spot and try to zip around a corner for a quick exit – hitting a shopper, who went up onto the vehicle’s hood.

Again, thankfully, it seemed the woman wasn’t injured (though my husband said her holiday spirit seemed altogether gone after the ordeal).

The holidays can bring packed schedules, traveling hassle, and year-end responsibilities. When the stress mounts and time feels short, we would all do well to slow down, put things in perspective, and remember the stakes may be higher than checking off our Christmas lists. ■

Planners give positive referral for trail easement

By Rocco Valluzzo

In a unanimous decision at its November 26 meeting, the Planning Commission made a positive referral to the Board of Selectmen for a permanent easement on the Town-owned Bruzelius Trail at 40 Dayton Road.

The easement would provide access to the 110-acre Granskog property, which can then be purchased by the Nature Conservancy through a combination of private funding and a Connecticut Open Space Watershed Land Acquisition (OSWA) grant.

A condition of these (OSWA) grants is that parking must be provided close to the access of the trail – in this case, a sliver of land between two residential parcels in

the middle of Ledgewood Drive.

At the request of The Nature Conservancy, First Selectwoman Julia Pemberton wrote a letter to the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP), asking the state to accept the parking area currently existing at the Bruzelius Trail trailhead. Despite being a dirt lot with room for only one vehicle, it could meet the requirement that gives access to Town-owned open space and connects Redding open space land to Devil’s Den.

Should DEEP accept the proposal, the matter must go to a town meeting for approval in accordance with state statutes. ■

LEGAL NOTICES

NOTICE OF REDDING SPECIAL TOWN MEETING

The Legal Voters in the Town of Redding, Connecticut, and those entitled to vote therein are hereby warned and notified to meet at the Special Town Meeting to be held on Monday, December 16, 2024, at 7:00 p.m. at the Redding Town Hall for the following purposes:

1) To consider and vote upon the State Employees Retirement Commission (SERC) settlement.

To do any and all things legal and necessary to accomplish the above-named purpose and to take any other action that may legally and properly come before the meeting. ■

*Redding Board of Selectmen:  
Julia Pemberton, Margaret O'Donnell, Michael Thompson*

At a Special Town Meeting held on November 18, 2024 it was unanimously voted to (1) accept Costa Lane as a town road; (2) expend remaining ARPA funds for town capital purchases; and (3)

create a Historic District Study Committee. ■

*Michele R. Grande, Town Clerk  
November 27, 2024*

The Redding Zoning Board of Appeals has scheduled a public hearing via Zoom on Tuesday December 17, 2024 at 7:00 p.m. to review and possible vote on the following applications.

**1. Application #12-01-24 - 12 Old Mailcoach Road** (Assessor’s Map and Lot #29 &-#19): Owner: Christina Calzolari: Requesting a Reasonable Accommodation under the Americans with Disabilities Act (FHA 42 USC SS3601-3631 and/or ADA 42 USC 12101-12213) to place a generator on our preexisting non-conform-

ing lot. This is necessary due to my husbands health condition.

**2. Application #12-02-24 – 41 Ledgewood Road** (Assessor’s Map and Lot #43 & #11): Owner: Jonah Trout & Robert Busby: Contractor Dylan Hughes, 110 Sanfordtown Road: Requesting a variance to reduce side yard setback from 40’ feet to 10’ feet for a 22’ x 14’ single car garage. Redding Zoning Regulations Section 4.6. Variance requested is 30’ feet. ■

*Elizabeth Williams – Chairman,  
Redding Zoning Board of Appeals*

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

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

To the Editor,

For most of us in peaceful Redding, our interactions with the local police are few and fleeting, usually traffic-related. And except for a rare emergency, perhaps they’re too easy to take for granted.

This passed my mind last week when my husband and I had a minor problem that I presented to Chief O’Donnell. My husband laughed at me for even thinking of going to the police – but I went ahead because, hey, you never know. And what a positive experience.

Chief O’Donnell read my letter and asked me to meet with an officer. I sat down later in the day and my complaint was treated seriously. He contacted the other party and wrote up a report.

I can’t say how this will be resolved, but that’s not why I’m writing this letter. My point is, the Redding Police listened to me, treated me respectfully, and helped to clarify the facts in my complaint which, for us, was very useful.

Bottom line: Redding’s police made me feel better, and that was no small thing. So, thank you, guys. Your help was greatly appreciated! ■

Alice Garrard  
Portland Avenue

Boggan is new Director of Health

By Rocco Valluzzo

The Board of Selectmen appointed Ryan Boggan, MPH as the Town’s Director of Health at its Monday, November 18 meeting.

Currently Danbury’s full-time acting Associate Director of Environmental Health, Boggan will work part-time in Redding on Tuesdays and Fridays. His salary will be covered by the Town’s workforce development grant through the Connecticut Department of Public Health.

“We were very fortunate that we were able to meet Ryan,” said First Selectwoman Julia Pemberton.

“We think he will be a real asset to the town.”

Redding has been operating without a Director of Health since Dr. Lawrence Leibowitz stepped down several months ago. Redding has a full-time health sanitarian, Christopher Wegrzyn, who is currently working towards his MPH (Master of Public Health) degree. Connecticut requires municipal directors of health to have either MD or MPH degrees.

“I’m excited to work with Chris to fill some state-mandated requirements, take a look at some

community health offerings that may be able to be expanded, and have some discussions with Chris about how I can help support him in the environmental health role,” Boggan said.

A native of Danbury, Boggan graduated from Danbury High School and the University of Connecticut with a degree in environmental science. For the last 15 years, he has served in various capacities with the Danbury and Bethel health departments. He completed his MPH degree at New York Medical College in 2015. ■

POLICE BLOTTER

Police activity from November 12 – 24 | By Donna Christopher

Officers assisted in 13 medical and seven fire emergencies. They also assisted nine operators of disabled motor vehicles. One firearms permit was processed.

**Identity Theft**

On November 14, someone reported her I.D. stolen, followed by an attempt to open a bank account in her name. The investigation remains open.

On November 22 someone reported a stolen identity and several credit cards opened using her name.

**Traffic**

Police stopped 13 motor vehicles on town and state roads. No further information was made available.

On November 12, a vehicle backed into another vehicle’s front bumper in the Redding Elementary School parking lot, causing minor

damage to the front bumper. There were no injuries.

On November 13, a vehicle rolled through a stop sign at the intersection of Diamond Hill Road and Route 53, striking a vehicle that had already passed through the intersection. There were no injuries. The driver received a warning for failure to grant the right of way at a stop sign.

On November 16, the Newtown Fire Department reported that one of its fire trucks traveling northbound on Poverty Hollow Road scraped the side of a truck while passing over a narrow bridge. The fire truck was returning to Newtown from Redding, as it had responded to a mutual aid request to assist with an active brush fire. There were no injuries.

On November 20, a vehicle was traveling northbound on Route 107/Dayton Road when a deer ran into

the vehicle’s path of travel, was struck, then ran off into the woods.

On November 22, a vehicle stopped in the roadway on Redding Road/Route 53 for a fallen tree was rear-ended by another vehicle. There were no injuries. The second driver was issued an infraction ticket for following too close.

On November 22, a driver traveling southbound on Pinetree Road in a very narrow section of the roadway pulled over to let another vehicle pass, then struck a rock ledge in the shoulder damaging the vehicle’s rim and tire. There were no injuries.

On November 23, a vehicle went off the road on a sharp curve on Stepney Road. The driver was issued a warning for traveling too fast for slippery road conditions. There were no injuries. ■

Town reaches \$2 million settlement over state pension claims / continued from page 1

dollars more at trial. This proposed settlement provides predictability and is fair and just to our employees and taxpayers.”

CMERS has been the subject of proposed reforms in the last year,

after surging costs hit municipalities across Connecticut. In 2017, the fund had almost 92 percent of the funding needed to meet future obligations, but that number dropped to 69 percent by 2023, prompting a

2024 rate hike. That mandatory increase hit Redding with a two-point increase, unexpectedly raising that budget line item by \$120,000 for fiscal year 2023-24. ■

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# Community Center walking path steps forward

By Rocco Valluzzo

Confident that the Town can secure funding for the Redding Community Center walking path project, the Board of Selectmen agreed to move forward with the project at its November 18 meeting.

After applying for and receiving a roughly \$204,000 Small Town Economic Assistance Program (STEAP) grant from the state in 2022, the Town then formed the Walking Path Working Group within the Park and Recreation Commission and has provided a \$65,000 matching grant. Since then, the Town has engaged Stantech for the design, engineering, and project management of the path.

There are now three different design options under consideration. The preferred design, however, exceeds the original budget estimate of \$268,000 by about \$33,000. This overage represents actual improve-

ments to the plans to deal with slope issues and routing around the ball field backstop and dugouts and also would make the path more enjoyable to users.

The \$301,400 estimated cost also does not include the \$29,000 that is contractually committed to Stantech for design and engineering, bringing the total project cost to about \$330,000.

“Our contribution to the project would essentially be doubled to accomplish what the committee feels is really the best option,” said First Selectwoman Julia Pemberton. “We have to identify the funding for the \$60,000. We haven’t chosen where the source funds would come from.”

Redding has \$270,000 in Connecticut Local Capital Improvement Program (LoCIP) money

that can be used for local capital improvements. It can access up to \$100,000 without the need for voter approval.

Finance Director Jim Sanders noted that one of the appropriations at the Town’s budget referendum was for the new roof at the Community Center, and the current bid for that project is coming in at approximately \$80,000 less than what was appropriated. If the changes to the path project design are important to the Board of Selectmen, Sanders said there probably are funding sources to cover them.

“We feel confident we can then identify the best possible solution,” said Pemberton. “Let’s hope that when this goes out to bid that it’s in a favorable environment, and maybe we come in lower than the number that’s here.” ■

# Municipal programs like Extended Day offer options in challenging childcare environment

By Donna Christopher

Challenges facing families in search of affordable, flexible childcare have been the topic of statewide conversations in recent years. Connecticut ranks third in the country for highest childcare costs. Governor Ned Lamont’s Blue Ribbon Panel on Child Care unveiled last year a five-year strategic plan for prioritizing equitable access to early care and education.

While licensed early education and childcare centers are state regulated and overseen by the Connecticut Office of Early Childhood, many municipalities offer programs that operate outside that system, providing parents with options for care outside of school hours.

Most of the staff are Joel Barlow High School students. Some Extended Day staff also work at RES as certified paraprofessionals. They are available to students who need one-on-one assistance.

While municipal programs are not regulated by the state, Redding has protocols in place to ensure students’ safety. All hired staff receive a background check. They are interviewed by McNelis to determine their suitability for the program.

McNelis works on-site every day. He documents cases in which a child is sick or injured. If deemed necessary, parents are called immediately.

