



# REDDING SENTINEL

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## Local parties gear up to seek candidates for fall elections

By Donna Christopher

With town board and commission vacancies to be announced in the coming weeks, the Democratic and Republican town committees are turning their attention to finding candidates for the fall municipal elections.

The Sentinel spoke to Democratic Town Committee (DTC) Chair Diana Carlino and Republican Town Committee (RTC) Chair Jill Cilo about the process.

The vacancies are first announced by the Town Clerk's office and posted on the Town, DTC, and RTC websites.

Candidates for the vacancies must be registered voters, but do not need to be party affiliated to run. However, to attend committee meetings and become registered members of the DTC or RTC, one must be a registered voter with that party.

An unaffiliated voter may run for office and be endorsed by either major party or a minor party. He or she would appear on the ballot on the party line that endorsed them. The word "unaffiliated" would not appear, as Cilo explained.

"If not endorsed by a party, an unaffiliated elector may apply for a nominating petition to have their name appear on the ballot for the November 7, 2023 election," Cilo said. "Unaffiliated electors cannot participate in a primary, either as a candidate or a voter," she noted.

Additional information on these nominating petitions can be found on the Connecticut Secretary of State website.

Registered members of either party may vote in their respective caucuses, which are held in July pursuant to the Secretary of State schedule. A caucus is when a party chooses its candidate for the election.

"Every registered Republican in Redding is entitled to attend," explained Ward Mazzucco, RTC's vacancy chair. "Then, candidates are nominated from the floor, and the Republicans in attendance vote on them. The winning candidates will then go on the ballot in November."

Carlino described a similar procedure for the DTC. Members of the DTC first vote on a slate of recommended candidates at their meeting before the caucus. "Often, these are candidates who were vetted in advance by the DTC's Nominating Committee," she said.

"Those candidates, chosen by the majority of DTC members, are presented at the caucus, along with any nominations from the floor. The caucus, like our monthly DTC meetings, is open to any registered Redding Democrat. The Democrats in attendance vote at

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Photo by Debora DeCarlo Rosa

**Redding Elementary School on a sunny February day. Redding will be the only school district to accept Danbury students through the State's Open Choice program for the 2023-2024 academic year. If you have a photo you'd like us to feature here, with credit of course, please e-mail editor@reddingsentinel.org**

## Redding only district to accept Danbury students through Open Choice program next fall

By Jessie Wright

Redding Elementary School will welcome eight students from Danbury next school year through the State's Open Choice program. Redding is the only district that has opted to participate in 2023-2024 as a receiving district for the Danbury region.

The Open Choice program aims to "improve academic achievement; reduce racial, ethnic and economic isolation; and provide a choice of educational programs for public school students," according to the official state website on the program. Serving as an opportunity for students in urban districts to attend schools in nearby suburban districts (and vice versa), districts opt into participating in the program in their region, and enrollments are provided on a space-available basis.

First introduced in Bridgeport in 1997, the Open Choice program has been operating in Connecticut for over two decades and has served students in the Bridgeport, New Haven, and Hartford regions in past years.

An expansion to include the Danbury and Norwalk regions was approved for the 2022-2023 school year, with Danbury students eligible to attend New Fairfield, Brookfield, Bethel, Ridgefield, or Redding schools, and Norwalk students eligible to attend Darien, New Canaan, Wilton, Weston, or Westport schools. The Norwalk program began this school year, with Weston and Westport opening seats, but the Danbury program was delayed because none of the five suburban districts opted to participate.

The five districts cited various reasons for not participating, from capacity constraints to concerns over funding and diversity within the school districts. The Redding Board of Education had signaled their intent to participate last year, according to ER9 Superintendent Dr. Jason McKinnon, but ultimately did not open any seats before the program was postponed.

The Open Choice program is not a new one within the area – ER9 is comprised of three school districts: Redding, Easton, and Region 9 (which includes Joel Barlow High School). "Easton and Region 9 already accept students through Open Choice enrollment," McKinnon explained, accepting students living in Bridgeport. According to McKinnon, there are

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## Grand List finalized

By Susan Clark

The Grand List for October 1, 2022 – on which our taxes for the new fiscal year beginning July 1, 2023 will be based – has been finalized. The total net taxable value is \$1,958,044,395. This represents an increase of 22.9% from the previous Grand List value.

Regular real estate showed the most significant jump in value, at 25.1%. This category of asset carries a total net value

of \$1,737,035,010 and represents 89% of the total net Grand List.

Real estate of elderly homeowners increased in value by 11.3% to a net value of \$16,436,650. This amount is about 0.8% of the total net Grand List.

The only asset category to drop in value this year was exempt real estate, which fell 12.75% on a net basis. Most of the real estate in this category reflects those eligible for the veteran's benefit

of \$1,500. This category, on a net basis, makes up about 9% of the Grand List.

The value of personal taxable items and motor vehicles each increased about 7.5% in this tax year.

Formal assessment appeals may be submitted to the Board of Assessment Appeals until February 17, 2023. ■

## REDDING'S BIG OUTDOORS

### Ground Pine Sanctuary

By Jessie Wright

As its name suggests, trees are the stars of Ground Pine Sanctuary, though no ground pine is found anymore in this 54-acre born-again forest. Nowadays, hemlocks and red cedars are the sanctuary's main evergreen inhabitants, alongside an array of deciduous neighbors.

On a hike following last weekend's polar winds and cold, many of the most striking views on the trails were of trees that had fallen or hung balanced in gravity-defying positions. Like arboreal acrobats, they leaned, swung, and cleaved against one another both on the ground and up above. There is plenty to take in here, even on a short walk.

A hike at Ground Pine Sanctuary consists primarily of the meandering Sanford Trail, a one-way path that traces alongside the northern edge of the sanctuary before cutting south, running the length of the area down through its middle, then looping into the southeast corner and finishing along the southern edge. Two short trails – Grouse Run and the Snipe – offer cutoffs of the Sanford Trail's longer loops. Using the two cutoffs, a hike from the parking area to the end of the Sanford Trail takes about thirty



Photo by Jessie Wright

**A fallen "wolf tree" near the entrance of Ground Pine Sanctuary.**

minutes at a comfortable pace; for a longer outing, follow the white blazes of the Sanford Trail for the entirety of your adventure.

Parking is available at a well-marked gravel area on the east side of Sport Hill Road, about one-quarter mile from Stepney Road. Pick up the Sanford Trail to your right and begin into the sanctuary. An enormous fallen oak tree appears shortly after the entrance to the trail. *The Book of Trails* describes it as "no doubt a 'wolf

tree' from long-gone pasturing days." A 'wolf tree' is a tree much older and larger than surrounding trees, often left to provide shade for livestock when the pastures of 19th-century farms were cleared. Ground Pine Sanctuary was once part of Sanford Farm, and former First Selectman Jesse Sanford remembered it fondly as a cow pasture, according to *The Book of Trails*.

As the trail continues, tufts of moss-covered rocks on your

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# EDITORIAL

As part of the regular “beat” of covering local news, I have found myself at several municipal board and commission meetings over the last three months. Some have been livelier than others; agenda items have ranged from approval of the minutes, to welcoming new board members, to discussions around land use, to brainstorming sessions around summer family activities.

The work is sometimes slow. Progress can stall for all sorts of reasons – a delay from one group can ripple through multiple other groups’ future agendas. Sickness or weather or a burst pipe in Town Hall can bring unexpected postponements of discussions or decisions. New information might come to light that prompts the need for future research or examination. There is a lot of time spent together in conference rooms, gathering halls, and Zoom calls.

That time together, in most cases, is volunteered. There are twelve boards and commissions in Redding, not including the Board of Selectmen, and a host of other working groups, advisory committees, and committees that examine more finite projects or strategic goals. The members of these groups represent all sorts of Redding citizens – retirees, young parents, experts in various specialized fields. What is extraordinary, when one thinks about the many pressures and demands on people’s time nowadays, is that so many of our neighbors have chosen to give their time in service to this town.

Coming from a career in non-profit fundraising, I know that people choose to donate their time and money for a host of different reasons. There can be tangible and intangible benefits that come along with giving a gift, and donors are certainly not always motivated simply by altruism. But the prevailing sense as I sit in many of these meetings is that these are groups of people who are giving their time because they want to see what is best for Redding. There are certainly disagreements on what that looks like and how best to get there – but they show up and give their time to do the work of government.

In one of my first editorials for the Sentinel last November, I wrote about how getting involved in local government can be one of the most immediate ways we, as voters, can make our voices heard. These meetings remain open to the public for those who want to learn more about how decisions in town are made – and through the upcoming elections and other opportunities throughout each year, there are also opportunities to become one of the people who make them. ■

## Read all about it! | By Susan Clark



In July of last year, shortly after we published the first three monthly issues of the Redding Sentinel, columnist Margaret Sullivan of the Washington Post wrote about our improbable launch of a print newspaper for Redding. She quoted reader Tina Miller’s Letter to the Editor about “this indispensable venture in community building” which went on to say that “a true community requires reliable, unbiased information on issues including taxes, schools, the environment, roads, elections, public safety and more.”

Sullivan’s column (which since has moved to The Guardian) is widely read. The column about the Sentinel prompted offers of help and contributions from around the region, across the U.S., and even from Ireland – this last was from a former reporter for the Redding Pilot now living there.

The Washington Post column and the launch of the Sentinel were also noticed by a famous

Connecticut resident of Winsted, Ralph Nader. He was intrigued by our decision to launch a newspaper for our small Connecticut town. He reached out to veteran journalist Andy Thibault for help in doing the same thing for Winsted and surrounding towns that we had done for Redding, following our model.

Andy reached out to us to learn more about the launch of the Sentinel – What was the business model? Where did we print? How did we distribute? What challenges did we face? We helped as much as we could, and we’ve stayed in touch since.

I am happy to announce that the Winsted Citizen published its first issue on February 3. There will be monthly issues published for the remainder of this year. If you’re interested to learn more, visit [winstedcitizen.org](http://winstedcitizen.org)

Congratulations, Andy and team! May the Winsted Citizen thrive! ■

## LEGAL NOTICE

The Redding Board of Assessment Appeals will be meeting Tuesday, Feb 21, 2023 at 4:30 p.m. in the Conference Room of the Town Hall to set hearing dates and review appeals applications from the tax assessments on the grand list as of Oct 1, 2022. Anyone wishing to make an appeal must obtain an application from the Tax

Assessors office or Town website, fill out the required information and return it to the Tax Assessors office by Tuesday, Feb 17, 2023. Once the application is received, a hearing date will be scheduled for all eligible applicants. Only applications completed and returned by Feb 17, 2023 may be considered for a hearing. ■

# Redding’s Department of Social Services

## Providing vital assistance to neighbors in need | By Rob Sample

In a small, semi-rural community such as Redding, the need for social assistance might not seem as apparent as in some of Fairfield County’s larger cities. Nonetheless, there are neighbors in need here, and Redding’s Department of Social Services works tirelessly to provide both acute and ongoing services and resources.

There are currently 88 Redding residents who receive the federally-funded Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP). Once commonly known as food stamps, SNAP often functions as an entry point for other forms of public assistance; and though living in Fairfield County is costly, a family’s income must be quite low to qualify for SNAP. “For a family of four with no disabled members, the qualification threshold is a net income of \$2,313 or less,” explained Angelica Fontanez, Redding’s Director of Social Services. “That’s extremely low for a family.”

Besides the SNAP program, about a dozen households in Redding take part in the Town-run food-assistance program. This used to take the shape of a physical food pantry but has been replaced with the issuance of gift cards for use at area supermarkets. It exists through a combination of public and private funding, Fontanez said.

“The gift cards give people a sense of dignity as well as privacy,” she said. “The food pantry was limited in what it could offer. With a gift card, recipients can choose what their households need.”

In addition to Fontanez, the Department’s staff includes an

administrative assistant who splits her time with the Redding Heritage Center (Redding’s senior center), a van driver/administrator, and a senior program coordinator. The latter role had been part-time but became full-time last year via an ARPA (American Rescue Plan Act) grant.

Social Services works closely with Redding’s Police Department, the three area fire companies, and with the Heritage Center. “Our town has a number of senior citizens who live alone in their homes, and they often rely on us for assistance,” said Fontanez. “For example, we receive numerous calls for lift-and-assist.”

Such events might involve an elderly person of limited mobility who has fallen at home. Social Services will then coordinate with emergency personnel to respond. Some require medical attention, while others just require being moved back into their bed, their kitchen table, a favorite chair, or a wheelchair – along with a measure of kind reassurance.

At this time of year, emergency heating assistance is also a key part of the Department’s service mix. This service is made possible through both public funding and private donations to a program known as “Redding Shares the Warmth”. An important part of the heating-assistance fund is making residents aware of its existence before temperatures dip severely and they need it acutely.