When it gets dark, the children go inside and typically utilize the RES cafeteria during pick-up time. Parents park and then go inside to pick up their children after being verified on the authorized pick-up list.

Redding’s flexible after-school program for children in kindergarten to fourth grade, called Extended Day RES, allows parents to sign their children up for one to five days of after-school care. The program is run by the Park and Recreation Department.

Parents have the option to enroll a child by signing up by noon the day before an Extended Day is needed. The cost is \$27 per day with a one-time registration fee of \$35. Current enrollment in the program is 115 children; because of the tailored scheduling option, daily participation varies and can be anywhere from 40 to 60 students.

McNelis oversees all pick up. He said that even for small reasons, he likes to talk daily to parents so they can get a snapshot of what might have happened at Extended Day. “The last thing I want is a kid to go home and say ‘this and this happened’, for parents to be blindsided. I’ve got to communicate and make sure that all parties are on the same page,” he said.

If there’s ever a suspicion of child abuse or neglect, staff reports it to the Connecticut State Department of Children and Families (DCF). “We are all mandated reporters,” said Deelia Wadsworth, the Assistant Director of Park and Recreation responsible for Extended Day programming. “We would report it to DCF. It would involve Rob (Blick), me, Julia (Pemberton), and everyone at work.”

Under Connecticut General Statutes §17a-101a, mandated reporters are required to report or cause a report to be made when, in the ordinary course of their employment or profession, they have reasonable cause to suspect or believe that a child under the age of 18 has been abused, neglected or is placed in imminent risk of serious harm.

“We pride ourselves in the flexibility of the program,” said Jonathan McNelis, who joined as the program’s director in September. He has a three-year background in extended day programming.

Extended Day operates at its home base of Redding Elementary School for 90% of the time. The children utilize the school’s playground and outdoor areas and have access to the Community Center if they need it.

This applies to all the staff.

“Paraprofessionals work for the schools and are certified as such. The high school students receive training, and they’re made aware that they are legally responsible and how to handle if a child says something (happened) to them,” Wadsworth said.

The program also follows “no one-on-one” guidelines, so that a child is never alone with one teacher.

“We have a wonderful group of caring staff members who are very understanding of the kids and their needs. We try to be welcoming of all their needs and be available to all the parents in the community,” Wadsworth said.

“We have a fabulous staff,” McNelis agreed. “It’s awesome. The staff rotates depending on the number of children in the program. We have a good ratio that changes, but anywhere from one-to-four to one-to-eight almost every single day.” ■

Lonetown Road dig promises future finds / continued from page 1



Photo by Robert MacInnes

A team of seven people, led by State Archaeologist Dr. Sarah Sportman, conducted a dig recently in a backyard on Lonetown Road.

each November, they were primed to unearth a trove of Native American history.

Alas, that did not happen. “We went back [to the MacInnes house] and did the testing on October 22 – but we didn’t find much of interest,” said Sportman. “I do think there is an early period site on the property, though probably not in the area where we were digging.”

The dig team uncovered dust and pieces of what were likely shards of rock that resulted from the creation of Paleo-Indian tools and projectiles. These were used, in turn, for hunting birds and wild animals by the first inhabitants of Quinnetukut – the Pequot and Mohegan name for Connecticut.

Sportman noted that the team was on site for just one day, affording it a short time for discovery. The team consisted of several archaeologists and a half-dozen interested volunteers. They dug approximately one dozen 50-centimeter holes (roughly 20 inches) in a grid where the holes were spaced 10 feet apart.

“They sifted everything they dug up,” said MacInnes, “washing and testing it in the process.”

Archaeologists have estimated the Paleo-Indian age to have

spanned from approximately 12,000 to 25,000 years ago. Early humans lived in caves or simple huts during this period, which became more advanced over time. MacInnes’s own house dates to 1790; it was built on property originally owned by Redding founder John Read.

Because his property encompasses a depression between two hills, MacInnes has theorized that it was a natural passageway for wildlife – particularly caribou, who trod this low spot in their search of water. As a result, it was a good spot for encampments by Native American hunters.

Likewise, Sportman said she has no doubt the property was once the site of a very old Native American settlement – but that further knowledge will require further digging. “People don’t realize that this landscape has been occupied before us for more than 12,000 years – and Native Americans were found all over the State of Connecticut,” she said.

The 11 artifacts MacInnes discovered in the summer of 2020 were later confirmed to be Paleo-Indian Clovis points. Such

artifacts have been uncovered in about 1,200 North American locations since the first was identified in 1920. The name “Clovis” refers to the civilization of native Central and North Americans dating to 11,000 BC.

“What we found in October were the byproducts of Native-American toolmaking, but no more tools themselves,” said Sportman. Of significance, MacInnes discovered the 11 artifacts while turning over soil in a garden area. Sportman suspected that this area was cultivated repeatedly over centuries for agricultural purposes – by both Native Americas and the Colonial settlers who arrived later.

“We know there’s something there – it’s just that there were no major finds in the areas where we dug our holes,” said Sportman. “I know Mr. MacInnes would like us to come back and do a more extensive dig, which we might do in the spring of next year.”

Redding has proved to be a prime spot for archaeological exploration, she added, and she commended town leadership and residents for caring about the area’s history. “Redding has been shown to have had a pretty involved pre-contact [before Colonial settlement] history,” Sportman said. “The town has been very interested in and supportive of our work.”

“One of the archaeologists mentioned that on a dig he discovered a fire pit right away – but that such a find is very unusual,” said MacInnes. “(These) sites are often spread out over large areas. That makes these kinds of digs hit or miss.”

What’s more, archaeologists often make significant discoveries years after their original excavations of a site. “The team knows what it’s looking for, but it’s going to take some effort to find it,” said MacInnes. ■





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SPORTS

Falcons finish on winning note

Football | By Rocco Valluzzo



Photo by Rocco Valluzzo

Joel Barlow High's Jack Hall (20) gets some help from his teammates in bringing down Weston's Torin Cosgrove in the annual Thanksgiving game on Wednesday, November 27. Barlow won 48-13.

Having finished the toughest part of its schedule, the Joel Barlow High varsity football team would turn things around in its annual Thanksgiving game against Weston last week.

The Falcons, who had lost their last three contests to unbeaten opponents, had an easier time on Wednesday, November 27. Despite not qualifying for the state Class SS playoffs to defend its state title, the Falcons still had plenty of incentive, securing a 48-13 win over the hosts to secure bragging rights and end the season on a winning note.

It was Barlow's fourth straight win in the annual holiday contest, which has been played every year since 1996 (except 2020).

Never trailing, the Falcons went to work on their first series. Following a short punt, they took over on the Weston 41-yard line and capped off the drive with a 19-yard touchdown run by Scott Romano. Joey Comis kicked the extra point

and Barlow led 7-0.

Barlow's defense again forced the Trojans to punt on their next series, setting up another score by the visitors. On first down, quarterback Jack Gilbert's 51-yard run was good for a touchdown and with 7:12 left in the first quarter the Falcons led 14-0.

Gilbert soon got the ball back for his team when he intercepted a pass on the Trojan 36. However, a couple of penalties pushed the Falcons back into their own territory, and they were forced to punt. Having little luck moving the ball on the ground, Weston took to the air with quarterback Tim Martin completing several passes, including a 49-yard one to Jack Olsen that was good for a touchdown, cutting the lead to 14-7.

"They do want to pass more than they want to run," said Barlow Head Coach T.J. Cavaliere. "I thought we did a really nice job of stopping the run early on, which

made them think they had to continue to throw."

A successful onside kick gave the Trojans the ball on the Falcon 48. Although Barlow would take over on downs, a fumble ended the threat on the Weston 39 early in the second quarter.

"It was a little bit of a sloppy game early on," said Cavaliere. "I think we kind of did a better job as the game went on of putting things together."

Again taking over on downs, Barlow came up with another big play, this one a 52-yard touchdown run by Gilbert for a 21-7 lead with 7:31 left in the half.

The Falcons tacked on two more scores in the time remaining, the first on a 36-yard jaunt by Romano, and a two-yard run by Pierce Counter to give the visitors a 35-7 halftime lead.

Romano's 52-yard touchdown run started the second half on a strong note for Barlow, but Weston's Tyler Umhoefer returned the ensuing kickoff 78 yards to make it 42-13. It looked like the Falcons would answer on their next series, getting as far as the Trojan nine before they turned the ball over on downs.

Luke Bishop's interception at the Weston 19 set up the Falcons' final score, coming on a one-yard touchdown run by Dimo Galindo with 34 seconds left in the third quarter. Barlow's defense then took over, keeping Weston off the board in the time remaining.

Romano led Barlow with three touchdowns and 185 yards rushing. He also passed the 1,000-yard mark for the season and finished his high school career with more than 2,500. Gilbert had 166 yards rushing and two touchdowns in his final high school game. They are two of 16 seniors on this season's team.

Barlow finishes the season at 5-5. ■

“Redding Rakes” another home run for neighbors in need | Photos courtesy of James Fleming



Members of the Joel Barlow baseball team, led by coach Matt Griffiths, teamed up with members of Christ Church, Episcopal for another year of “Redding Rakes”. The initiative, organized by Christ Church's Mission Committee and Community Outreach, brought the volunteers to rake and clear leaves at 13 properties across town the week of November 15.

Redding's Big Outdoors: Hike back in history  
Winter Walk at Putnam Memorial State Park | continued from page 1

a fun opportunity for re-enactors to put on one final event for the year before things start up again in spring.”

Leary will be exploring the answers to several intriguing questions during the event, such as: How did the Continental Army feed 1,000 soldiers enough bread to keep them going in the dead of winter? What was the most unexpected condition treated at the military hospital in Danbury in 1779? What happened when a team of archaeologists explored a previously unknown site across from Philip's Cave, marked on an old map only as "The Magazine"?

The tour will be followed by a live re-enacted skirmish featuring local regiments, such as the 5th CT Regiment, 6th CT Regiment, 38th Regiment of Foot, and many others. The re-enactment does involve the use of black powder gun fire with blank rounds being fired, but the re-enactors are a safe distance from the spectators. “People have a better appreciation of what war looked like during the time of the

encampment, and they also get to end the event on an exciting note,” said Leary. Afterward, many re-enactors, including the artillery crew, stay for a meet-and-greet. During the event, the Visitor's Center will be closed, but they will have a special pop-up edition of the gift shop. “Due to new DEEP regulations, there will be few opportunities to browse our shop in the coming years, so now's the time if you have your eye on our book selection or our new Putnam Park hoodies,” he said.

Leary sees the Winter Walk as both educational and entertaining even for those who aren't history buffs. “Come and stretch your legs and your brain as you learn about the untold histories of the Redding Encampment,” he said. “I hope people walk away having had a fun time, while feeling like they've learned something interesting. I love it when people leave with more questions than they started with – hopefully they're inspired to explore their own local history and find new tales to tell.” ■

Unified Sports program forges connections on and off the field | By Anne Young Albanese

The Unified Sports program at Joel Barlow High School (JBHS) allows students with disabilities to participate in school sports while partnering with typical athletes to develop relationships through athletics. The program has changed over the years due to student needs and interests. The program started more than 10 years ago and typically runs from October through May.

Throughout its history, the program has offered co-ed activities such as soccer, basketball, theater, and art, and it has joined other schools for events such as Zumba. This year's program began with a soccer team in the fall, whose season has just ended. On November 22, the Unified Sports program hosted a homecoming dance and invited members from other schools in southwestern Connecticut. These are the teams that the competitors play on a regular basis, although there are also tournaments across the state. Basketball season will start in December and continue through the winter sports season. The spring sport has not yet been determined, but the administrators

are exploring a wiffle ball or kickball team. All teams are co-ed. The participants do not keep score so the students can concentrate on having fun.

The program at Barlow recently received a \$1,000 grant from the Connecticut Association of Schools. The grant will be used for a coach's stipend, transportation fees, uniforms, equipment, or supplies.

School administrators and coaches oversee the program, including JBHS Head of School Dr. Mario Almeida, ER9 Transition Coordinator Kristina Martorana, and special education teacher Amy Hannibal, and help encourage students to form connections through their love of sports.

“Just as with any sports team, there is quite a bit to manage in order to set up a successful season. Therefore, all three of us serve as coaches with individual responsibilities that play to each of our strengths,” said Hannibal. “It's been a wonderful collaboration, and we are excited to continue to expand our program and create more opportunities for our region

to connect and expand students' social opportunities and network.”

The athletes encourage one another and connect with their teammates on the field. The JBHS cheerleading team also cheers during their scrimmages throughout the season, facilitating crowd involvement and adding an extra layer of enthusiasm. The Unified Sports program is sponsored by the Connecticut Interscholastic Athletic Conference (CIAC), which was established in 1921 to mitigate the unsafe and abusive practices prevalent in high school sports in Connecticut.

The Special Olympics developed the Unified Sports program to build connections through sports. According to the Special Olympics website, “Special Olympics is dedicated to promoting social inclusion through shared sports training and competition experiences. Unified Sports joins people with and without intellectual disabilities on the same team. It was inspired by a simple principle: training together and playing together is a quick path to friendship and understanding.” ■

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# \$2,500 grant awarded to youth mental health club

By Anne Young Albanese

The Jordan Porco Foundation is committed to preventing suicide in the high school, college, and college entry student population. The Foundation’s initiatives raise awareness and share innovative programming to challenge the stigma around mental health and help-seeking and create open conversations about the prevalence of suicide and mental health issues in the young adult population.

Some of the supplies that the grant award will help secure will be utilized for the Mental Health Fair in May, which is Mental Health Awareness Month. The Fair will be held in the Upper Gym. All students attend during a specific class to ensure that every student in the building visits the Fair. Last year, the Fair was also open to the community in the evening during Barlowpalooza.

There is typically a variety of booths that support mental health, such as art and creativity, physical activity, and gratitude, which students will run. These all have interactive activities for the students. There is a mental health Bingo booth to educate students on mental health and wellness. The YMHFA also tries to have therapy dogs at the event. There is an adult-run booth, not only run by support staff at JBHS, but also by community members such as the Easton Town social worker, Easton’s Here to Help, and people from LIFT Wellness Group in Westport. The Fair focuses on resources available in and outside of school, including the Suicide and Crisis Lifeline 988, 211CT, and other resources. There is even a raffle incentive for students who attend all the booths to enter to win JBHS swag or a gift card. ■

Joel Barlow High School’s (JBHS) Youth Mental Health First Aid Club (YMHFA) has received a grant of \$2,500 from the One World Education Foundation. Mario Almeida, Head of School for JBHS and Assistant Superintendent noted that the funds will be used for the yearly cost of the Jordan Porco Foundation curriculum and supplies.

The One World Education Foundation funds student-led projects for ages seven to 17. These must connect to one of three core values: nurturing students’ connections to self, others, and the earth. One of the YMHFA club members applied for the grant.

“The YMHFA meets to increase education and awareness of mental health disorders and works to decrease the stigma of mental health disorders,” explained Maryanne Pieretti, one of the advisors for the YMHFA. “The students plan activities and programs for JBHS and the Easton and Redding communities. The programs and activities they plan focus on educating others about the common mental health challenges that adolescents may face, assisting a young person who may be struggling, and knowing when to connect them with an adult or professional assistance.” Caroline Morasco is a second advisor for the Club.



# Selectmen pause on Extended Day fee increase

By Rocco Valluzzo

Rather than raise fees for Park and Recreation’s Extended Day program mid-year, the Board of Selectmen opted to continue to work towards increasing enrollment as a method of offsetting costs.

The after-school program, which serves children in kindergarten through fourth grade, has experienced a drop in enrollment for the 2024-25 fiscal year. To help offset costs, the program had raised its fee to \$27 per day, which works out to \$540 per month for 20 days in the program.

Park and Recreation Director Rob Blick proposed that the daily rate be increased from \$27 to \$30, and the half-day rate would remain at \$34. Raising the rates an additional \$3 per day would bring the total to \$600 per family per month. The Park and Recreation Department also plans to increase the rates again next year.

“The price of the program is going to go up,” Blick said. “It’s how we do it that matters.”

A major expense of the program has been accommodating special needs students, who may need additional resources and staffing. While there had been a small number of special need students

in the program in previous years, there was a sizeable increase in enrollment this year.

“If we increase the fees in January, then we can phase in an increase,” Blick said. “If we wait until next fall, the rate increase would be greater. By doing so in January, we spread it out.”

The program has seen periodic enrollment increases in recent days after announcing special events, such as pumpkin carving in October. According to Blick, an additional four or five children signed up for the event. Blick argued that by raising the daily fee to \$30 and increasing enrollment by four more children, the program would be able to reach its target budget goal.

The Selectmen, however, decided against a rate increase after the holidays.

“Initially, I’m uncomfortable with a mid-year rate increase, just because people have set their budget,” said First Selectwoman, Julia Pemberton. “I don’t know if the difference from \$27 to \$30 is material enough that it really would make a difference. At least we know where we are. We’re trying to get our enrollment numbers up.” ■

# Barlow Beat

By Juliana Qiu

As the holiday season approaches, excitement is building at Joel Barlow High School, with a lineup of events that promises to bring the school community together in festive and meaningful ways.

To kick things off, the First Annual Reindeer Run is set for Saturday, December 7 at 11:00 a.m. This 5k race, benefiting the Joel Barlow High School Class of 2026, will take place on the school’s scenic cross-country course. Participants are encouraged to get creative with their clothing – whether that be reindeer antlers, festive hats, or holiday-themed attire! The race will be hand-timed by Barlow students, and results will be posted afterward. Be sure to register before December 6 for a fee of \$27.50. Check-in begins at 10:00 a.m. on Saturday, with the race starting at 11:00 a.m. Those who are interested in running can sign up via [runsignup.com/Race/CT/Redding/Joel-BarlowHighSchoolReindeerRun](https://runsignup.com/Race/CT/Redding/Joel-BarlowHighSchoolReindeerRun) to take part in this exciting event and support a great cause.

On Friday, December 20, students can look forward to the College Alumni Panel, which will be held during the Advisory period from 9:19 a.m. to 9:59 a.m. This session will feature a select group of Joel Barlow alumni who will share their college experiences and offer valuable insights to current students. Whether students are interested in taking on academic challenges, adjusting to campus life, or navigating extracurricular activities, the panel will provide an excellent opportunity to learn directly from those who have already walked the path to higher education.

Finally, the much-anticipated Holiday Recess begins on Saturday, December 21 and runs through Wednesday, January 1. During the break, students will have a chance to unwind and enjoy quality time with family and friends, providing a welcome pause from the school routine. Whether one is celebrating the holidays, catching up on rest, or simply enjoying some time off, this break offers the perfect opportunity for all students to recharge. School will resume on Thursday, January 2, as Barlow prepares for a productive start to 2025. I wish everyone a joyful holiday season and a restful winter break.

With these exciting events on the horizon, December is shaping up to be a memorable month at Barlow. Mark your calendars for the Reindeer Run, attend the College Alumni Panel, and enjoy the well-deserved holiday break! For additional details regarding any of the information above, please visit Barlow’s official website at [jbhs.er9.org](https://jbhs.er9.org). ■

Juliana Qiu is a senior at Joel Barlow High School

# Barlow reaches the second stage of re-accreditation process

By Anne Young Albanese



A team of educators from New England are visiting Joel Barlow High School (JBHS) this week on December 4 and 5 to conduct an on-site Collaborative Conference visit. This is the second step in the 10-year re-accreditation process conducted by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) Commission on Public Schools.

Associate Principal Monica Kreuzer from Amity Regional High School in Woodbridge will chair the visiting team. The other team members are educators and administrators from Connecticut and Massachusetts, including assistant chair Dominique Galvez, a world language teacher at East Hampton High School in East Hampton; Katherine Howard-Bender, an assistant principal at Ludlow High School in Ludlow, MA; Danielle McCauley, a physical education teacher at Pomperaug Regional School District #15 in Southbury; and Kristen Mucinkas, an English teacher at Wethersfield High School in Wethersfield.

During their visit, the NEASC team members are observing classrooms and speaking with administrators, teachers, support staff, students, and parents. The visitors are also reviewing evidence to understand the values, core beliefs, and upcoming priorities and initiatives for the school. The team will compile a report outlining JBHS’s goals for the next two years to achieve in time for the 2026 decennial visit.

“We look forward to this visit and the team’s feedback. The visitors are also educators and are currently active leaders in their schools,” said Dr Mario Almeida, JBHS Head of School and Assistant Superintendent. “When they provide their report, they will give us commendations and recommendations that we can use for improving our school system over the next two years. I also want to thank our internal team, especially our steering committee members and our two NEASC chairs, Angela Staron, Humanities Department Chair, and Scott Reimold, School Counselor, for the efforts they made on this comprehensive report over the last 12 months.”

The NEASC accreditation review cycle is 10 years long. In two years, the NEASC team will visit JBHS again to determine the progress made since this week’s Collaborative Conference visit. The results of the second visit will determine the school’s accreditation. Almeida and the Region 9 Board of Education will receive feedback on changes to make at two and five-year intervals until the re-accreditation process begins again.