“Energy assistance takes a long time to qualify for,” noted Fontanez. “Through our outreach, we work to make sure no one is without heat – and nobody goes without electricity, either.”

While Fontanez and her

team receive applications for energy assistance, follow-up and approval is through the Community Action Agency of Western Connecticut, located in Danbury. “Last year, more than 40 households in Redding qualified for emergency heating assistance,” Fontanez noted. “The Community Action Agency can also connect householders with other forms of assistance, such as the state’s Weatherization Assistance Program.”

The Weatherization Assistance Program provides financial assistance to needy households toward the cost of energy-saving home improvements. The objective is to lower energy costs by making a dwelling more energy efficient, and the program is available to both homeowners and renters.

Housing assistance is a huge need, and for that purpose the Town allocated \$50,000 in ARPA funding toward the establishment of a housing assistance fund. This fund targets households that fell behind on rent or mortgage payments as a result of Covid shutdowns; the people in these households are employed.

For more acute housing needs, Fontanez makes shelter placements and assists people who are at risk of eviction. “Sometimes, there are mental health dimensions to the situation, and the individual can’t or won’t move quickly on finding a new place,” she said. “We don’t let anybody be put out on the streets.” ■

For more details or to donate to a Social Services program, visit [townofreddingct.org/government/services/social-services](http://townofreddingct.org/government/services/social-services)

# GET TO KNOW THE SENTINEL TEAM

## Justin Reynolds, Reporter | By Jessie Wright



The story of how Justin Reynolds came to live in Redding – and become part of the Sentinel team – is filled with “right place, right time” coincidence.

After growing up in Ridgefield and moving back home after college, Reynolds bounced around Fairfield County – including stints in Georgetown, Weston, and Westport – when he and his wife began looking to buy their first home. After three deals fell through and the arrival of their first son drew nearer, they were almost ready to table the idea after an emotional, eight-month search. They hadn’t been looking at

Redding when their current house came on the market. “We did a last hurrah,” Reynolds said, putting in an offer and getting settled in a woody neighborhood on Old Redding Road just weeks before their son was born in February 2020. Just one month later, the pandemic hit.

“All of a sudden, we’re in a new house, isolated in the woods, Covid happens – it was perfect timing for all of that,” Reynolds said.

Reynolds had some familiarity with the area already, after his own experience living in Georgetown and his years working as a local journalist for Hersam Acorn newspapers and Patch, where he launched the Weston-Redding-Easton Patch site in 2010. Throughout his news career, he had interviewed the likes of Joe Lieberman, Mariano Rivera, and Chris Frantz, the drummer for the Talking Heads.

Reynolds then left the news world, joining a B2B tech agency before starting his own copywriting business in 2015. He’d been writing content for startups and technology firms for

nearly a decade when the Sentinel landed in his mailbox.

“I really enjoy my job – I get paid to learn about leading-edge technology – but at the same time, writing content like ‘NoSQL vs. NewSQL: what database technology is right for you?’ maybe that’s not always the most exciting thing in the world,” he laughed.

He was excited for the opportunity to get to know more about his new neighbors and says that he enjoys the creative outlet his reporting for the Sentinel provides. His interviews with entrepreneurs and reporting on the unique business community here in Redding have forged new connections for both him and his family.

“I told my dad who loves beef jerky, ‘now I got a jerky guy!’” said Reynolds, after writing his January 26 Business Spotlight feature on Frank Williams.

“This job has helped me personally learn more about the town and what it has to offer,” Reynolds said. “And I guess if I’m learning about it, then the readers are learning about it too.” ■

We welcome Letters to the Editor. Please be clear, civil, and concise. Please e-mail us at [editor@reddingsentinel.org](mailto:editor@reddingsentinel.org)

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

## A bit of help for our litter problem

By Susan Clark



Photos by Sandi Martin

An assortment of litter and liquor bottles collected near Umpawaug Road and Fox Run Road in January.

In 2021, Connecticut passed a law imposing a 5-cent fee on each 50ml bottle of alcohol sold in the state – so-called ‘nip’ bottles. The fees collected are remitted to each municipality, with a stipulation that the funds be used for litter reduction or environmental initiatives.

For the first year of the new fee,

which ended September 30, 2022, Redding received \$3,170. That covers a lot of nip bottles.

Our three package stores (Redding Wines & Spirits on the Ridge, Lina Wine & Spirits in West Redding, and the Georgetown Package Store) had to have collectively sold 63,400 nip bottles to result in that fee.

That seemingly high number works out to 174 nip bottles sold, on average, every day of the year.

Those of us who regularly walk around Redding might say we have seen most of them on the side of our roads. And not just nip bottles – beer and soda cans, water bottles, liquor bottles, discarded masks, fast-food containers, construction debris, and much more are easy to see this year without snow to cover the mess.

According to First Selectwoman Julia Pemberton, the nip bottle fee goes into a trust account to be used for environmental and sustainability initiatives, Earth Day’s annual trash collection among them. The nip bottle fee is new, and therefore an addition to our resources for dealing with our litter problem.

Thus far, no new plans are on the table to deal with our roadside litter, but the nip bottle fee will be used to support existing initiatives.

## Selectmen propose 2.7% budget increase

2023-2024 budget development continues

By Rocco Valluzzo

Redding’s Board of Selectmen proposed a budget of \$16,033,554 for fiscal year 2023-2024 at a special meeting on Tuesday, January 31.

This represents an increase of 2.7% over the current year’s budget of \$15,611,657. Included in the budget is an increase of 6% in health insurance premium costs for Town employees. First Selectwoman Julia Pemberton also has asked for a computation based on a worst-case scenario of a 12% increase in premium costs.

Redding Finance Director Jim Sanders said that the Town will have a better idea in March of what the actual premium increase will be when its insurance broker begins to finalize rates. These rates are not set arbitrarily, but rather based on Redding’s costs.

“My recollection is in the last couple years we’ve been on the good side of it,” said Selectwoman Peg O’Donnell. “I certainly appreciate that we put together some estimates that are higher, because I think there’s a real possibility that could happen, so I think it’s something we need to think about.”

Sanders said the Town’s medical claims history has been very good overall. Over the last two fiscal years, it has seen rate decreases instead of increases.

“Our broker had suggested a budgeting range of a 10 to 12% increase,” Sanders explained. “We’ve never seen anything higher than a +5%, which was four years ago. ‘I put it in the budget at +6%, but I don’t have a good sense yet.’”

Pemberton suggested the idea of looking at the Town’s legal budget as a way to absorb such an increase without having a much larger increase in the overall budget. To date, the Town has had no significant material legal expenditures and is well within its budget of \$200,000.

What was not built into the proposed budget was the cost of the Town’s paramedic service. Redding and Bethel share a regional paramedic service, which is currently running a deficit of about \$50,000 (Redding’s share).

Pemberton and Sanders had met with Nuvance Health Emergency Medical Services Director Matt Cassavecchia and asked him to

put together some projections. Based on what was discussed at the meeting, to close the operating cost gap would require a \$240,000 budget for paramedic service, an increase of \$45,000 from the current \$195,000.

Pemberton said that what Redding has experienced in the past, which is a paramedic services budget increase of perhaps 2 to 3% on an annual basis, will now be significantly higher because Nuvance Health is losing money on the Redding-Bethel paramedic program.

“That’s something that I expect you should be putting in and changing the number,” she added. “It shouldn’t come as a surprise that the cost of providing paramedic services has gone through the roof, primarily as a function of supply and demand of paramedics and the wages for paramedics since the pandemic have increased significantly.”

The Selectmen decided to wait until all the numbers have been finalized before making any decision to transfer funds from the legal budget to cover this increase.

## Selectmen discuss upgrading part-time position

By Rocco Valluzzo

Due to increased workload in Redding’s Building Department, the Board of Selectmen has received a request from Chief Building Official Shaun Donnelly to upgrade the position of Assistant Building Official to full-time.

While the Selectmen have discussed the matter at previous meetings, they have held off on taking action based on a couple of concerns, one being the difficulty involved in creating another full-time position within an operating year. First Selectwoman Julia Pemberton also said there were concerns about the uncertainty of the economy and whether the demands on the Building Department officials’ time would stay the same as in recent months.

“That has been something that we’ve been thinking about

for probably close to a year,” Pemberton said. “We didn’t put it in last year either.”

The Building Department issues permits for all new construction, alterations, remodeling, additions, renovations, temporary structures, decks, storage buildings, and some repairs. The Department lost a position in 2020 due to budget decisions and currently does not have the manpower to cover the hours, according to Pemberton.

She added that if the position was increased to full-time it would result in about a \$70,000 differential to the Town’s current budget. Currently, the cost of the position is slightly more than \$40,000 but would increase to \$110,000 if it became full-time with benefits. There is also the possibility of adding more hours

to the position while still keeping it part-time.

“I think that might be something for us to at least consider, to put it in as increasing the part-time hours and maybe even with the thought that we can revisit it, you know in December, and see how that construction year went,” said Selectwoman Peg O’Donnell. “I know that’s not ideal, but we have to keep both on the table – but I just think that’s something else to think about.”

“I just want to keep it in the back of our minds” added Pemberton. “We’re not there yet, and perhaps if the interest rate environment becomes healthier, the trend in the Building Department will either stay the same or improve.”

## Short-term rentals

### Members of new subcommittee to be appointed

By Susan Clark

At the September 2022 meeting of the Board of Selectmen, as reported in the Sentinel, the Board unanimously approved a motion to create a subcommittee reporting to the Board of Selectmen to study the regulation of short-term rentals in Redding.

After several months’ delay, appointment of that subcommittee is now being taken up. In a call with the Sentinel, First Selectwoman Julia Pemberton indicated that representatives from the Planning and Zoning Commissions would sit on the subcommittee as well as other Redding residents. If you are interested in getting involved in the subcommittee, Pemberton encourages you to reach out to her at [jpemberton@townofreddingct.org](mailto:jpemberton@townofreddingct.org)

Connecticut does not regulate short-term rentals at the state level, although there is a 15% state tax on hotels and lodging house room revenue and 11% state tax on Bed and Breakfasts (B&B’s). No portion of that state

tax is returned to the municipality in which the facility operates. The only revenue that would accrue to Redding from regulation of short-term rentals would be if a permit were to be required and the Town chose to charge for it.

Most towns around Redding do not regulate short-term rentals, although some do. The subcommittee is expected to review the experiences of other towns as well as to weigh the pros and cons of introducing regulation of short-term rentals.

The Sentinel has a survey open where you may express your opinions about the regulation of short-term rentals in town. It can be accessed at [surveymonkey.com/r/reddingrentals](https://surveymonkey.com/r/reddingrentals)

This is not an official survey, but rather our effort to add some value to the process as the subcommittee takes shape and begins its review. We will report the results of the survey in a future issue.

## One “STEAP” forward

### Grant accepted for walking path at RCC

By Rocco Valluzzo



A Small Town Economic Assistance Program (STEAP) grant of \$203,856 was formally accepted by the Redding Board of Selectmen at a special meeting on Monday, January 30.

The grant is part of a state program that funds economic development, community conservation, and quality of life projects for localities that are ineligible to receive Urban Action bonds.

Awarded to the Town last fall, the grant will be used for the Redding Community Center walking path. First Selectwoman Julia Pemberton will now complete the paperwork to fulfill the obligations of the grant.

According to Pemberton, the total cost of the project that was submitted is \$268,420, with Redding sourcing a matching grant of \$64,564.

“Before we do anything with this project, we are going to have to determine the source of that funding,” Pemberton said. “This is a capital project, so it would not be an operating expense. We will not proceed to do work until we have identified the source of funds.”

She added that the Town has four years to secure the matching funds and can request a one-year extension.

One change she noted in the 2022 STEAP grant program is that funds cannot be used for design, planning, or engineering costs, which was permitted in the past. The Town would need to identify a source of funding for these as well.

Park and Recreation Commission member Peter Graziano said that a contractor has submitted some preliminary pricing on what the asphalt component would cost for the space in question and gave ideas of the costs for phase 2 and phase 3 of the project, but these were only estimates.

“The good news is now we have a \$200,000 authorization from the state, so that will go a long way towards accomplishing that first phase,” said Pemberton. “We just have to do the planning portion of it. I think the matching amount is not extraordinary. I think it’s something reasonable to expect we could complete in a fairly short period of time.”



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## SPORTS

## Bobcats beat Falcons on senior night

By Rocco Valluzzo



Photo by Rocco Valluzzo

Elyssa Kalamaras led the Joel Barlow High girls basketball team with 12 points in its game at Brookfield on Thursday, February 2. Barlow lost a slim 44-41 decision.

An offensive dry spell late in the game hurt the Joel Barlow High girls varsity basketball team's chances for victory when it visited Brookfield last Thursday, February 2.