The NEASC is an independent, voluntary, non-profit membership organization that partners with more than 1,500 public, independent, and international schools in the United States and worldwide to assess, support, and promote high-quality education for all students through accreditation, professional assistance, and the pursuit of best practices. Founded in 1885, the NEASC is a globally recognized standard of excellence, and accreditation attests to a school’s high quality and integrity. According to the NEASC, they aspire to provide a process for meaningful, ongoing whole-school improvement while honoring the unique culture and context of each educational institution they support. ■

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# MUSIC NOTE

## Fa la la la la at Barlow’s Community Carol Sing

Wednesday, December 18 | By Pamela Brown



Start your vocal exercises to get ready for one of Redding’s crowd-pleasing seasonal concerts. Joel Barlow’s 14th annual Community Carol Sing will take place on Wednesday, December 18 at 6:30 p.m. in the high school auditorium. There is no entrance fee; donations are welcome to support the Barlow Performing Arts Boosters. The event is sponsored by the Tri-M Music Honor Society, a national honor society of the National Association for Music Education for student musicians.

“It’s a relaxed, family-friendly environment with lots of fun music. This event is perfect for people of all ages. There are songs that many people will recognize, such as *Let It Snow*, *Here Comes Santa Claus*, and *Chanukah, oh Chanukah*, as well as an appearance by Santa and a musical reading of *’Twas the Night Before Christmas*,” said Joel Barlow music teachers Gwynne Wittmann (vocal director) and Chris Breault (instrumental director), who are co-advisors for the Joel Barlow High School Chapter 6080 of the Tri-M Music Honor Society. The event introduces the community to performances that showcase Barlow students’ talents and hard work. “We’re also pleased to have the opportunity to spread some seasonal cheer and raise funds for Barlow Performing Arts Boosters,” Wittmann and Breault said. A reception will follow the event.

The Community Carol Sing is one of sophomore Sassy Wood’s favorite music events of the year. “It’s so much fun, because it’s a comfortable performance environment filled with spirit and cheer,” said Wood, who participated last year. “We get to dress in the spirit of the holidays, which adds a fun flair to the concert, although our music is still impressive and rehearsed. My favorite carol that we’re singing this year is *The First Noel*. Our choir already sounds so beautiful singing it.” Since joining choir, Wood has learned valuable skills and techniques. “Mrs. Wittmann is excellent at critiquing our work in order for us to improve, while keeping a fun and lighthearted energy in the classroom. Skills such as reading music, dynamics, rhythms, and other symbols become easier each year with Mrs. Wittmann.”

The concert is a wonderful experience for Kristina Stranik, a senior who will be performing in her fourth Community Carol Sing. “I love how this event brings together the community. I enjoy performing with various musicians, such as the jazz band, which typically has a separate concert from the Concert Choir during the year,” said Stranik. “Students are able to showcase their talents with one another. It fosters a musical community at Barlow, where people can

learn from each other and work together.” Her favorite song, *Sleigh Ride*, is performed by the concert band and alumni. “I love seeing graduated musicians and teachers on the stage playing and having fun.”

The concert will feature both the Barlow music and curricular ensembles – Concert Band, String Orchestra, Jazz Band, Concert Choir, and Chamber Singers – and the extra-curricular ensembles – Nothing But Treble and A Choired Taste – both pop-style a cappella groups. There are also opportunities for the audience members to join in.

“There are sing-along portions interspersed throughout the concert. Some of the songs are performances by a specific ensemble and some of the songs are intended for everyone to sing along. Lyrics to the songs will be projected onto a screen above the stage,” noted Wittmann and Breault. For two special performances, audience members are invited onstage to join the ensembles. “Singers with choral experience are invited to join the Concert Choir for the choral classic *Carol of the Bells* and instrumentalists are invited to join the Concert Band for Leroy Anderson’s *Sleigh Ride*,” they said.

Members of Tri-M also transform the auditorium into a festive space. There are 22 members of Tri-M, but the concert includes more than 100 students.

Sage Oliver, a senior, has been part of the choir since freshman year. “Performing is one of my favorite things to do. Once I’m up on stage or on the risers with the rest of the choir, I can forget everything else and do what I love,” said Oliver, who appreciates Wittmann’s guidance. “Mrs. Wittmann is a very enthusiastic and knowledgeable teacher. She has shaped both the person and musician I am today. (She) pushes us to become better musicians by tasking us with learning some pieces almost completely on our own, which is both scary and rewarding.” Oliver is looking forward to the concert. “It’s a cozy environment for everyone involved, and it’s fun to hang out with my friends before, during, and afterwards. The Carol Sing gives the community an opportunity to come together over a shared interest of the winter holidays (and music!), and I think it really emphasizes the importance of coming together to enjoy the arts.” ■

For more information or for any community members interested in performing with the ensembles, singers who need a refresher can e-mail Gwynne Wittmann at [gwittmann@er9.org](mailto:gwittmann@er9.org) and she will share a practice recording appropriate for your voice part; and instrumentalists can contact Chris Breault at [cbreault@er9.org](mailto:cbreault@er9.org)

# Churches mark Advent with festive, contemplative events

By Pamela Brown

As the countdown to Christmas begins, the four weeks of Advent (or “arrival”) have begun for those of the Christian faith. Local churches of different denominations are hosting special events for the community to reflect, honor, and reinforce faith, and help others prepare for the birth of Jesus.

### Tree Lighting Ceremony Georgetown Oratory of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus 30 Church Street

The splendor of the holiday will be illuminated for all to see at the Great Lawn of the Oratory on Saturday, December 7 at 5:30 p.m. The parish, which was established in 1881, has been presenting this event for over 30 years, according to Father Michael Clark. “Each year, we add a few hundred more lights. But we introduced a fun ceremony of Tree Lighting and Carols in December 2022. We always choose either the Feast of St Nicholas or the Immaculate Conception, as these are both important cultural holidays for Catholics,” he said.

The Ceremony includes a Prayer of Dedication, a blessing with incense and Holy water, and then the lighting of the tree. Afterward, the community is invited to sing Advent carols, enjoy hot mulled cider, and mince pies (an old English treat.) “The purpose is twofold: to bring the community together, and more importantly, to take a moment to recall the spiritual dimension of our festive season – that the heart of all our busy-making should be the welcome we prepare for Our Lord and Savior, who comes to us at Christmas in the manger of Bethlehem,” said Father Clark. “We exist as a place of contemplation for everyone, and our doors are always wide open to welcome all people of good will.”

### Cookie Wrap and Shoebox Decorating and Festival of Lessons and Carols Christ Church Episcopal Parish 184 Cross Highway

Christ Church invites the community to help spread Christmas

cheer and give back to those in need. On Saturday, December 14 from 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m., all are welcome to assemble cookie trays to give away and decorate shoeboxes that will contain Christmas gifts for unhoused people in shelters in Danbury.

On Sunday, December 15 at 9:00 a.m. Christ Church will then host a special Sunday worship service, “Festival of Lessons and Carols”, that will feature readings from Scripture and favorite Advent and Christmas carols. All are invited to join.

### Christmas Choir Concert Calvary Independent Baptist Church 711 Redding Road

This special evening choir concert on Sunday, December 22 at 6:00 p.m. will infuse all with the spirit of the season. The free concert is open to the public and will feature the Christmas cantata, *Celebrate the Savior*, from Majesty Music in Greenville, South Carolina. “We’ve been hosting this concert for some 20 years,” said Pastor Ken Brooks. The concert includes a reader’s theater drama presented by five members of the congregation that relates a story of faith and forgiveness, along with a selection of traditional and revitalized carols and new anthems sung by the church choir.

Following the concert will be a time to socialize while enjoying light refreshments and snacks. Pastor Brooks appreciates how the concert offers the congregation and the entire community a way to tell everyone else about the goodness of our Savior. “It’s a special time to celebrate the Savior and tell others about Him,” noted Brooks. “The community is warmly invited. This event has been well-attended in the past by folks from the Redding community, and we hope it will again be this year. We hope the people who attend will feel that they have been in a place of warmth and light and they will leave with the glow of the knowledge of God’s love demonstrated in Jesus Christ.”

### Live Nativity Christmas Pageant and Peace Program First Church of Christ, Congregational 25 Cross Highway

First Church will be presenting a variety of events to celebrate Advent. “It’s a special time for fellowship, deepening of the Christmas spirit, education, and sharing insights on intentional efforts underway to bring peace to our world,” said Reverend Dr. Dean Ahlberg. “Advent is a time set aside to prepare our hearts, minds, and homes for the celebration of Jesus’s birth. At First Church, we try to set the tone with seasonal decorations of our meetinghouse, candle lighting during worship, special music, and programs for all ages that stimulate the mind and touch the heart.”

On Saturday, December 14, First Church will again host their beloved Live Nativity Christmas Pageant at 5:00 p.m. (rain or snow date is Sunday, December 15). The live spiritual drama will take place on the church grounds and the cast will include First Church children and adults. “It’s an outdoor rendition of the Christmas story, featuring live animals and carols,” said Ahlberg. “I hope attendees come away with a closer connection to one another in community, to God, and to the stories of our faith.” Attendees can socialize and enjoy hot cider after the pageant in the Fellowship Hall.

Dr. Joel Lohr, President of Hartford International University for Religion and Peace (formerly Hartford Seminary) will preach the morning sermon at 10:00 a.m. on Sunday, December 15. Following worship, a gathering in the Fellowship Hall will allow attendees to meet and hear from three recent graduates of the HIU Master of Arts in International Peacebuilding program. The graduates came to Hartford from Zimbabwe, Lebanon, and Ghana, to live and learn in an interfaith, academic environment before returning to their respective homelands. The event is free and open to the public and refreshments will be served. ■

# A cabaret-style Christmas at Ridgefield Theater Barn

By Pamela Brown

Ridgefield Theater Barn will be placing audiences right in the middle of the holiday action with interactive, cabaret-style events to bring out the Christmas spirit.

The all-volunteer community theater will start its holiday programming with *A Christmas Carol Read & Sing Along*. The show features a reader’s theater adaptation of the Charles Dickens classic, *A Christmas Carol*, on Saturday, December 7 at 8:00 p.m. and Sunday, December 8 at 2:00 p.m.

The shows will feature cabaret-style seating at candlelit tables with audience members encouraged to join in either by singing along to festive tunes or participating in the play’s actions. Attendees are invited to bring their own food and beverage. Doors open one hour before showtime.

“It’s a wonderful opportunity for families and friends to come together, enjoy a classic, and play along,” said Pamme Jones, Executive Director. “The show is being presented in the style of a radio play. There will be actors, musicians, and Foley artists on the stage and patrons will be led by these talented group of actors and musicians while they join in the fun from their tables.” There will be costumes, props, and lyrics sheets at each table for audience members to use throughout the show. This is Ridgefield Theater Barn’s first time trying such a production, but Jones noted they hope it will become a

beloved tradition.

The production is deeply rooted in Dickens’s original text, including the songs. “Patrons should expect familiar Christmas carols and tunes. This is a great opportunity for families and friends to get together and enjoy a new holiday tradition,” Jones said, noting the theater has assembled a merry troupe of actors who have previously appeared on the Ridgefield Theater Barn stage, including Greg McLaughlin, Rob Mayette, Michael Valinoti, Clarissa Krasner, Lucas and Marshall Valinoti, Rick Hodder, Garrett Levine, Anne Testa, Susan Egginton, Lisa Cambridge-Mitchell, Jaime Babbitt, and David Fritsch. Music and sound effects will be handled by Claire Simard and Jones, respectively.

The following weekend, *Holiday Piano Bar: A Musical Cabaret* will transport audiences to a festive Manhattan club scene. Due to its spontaneous nature, the show is recommended for mature audiences. The event runs December 13 and 14 at 8:00 p.m. The show will feature live music, talented performers, unpredictable laughter, and good company and will be co-hosted by Jones and Jeffery Albanesi with accompaniment by Lisa Riggs Hobbs.

“It’s a perennial favorite and always a special event. For each Piano Bar, we invite a few singers ahead of time. We encourage everyone to embrace the holiday theme, but it is by no means a re-

quirement. We never know who is going to come and perform at a Piano Bar. This is what makes it so special and magical. This means it is a very spontaneous evening, with moments that run the gamut of emotions,” said Jones. “It’s a popular event we do several times a year and they always sell out. Audience members are encouraged to get up on stage and sing, and they always do! It is karaoke adjacent, but it’s not karaoke. We provide an accompanist and have the sheet music and lyrics to hundreds of songs. Many people bring their own sheet music, sometimes they bring their guitar.”

For both holiday events, Ridgefield Theater Barn’s unique space adds a layer of community spirit.

“Our mainstage space is intimate. When you come to see a performance here, you are IN it. We make the choice to lean into that intimacy, so by nature, anything you see at Ridgefield Theater Barn is, in a sense, interactive,” said Jones. “Presenting all our shows cabaret style also fosters that communal, interactive vibe. When we designed the expanded Ridgefield Theater Barn, we committed to keeping the theater small because it truly is a very special atmosphere.” ■

For more information and tickets, visit [ridgefieldtheaterbarn.org](http://ridgefieldtheaterbarn.org)

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# If trees could talk “Lighting Up!”

By Janice Rotchstein



The Redding Holiday Tree, seen in 1978 (left) and today (right)

Do you know the story behind Redding’s huge Holiday Tree?

Actually, there are many tales to be told.

**Humble beginnings:** Forty-six years ago, Reddingites joined with the Redding Garden Club to recognize Edith Pharr’s years of service as Civic Beautification Chairman. They decided to donate an evergreen in her memory and place a simple plaque at its base.

**Ground breaking:** Jim McNamara, founder of Redding Nursery, recommended a Colorado Blue Spruce for its hardiness and longevity. He and his then teenage son, Sean, planted the six-footer on the Town Green.

**First lighting:** On December 14, 1978, legendary land conservationist and First Selectwoman Mary Anne Guitar led the dedication with the Joel Barlow High School Choir singing carols. It was a simple event around a small tree with a few strands of lights, but to residents, it was magical.

**Changeover decorating:** By 1985, when the spruce grew too tall for the Garden Club to trim, McNamara took over. At first, an orchard ladder helped him do the job,

but as the hybrid kept growing, he tapped Knapp Tree Service. Working with the Park and Recreation Department, a crew now spends nearly two days fastening the hundreds of multi-colored LEDs. And no wonder: the tree stands 58-feet tall – only 16 feet shorter than the Norway Spruce erected this year in Rockefeller Center.

**Early circuitry:** Before the electrical current was hard-wired underground, power traveled through a series of extension cords from Town Hall. Former First Selectwoman Natalie Ketcham recalled crawling under the boughs, and waiting for a signal to make the final connection. One year, as she crept out from beneath the branches, a father holding his son remarked, “I don’t think the Mayor of New York does it that way”.

**Poignant memorializing:** Moments of remembrance have always been part of the ceremony. None was more heartrending than in 2001. To honor those lost on 9/11, the lights sparkled red, white, and blue.

**Switch flipping:** In 2023, a new ritual began. Citizens vied to turn on the juice by placing Silent

Auction bids at the Mark Twain Library’s Frog Folic. Inaugurating the rite was seven-year-old “Gigi” Todaro with aunts, uncles, friends, and her parents, Danielle and Angelo. Doing the honors this year will be nine-year-old Maddie Theodore, her “besties”, plus mom and dad: Andrea and Brian.

**Succession planning:** The latest custom: various smaller trees and plantings on our Green join the spruce in “lighting up”. Each is embellished by a local organization or family. The project is spearheaded by private citizen, Jacob Cedusky who envisions yet another tradition, sometime in the future: a Christmas Market on the Green.

Who knew that 46 years ago, a small evergreen would still be sparking ideas, new celebrations, and cherished memories?

*Special note: The 2024 Redding Holiday Tree Lighting starts at 3:30 p.m. on Saturday, December 7. ■*

*If you have a favorite tree for this column, send your suggestion to [reddingtreeconservancy@gmail.com](mailto:reddingtreeconservancy@gmail.com)*

# Community invited to help light the Town Green

By Rob Sample

The holidays are a magical time for young and old alike – and they are often made even more so by abundant, dazzling lights.

Redding resident Jacob Cedusky is a self-described aficionado of holiday lights and the festive vibe they create – so each year, he carefully decorates his own house and helps to light up the Redding Town Green. Last year, he had a brainstorm: Why not get people and groups together to put on a truly impressive holiday display?

The task at hand: lighting up all 20 or so trees that occupy spots on the Green. “We’re inviting anyone to help light up the Green,” said Cedusky. “That means anybody – individuals and families, charitable organizations, school groups, clubs, and other community groups. Come out and help us put up lights on one of the trees. Even better, choose your own tree for decorating and have at it.”

One of the best things about this project is that there is no designated day to go out and decorate your tree, nor is there a hard deadline – though the lighting of the large Holiday Tree on the Green is set for Saturday, December 7, so people are encouraged to decorate sooner rather than later. After all, the whole point of the project is to the Town Green more festive for the season.

You do need to bring your own lights, possibly a ladder for reaching the top parts of your assigned tree, and a 100-foot extension cord for power. The Town of Redding is providing the juice. The trees will stay lit through mid-January.

Several groups have already signed up to help, including the

Redding Historical Society, local Girl Scouts, and the Redding Preservation Society. The trees available to light include oaks, crabapple trees, birches, as well as traditional evergreens.

The lights will share space with the Town’s own Holiday Tree and menorah. With that in mind, Cedusky emphasized that the lighting project is an ecumenical affair. “Light displays are part of many different cultures and faiths, making this project a great way for everybody to celebrate this holiday season,” he said.

During the holidays, Cedusky enjoys going from town to town to look at their holiday light displays – which can be elaborate, especially in Connecticut cities. “So, I thought, we should do some of this in Redding, too,” he said. “I reached out to First Selectwoman Julia Pemberton, who was immediately supportive and offered for the town to provide power.”

In recent years, there’s been a trend for more retailers and homeowners to join the holiday-lighting bandwagon. Moreover, as a recent *Washington Post* article noted, people are leaving their decorations up for much longer than they did in the past.

It’s all part of the spirit of the season, Cedusky said, and he encourages people to reach out to him with questions or to sign up for the Town Green project. You can contact Cedusky by phone at (916) 616-9426 or by e-mail at [jcedusky@gmail.com](mailto:jcedusky@gmail.com). ■



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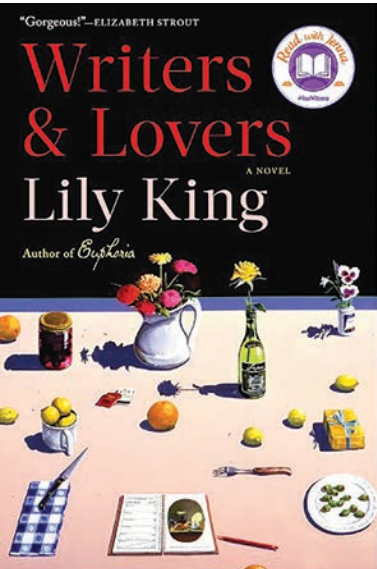
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BOOK REVIEW

Writers & Lovers

By Lily King / 336 pages / Grove Press / \$27



In her novel, *Writers and Lovers*, American writer Lily King has ventured into a fictional description of the prolonged, emotionally demanding, and by turns depressing, exuberant, and ambivalent emotions a first-time novelist is likely to experience. As Robert Stone said, “Nobody cares if you write a novel or not.” So, what is the attraction to doing it all about?

Many male writers have written about the trials of becoming a novelist. After winning the Pulitzer Prize in 1947 for *Tales of the South Pacific*, James Michener wrote about his beginnings as a writer in *The Fires of Spring*, published in 1949. Norman Mailer wrote about his novelist’s journey and ongoing aspirations in *Advertisements for Myself* (1958). Paul Auster and others warn against the writing life, calling it an illness that virtually guarantees poverty and solitude. But behind these admonitions is a pride in a certain intellectual muscularity male writers of fiction have tried to claim as their own. Perhaps this notion has kept women from the subject. Until recently.

Camila “Casey” Peabody is King’s main character. Remarkable in King’s style of writing is her way with compression. She handles her characters with great efficiency and economy of language. Casey breaks up with one of her two lovers and he says: “But I love you and we are good together. I feel so good when I’m with you. God, I *like* myself when I’m with you.”

Her reply: “I’m not sure that’s being in love with me...That’s being in love with you.” *Ouch!* Correct and rapier understanding.

King is a novelist who loves the whole idea of writing and art. She is mystified when her peers drop off the track of committed ambition to write, and go to law school or marry and have children. Thirty-one-year-old Casey soldiers on, working shifts as a server in a Boston Harvard Yard restaurant, laboring under a \$73,000 student loan debt, unable to pay her bills, and threatened with serious health issues as she is put on probation at her job. The question of her romantic life is left unanswered until the end.

Discovering a strong literary voice is a satisfying experience. King shows us in *Writers and Lovers* precisely the challenges, misgivings, and tenacity required to write a novel, especially a first novel, and what it might feel like to at least taste success as a proper reward. And King offers the reader wonderful psychological insights, which only a woman would bring to mating rituals. Men emphasize the sexual over nearly every consideration, especially at the start of a relationship – King writes of female longing and appropriate female response. Honesty is Casey’s greatest native quality. Honesty is what drives her artistic mojo. “My parents were married twenty-three years and never made it look appealing.”