The Falcons had a slim lead heading into the fourth quarter but were held to only single-digit scoring the rest of the way in a 44-41 loss on Brookfield's senior night.

"It stinks losing, but to finally play the way that we can play was awesome for our team, our fans," said Barlow head coach Joe Carollo. "We've got some games left. We're gonna try to do more of that."

Propelled by a pair of successful three-pointers by Kat Czerkawski, the Falcons took an early 8-1 lead. The Bobcats answered with the help of an eight-point effort by Catherine Sollose to help bring her team to within two points (14-12)

by the time the period ended.

Barlow's defense did a better job containing Sollose in the next frame, as she was held to just one free throw to make it 18-13 with a little more than three minutes left to play in the half. A 9-2 scoring run by the Falcons featured a three-pointer by Marin Kalamaras to help put the Falcons up by ten (27-17) going into halftime.

Barlow tried its chances at the three-point shot early in the third quarter but without much luck. In the meantime, Brookfield's press defense gave the Falcons some trouble, causing a number of turnovers that were turned into transition points for the hosts.

Sollose remained a particular concern. The junior would score 12 points in the third quarter alone and finished the game with 27.

After Emily Green hit a couple of free throws just past the midway point of the third quarter,

Brookfield went on an eight-point run, capped off by a basket by Sollose to tie it at 31-31 with less than two minutes to play in the period. Mia Tartaglia followed with a three pointer to put the Falcons back in the lead, but it was a one-point game (36-35) going into the last quarter.

Barlow's offense stalled in the fourth quarter, getting held to just five points. Green's basket down low at the start of the frame would be her team's lone field goal that period.

Two free throws by Sollose with 3:33 left to play gave the Bobcats the lead (41-39) for the first time since early in the night. The Falcons managed to tie it again with 2:34 left to play when Green hit both ends of a one-and-one, but those would be the final Falcon points of the night.

"They have a couple of explosive players, Cat Sollose especially," said Carollo. "But I'll tell you we gave them a run for their money. "How well we played makes me feel good. We're definitely representing ourselves pretty well."

Elyssa Kalamaras led Barlow with 12 points. Mia Tartaglia was next with 11, including one three-pointer.

Emily Green and Kat Czerkawski (two three-pointers) had six apiece. Marin Kalamaras (one three-pointer) and Julia Tartaglia had three points apiece.

Barlow, now 5-12, visits Pomperaug Thursday, February 9 at 7:00 p.m. and hosts Notre Dame on Tuesday, February 14 at 6:00 p.m. in the final game of the regular season. ■

## Falcons take ninth, seventh at conference finals

By Rocco Valluzzo

Four medals and six personal best performances highlighted the day for the Joel Barlow High indoor track teams at the South-West Conference championships.

The Falcon girls were among a dozen teams competing at the Floyd Little Athletic Center in New Haven on Saturday, February 4. Totalling 16 points, they placed ninth out of 12 teams.

Weston was the winner with 87 points, dethroning defending champ Newtown, which was a close runner-up with 83. Bethel was third with 72.

Barlow's first points came early in the meet. The 4x200 meter relay team of Emma Borgeault, Jenna Najjar, Jordan Carr, and Olivia Taylor combined for a time of one minute, 53.13 seconds for the bronze medal and less than 0.25 seconds behind runner-up Brookfield.

Although she did not score, Borgeault ran a personal-best 7.94 in the preliminary round of the 55-meter dash for ninth, just behind Sabrina Wade of Notre Dame of Fairfield. Barlow had two athletes run in the 1,000 meters, with Alex Bardani taking 13th in 3:30.60 and Sydney Borofsky right behind her in 3:31.23.

The same two runners competed for Barlow in the 1,600 meters. Borofsky took tenth in 6:05.08 and this time Bardani was right behind her in 6:15.12.

Borgeault just missed scoring in the 300 meters, taking seventh in 45.06, a personal best and a tenth of a second behind Pomperaug's Jessica Dickson. Taylor (13th) and Najjar (14th) were also in the race with times of 46.88 and 46.93 respectively.

Carr had Barlow's best performance in the field events. Clearing ten feet in the pole vault,

she scored third for a bronze medal.

She just missed scoring in the shot put with a seventh-place distance of 25 feet 7.75 inches. Lauren Klein Wassink got Barlow's points here with 28 feet 10 inches, for fourth.

The Falcon boys also took a pair of medals to go along with some personal best performances. They scored 18 points to take seventh in a field of 13, only one point behind sixth-place Immaculate.

Bethel was the winner with 119, taking over defending champ New Milford, which was runner-up with 89. Third went to Newtown with 71.

Despite not getting any points, Barlow was represented in the 4x200 meter relay. Taking 12th, Aidan Stant, Luke Bonanno, Jack Decker, and Sean McTague finished in 1:47.30, improving on their seed time by more than ten seconds.

The bulk of Barlow's points came in the 1,600 meters, which was also its lone victory. Matthias Galban won the gold medal in 4:29.41, a personal best.

Another personal best came in the 300 meters with Aidan Stant running a 38.77, taking ninth.

Galban secured all of Barlow's points. Taking the bronze medal in the 3,200 meters, he was third in 9:54.26. Jackson Sobelman also competed in the race and was ninth in 10:20.04, 0.12 seconds and one spot ahead of teammate Devon Tala.

The boys team had one competitor in the field events. McTague took 13th in the long jump with 14 feet 9.5 inches.

Barlow is back in New Haven on Saturday for the state Class M finals at 10:00 a.m. ■

## Times improve for Barlow ski teams

By Rocco Valluzzo



Times would improve for the Joel Barlow High Ski teams in their most recent race of the season last week.

Visiting Mount Southington on Thursday, February 2, the Falcons again took fourth overall in a field of eight teams. However, their overall time improved by almost 15 seconds as they finished with a combined 299.47, 0.35 second ahead of New Canaan.

Brunswick/Greenwich Academy was first in 279.12. Weston followed in 286.2. Wilton was

third in 289.66

Barlow had one skier in the top ten overall places. Once again, the Falcons were led by Ian Lent, who had a combined 45.77, good for sixth overall.

The next two Falcon skiers had times within a span of 0.05 second. In 23rd was Quinn Williston with a 48.2. One place later was teammate Jack Gustavson.

Next for Barlow was Luke Mutuski in 40th with a 50.96. Andrew D'Amaro clocked a 52.04, good for 46th. Completing the scoring for Barlow, Matthew Hartmann was 61st with a 54.24.

Also in the race, Alex Illie was 76th in 57.58, 0.04 second ahead of New Canaan's James Bakal. Taking 90th was Adam Goodacre in 60.14.

Completing the varsity slate for Barlow were the Dyar brothers with Nate in 96th in 61.28 and Alex in 106th in 67.62.

While the Falcon girls took eighth out of a field of ten teams,

their times also improved from their January 26 race by nearly 18 seconds with a 330.59.

Like the boys team, the Falcon girls also had one skier in the top ten overall places. That was Ava Kulikowski who was fifth in 47.68, 0.04 ahead of New Canaan's Paxton Beladino.

Taking 19th was Macy Baker in 50.92. Ten places later came Helena Zima with a 91.94.

A 53.23 time got Mary Baker 36th, 0.04 second ahead of Lane Pinto of Lauralton Hall. Farther back in the order was Avery D'Amaro in 56.72 for 68th. Completing the scoring for the Falcons, Genoveva Perez took 73rd in 51.94.

Two places later was Phoebe Merrill in 29.96. Na'ama Klein was not far behind with a 58.34 for 79th. Also in the varsity race was Gaby Boehlert with a 59.4 for 89th, 0.04 second behind Hannah Brown of Guilford. ■

## Five Barlow students sign to play collegiate sports



Photo by Mike Santangeli

Five Joel Barlow High student-athletes signed National Letters of Intent to play a sport in college next year. From left are Adam Goodacre (lacrosse, SUNY Cortland), Danny Shaban (football, UConn), Sydney Keenan (soccer, St. Lawrence University), Jack Baer (soccer, Franklin & Marshall College) and Will Scott (baseball, Williams College).

## Ground Pine Sanctuary / Continued from page 1





right bring to mind Dr. Seuss as a small creek flows alongside you. After walking approximately one-eighth of a mile, the trail crosses the creek – there are several secure rocks that provide a path for the crossing, though hikers should be aware that rain or condensation may make the moss on the rocks slippery. The Grouse Run cutoff is available shortly after the creek crossing, bringing you along a short, but steady incline to your right. After crossing through a gap in a rock wall, you are greeted again with the Sanford Trail.


Following the Sanford Trail to your right, you continue for an approximately one-half mile meander, mostly level with a few gentle inclines. Hikers should take care not to slip on the downhill portions in the autumn and winter,

as most of the trail is covered with a thick cover of fallen leaves.

The Snipe cutoff provides a shorter route back to Sport Hill Road and also avoids a particularly steep section of the Sanford Trail. However, the Snipe is not without its own incline, bringing hikers up a short but steep hillside towards the backyards of the Sport Hill Road neighborhood. Joining back with the Sanford Trail, it is just a short walk to the road, where two-tenths of a mile north, the parking area appears once again. ■

Do you like to hit the trails? The Sentinel is looking for additional volunteer contributors for Redding's Big Outdoors. E-mail editor@reddingsentinel.org for more information.



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# “Pink Out Day” at ER9 schools February 14

*Five parent-teacher organizations come together for breast cancer center fundraiser*

By Jessie Wright

For the first time, all five Parent Teacher Associations/Organizations (PTA/PTO's) in Redding, Easton, and Region 9 have united to spearhead a fundraiser. On February 14, the five schools – Redding Elementary School, Samuel Staples Elementary School, John Read Middle School, Helen Keller Middle School, and Joel Barlow High School – will participate in “Pink Out Day” to raise money for the Norma Pfriem Breast Center.

The idea for the fundraiser initially came from Ann Mohr, Assistant Principal at Helen Keller Middle School. Mohr's close friend Allison is a two-time breast cancer survivor and tireless advocate for patients with breast cancer and funding treatment. Her story inspired Mohr to do something to help.

“Allison is a nurse,” Mohr explained. “At the time of her first battle, she was working at the hospital St. Rayfield's in New Haven. She told her oncologist that when she made it through her battle, she would dedicate her career to women battling breast cancer and use her experience to help them through it all. When her cancer went into remission, her oncologist called her with the good news and a job offer. Allison has worked at the Norma Pfriem Breast Center in Trumbull since that day.”

The PTA/PTO's at the five schools are coordinating the logistics and fundraising efforts for the day. Students, teachers, and administrators are encouraged to wear pink on February 14 to show support for all who are currently battling, who have beaten, and in honor of those who have been lost to breast cancer. “We were thrilled to be invited to participate

in this initiative,” said Darrell Bradford, Co-President of the John Read Middle School PTA. “A key part of the PTA's mission is to ‘engage the community’ which can be a challenge in a small, rural community like Redding. Historically, the PTAs and PTOs in Redding, Easton, and Region 9 have operated independently of each other. This initiative provides a wonderful opportunity for all of the parent teacher associations to collaborate with each other towards a common goal.”

The Norma Pfriem Breast Center has locations in Bridgeport, Fairfield, and Trumbull and has been helping patients fight breast cancer in the region for over two decades. They offer screening and diagnostic services alongside the latest therapies and procedures to treat breast cancer. The center provides “world class treatment close to home, without having to travel to New York City or Boston.”

“Not only is this a great cause and a message we're proud to support, the collaboration between the Redding and Easton PTAs, PTOs, and schools truly exemplifies the heart and spirit of our communities,” said Tara Patrick, President of the Redding Elementary School PTA.

“I am so happy that all parent teacher organizations in our districts have united to promote this event,” said Mohr. “Our Pink Out Day is February 14. What better day to show love and support to others than Valentine's Day?” ■

*Donations to the effort can be made at [justgiving.com/page/er9pinkoutday](https://www.justgiving.com/page/er9pinkoutday) with all proceeds going to the Norma Pfriem Breast Center and their programs.*

## Redding only district to accept Danbury students

*Continued from page 1*

19 students attending the Easton schools and six students attending Joel Barlow High School/Region 9 schools through the Open Choice program as of January 25, 2023.

“Our goal is to accept eight students next year (in Redding),” McKinnon said. “Our hope is that students not only enroll but belong in our schools and classrooms.”

Students enrolled through the Open Choice program are guaranteed a spot within their new district through high school graduation, provided they maintain residency in the city they originated the application in. “For students, they become full members of their new school district,” said Eric Nyquist, Open Choice Coordinator at Cooperative Educational Services (CES), the regional educational service center responsible for facilitating the Bridgeport, Norwalk, and Danbury regions. “Students are able to take advantage of all the opportunities offered by the district. Many parents indicate that their students find great success when enrolled in their new districts. This could be due to a variety of factors, including enriched opportunities and being in a diverse classroom where they are exposed to students from different backgrounds who have a variety of interests that might be new to them.”