*Writers and Lovers* is King’s love letter to writing, and to fiction writing’s impossible challenges and extraordinary satisfactions. Commitment and tenacity are essential, but these requirements come during the wrong time in life for so much ambition, which King underscores impressively without increasing fear and dread over the whole endeavor. But luck matters. And it can work out. ■

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

Scam aware alert  
Holiday hazards online

By Anthony Freyberg

With apologies to Andy Williams, it’s the most vulnerable time of the year.

When the holiday season arrives, so does the opportunity for scammers to separate shoppers from their money and steal their personal data at the same time. But there are effective ways to keep yourself (and your money) safe.

Holiday scams to watch out for include:

- Fake Websites – phony online stores with hard-to-resist deals on popular holiday gifts.
- Counterfeit Goods – Low-cost items advertised as brand-name products.
- Gift Card Fraud – scammers manipulate the barcodes of physical gift cards in stores and steal funds once they’re loaded.
- Charity Scams – these take advantage of holiday goodwill. These cons are especially insidious, and the scammer will often try and pressure you to donate immediately, usually via untraceable methods like gift cards or wire transfers.
- Package Delivery Scams – these are very popular this time of year. You get a fake notification claiming a package is delayed or undeliver-

able and includes a link to provide payment and personal information.

Phishing e-mails and texts – these often pretend to be from popular retailers or charities. They include links to fake websites designed specifically to steal your personal and financial information.

So, what to do? Never click on unfamiliar attachments or links. That’s true no matter what season it is. Just the act of clicking can download malware and allow scammers to access your computer.

Be especially suspicious of e-mails that ask you to update passwords and account information. It’s best to look up the institution’s phone number or website and contact them directly.

The safest way to shop online is still with your credit card. It’s not 100-percent safe, but most of the big-name cards offer \$0 liability for fraudulent purchases.

Always get the tracking numbers of your purchases and follow up to be sure they have been delivered safely.

That seems like a lot to consider, but it’s worth the effort to protect you and your family so that you can enjoy the holidays without worry. ■

LIBRARY CORNER

By Erin Shea Dummeyer

I took a road trip this week to the Northeast Document Conservation Center (NEDCC) in Andover, Massachusetts along with my five-year-old and 20 books once owned by Mark Twain. The story goes that when Twain purchased his Stormfield home in Redding and went to fill the shelves with his book collection, he quickly realized he needed more shelf space. Not only that, but Redding was a rural farming community and lacked a free, public library. Enter his idea to raise funds for what we now know as the “Mark Twain Library”, named in his honor.

We still have roughly 200 of his personal books that made up this founding collection. They are normally housed in a locked, glass

cabinet in our community room upstairs. A few months ago, we received an anonymous gift earmarked to seed a restoration project of this priceless collection, which is how I found myself in Andover. The Northeast Document Conservation Center is a conservation lab that specializes in treating paper collections. While I was there, a staff member was piecing back together an 18th-century manuscript that had become so brittle that shards were coming off in pieces. Now that a part of our Mark Twain collection is there, experts will go through the volumes and come up with a plan for restoration. The goal is to get these books back to a condition where they can be handled so we don’t lose access to the precious

information contained in them.

I chose which books to bring to NEDCC based on their condition and historical significance. Included in the books chosen for restoration are Twain’s family bible, his daughter Clara’s songbook, and a copy of *Northanger Abbey and Persuasion* by Jane Austen. Once the restoration work is appraised and ordered, it should take about six months for the staff at NEDCC to complete the project. A future exhibit is planned for showcasing NEDCC’s work to bring this founding collection back to life. ■

Erin Shea Dummeyer is Director, Mark Twain Library

Good books for good readers

By Margi Esten

We seem to already be in the throes of the holiday season! Always a surprise when it arrives so soon, right?

Born in 1924 in New Orleans, Truman Capote is often described as a writer, actor, and socialite. Most know him for his literary works, specifically *Breakfast at Tiffany’s* and *In Cold Blood*, and he is considered a leading literary figure of the post WWII generation.

My favorite Capote books are lesser-known short stories (or really novellas), but they sit ready to be taken out and re-read at this time of year: *The Thanksgiving Visitor* and *A Christmas Memory*.

Capote had a tumultuous, but eventful, upbringing that influenced much of his writing and enhanced his extraordinary talent as

an adult. *The Thanksgiving Visitor* is based on his childhood memories of living with his aunts in Alabama during the Great Depression. He is “Buddy”, a young school-age boy, and she is Miss Sook, his older, eccentric, mentally-challenged cousin. And, she is his best friend.

*A Christmas Memory* was actually written before *A Thanksgiving Visitor* and features the same characters as Capote describes one very special Christmas: “A woman with shorn white hair is standing at the kitchen window. She is wearing tennis shoes and a shapeless gray sweater over a summery calico dress. She is small and sprightly, like a bantam hen; but, due to a long youthful illness, her shoulders are pitifully hunched. Her face is remarkable – not unlike Lincoln’s,

craggy like that, and tinted by the sun and wind; but it is delicate too, finely boned, and her eyes are sherry-colored and timid. ‘Oh my’, she exclaims, her breath smoking the windowpane, ‘it’s fruitcake weather!’”

These beautiful narratives focus on country life and the joy of giving during the Christmas season while also touching on loneliness and loss. The story’s heartbreaking conclusion will contribute to any reader’s desire to go back to it year after year: “As if I expected to see, rather like hearts, a lost pair of kites hurrying toward heaven.”

Wishing all my readers a happy, healthy, and peaceful holiday season. ■

Nod to the pod  
“Sober Awkward”: “The Secret to Ridding Ourselves of Our Drinking Shame”

By Amy Maloof

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

My mom – a lifelong barely-drinker – is constantly reading books and listening to podcasts about getting sober. Recently, my kids and I visited her and a book about overcoming drug addiction was proudly displayed on her living room coffee table. My oldest looked at it and then at me, silently asking, “Um...is Grammy ok?” She is. Her slightly odd comfort ritual provides her, I think, with the (accurate) sense that people can overcome adversity and that change is possible. I’m more likely to read about people climbing Everest or surviving a plane crash, but I get it.

One of her favorite sober podcasts is so irreverent and charming, I’m a fan now, too. The two hosts (brits

Victoria and Hamish, both living abroad in Australia) have great chemistry, zero self-righteousness, and loads of wild tales from their drinking days. Because they so clearly understand and remember what it’s like to be on the other side, they always keep the conversation free from shame and judgment. Their sole focus is giving those who might be curious about the lifestyle a grounded and comforting perspective on an alcohol-free life.

I chose this episode because it’s a fun one, each host swapping a few of their most embarrassing stories from their drinking days, letting listeners know that anyone who’s ever had a drink has a few doozies – you’re not alone. With kindness and humor, they show there’s no shame in admitting the truth in

where we’ve been and taking a solid look at where we might want to go next.

Alcohol never agreed with me, but peer pressure and societal expectations kept me trying to like it for most of my adult life. The reactions I got when I didn’t partake felt like such a hassle that I’d cave, order a pricey drink, then get a headache. But things are changing. I love the sober curious movement that’s been building momentum for a while. It’s given me the courage to listen to what I actually like and stick to tonic water (plenty of ice), and I know it’s giving strength to those who might need encouragement for their own reasons. ■

Library outdoor space now open

Photos by Jessie Wright



After months of construction, the new outdoor space at Mark Twain Library was officially opened on Wednesday, November 20 with a ribbon cutting ceremony. Funded in part by a \$200,000 grant from the Town’s American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds, the project, which includes a patio, pergola, seating, and plantings overlooking the Saugatuck River, will provide year-round outdoor space for Library programming.



# Sip, stroll, and shop in Georgetown

Popular PTA event is back December 12 By Anne Young Albanese

A budding new tradition is back, just in time for the holidays. The John Read Middle School PTA is hosting its third annual Georgetown Sip & Stroll event on Thursday, December 12, from 5:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m.

“This is the first year we are hosting this event in December to take advantage of the incredible holiday spirit and beauty of Georgetown,” said Meredith Schuchard, the Co-Vice President of Membership of the PTA.

Guests will have the opportunity to visit the many businesses and restaurants in Georgetown. Each host will offer attendees a free light bite or beverage throughout the evening. The event is a great

opportunity to meet up with friends, discover new businesses, and shop for the upcoming holidays. (Note: times for each location may differ based on participant discretion.)

Participating restaurants include Milestone, Wire Mill Saloon & Barbeque, Old Mill Market, and Lombardi’s Trattoria. Other participants include non-eateries such as Georgetown Collective, Georgetown Arts & Cultural Center, Georgetown Package Store, Love & Light Salon Studio, and Georgetown’s newest retailer, The Shops at Auburn Landing.

“GVR is proud to support the PTA’s third annual Georgetown Sip & Stroll,” said Kate Perry, Secretary of Georgetown Village

Restoration, Inc. (GVR). “The benefits are twofold: supporting Redding’s schools and Georgetown businesses. GVR helped the PTA with starting the event several years ago and continues to assist where needed. This year, we will be selling our Georgetown merchandise – sweatshirts, T-shirts, and more – at The Shops at Auburn Landing.”

Schuchard and Seana Bedard, Co-Vice President of Fundraising for the PTA, organized the event this year along with several volunteers. This event is open to all members of the Redding community. Tickets sell out quickly (and must be purchased in advance), so the PTA suggests purchasing them soon at [jrmspta.org/sipandstroll](http://jrmspta.org/sipandstroll) ■

# Shops at Auburn Landing opens on Main Street

By Justin Reynolds



Photo by Jessie Wright

On Small Business Saturday, November 30, Shops at Auburn Landing welcomed shoppers for the first time during a soft opening at its 28 Main Street location in Georgetown.

A unique collective of three retail businesses housed under one roof, Shops at Auburn Landing sells flowers, jewelry, vintage items, and locally sourced gifts.

The business is the brainchild of three women who grew up in Ridgefield and have always loved Georgetown: Stephany Sanderson, Laura Verses, and Jacqui Coleman. Verses and Coleman now live in Redding while Sanderson lives in Weston.

Shops at Auburn Landing aims to play a key role in the continued revitalization of the Georgetown village. The owners noted they are excited to become fully immersed in the Georgetown community; expect to see them at the John Read Middle School PTA Sip & Stroll,

Georgetown Day, and helping out Georgetown Village Restoration, Inc. (GVR) throughout the year.

A couple of months back, Kate Perry – a member of GVR and owner of the opening-soon Georgetown Owl Market & Saloon – helped connect the three women with the available space at 28 Main Street. Perry knew that they had been looking for a storefront and thought the location might be a good fit.