The State provides a \$3,000 stipend to receiving districts for each student they accept through the program, which can increase up to \$8,000 as the ratio of Open Choice students in the district increases. Transportation to and from school is also provided through the state. Regional educational centers like CES facilitate the application and selection process, coordinate with the receiving districts as students enroll, assist families in the enrollment process, coordinate transportation, and

provide professional development opportunities for school personnel when requested. There is no cost to families to participate in the program.

Nyquist reports that CES currently serves approximately 300 students across the Bridgeport and Norwalk regions and remains in conversations with the other districts who are eligible to participate. New Haven and Hartford are served by other regional education centers. The Hartford region serves almost 2,500 students each year through the program.

While CES acts only as a facilitator and thus does not collect data to track the specific benefits of the program, Nyquist did say that the feedback his office gathers from parents of students participating in the program has been overwhelmingly positive.

“We recently had an Open Choice student graduate as valedictorian of his high school,” Nyquist said. “On his parental response form, the parent indicated his belief that his son would have never been inspired to work so hard if he was not surrounded by the encouragement they found in his district.”

Receiving districts also stand to benefit from the program, from creating more enriched educational environments by including students of different backgrounds to the opportunity to balance their enrollment numbers across a district.

“The goal of the Open Choice program is to reduce racial, ethnic and economic isolation and invite students living in more urban areas to enroll in suburban communities,” said McKinnon. “Our message is more simple: we have space, and you are welcome here.” ■

# Choosing the right pre-school

By Jessie Wright



Photo courtesy of Westbrook Nature School

Redding families have the benefit of living in a district with excellent public schools and highly rated teachers. In the years before kindergarten, however, parents must choose what type of early childhood education programs are right for their children.

“Pre-school” programs fall within the larger category of Early Childhood Education, with pre-school aged children being 3-5 years old, before they are eligible for kindergarten. In Connecticut, pre-school is not required, but the Connecticut Office of Early Childhood (OEC) recommends that children experience some sort of structured social or educational setting before starting school.

“There are a lot of benefits,” said Beth Bye, Commissioner for the OEC. “I start by saying that it's really important for kids to socialize with other children. And it's important, facilitated by people trained in early childhood, for children to have an experience outside of their parents.”

Other benefits for pre-school aged children can include a sense of self-assuredness as they experience being dropped off at a program by caregivers (and picked back up), the introduction of certain structures and routines throughout a day, social skills, and practice in self-regulating. “That's what early childhood education does,” continued Commissioner Bye. “It's helping children learn to self-regulate in a new environment, but in a trusting, safe environment... I think at the core, it's the children learning to feel confident.”

Commissioner Bye also cited several benefits of pre-school for parents, with these programs often providing a first opportunity for parents to have a partner or “coach” who can help them problem-solve or strategize on approaches to various issues with their children.

Pre-school programs in Connecticut are regulated by the OEC, which provides state licensing to programs through a rigorous process to ensure the safety and well-being of the children. Programs can then choose to pursue accreditation through either National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) or National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC), which is a process that improves and measures the quality of the program against a national standard.

There are currently four licensed pre-schools in Redding, with a host of additional options in neighboring towns as well. Parents can search a database of licensed providers by zip code at [211childcare.org](http://211childcare.org) to explore programs that may be nearby.

The Sentinel spoke with teachers and administrators at Redding's licensed pre-schools to develop an at-a-glance guide to the in-town options for local families.

## Partners in Education Preschool at Redding Elementary School

33 Lonetown Road

**Pre-school schedule:**  
8:15 a.m. – 1:15 p.m. for 5 days a week

**Age of children:**  
Single-age classrooms, ages 3-5

**Program approach:**  
Structured, play-based program for students who have special needs and for typically developing peers. These peers are referred to

as partners. While partners are role models to students who have special needs, all children receive individualized and differentiated support.

“At this age especially, to learn that differences are all around us... and we make a big point to celebrate all sort of differences and celebrate all those things... we always talk about how it's such a positive thing,” said Stacey McGee, Preschool Teacher at Redding Elementary School. “We teach empathy. It's amazing watching them, because they don't come with any preconceived ideas about anything yet, so you can really teach those skills on how to help people.”

### Admissions process:

Applicants must be residents of Redding school district to apply. While many students with special needs enter the program through the State's “birth to 3” program, any student in the district can apply for admission. Applications are typically due in early January, with priority given to families with students currently enrolled or who are alumni of the program. A lottery is then drawn from the applications received, with notifications sent sometime in February. A wait list is maintained. A tour date for prospective families is offered in late fall.

### Advice for parents:

“Think about what is going to be best for your child,” said McGee. “Some kids learn through a very structured day, lots of predictability... other programs offer that more loose (approach). It really just depends on what type of child you have and what you think is going to be best. I never think there is going to be a ‘bad’ early childhood program as long as your child is safe and loved, and they're learning.”

## Westbrook Nature School

7 Long Ridge Road

**Pre-school schedule:**  
8:30 a.m. – 12:30 a.m. for 3, 4, or 5 days per week

**Age of children:**  
Mixed-age classrooms, ages 3-6

**Program approach:**  
Nature-based education, with most of the children's time spent outdoors. Children have the opportunity to explore and discover nature for themselves in the school's woodlands, fields, and streams.

“These experiences encourage social bonding and a sense of kinship with nature. As educator David Sobel put it, we need to allow children ‘to love the earth before we ask them to save it,’” said Director Suzanne Fogle. “In a mixed-age class, the youngest children have older children to learn from socially and physically. And the older children are given an opportunity to experience themselves as leaders in the class and as helpers to their fellow students and the teachers.”

### Admissions process:

Priority enrollment for in-house applications (parents who already have a child enrolled in the program) is from November 1 – December 31, followed by applications from the general community. This small program fills up quickly each year, though a waitlist is maintained. Tours can

be scheduled before applying.

### Advice for parents:

“Learn about the school's culture and mission,” said Fogle. “Schools with a strong sense of community will be more supportive of families, and the children will feel a stronger sense of belonging. Find out if parents will be asked to volunteer and what role they will play in the school's parent committees and fundraising efforts. Ask if the community comes together for seasonal celebrations and/or other events.”

## Maple Hill Montessori School

25 Cross Highway

**Pre-school schedule:**  
8:15 a.m. – 11:15 a.m. or 8:15 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.

**Age of children:**  
Mixed-age classroom, ages 3-5

### Program approach:

Montessori philosophy, which encourages children to develop independence as well as work together as part of a community. The program gives children the opportunity to choose work not based on their chronological age but on their desire to learn, create order, and repeat a skill until it is mastered.

“Our students take great pride in helping their classmates and having responsibilities that make them feel invested in their daily school experience,” said Director Jodi Barry. “Children stay together over a number of years and develop close friendships with their peers and teachers.”

### Admissions process:

Applications for the 3-6 program are collected on a rolling basis until the program is full. A child must be three years old by December 31 of the admitting year to be eligible for the program. Priority is given to current families and children currently enrolled in the school's toddler program. Morning tours are encouraged and can be scheduled before applying.

### Advice for parents:

“Parents should explore as many programs as possible!” Barry said. “Making time to come in for a tour and an in-person talk with the teachers is a wonderful way to find the best fit for your family. Comparing length of school day as well as the school's approach to learning is essential. In my mind, preschool and toddler programs should be a balance of play, learning, and discovering what it means to be a member of an educational community. The right school will make you feel comfortable and in turn your child will have a positive outlook on what it means to be a student.”

## BrightPath Redding

20 Portland Avenue

**Pre-school schedule:**  
Times and dates up to full-time child-care offered

**Age of children:**  
33 months to 4.75 years

### Program approach:

Play-based curriculum that follows two-week themes that teachers lead in the classroom and through hands-on play experiences. A focus on asking open-ended questions and infusing learning into play.

### Admissions process:

BrightPath offers childcare to families on a rolling basis for children six weeks old and up. Parents fill out an inquiry form at [brightpathkids.com/us/locations/redding](http://brightpathkids.com/us/locations/redding) to begin the admissions process. In-person and virtual tours can be scheduled before enrolling.

### Advice for parents:

Administrators at BrightPath Redding were not able to be reached for comment. ■

*Please note: Family Child Care providers can also be licensed to offer care for pre-school aged children. Search [211childcare.org](http://211childcare.org) for a comprehensive list of licensed programs.*

# Black soldiers at the Redding encampment of 1778-79

Research team uncovers untold stories from the Revolutionary War

By Pamela Brown

As we celebrate Black History Month, the black soldiers who played an integral role in the Revolutionary War provide a compelling account of our town and country's histories. Part of the Redding encampment in the winter of 1778-79, these men's stories are now available on the new mobile app at Putnam Memorial State Park.

"Learning the details of those encamped at Redding helps us forge a more personal connection to the past," said Ellery Leary, President of the Friends and Neighbors of Putnam Memorial State Park and Park Historian.

One of these soldiers was Cuff Saunders, known as Doctor Cuff, who worked beside Dr. Philip Turner, surgeon general of the hospital of the Northern Division of the Army. "He already had training in pharmaceuticals, because when he was enslaved, he worked for a pharmacist," said Dr. Katherine Hermes, Publisher of *Connecticut Explored*, the magazine of Connecticut history. Hermes was part of a research team who uncovered pertinent information on these overlooked historical figures for the Park's new app and helped create the website "The Forgotten Voices of the Revolutionary War".

Cuff was then sold to and enslaved by Deacon Israel Wells, and was called Cuff Wells. He enlisted in 1777 with hopes of gaining his freedom. Upon receiving his bounty at the end of the war, he purchased his freedom and changed his name to Cuff Saunders and became a scholar, educator, and statesman. After a few years of freedom, he died of influenza in 1788, leaving behind a wife and son.

Another soldier, Private Prince Simbo of Huntington's Brigade, is recognized for carving a gunpowder holder made from a bull's horn that survived the war. "It's especially thrilling to see objects like Private Simbo's intricately carved powder horn, which might have accompanied him to Redding. The care and artistry put into that functional aspect of a soldier's kit gives us a glimpse into his personality," said Leary. Hermes explained Simbo, of Glastonbury, enlisted as a private with the Connecticut Seventh Regiment and served throughout the war. "Prince was at Valley Forge and saw

fighting action at the Battles of Brandywine, Germantown, and Monmouth," she added.

According to Dr. Anthony Martin, also part of the research team, "These are just two stories of the thousands of people of African descent that served in the Continental Army and militias during the American Revolution. Some were free and others enlisted in the cause to gain their freedom after the war," he explained. "Why would these men risk their lives in combat, risk getting dysentery and other disease, brave the elements, and subject themselves to the hardships of military life? To quote the famous Langston Hughes poem 'I, too, am America.'"

Historical documents were used to uncover the stories of these soldiers, such as newspapers, court proceedings, pension records, military muster rolls, and local histories from the nineteenth century. "*The Hartford Courant* goes back to 1764 when it was called the *Connecticut Courant*, and we found ads for soldiers who deserted, and other information about the soldiers," noted Hermes, who taught a graduate class on People of Color in the American Revolution that focused on the Redding Encampment. Graduate students in the Public History program at Central Connecticut State University also wrote narratives and discovered documents that are featured on the site.

Hermes felt a mix of emotions as she read about these soldiers. "I feel sad for families whose ancestors have not been remembered. I feel wonderful when I'm able to put together a narrative that gives voice to their experiences, and I feel anger at the injustices people had to endure," she said. "Uncovering their histories won't right the wrongs, but it will allow our current generation and future generations to restore these people to their proper place in history. These were people who persevered and struggled. They loved their families and accepted many challenges. They're inspiring." ■

*More stories are available on Putnam Park's mobile app, CRISACCESS Tours, part of a National Park Service (NPS) project called "The Forgotten Voices of the Revolutionary War". More information is also available at [forgottenvoicesrevwar.org](http://forgottenvoicesrevwar.org)*

## OBITUARY

### Grady E. Jensen

November 8, 1922 – January 31, 2023

Grady Jensen was born in Pittsburgh, PA on November 8, 1922, the son of Claude Henry Jensen and Margaret Edmonds Jensen. He grew up in Pittsburgh, attending the Rogers Elementary School, Peabody High School, and the Arnold School, which in 1940 was merged with Shady Side Academy.

Mr. Jensen attended Hobart College from 1940 to 1943, when he entered service in the Navy as an Aviation Cadet. He was released to inactive duty in December 1945 after the end of World War II. In March 1946, he was commissioned an Ensign and designated a Naval Aviator.

Mr. Jensen attended the Wharton Graduate Division of the University of Pennsylvania, where he received a Master of Business Administration degree in 1949.

From 1950 to 1955 he was employed by Cresap, McCormick and Paget, management

consultants, in New York City as a staff consultant. Subsequently, he held general management and human resources positions with American Broadcasting Company, New York University, Eastern Air Lines, Columbia University, Chase Manhattan Bank, and American Express Company. From 1986 to 1996 he was Executive Director of Senior Personnel Employment Council (SPEC) in White Plains, NY, a not-for-profit employment service for older workers.

In 1952 Mr. Jensen married Mary Margaret Wilber. They had three children and lived in Scarsdale for 46 years. During that time, Mr. Jensen was active in civic and community affairs, including service as a Village Trustee, Fire Commissioner, Police Commissioner, and Mayor. He was also extensively involved in Hobart College activities, including a term as alumnus trustee, and quarterbacking the Class of

1944's reunions many times. At the College's commencement in 2004, Mr. Jensen was awarded an honorary Doctor of Humane Letters degree.

Mr. and Mrs. Jensen were parishioners at The Church of St. Joseph of Arimathea, Elmsford, NY for many years. Mr. Jensen was a vestryman, clerk of the vestry for 29 years, head usher for 25 years, and author of the centennial history of the parish in 1986.

Mr. and Mrs. Jensen moved from Scarsdale to Meadow Ridge in 2003. Mrs. Jensen died in 2009. Mr. Jensen continued to live at Meadow Ridge until his death.

Mr. Jensen's brother, Henry Grosvenor Jensen, died in 1999. Mr. Jensen is survived by his three children - Timothy, Eliza, and Caroline - and five grandchildren - Patrick, Adam, Lily, Michael, and Steven. ■

## Sam Clemens, meet Grady Jensen

Remembrances of a remarkable friend from Mark Twain Library | By Jen Wastrom



Grady Jensen

We lost a star brighter than Haley's Comet last week – Grady Jensen has died.

For the past 13 years – beginning when he was 87 – Grady enthusiastically brought his professional smarts, his curiosity, his determination, his creativity, and his bighearted generosity to the Mark Twain Library, leaving his mark in countless ways. His relationship with the Library began in 2010 with the gifting of the bronze Twain bench – a welcoming and iconic addition to our campus – dedicated to the memory of his wife, Maggie. Shortly thereafter, he agreed to become a Trustee. An out-of-the-box thinker just

like Twain, Grady came with a yet-to-be-tapped vision for the Library: "I believe that the 300+ Meadow Ridge residents should be considered a special 'market' for Mark Twain Library."

Thus sparked what has grown into a mutually beneficial, dynamic partnership with our "friends up the hill". Grady's steadfast commitment to fostering the relationship included subtle things – like getting a portrait of Twain hung in the Meadow Ridge Library (clever!), and, more practically, a MTL-connected computer terminal. Soon, the programming staff at Meadow Ridge began to partner with our programming and development teams and celebrated events percolated: the Annual Ice Cream Social, special cultural presentations both at Meadow Ridge and the Library, including a few wine tastings (for which he insisted on quietly covering the cost of the wine), and the Orientation Teas held for new Meadow Ridge residents twice a year at the Library. He also paved inroads with the administration at Meadow Ridge, persuading them that sponsoring the Library's fundraisers were invaluable marketing opportunities. The answer was always "yes" (much

to the joy and relief of the event chairs and the Library's coffers).

His exemplary service as a Trustee didn't stop at the end of the Meadow Ridge driveway – he was ever-thinking of ways to make the Library stronger. Just a small selection includes his idea (and personal financial support) to protect our beautiful Mark Twain Library silhouette trademark with a copyright; his hours spent investigating weather insurance for the Frog Frolic; the letters he wrote to the *Redding Pilot* newspaper every year at Annual Appeal time, and his efforts to ensure a bus ran from Meadow Ridge up to the Community Center on Town Budget voting days. In 2011, when we created The Stormfield Society honoring those who choose to leave funds to the Library in their will, Grady stepped up as the inaugural member.

Once, after an event we had worked on together, Grady sent me a short note, and signed it: "*Sam Clemens thanks you muchly.*"

Grady, I imagine, wherever you are, Mr. Clemens has already found you... and is thanking YOU muchly... for it all. ■

Jen Wastrom, Trustee, Mark Twain Library

### Local parties gear up to seek candidates for fall elections / Continued from page 1

the caucus to choose their candidates for the November election."

Now is the time prospective candidates should express their interest in running, Carlino said.

"Once we get the information from the Town Clerk, we will advertise the open positions for each seat, and we will ask people interested in running for those positions to submit their names. They will be interviewed by the DTC nomination committee, then the committee will make the recommendations of who they feel should run," Carlino said.

"If you have interest, you should attend a meeting," she continued. "You learn more that way. If you really want to run and be elected by your Town, you should speak to committee chairs. Now is the time to express your interest; get your face out there. It's good to be known. The more opportunities you have to be seen and heard, the better."

"Individuals interested in running for an elected board or commission need to get in touch with the town committee well before its caucus," agreed Cilo. "Attend RTC, board, and commission

meetings to learn more. Express an interest in a particular position with your party chair and party committee," she recommended.

It is not necessary to have experience if someone wants to run for a board or commission vacancy, though it is beneficial for anyone interested in that commitment to familiarize themselves with the workings of the group they are interested in and get to know other people that represent it.

"We're looking for people committed to volunteering for the Town," said Carlino.

"Open-minded, intelligent, hard-working candidates who are committed to doing their best (and what's best) for the Town of Redding" are qualifications of any good candidate, Cilo said, in addition to being a registered voter and resident of Redding.

The qualifications that are necessary for a specific post "depends on the commission," she continued.

According to Carlino and Cilo, the two major parties in Redding share the common goal that all Redding residents be represented on its boards and commissions.

"We always want to have a respectful dialogue about that issue to work together on resolutions. Because we live in a small town, we're able to avoid inter-party acrimony that we see on a national level," Carlino said.

"There have been, and continue to be, times when a candidate is endorsed by both political parties," Cilo said. "The parties have often agreed that if a current candidate from one party is doing an exceptional job, why challenge that position with a candidate from the other party?"

Taxes, education, and Georgetown development are among the key focuses for the DTC this election, according to Carlino.

For the RTC, taxes and "spending are hot issues, as are curriculum and school spending, and affordable housing for land use candidates," said Cilo. ■

Visit [reddingdemocrats.org](http://reddingdemocrats.org) or [reddingrepublicans.org](http://reddingrepublicans.org) for more information.

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## BUSINESS SPOTLIGHT

# Helping students cross the finish line

*Local tutoring business sharpens students' writing, reading, and acting skills* | By Justin Reynolds



Photo courtesy of Jason Howard

Does your favorite student need extra help refining their writing skills, growing as an actor, or preparing for college? If so, Jason Howard would love to help.

Howard is the founder of Finish Line Tutoring, a tutoring business based in Redding that specializes in helping students strengthen their reading, writing, and acting skills. To date, Howard has worked with middle school, high school, and college students across northern Fairfield County.

"I've worked as a teacher and tutor for almost 18 years," said Howard, who has lived in Redding for ten years and thus very familiar with the Redding school system. "We launched Finish Line Tutoring after teaching English and drama at levels from middle school to first-year college students."

"I've found one-on-one work with students particularly rewarding, regarding writing and reading skills," Howard continued. "In addition, as a coach at Joel Barlow High School Writing Center, I discovered a love for helping all writers – those struggling with writing, and (those) soaring ahead but not yet confident of their skill."

If there's anything that sets Finish Line Tutoring apart from other tutoring businesses, it's these three words: personalization, patience, and practice.

"While we may do lessons, we do them at the right pace for each student," Howard said. "We can practice with patience, because we take the time to be personally aware of each student's learning needs. With a tutor, another adult gets to know the student and cares."

Finish Line Tutoring was launched in the fall of 2019, right before the pandemic ushered in an era of online learning.

"We offer both online and in-person instruction," Howard said, adding his primary tool of choice for remote instruction is Zoom, and he also uses Google Classroom. "My tutoring takes place in homes, libraries, and online in Redding and many nearby towns. I've also met my students at their parents' offices."

One of Howard's main areas of specialty is working with juniors and seniors on brainstorming and drafting Common Application personal essays and other writing required for college admissions.

"We design College Application Essay Bootcamps to help rising seniors develop some of the most crucial writing they will do in high school: the Common Application's Personal Statement and other writing requirements often required by individual colleges," Howard said. "Offered at Spring Break over five days or three weekends during the summer, it's a series of six small-group lessons – guided brainstorming combined with drafting sessions – all at a package price."

The bootcamp can also be held privately if the student prefers.

Howard's tutoring business is primarily focused on writing and reading; in the event a student needs help in other subjects like math or science, Howard has a network of other tutors he can recommend.

While you might think that students who perform well academically wouldn't get much value from having a tutor, you'd be mistaken.

"Struggling students and high achievers both benefit from the personal touch," Howard explained. "High achievers can be very hard on themselves, too. All students need encouragement from someone other than their family or teachers." ■

Learn more at [finishline-tutoring.com](http://finishline-tutoring.com) or contact Howard at [runjas@gmail.com](mailto:runjas@gmail.com) or (203) 644-0279.



# On the Valentine's menu with ... Laura Ancona of Tusk & Cup

By Pamela Brown



and treats from morning to night."

Every day fresh bagels are delivered from NY, and they serve pastries, sandwiches, salads, soups, and handmade gelato in 12 flavors. "At heart, my husband and I are foodies. We're passionate about quality," she said.

Working with local coffee company Redding Roasters, they created their proprietary "Espresso Italiano Blend" as well as their signature house blend, "Branchville Brew". "In addition to our traditional coffee menu, we are creating new specials all of the time," Ancona continued. "I've worked with our chefs and bakers to help develop recipes and new gelato flavors. We love experimenting to keep things fresh and exciting."

Ancona and her husband recently moved to West Redding. "We love being part of the Redding community and feel that Branchville is an extension of the local food landscape including Redding and Georgetown establishments," said Ancona.

Ancona shared her thoughts on food and love in a fun Q&A.

**What was your most memorable Valentine's Day?**

2011 - My husband proposed to me!!

**Flowers or chocolate?**

Chocolate!

**What desserts say "love" to you?**

I'm a cookie and ice cream girl!

**Favorite romantic comedy?**

*My Best Friend's Wedding*

**What love song describes your life right now?**

*Looking Through the Eyes of Love.* I've been doing a deep dive Rom Com binge. I just watched *Ice Castles* for like the millionth time!

### Affogato (Serves 1)

#### Ingredients

- 2 scoops vanilla gelato (or your favorite flavor)
- 1 shot of hot espresso (you can buy espresso shots in advance and warm them up later)

### Directions

Scoop the gelato into a wide glass or bowl. Pour the hot espresso over the gelato. Top with whipped cream, chocolate, or caramel sauce, or any of your favorite toppings. Serve with biscotti for dunking if desired. Enjoy!

# From puppets to producing Redding's Bob Marty has made a career of creativity

By Pamela Brown



Photos courtesy of IDW

**Bob Marty of Redding has worked in creative fields from puppetry to TV production to mixed-media art.**

Live a creative life. That's been Bob Marty's outlook since he was a young man.

"I'm just this kid from New Jersey who had a lot of amazing opportunities. I love what I do," said Marty, a Redding resident known for building iconic *Sesame Street* characters, including Big Bird, and producing and directing programs for CBS, NBC, A&E, BBC, the Hallmark Channel, among others. His PBS programs have helped raise an estimated \$750 million dollars and include some of the biggest hits in the network's history.

"Most of my television work has been to help PBS thrive," said Marty. "Through luck, hard work, and tenacity, I'm able to work with notable figures like Tom Hanks, Ken Burns, Meryl Streep, Deepak



Sam Waterston, Meryl Streep, and Bob Marty.

Chopra, etc. But I also get to dream up ideas about health concerns and subjects of interest to the PBS audience."

A high school film program whet Marty's appetite for a career in the industry, but his true calling was art, so he enrolled at Pratt Institute. "I took a puppetry class because it seemed like fun. Pratt was formative to me," he said. "My favorite professor, now a best friend, taught us to embrace the chaos. One of the most important lessons I learned at Pratt and applied in TV and my own art is to learn from your mistakes."