She was right.

Shops at Auburn Landing will be posting opening hours each week of the holiday season; they will then open for regular hours in the new year.

To learn more about the business, search “shops.at.auburn.landing” on Instagram or swing by 28 Main Street (the former location of Crystals and Cones) and say hello. In a future edition of the *Sentinel*, we plan to publish a full spotlight feature on Shops at Auburn Landing and its owners. Stay tuned. ■

Annual Art Show turns Library into gallery / continued from page 1

ings, sculptures, and mixed media and runs the gamut from modest to high-end pieces.

“Works range from classic to contemporary, you’ll find everything from stunning landscapes to thought-provoking sculptures to add to a special place in your home,” explained Shea.

The breadth of talent in and around the Redding community attracts renowned artists each year, offering an opportunity to experience a top-notch art gallery that is close to home and appeals to both accomplished art enthusiasts and those looking to enhance an empty space on their wall.

This year, in an effort to share the gallery with community members looking for a more personalized experience, as well as a desire to increase art sales, the Library is offering several special programs. Bright and early on Monday, December 9 (8:30 a.m. to 10:00 a.m.), at “Java with the Juror”, Dunlop will offer expert advice on identifying masterful pieces and selecting artwork. Visitors can drop in, grab a cup of coffee, and wander the gallery, with a valued opinion on hand.

On the evening of Tuesday, December 10, patrons can register for “Art in Bloom”, featuring Jessica Bowen of Botanicals by Jessica, who will bring still life paintings from the art show to life in actual floral arrangements.

Redding Neighbors & Newcomers have partnered with the Library for a private event on Wednesday, December 11, for personalized advice on building an art collection and framing pieces.

On Thursday, December 12, two New York City interior designers who call Redding home, Victoria Cole and Bennett Leifer, will host an Open House called “Art by Design,” where they’ll be available

to informally consult on how to find the right piece of art for the right space in your home.

Finally, on Sunday, December 15, patrons can stop in to take a final look at the art in this once-a-year gallery and enjoy refreshments at the closing ceremony while the Joel Barlow Chamber Singers perform.

The Library retains a 35% commission on the sales of each work sold. In addition to the art that is displayed on the Library walls and panels, many artists also present portfolio works that make great gifts for the holiday season.

The art will be on display and for sale from December 7-15. The exhibition is open to the public during regular library hours and may also be viewed and purchased through the virtual gallery online. ■

For details, the virtual gallery, and hours, visit [mtlartshow.org](http://mtlartshow.org)

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# Holiday Events 2024

## December 5-11

<p><b>Monday, December 2 – Sunday, December 15</b></p> <p><b>Wreath Festival Fundraiser</b> Various times Relax by a roaring fire with friends and decorate a 24-inch balsam wreath. Woodcock Nature Center 56 Deer Run Road Wilton woodcocknaturecenter.org \$, R</p> <p><b>Friday, December 6 – Saturday, December 7</b></p> <p><b>Ridgefield Holiday Stroll</b> 6:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m. Friday 10:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m. Saturday Horse-drawn carriages, live music, carolers, reindeer, and more. Shops will be open late. Main Street Ridgefield ridgefieldchamber.org</p>	<p><b>Friday, December 6</b></p> <p><b>Carols &amp; Lullabies</b> 7:30 p.m. Music on the Hill’s Festival Chorus &amp; Children’s Chorus with guitar, harp, and percussion. Performance at U.U. Congregation 10 Lyons Plains Road Westport \$</p> <p><b>Saturday, December 7</b></p> <p><b>Cannon Grange Holiday Market</b> 10:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. Cannon Grange 25 Cannon Road Wilton cannongrange.org</p> <p><b>Saturday, December 7</b></p> <p><b>Reindeer Run 5k</b> 10:00 a.m. Check in 11:00 a.m. 5k race Festive attire encouraged. Registration open through December 1. Joel Barlow High School 100 Black Rock Turnpike runsignup.com/Race/CT/Redding/ JoelBarlowHighSchoolReindeerRun \$, R</p>	<p><b>Saturday, December 7 and Sunday, December 8</b></p> <p><b>Holiday Market and Poutine Shack</b> 12:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. Handmade wreaths, candles, crafts, and delicious poutine. Open Farmhouse 11 John Read Road openfarmhouse.com/events</p> <p><b>Saturday, December 7 and Sunday, December 8</b></p> <p><b>WCSU Holiday Pops Concert</b> 3:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. Veronica Hagman Concert Hall, VPAC 43 Lake Avenue Extension Danbury wcsu.edu/svpca/event/holiday-pops-2 \$</p> <p><b>Saturday, December 7</b></p> <p><b>Redding Tree Lighting</b> 3:30 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. Music, treats, Rudolph, s’mores, Selfies with Santa, and more. Redding Town Green 100 Hill Road townofreddingct.org</p>	<p><b>Saturday, December 7</b></p> <p><b>Tree Lighting at Georgetown Oratory</b> 5:30 p.m. Tree lighting and carols on great lawn of Oratory. Georgetown Oratory 30 Church Street jesusguild.org</p> <p><b>Saturday, December 7 and Sunday, December 8</b></p> <p><b>A Christmas Carol Read &amp; Sing Along</b> 8:00 p.m. on Saturday 2:00 p.m. on Sunday Ridgefield Theater Barn 37 Halpin Lane Ridgefield ridgefieldtheaterbarn.org/ a-christmas-carol \$, R</p>	<p><b>Sunday, December 8</b></p> <p><b>Newtown Youth &amp; Family Services Holiday Festival and Market</b> 11:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. Arts, crafts, food, and more. Edmond Town Hall 45 Main Street Newtown newtownyouthandfamilyservices.org/Special-Events/test/buy-tickets \$, R</p> <p><b>Wednesday, December 11</b></p> <p><b>Kids Crafting – Gnomes and Cork Reindeer</b> 5:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m. WorkspaceCT 16 Trowbridge Drive Bethel workspacect.org \$, R</p>
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## December 12-17

<p><b>Thursday, December 12</b></p> <p><b>Holiday Lunch</b> 11:45 a.m. Lasagna, gingerbread, and festive live music from John Read Middle School musical ensembles. Heritage Center 37 Lonetown Road RSVP to Michelle at mstillman@townofreddingct.org or (203) 938-9725 R</p> <p><b>Friday, December 13</b></p> <p><b>Holiday Felt Ornaments: A Beginner’s Craft Class</b> 6:00 p.m. – 7:30 p.m. Hands on class for adults. New Pond Farm Education Center 101 Marchant Road newpondfarm.org \$, R</p> <p><b>Friday, December 13</b></p> <p><b>Holiday Sip &amp; Paint</b> 7:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m. Visual &amp; Performing Arts Center, WCSU 43 Lake Avenue Extension Danbury eventbrite.com/e/sip-paint-tickets-1001532078407 \$, R</p>	<p><b>Friday, December 13</b></p> <p><b>Sounds of the Season</b> 7:30 p.m. Music on the Hill’s handbell ensembles with flute, piano, and percussion. Performance at U.U. Congregation 10 Lyons Plains Road Westport \$</p> <p><b>Saturday, December 14</b></p> <p><b>Winter Breakfast featuring Santa &amp; Buddy the Elf!</b> 9:15 a.m., 10:15 a.m. and 11:15 a.m. Attendees encouraged to bring donations for the Wilton Food Pantry. Riverbrook Regional YMCA 404 Danbury Road Wilton wiltonymca.org/breakfast-with-santa \$, R</p> <p><b>Saturday, December 14</b></p> <p><b>Redding Artisan Holiday Market</b> 10:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. John Read Middle School 486 Redding Road facebook.com/ reddingartisanmarket</p>	<p><b>Saturday, December 14</b></p> <p><b>Festive Seasonal Crafts (for kids)</b> 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. New Pond Farm Education Center 101 Marchant Road newpondfarm.org \$, R</p> <p><b>Saturday, December 14</b></p> <p><b>Cookie Wrap and Shoebox Decorating</b> 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. Assemble cookie trays to give away and decorate shoeboxes for gifts to unhoused people in Danbury. Christ Church Episcopal Parish 184 Cross Highway christchurchredding.org reddingartisanmarket</p> <p><b>Saturday, December 14</b></p> <p><b>Holly Jolly Saturday</b> 1:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m. Highlight your trip to the Great Trains Holiday Show with a meeting with Santa. Free with Admission to Great Trains Holiday Show. Wilton Historical Society 224 Danbury Road Wilton wiltonhistorical.org/events/great-train-holiday-show \$</p>	<p><b>Saturday, December 14</b></p> <p><b>Live Nativity</b> 5:00 p.m. Special live pageant, carols, and the story of Christmas. Rain/snow date: Sunday, December 15 First Church of Christ, Congregational 25 Cross Highway firstchurchredding.org</p> <p><b>Sunday, December 15</b></p> <p><b>Festival of Lessons and Carols</b> 9:00 a.m. Special Sunday worship service featuring favorite Advent and Christmas carols. Christ Church Episcopal Parish 184 Cross Highway christchurchredding.org</p> <p><b>Sunday, December 15</b></p> <p><b>Gaudete Christmas Market at Georgetown Oratory</b> 9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. Georgetown Oratory 30 Church Street jesusguild.org/calendar</p>	<p><b>Sunday, December 15</b></p> <p><b>Holiday Market at Nod Hill Brewery</b> 12:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. Craft and artisan vendors, with Christmas music by Fairfield County Brass Quintet and Glühwein and Christmas beers. Nod Hill Brewery 137 Ethan Allen Highway nodhillbrewery.com</p> <p><b>Tuesday, December 17</b></p> <p><b>3rd Annual Community Messiah Sing</b> 7:00 p.m. The audience is the chorus – presented by Music on the Hill. United Church of Rowayton 210 Rowayton Avenue Norwalk musiconthehillct.org</p>
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## December 18-25