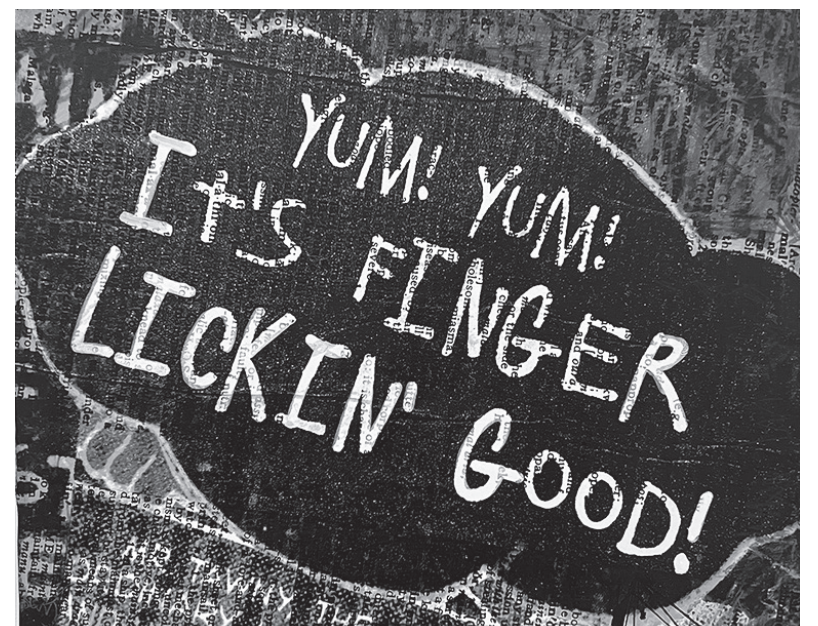
In 1980, upon earning a BFA in painting, Marty worked at Great Jones Studio designing and building puppets for *Sesame Street*, including six Big Birds. He also created designs and props for New York City Ballet, built the Snuggle fabric softener bear, and other puppet characters still used

all over the world today.

"In the mid-80's, I came to use what I learned in high school," said Marty, who founded MPI, Media Productions International, and Inky Dinky Worldwide and began a long-standing career with PBS after producing a well-received show about musician and comedian Victor Borge. "All of a sudden, I was one of the go-to producers for PBS membership pledge specials to get people to support their local stations."

Initially retiring in 2001, Marty returned to PBS in 2005 to produce *Rich Dad's Guide to Wealth with Robert Kiyosaki*. "That got me back to seeing how fun this TV stuff was. It snowballed into more shows," said Marty, who has around ten PBS shows currently airing with new shows on the way.

Wanting to also focus on his art, in 2016 Marty opened the Georgetown Arts & Cultural



A mixed-media piece by Marty.

Center at 5 Main Street that houses studios for Marty and his wife, Julie, a painter; a storefront gallery; and a maker space. "It's a salon for artists to have a place to gather in small groups. If you expect people to buy your art and/or attend your openings, you have to support them," said Marty who himself works in mixed medium.

"The skills I learned as a producer are the same as putting on a gallery show," he said. "You can have an idea, but how do you make that concept come into the world in a way that has integrity and authenticity? Whether it's making six Big Birds, a large painting, or 22 *Downton Abbey* specials, it's that leap from concept into execution."

In 2019, Marty's career came full circle when he produced *Sesame Street's 50th Anniversary Celebration* on PBS. "It was wonderful to re-live this," he said, noting it represents living a creative life and using whatever gifts you have. "Creativity is a process, and you have to trust the process. You have to leap, and the net will appear. I hope I always remain creative." ■

Marty's newest show, which he produced and directed, is *Eat to Sleep*, a program that helps you sleep better by learning what and when to eat. It premieres on PBS on February 26.

# With love, from Meadow Ridge

By Pamela Brown



Photos by Carol Morgan

Jess and Doug Dawson (married 53 years) with Ruff 'n' Ready, their Tibetan terrier.

The residents at Meadow Ridge are getting into the spirit of Valentine's Day – and some are even willing to share their secrets to long-lasting relationships between friends and family.

"I absolutely wear red and pink on Valentine's Day to buoy the day along. When someone passes by wearing red or pink I Valentine cheerlead a greeting," said resident Carol Morgan, proud of her fondness for the love-filled day of the year. "Since childhood, corny at heart, I celebrate Valentine's Day as a national holiday. It stirred my delight to create handmade valentines to send to my parents and favorite relatives and friends."

That tradition is still going strong. "Decades later, it has morphed into an e-blast to far-flung dear friends as an expression of 'thinking of you' though the chaotic Covid world has separated us," said Morgan, who has framed photos of loving shared moments with those who mean most.

Bob and Karen Wylie have been married for 71 years. "We met at the office. She was a knockout," said Bob. "I was smitten. For

Karen, it took a while." It didn't take long for her to come around, and the two were married in 1953 after dating less than a year. According to Bob, the secret to their long-lasting marriage is "working together on everything."

Although not huge fans of Valentine's Day, preferring instead to celebrate meaningful personal occasions, Bob gets into the spirit by showering Karen with love. "I present flowers to her, and we'll have a drink or two," he said. For Bob, love is all about Karen, children, family, and friends.

Bill and Margaret Brown will be celebrating 56 years in July. "Our love is a more diverse love, meaning we enjoy each other in many ways beyond 'pure love,'" said Bill who added love means many things to him. "An example is doing something willingly with your wife when you really don't want to do it, like constant socializing." The Browns don't have special traditions for Valentine's Day; rather they keep the entire day free for each other. "We've traveled to a few destinations over Valentine's



Carol Morgan at Meadow Ridge loves to celebrate Valentine's Day with friends near and far.



Day. We will be doing a special dinner on Valentine's Day this year. A restaurant we like in Redding (officially Ridgefield in Georgetown) is The Barn Door. Another would be Note in Bethel."

Married for 53 years, Jess and Doug Dawson have found their formula for a successful marriage. "It fits right in with my basic premise of life – you have to have a sense of humor, be flexible, and have good friends," said Jess. "One of the important things of loving each other is listening to your spouse and meshing on things he's strong with and things I'm strong with. I'm an artist, and he's an engineer, so we speak different languages."

For Jess, love incorporates into all aspects of her life. "Things that make me happy, like my dog, my family, food. There's not one specific thing. I loved going to conventions with my husband and I enjoyed being with people, playing golf, going out to dinner and it was really cool to go whale watching," she said. This year, the Dawsons

Continued on page 9

# MOVIE SERIES

## Comedy icons bring Disney to Redding

By Donna Christopher

The media was not allowed on set but reported much hoopla in 2007 when movie stars Robin Williams, Kelly Preston, and John Travolta filmed scenes in Redding for the 2009 movie *Old Dogs*.

The PG-rated Disney movie includes scenes shot at locations around the country, including several in Connecticut. The Redding Community Center, Redding Country Club, and Putnam Memorial State Park were used for filming over a couple of weeks in the summer of 2007.

The News-Times reported at the time that there were bars on windows and barbed wire on fencing at the Community Center as the film crews transformed it into a prison set. The article also included an interview with Willie Roman, then facility coordinator for Redding, who handled leasing between the Town and the film crew. Roman spoke of his long workdays and meeting some of the actors amongst the excitement of watching movie making live.

Several reports also said former Connecticut Governor Jodi Rell and Redding First Selectwoman Natalie Ketcham went to Putnam Memorial State Park, which was closed to the public for a week during filming, for a bill signing ceremony of a bill which offered incentives for the film industry to use Connecticut for production.

According to the Connecticut Department of Economic Community Development, a study reported on last year shows that the State's film industry tax incentive programs have been successful, leading to nearly 3,000 direct, indirect, and induced jobs in the fiscal year 2020. The study also found the incentives boosted Connecticut's economy by nearly

\$359 million.

Joe Bonomo of Redding, who has served as President of the Redding Historical Society, said he remembers when the film was made.

"I was working in Wilton. They used the vet office (Passage East) on Route 7. They used the Methodist Church parking lot further down Route 7 for their production trucks," he recalled. The person who answered the phone at Passage East did not remember the movie.

*Old Dogs* is a comedy which centers around friends and business partners Charlie (Travolta) and Dan (Williams) and their attempts to take care of two kids (played by Conner Rayburn and Ella Bleu Travolta), Dan's biological children from a fleeting affair several years earlier with fun-loving Vicki (Preston). Vicki shows up one day and leaves the children with the two friends after she tells them she needs to serve a two-week prison sentence.

What ensues is a series of slapstick scenes as the men try to mind the children and meet the demands of an important business client. When their colleague, Ralph (Seth Green) screws up the deal, Dan must make a choice between moving to Japan or staying behind and becoming a family man.

Reviews were mixed, but there were memorable funny scenes.

One such scene features Seth Green, who gets into an enclosure at a zoo and finds himself in the embrace of a gorilla. To untangle himself, he sings the big animal a soothing lullaby. A pill mix-up in another scene by the kids results in Charlie experiencing a frozen face like the Joker while he is at an important golf outing. ■

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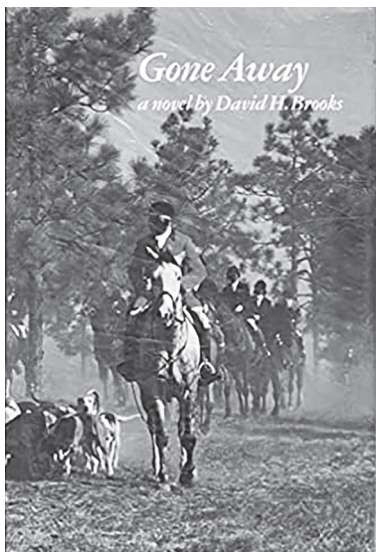
## BOOK REVIEW

### Gone Away

By David H. Brooks

Published in 1975 by Harper's Magazine Press, 232 pages.  
Original price \$7.95

Available online used



Why review a book published almost fifty years ago and long out of print? The author of *Gone Away*, David H. Brooks, was well-known to many in Redding. He passed away in January, and this review is both a tribute to him and a remembrance of another era. Brooks famously wrote much of *Gone Away* while on the train, commuting to New York City from Redding for his job in the advertising world.

A work of fiction, *Gone Away* is set in rural Connecticut in a town depicted in such a way as to bring Redding clearly to mind. This should not surprise the Redding reader – David Brooks was the third generation of his family to live here, on Uncle John's Road in Poverty Hollow. A sense of place and feeling of rootedness is strong throughout the book.

Douglas Harrison is the patriarch of his small family, which includes his wife Martha and their two sons. They live in a small, old house on a large farm. Sports are important, especially being good at them. The boys ride horses, play football, run. Their "Old Man" is right there with them, challenging them and usually besting them.

While Harrison may be good at sports, he has a harder time navigating the changing world of the late 1960's and his boys' coming of age. The upheaval of the civil rights movement, the prevalence of drugs in schools and on city streets, as well as changing roles for the sexes compound the often-difficult relationship between a father and his teenage sons.

It becomes all too much for Martha and the eldest son, Douglas's namesake, who react by separately taking off – one to Europe, one from boarding school. I'll stop here and not give away the ending, which nicely ties the personal and societal themes together.

Brooks's writing draws you in and along; he is a visual phrase-maker. Not only does he tell a good story, he writes it very well. Some of the best parts of the book are the descriptions of nature and weather in the country town that so clearly is the Redding the author loves and calls home. ■

Review by Susan Clark

With love, from Meadow Ridge / Continued from page 8

will celebrate Valentine's Day in Vermont. "I envision we'll be spending it with my daughter and my 11-year-old grandson. When I was a kid, we'd give silly little gifts at breakfast, like candy hearts with sayings on them, chocolates, small stuff. I'll do that for my grandson." The Dawsons also will exchange cards to proclaim their everlasting love. "After 53 years, it's still there," she said.

To help residents get in the spirit of Valentine's Day, Meadow Ridge will be hosting a Mix 'n'

Mingle in the facility's award-winning botanical Atrium. Festive décor and refreshments will add to the fun.

Even when it's not Valentine's Day, Meadow Ridge is filled with love. "There's a certain buoyancy at Meadow Ridge. It's a stunning village of hundreds of gracious and caring people, both residents and staff, that create a special vibe," said Morgan. "That's great company for Valentine's Day — or any day." ■

## LIBRARY CORNER

By Erin Shea Dummeyer

This week, I found myself on a delightful little road trip to the Mark Twain House & Museum in Hartford, where Twain lived with his family for 17 years. The house had all the bells and whistles of the time, including indoor plumbing and one of the first telephones installed in a private residence. The reason I paid a visit was to securely transport two of our Twain artifacts – his cigar box writing desk and travel cigar case – to the museum for an upcoming exhibition. "For Business or Pleasure? Twain's Summer Sojourns" will open there this March. When I

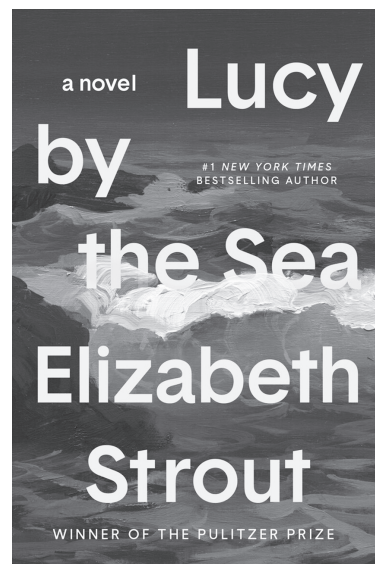
arrived, the curators were excited to show me that our artifacts would be displayed next to one of Twain's signature white suit jackets – the only one still in existence – on loan from Hannibal, Missouri.

After my brief visit to the Mark Twain House, I decided to stop by the Connecticut State Library since I had never been inside. Any resident of Connecticut can obtain a library card with proof of address, and there's nothing this librarian loves more than a new library card. When you walk into the main reading room, the most striking feature is the Beaux Arts

style ceiling which depicts the sky and clouds. The entire reading room is something to behold and harkens back to the early twentieth century. The building opened right around the time Mark Twain died here in Redding. The Mark Twain House and the Connecticut State Library are both worth a visit. And if you go in March, you can see some of the Mark Twain Library's very own artifacts on display while you're at his Hartford house. ■

Erin Shea Dummeyer is  
Director, Mark Twain Library

## Good books for good readers | By Margi Esten



I started a book group with my friend Mary Ellen back in the mid 1990's shortly after we had both moved to Redding. We played golf together. We would walk the course and never stop talking about the books we were reading. So, we decided forming a group was in order. That book group still exists. We've lived through members coming and going, births, deaths, divorces, new jobs, retirements... and still, we read. And then discuss what we read with other women whose ideas and opinions we cherish. Our group reads mostly contemporary fiction, with a few biographies and classic literature thrown in. If you love to read, I urge you to find a book



group to join – or better yet, begin one yourself with like-minded reading friends. My book group has absolutely been one of the best constants ever in my life.

Here are a couple of our recent choices:

*Lucy by the Sea* by Elizabeth Strout. Strout has written about nine novels, some short stories, and there is a "Lucy Barton" series in there, too. (The third book in the line-up – *Oh William!* – made the long-list nomination for the Booker Prize in 2022). We meet Lucy first in *My Name is Lucy Barton*, a heart-wrenching story of a mother and daughter reuniting and sharing family stories from Lucy's hospital bed. *Anything is Possible* follows

Lucy returning to her hometown in Illinois to visit siblings she has left behind. *Oh William!* tells the story of the second half of Lucy's life, living an entirely new existence until a surprise encounter with her first husband William. And now, we just finished *Lucy by the Sea* with Lucy – and her first husband William again – dealing with the global pandemic and leaving New York City where, in isolation, they tackle their complex past together on the coast of Maine. Elizabeth Strout's writing style is unique – spartan and right to the point bringing the reader directly into her world. She has also written some bestselling standalone novels I highly recommend, most notably *Olive Kitteridge* and *The Burgess Boys*.

Celeste Ng (pronounced "ing") is an American novelist living in Cambridge, Massachusetts. We are currently reading her third book, *Our Missing Hearts*, a fist-clenching, suspenseful novel about the unbreakable bond between a mother and child in a new society consumed by fear – of others, of books...my god, seems a little too close to home! Her previous two novels, *Everything I Never Told You* and *Little Fires Everywhere*, both dealing with ethnicity and class struggles, are not to be missed. ■

## Putting pen to paper – together

New group at Mark Twain Library

welcomes writers of all kinds | By Pamela Brown

If you enjoy writing, want to share your work with others, or are interested in learning about the writing process, Mark Twain Library's (MTL) new bi-weekly Writers' Group is the place for you.

The 90-minute meetings include group conversation, discussion of relevant books, and sharing drafts and material with fellow members. The group meets via Zoom on the second and fourth Monday of each month at 7:00 p.m. This month's upcoming meetings are February 13 and 27.

Redding residents Iris Hotakov and Elwood "Woody" Collins facilitate the group; participants are also invited to lead the discussion. "Iris and Elwood spearheaded this new workshop given their own writing backgrounds and expertise and because there was significant interest from others. Just as with the Creative Collective, this Writers' Group will evolve at the collective members' discretion," explained Elaine Sanders, MTL's Adult Program Coordinator. "They've been long-standing members of the Library's Creative Collective, another self-led group we hosted at the Library for quite a few years which is a workshop that inspires participants to tap into any and all of their creative sides."

Hotakov appreciates talking to members about the writing process and discussing problems they've encountered. "We all seem to have different perspectives when it comes to writing, and it's great to be able to discuss these and learn new ways to approach the process," she said.

A former editor in educational publishing for over twenty years, Hotakov was always interested in fiction writing and is currently working on a romance novel. "I wanted to find a supportive group of like-minded people and learn from others who are working on similar projects," she continued. "I love that my local library is so encouraging of creatives and provides a space for them to come together and share their experience."

Hotakov notes the group is small enough to allow for good discussion where everyone contributes. "The fact that it's online allows members from all over to join. The atmosphere has been pretty casual and friendly. Members feel comfortable sharing as much or as little as they want."

Similarly, Collins's life has revolved around writing. "I was an English major in college. My father worked for the Macmillan Company for over fifty years. I grew up in a house filled with books," said Collins, a lawyer who used various writing styles in his profession. "Legal writing often requires persuasion; persuasion is all about telling a story."

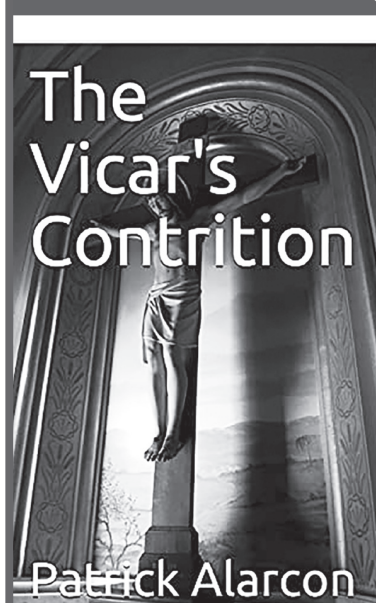
Although never published, he's dedicated to the craft and is currently writing a novel in addition to a project recounting his life story in multiple episodes. "I wrote for nearly a year-and-a-half. I filled sixteen steno books, eight of which I later typed up," he said, adding, "For the past five years, I've hosted a two-hour rock music radio program on WCWP,

the public radio station of Long Island University. The shows are all scripted, so doing scripts is my regular weekly writing exercise."

According to Sanders, writing groups have grown in popularity in recent years, and when Hotakov and Collins shared their interest in forming a group of like-minded writers, it was the perfect time to offer one at MTL. "The response has been even greater than we expected!" she said. "We're seeing a wide variety of participants, from those just beginning their journey in writing to others who are already published. We're looking forward to watching this group grow and evolve over time." ■

For more information and to register online, visit: [marktwainlibrary.org](http://marktwainlibrary.org) or call (203) 938-2545. Prior to attending, group members should obtain a copy of *Story Genius: How to Use Brain Science to Go Beyond Outlining and Writing a Riveting Novel* by Lisa Cron.

## Redding Author



As a severe Nor'easter falls upon St. Thomas Seminary, a seminary student named Timothy is murdered by Jesuit assassins for his investigation of a secret society operating within the Vatican. His classmates, guided by their Professor, seek to avenge their friend by finding his hidden diary and sharing his work. Their quest brings them around the world, as they try to avoid entanglements with local law enforcement who have a growing interest in the case. All the while the assassins are on their trail, seeking to finish the job and prevent them from revealing the truth.

### About the Author

Redding resident Patrick Alarcon is a graduate of St. Thomas Seminary and a retired high school science and history teacher. He is currently an Adjunct Professor at Sacred Heart University in Fairfield. In addition to *The Vicar's Contrition* he has recently published *Deadly Beacon*.



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# THE NATURAL WORLD

## Take a walk on the boardwalk

*Lonetown Marsh* | By Bill Hill



Photos by Cody Jacobs  
View of the Lonetown Marsh Sanctuary from Lonetown Road.



The new boardwalk, a work in progress.



Views of Redding Elementary School after a walk along the boardwalk.

Coney Island may have a busy, big, beautiful boardwalk, but Redding has several. Redding's original open space purchase, Lonetown Marsh Sanctuary, is currently being revitalized with a new, raised, fully accessible wooden pathway. Located across the street from Redding Elementary School, the boardwalk winds a quarter mile around the tranquil marsh. When it reopens in spring, families may again discover its ever-changing charms.

Lonetown Marsh has the distinction of being the very first open space purchase Redding citizens approved at a Town Meeting in November 1966. For the sum of \$14,000, a cost shared by residents, the State of Connecticut, and the Federal Government, the initial 7.5-acre Lonetown Marsh, then known as "Murphy's Swamp," became ours on the first day of 1967, Redding's bicentennial year. Over the next nearly 60 years, town citizens have gained an understanding of the importance of saving land and have consistently voted

to buy subsequent parcels. Today, Redding is renowned as being an exceptionally verdant town. In fact, over one third of Redding's acreage has now been preserved as open space. Yet, Redding's green reputation did not happen by chance.

In the early 1960's, the parcel containing the marsh was up for sale. Rumor had it that a prospective buyer was going to fill it in to build a shopping center. Nationwide, the nascent environmental movement was slowly emerging, thanks in part to Rachel Carson's book, *Silent Spring*, and a growing awareness of terms such as "pollution", "littering", and "ecology." At the time, the Redding Planning Commission initially agreed with the developer's plans for the property. Few citizens were aware of what the impact of filling in the wetland would be. There was yet to be a Town Plan of Development, State Inland Wetland Regulations, the federal Clean Water Act, or even Earth Day. Some residents thought, "It's just a swamp,

why save it?"

In the 1960's, making a commitment to buy open space did not come easily. Deliberate vision, planning, and effort was initiated by a few prescient individuals. Over time, thanks to many dedicated citizens, town servants, and new local, state, and federal laws, bold open space commitments were made. Partnerships among the Town, The Nature Conservancy, Redding Land Trust, Redding Open Lands, Inc (ROLI), The Bridgeport Hydraulic Company, the State, and occasionally private interests all understood the value of wetlands for their own sake, and for watershed protection. Bit by bit, the acres added up.

In response to Redding's purchase of Lonetown Marsh, and at the suggestion of Redding's first Conservation Commission Chair Sam Hill (full disclosure, he was my father), Attorney Sam Chambliss wrote the first State Inland Wetland Regulations, which were finally adopted as state law in 1973, benefitting every town in

Connecticut.

Why do wetlands need to be regulated? Anyone who has experienced a flooded yard, basement, or washed-out road knows that when it rains heavily, the water has got to go somewhere. Wetlands, including swamps, marshes, vernal pools, watercourses, ponds, and larger bodies of water all act as catch basins to recharge the local aquifers and hold seasonal water. Redding's terrain is spread out over three dominant ridges, all subject to the rule of gravity. Water travels down hills and through underground channels and, at long last, out to the sea. In a town where most residents depend on their own well water, it is imperative that we remain responsible for controlling runoff, protecting our drinking water supply, and preserving natural habitats. All water basins and watercourses, including Lonetown Marsh, are subject to contamination by commercial and private pesticide and herbicide use, nano particles, house-

hold chemicals, and a multitude of unnatural products. We depend on natural geography to protect our pure drinking water, our health, and our safety.

Following the purchase of the land, Ann Marshall, fourth grade teacher at Redding Elementary School, initiated field trips for children to explore the wonders of the marsh. Almost sixty years later, several generations of schoolchildren have now regularly experienced the convenient outdoor classroom called Lonetown Marsh Sanctuary. Today, anyone can travel along the boardwalk, at every season, and discover something new each time.

For those who are interested, a detailed history of all the Town's open space purchases can be found in *The Book of Trails* as "Redding's Race for Open Space". Amble around the sturdy new walkway and discover the hidden treasures that can be found over and under the boardwalk. ■

## Atrium at Meadow Ridge wins international plantscape award



Photo by Carol Morgan



Photo courtesy of Meadow Ridge

Meadow Ridge was awarded Platinum in the Horticultural Service category at the 2023 International Plantscape Awards in January, for its three-story atrium and gardens. The atrium serves as a relaxing centerpiece of the Meadow Ridge community and is maintained by John Mini Distinctive Landscaping, based in Congers, New York. Presented by I-Plants Magazine, the International Plantscape Awards recognize outstanding achievements in interior plantscape design, installation, creativity, renovation, and innovation.

**Have a nature photo you'd like to share?**

The Natural World will feature the best of Sentinel readers' photos of animals in Redding next week.

E-mail photo submissions to [editor@reddingsentinel.org](mailto:editor@reddingsentinel.org) for consideration.

## Redding Garden Club scholarship applications now available

By Ann Crocker



The Redding Garden Club is continuing its tradition of awarding the Mary Clinton scholarship dedicated to Mary Clinton's years of service and devotion to the Town of Redding.