<p><b>Wednesday, December 18</b></p> <p><b>Community Carol Sing</b> 6:30 p.m. Join the musical groups at Joel Barlow High School for the 14th year of this holiday tradition. Joel Barlow High School 100 Black Rock Turnpike er9.org</p> <p><b>Friday, December 20</b></p> <p><b>Holiday Floral Centerpieces</b> 11:00 a.m. Ruth Moran will lead a holiday centerpiece workshop using winter greens. Heritage Center 37 Lonetown Road RSVP to Michelle at mstillman@townofreddingct.org \$, R</p>	<p><b>Friday, December 20</b></p> <p><b>Christmas with the Celts Dance Show</b> 6:00 p.m. – 8:30 p.m. Drinks, mingling and performance by Ashurst Academy of Irish Dance. Aquila’s Nest Vineyards 56 Pole Bridge Road Newtown eventbrite.com/e/christmas-with-the-celts-dance-show-tickets-999836236097 \$, R</p> <p><b>Friday, December 20</b></p> <p><b>Massive Diva Christmas Show</b> 7:00 p.m. Ages 21+ Nod Hill Brewery 137 Ethan Allen Highway nodhillbrewery.com \$, R</p>	<p><b>Saturday, December 21</b></p> <p><b>Dance with a Rockette</b> 10:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. For kids and teens of all ages. WorkspaceCT 16 Trowbridge Drive Bethel workspacect.org \$, R</p> <p><b>Saturday, December 21</b></p> <p><b>Decorate a Mini Gingerbread House</b> 12:00 p.m. – 1:00 p.m. Sip hot cocoa and craft with other children and teens. 16 Trowbridge Drive Bethel workspacect.org \$, R</p> <p><b>Saturday, December 21</b></p> <p><b>Jingle All the Way!</b> 2:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m. Holiday handbells and children’s chorus from Music on the Hill. Wilton Historical Society 224 Danbury Road Wilton musiconthehillct.org</p>	<p><b>Sunday, December 22</b></p> <p><b>Georgetown Holiday Festival</b> 11:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m. Parade, followed by photos with Santa, horses from Rising Starr Horse Rescue, hay rides, raffles, and more. Main Street Georgetown facebook.com/GeorgetownParade</p> <p><b>Sunday, December 22</b></p> <p><b>Newtown Holiday Craft Festival</b> 11:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. Edmond Town Hall 45 Main Street Newtown facebook.com/ events/1629888191275836</p> <p><b>Sunday, December 22</b></p> <p><b>Christmas Choir Concert</b> 6:00 p.m. Featuring the Christmas cantata “Celebrate the Savior” Calvary Independent Baptist Church 711 Redding Road cibredding.org</p>	<p><b>Monday, December 23</b></p> <p><b>Holiday Pool Party</b> 2:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m. Riverbrook Regional YMCA 404 Danbury Road Wilton wiltonymca.org R</p> <p><b>Wednesday, December 25</b></p> <p><b>Menorah Lighting</b> 6:00 p.m. (tentative time) Redding Town Green 100 Hill Road townofreddingct.org</p>
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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

\$ = fee applies  
R = registration required

This Week’s Featured Events

Donation Sheds  
Temporarily Closed

**Now through January 9**  
Donation sheds for the Mark Twain Library Book Fair are closed to make room for the Art Show, which opens Friday, December 6. But the Labor Day Book Fair comes quickly, and the team will be very happy to accept your donations starting January 9.

Redding Tree Lighting

**Saturday, December 7**  
3:30 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.  
Music, treats, Rudolph, s’mores, Selfies with Santa, and more.  
Redding Town Green  
100 Hill Road  
townofreddingct.org

Annual Holiday Open House  
Lonetown Farmhouse Museum & Zalmon Read Barn

**Sunday, December 8**  
1:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.  
Sponsored by the Redding Historical Society. Merchandise available to purchase.  
43 Lonetown Road  
reddinghistory.org

Art by Design

**Thursday, December 12**  
7:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.  
Two top NYC designers/Redding residents Victoria Cole and Bennett Leifer sharing fashion-able advice on buying, framing and hanging during the Mark Twain Library Art Show.  
Mark Twain Library  
439 Redding Road  
marktwainlibrary.org  
**R**

ARTS

**Friday, November 29 – Sunday, December 29**

**“In The Moment” – Flat File Project Experience**  
12:00 p.m – 5:00 p.m.  
Thursdays and Fridays  
10:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m. Saturdays  
Opening Reception:  
Thursday, December 5 from 6:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.  
Showcase of 23 artists, each contributing unique works under 18 x 24 inches.  
Anonymous Society  
268 Simpaug Turnpike  
anonymoussocietygallery.com

**Friday, December 6 – Sunday, December 15**

**52nd Annual Mark Twain Library Art Show**  
See website for Library hours  
Preview Reception on Friday, December 6 from 7:00 p.m. – 10:00 p.m. (tickets required)  
Mark Twain Library  
439 Redding Road  
marktwainlibrary.org/art

**Saturday, December 7**

**Lyrics Coffeehouse – David Morgan**  
7:30 p.m.  
Bring refreshments, a laptop, and enjoy an evening of live, acoustic music.  
Redding Community Center  
37 Lonetown Road  
For more information call (203) 938-2551  
\$

**Sunday, December 9**

**Java with the Juror – MTL’s 52nd Art Show Week**  
8:30 a.m. – 10:00 a.m.  
Coffee and advice from world class artist and Art Show juror David Dunlop.  
Mark Twain Library  
439 Redding Road  
marktwainlibrary.org  
**R**

**Thursday, December 12**

**Art by Design**  
7:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.  
Two top NYC designers/Redding residents Victoria Cole and Bennett Leifer sharing fashionable advice on buying, framing and hanging during the Mark Twain Library Art Show.  
Mark Twain Library  
439 Redding Road  
marktwainlibrary.org  
**R**

**Thursday, December 12 – Saturday, December 14**

**IHS Drama Club presents Little Women**  
7:00 p.m.  
Immaculate High School  
73 Southern Boulevard  
Danbury  
ihfsfinearts.booktix.com  
\$

**Thursday, December 19**

**Opera: The Magic Flute**  
1:00 p.m.  
Screening of the abridged version that the Metropolitan Opera produced by Julie Taymor in 2004. Refreshments provided.  
Heritage Center  
37 Lonetown Road  
RSVP to Michelle mstillman@townofreddingct.org or (203) 938-9725  
**R**

CHILDREN | TEENS

**Tuesday, December 10**

**Storytime for Children with Adults (Ages 1-5)**  
10:30 a.m. – 11:15 a.m.  
New Pond Farm Education Center  
101 Marchant Road  
newpondfarm.org  
\$, **R**

**Friday, December 13**

**NHS Movie Night: Happy Feet**  
6:00 p.m.  
All ages welcome.  
Joel Barlow High School Auditorium  
100 Black Rock Turnpike  
er9.org

**Friday, December 13**

**Parents Night Out**  
6:30 p.m. – 9:30 p.m.  
Games, pizza, and supervised fun for grades K-6.  
Redding Community Center  
37 Lonetown Road  
townofreddingct.org/parks-and-recreation or call (203) 938-2551  
\$, **R**

**Sunday, December 15**

**Winter Stories by the Fire (Ages 3-5)**  
11:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.  
Drop off program.  
New Pond Farm Education Center  
101 Marchant Road  
newpondfarm.org  
\$, **R**

CRAFTS

**Tuesday, December 10**

**Art in Bloom: A Floral Design Demonstration with Botanicals by Jessica**  
7:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.  
Learn how to create beautiful seasonal arrangements.  
Mark Twain Library  
439 Redding Road  
marktwainlibrary.org  
**R**

**Wednesday, December 12**

**Paint and Sip**  
7:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.  
All materials and light refreshments provided.  
New Pond Farm Education Center  
101 Marchant Road  
newpondfarm.org  
\$, **R**

**Sunday, December 15**

**Needle Felting**  
1:30 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.  
Learn to make simple felted animals.  
New Pond Farm Education Center  
101 Marchant Road  
newpondfarm.org  
\$, **R**

HEALTH | WELLNESS

**Thursday, December 12**

**Autumn Flow: Restorative Yoga with Viki**  
11:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.  
Virtual event  
Mark Twain Library  
marktwainlibrary.org  
**R**

NATURE

**Saturday, December 7**

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

**Saturday, December 7**

**Winter Walk**  
10:00 a.m.  
Walk and small historical re-enactment.  
Putnam Memorial State Park  
499 Black Rock Turnpike  
putnampark.org

**Saturday, December 14**

**Astronomy: Viewing the Night Sky**  
6:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.  
New Pond Farm Education Center  
101 Marchant Road  
newpondfarm.org  
\$, **R**

**Friday, December 20**

**Winter Luminaria Walk**  
6:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.  
Self-guided, illuminated trail walk with proceeds benefiting community programs.  
Woodcock Nature Center  
56 Deer Run Road  
Wilton  
woodcocknaturecenter.org  
\$, **R**

SPECIAL PROGRAMS

**Sunday, December 8**

**Annual Holiday Open House Lonetown Farmhouse Museum & Zalmon Read Barn**  
1:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.  
Sponsored by the Redding Historical Society.  
Merchandise available to purchase.  
43 Lonetown Road  
reddinghistory.org

**Wednesday, December 11**

**Redding Prevention Council Meeting**  
7:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.  
Christ Church Episcopal  
184 Cross Highway  
reddingpreventioncouncil.org

**Thursday, December 12**

**JRMS PTA Sip & Stroll**  
5:00 p.m. – 10:00 p.m.  
Enjoy special offers and events from the businesses in Georgetown.  
Main Street  
Georgetown  
https://linktr.ee/jrmspta  
\$, **R**

**Tuesday, December 17**

**Global Warming – Local Impacts**  
7:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.  
Learn from Priti Kiefer, a junior at Joel Barlow High School and active member of the Barlow Eco Club.  
Mark Twain Library  
439 Redding Road  
marktwainlibrary.org  
**R**

MEETINGS

**Thursday, December 5**

**Redding Safety Committee**  
4:00 p.m.  
Virtual

**Monday, December 9**

**League of Women Voters**  
4:00 p.m.  
Town Hall / Conference Room  
100 Hill Road

**Monday, December 9**

**Board of Ethics**  
7:30 p.m.  
Town Hall / Conference Room and Virtual  
100 Hill Road

**Tuesday, December 10**

**Redding Fire District #1**  
7:00 p.m.  
186 Black Rock Turnpike

**Tuesday, December 10**

**Planning Commission**  
7:30 p.m.  
Virtual

**Wednesday, December 11**

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

**Wednesday, December 11**

**Region 9 Curriculum Committee**  
1:30 p.m.  
Joel Barlow High School  
Room A106  
100 Black Rock Turnpike

**Wednesday, December 11**

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

**Thursday, December 12**

**Long Range Financial Planning Committee Special Meeting**  
4:00 p.m.  
Town Hall / Hearing Room  
100 Hill Road

**Thursday, December 12**

**Gilbert & Bennett Wire Mill Advisory Committee**  
6:00 p.m.  
Town Hall / Hearing Room and Virtual  
100 Hill Road

**Thursday, December 12**

**Redding Fire District #2 Commissioner’s Meeting**  
7:00 p.m.  
306 Umpawaug Road

**Monday, December 16**

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

**Monday, December 16**

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

**Tuesday, December 17**

**Region 9 Finance and Operations Committee**  
5:30 p.m.  
Joel Barlow High School / Library Media Center  
100 Black Rock Turnpike

**Tuesday, December 17**

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





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