The scholarship awards up to \$2,000 to one or more applicants who are legal residents of Redding and who are high school seniors pursuing studies in the field of agriculture, environmental sciences, horticulture, forestry, landscape or floral design, con-

servation, or other related areas. Applications are available online on the Redding Garden Club website: [reddinggardenclub.org](http://reddinggardenclub.org)

Once you've completed the application and your essay, please email your materials to [annsam@yahoo.com](mailto:annsam@yahoo.com) along with a letter of recommendation.

The deadline to submit an application is April 7, 2023. ■

Redding Garden Club  
[reddinggardenclub.org](http://reddinggardenclub.org)








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# CALENDAR OF EVENTS

\$ = fee applies  
R = registration required

## ARTS

Monday, Jan. 9 -  
Friday, Mar. 24

### Easton Arts Council Winter Celebration of the Arts + Member Art Show

Check eastonlibrary.org for open hours.

Works by 50 artists and photographers from Easton and neighboring towns. Contact Elizabeth Katz at katz.elizabeth@gmail.com with questions. Easton Public Library 691 Morehouse Road Easton eastonartscouncil.org

Friday, Feb. 10

### Lyrics Coffeehouse – Amy Rigby

7:30 p.m. – 9:30 p.m.  
Redding Community Center  
37 Lonetown Road  
townofreddingct.org/parks-and-recreation  
\$

## CHILDREN, TEENS

Saturday, Feb. 11

### Take Your Child to the Library Day

All day  
Legos, donuts, musical entertainment, and more. Refer to library website for complete event listings and details. Mark Twain Library 439 Redding Road marktwinlibrary.org  
R

Tuesday, Feb. 14

### Storytime for Children with Adults (Ages 1 to 5)

10:30 a.m. – 11:15 a.m.  
1:30 p.m. – 2:15 p.m.  
New Pond Farm Education Center  
101 Marchant Road  
newpondfarm.org  
\$, R

Thursday, Feb. 16

### Reptile Roundup

1:30 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.  
New Pond Farm Education Center  
101 Marchant Road  
newpondfarm.org  
\$, R

Friday, Feb. 17

### February Break Program

9:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.  
New Pond Farm Education Center  
101 Marchant Road  
newpondfarm.org  
\$, R

Friday, Feb. 17

### Family Workshop: Things that Go

10 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.  
Families will tap into their imagination to design cars, trucks, or other ways to move people and things around. Drop in, free with museum admission  
Fairfield Museum and History Center  
370 Beach Road  
Fairfield  
fairfieldhistory.org  
\$

Saturday, Feb. 18

### STEM at New Pond Farm (Grades 1-4)

10:30 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.  
New Pond Farm Education Center  
101 Marchant Road  
newpondfarm.org  
\$, R

Wednesday, Feb. 22

### Family Bingo Bonanza

6:30 p.m. – 7:30 p.m.  
Grades K-4  
Children must be accompanied by a parent.  
Redding Community Center  
37 Lonetown Road  
townofreddingct.org/parks-and-recreation  
\$, R

Friday, Feb. 24 –  
Friday, Mar. 31

### Caregiver & Child Series (Ages 18 – 35 months)

6 Fridays from 10:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.  
New Pond Farm Education Center  
101 Marchant Road  
newpondfarm.org  
\$, R

Saturday, Feb. 25

### Junior Staff: Animal Caretaker (Middle & High School)

12:30 p.m. – 1:30 p.m.  
Free for members  
New Pond Farm Education Center  
101 Marchant Road  
newpondfarm.org  
\$, R

## CRAFTS

Wednesday, Feb. 15

### Workshop: Unusual Materials: Interweaving and Interleaving

11:00 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.  
Create a textile project inspired by the works on view in “Norma Minkowitz: Body to Soul.” Materials will be provided.  
Fairfield University Art Museum  
Bellarmine Hall Galleries  
200 Barlow Road  
Fairfield  
fairfield.edu/museum/programs  
R

Thursday, Feb. 16

### Warm Wintertide Greetings: Modern Makers

10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.  
Create unique notecards to send warm wishes to someone special  
Mark Twain Library  
439 Redding Road  
marktwinlibrary.org  
R

Sunday, Feb. 26

### Make Zines with Bethel CT Pride

2:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.  
Create original writing or drawings, collage, blackout poetry, or whatever your heart desires.  
Mark Twain Library  
439 Redding Road  
marktwinlibrary.org  
R

## FOOD

Friday, Feb. 10

### Wine Tasting Class

6:30 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.  
Redding neighbor and Fine Wine Specialist Vanessa Bronder Alward will pour and teach about wine and J Vineyards & Winery  
Register by February 9 in store or e-mail reddingwines@gmail.com  
Redding Wines & Spirits  
119 Black Rock Turnpike  
instagram.com/reddingwines  
R

Tuesday, Feb. 14

### Taproom Tastings: Bread

6:30 p.m. – 7:30 p.m.  
Chief Curator Catherine Prescott and historian Mary Tsaltas-Ottomanelli investigate historic food and drink cultures.  
Zoom  
Keeler Tavern Museum  
keelertavernmuseum.org/events  
R

Saturday, Feb. 25

### From Prep to Plate – Yogurt Dip Recipe Challenge

2:30 p.m. – 4:30 p.m.  
Teams prepare, experiment, and share their delicious yogurt dip which incorporates farm fresh foods.  
New Pond Farm  
101 Marchant Road  
newpondfarm.org  
\$, R

Saturday, Mar. 11

### Gourmet Pancake Breakfast

8:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.  
BSA Troop 306 fundraiser features pancakes, omelets, juice, coffee and tea  
Snow/rain date Sunday, Mar. 12  
West Redding Fire House  
306 Umpawaug Road  
reddingtroop306.org  
\$, R

## HOLIDAY

Saturday, Feb. 11

### Valentine’s Day Treats (Grades 2-4)

1:30 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.  
New Pond Farm Education Center  
101 Marchant Road  
newpondfarm.org  
\$, R

Monday, Feb. 13

### Valentine’s Day Concert and Tea

3:00 p.m. String Concert: Songs of Love and Life  
4:00 p.m. Tea Reception  
Violinist Beryl Diamond Chacon and guitarist Roni Ben-Hur perform a Valentine’s concert, followed by a tea reception hosted by the National Charity League.  
Contact mstillman@townofreddingct.org or 203-938-9725 to reserve your seat by Friday, February 10.  
Heritage Center  
37 Lonetown Road  
townofreddingct.org  
\$, R

## RELIGIOUS SERVICES

### Bethlehem Lutheran Church

Sundays at 10:00 a.m. (in person) or 10:15 a.m. (Zoom)  
44 Portland Avenue  
bethlehmlutheranct.org

### Christ Church, Episcopal

Sundays at 9:00 a.m.  
184 Cross Highway  
christchurchredding.org

### First Church of Christ, Congregational

Sundays at 10:00 a.m.  
25 Cross Highway  
firstchurchredding.org

### Long Ridge United Methodist

Sundays at 11:30 a.m.  
201 Long Ridge Road  
Danbury  
longridgeumc.com

### Sacred Heart Catholic Church

Saturdays at 4:00 p.m.  
Sundays at 9:00 a.m. and 10:30 a.m.; 12:00 p.m. (Latin)  
Tuesdays and Thursdays at 8:30 a.m.  
Wednesdays at 6:00 p.m. (Latin)  
30 Church Street  
sacredheart-stpat.org

### St. Patrick Catholic Church

Saturdays at 5:30 p.m.  
Sundays at 8:30 a.m., 10:30 a.m., and 5:00 p.m.  
Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays at 8:30 a.m.  
169 Black Rock Turnpike  
sacredheart-stpat.org

### Temple B’nai Chaim

Fridays at 7:30 p.m.  
82 Portland Avenue  
Wilton  
templebnaichaim.org

## SPECIAL PROGRAMS

Tuesday, Feb. 21

### Ancestry 101: Research Your Roots

6:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.  
Mark Twain Library  
439 Redding Road  
marktwinlibrary.org  
R

Wednesday, Feb. 22

### The Benefit of Music on Brain Health

7:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.  
In person and Zoom  
Mark Twain Library  
439 Redding Road  
marktwinlibrary.org  
R

Sunday, Feb. 26

### NY Rangers Bus Trip – Rangers vs. LA Kings

12:00 p.m. – Bus leaves Redding Community Center  
5:00 p.m. – Game begins  
\$155 tickets in section 223 - Madison Square Garden  
Depart from Redding Community Center  
37 Lonetown Road  
townofreddingct.org/parks-and-recreation  
\$, R

## MEETINGS

Thursday, Feb. 9

### ARPA Funds Working Group Special Meeting

5:00 p.m.  
Zoom  
townofreddingct.org

Thursday, Feb. 9

### Gilbert & Bennett Wire Mill Advisory Committee

6:00 p.m.  
Zoom  
townofreddingct.org

Thursday, Feb. 9

### Redding Board of Education – Budget Workshop

7:00 p.m.  
John Read Middle School  
486 Redding Road  
johnreadps.org

Thursday, Feb. 9

### West Redding Fire District Commissioners Meeting

7:00 p.m.  
West Redding Firehouse  
306 Umpawaug Road  
westreddingfiredepartment.org

Monday, Feb. 13

### Board of Finance Special Meeting

7:30 p.m.  
Zoom  
townofreddingct.org

Tuesday, Feb. 14

### Fire District #1 Meeting

7:00 p.m.  
Redding Ridge Firehouse  
186 Black Rock Turnpike  
townofreddingct.org

Tuesday, Feb. 14

### Planning Commission

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

Wednesday, Feb. 15

### Water Pollution Control Commission

7:30 p.m.  
Zoom  
townofreddingct.org

Thursday, Feb. 16

### ARPA Funds Working Group Special Meeting

5:00 p.m.  
Zoom  
townofreddingct.org

Thursday, Feb. 16

### Historic Review Committee

6:30 p.m.  
Zoom  
townofreddingct.org

Thursday, Feb. 16

### Democratic Town Committee

7:30 p.m.  
Town Hall\* / Hearing Room  
townofreddingct.org

Tuesday, Feb. 21

### Board of Assessment Appeals

4:30 p.m.  
Refer to website for up-to-date location information  
townofreddingct.org

Tuesday, Feb. 21

### Conservation Commission

7:30 p.m.  
Refer to website for up-to-date location information  
townofreddingct.org

Tuesday, Feb. 21

### Board of Selectmen

7:30 p.m.  
Town Hall\* / Hearing Room  
townofreddingct.org

\*Refer to townofreddingct.org for up-to-date location information

## This Week’s Featured Events

### Lyrics Coffeehouse – Amy Rigby

Friday, Feb. 10  
7:30 p.m. – 9:30 p.m.  
Bring refreshments and friends to enjoy an evening of live music.  
Redding Community Center  
37 Lonetown Road  
townofreddingct.org/  
parks-and-recreation

### NY Rangers Bus Trip – Rangers vs. LA Kings

Sunday, Feb. 12  
12:00 p.m. – Bus leaves R.C.C.  
5:00 p.m. – Game begins  
\$155 tickets in section 223 - Madison Square Garden  
Depart from Redding Community Center  
37 Lonetown Road  
townofreddingct.org/parks-and-recreation

### Intriguing Birds

Monday, Feb. 13, 2023  
1:00 p.m.-2:00 p.m. or come at 11:30 a.m. for a light lunch and general meeting.  
*Stories of Backyard Birds to Birds Seen in my Travels* presented by Cheryl Basztura.  
Redding Garden Club  
Redding Community Center  
37 Lonetown Road  
reddinggardenclub.org

### Want to feature an upcoming event?

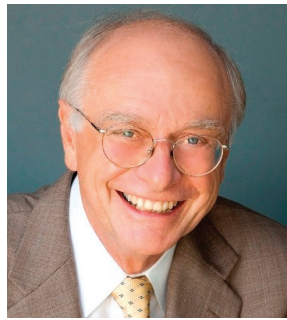
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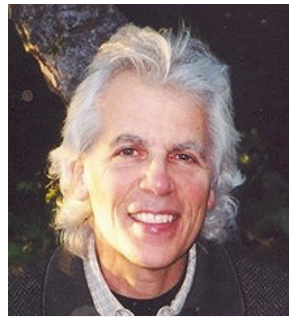
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**Barbara Baughman**  
203.241.9444



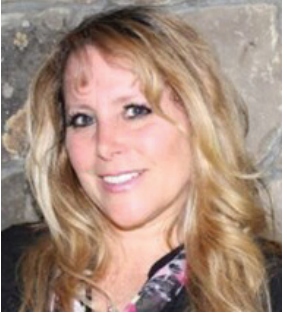
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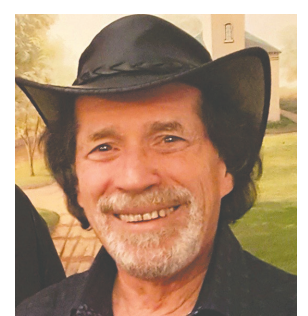
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