



REDDING SENTINEL

DECEMBER 22, 2022

REDDING, CONNECTICUT

Volume 1 / Issue 16

\$3

Tri-board meeting reveals main budget drivers for 2023-2024

By Jessie Wright

Redding's Board of Finance met with members of the Board of Selectmen and Board of Education on Monday, December 17 to discuss in broad strokes the budget drivers each group anticipates for the 2023-2024 Town budget. A brief report was also given by Region 9 Board of Education Chairman Mike D'Agostino; the Region 9 Board of Education (which governs Joel Barlow High School) develops its own budget each year, which taxpayers from both Easton and Redding vote upon.

First Selectwomen Julia Pemberton led the budget presentation for the Board of Selectmen. Pemberton identified inflation, particularly regarding salaries and utility expenses, to be a primary driver in the upcoming budget year. "There are significant pressures that we will be dealing with not only at the national level, but certainly at the state and local level," she said. "We are already seeing the impact of that in this current fiscal year, with the budget for gasoline and fuel almost entirely expended, and we are only five months into the year."

Salaries for Town employees make up 43 percent of the Town budget (excluding the Board of Education); the Town currently has 64 full-time employees and 12 permanent part-time employees. Pemberton noted the Board is considering reinstating one of the part-time positions to full-time next year. Two key union staff contracts – the Police Department and Highway Department – will also be entering negotiations in spring 2023. Pemberton reported that even without inflation, the Board expects a 2.5 percent to 3.5 percent wage increase in 2023-2024.

The Town is exploring increased, material revenue sources to help offset these pressures. "For fee" services, such as building inspection, conveyance, and zoning hearing fees, have been identified as areas of opportunity along with higher interest income. "We expect to have additional interest income this year, and depending on what the market looks like, we expect that our interest income next year will also be higher," Pemberton said.

Redding Board of Education Chairman Chris Parkin and ER9 Superintendent Dr. Jason McKinnon led the budget presentation for the Redding Board of Education.

"Our philosophy is that we are a zero-based budget. We don't take what we did last year and automatically add costs," McKinnon said as he began the presentation.

Continued on page 10



Photo by Susan Clark

A quiet moment of holiday beauty captured in Redding Center. If you have a photo you'd like us to feature here, with credit of course, please e-mail editor@reddingsentinel.org

Danbury Hospital sees rise in pediatric admissions

Take steps to prevent virus transmission this winter

By Donna Christopher

There has been a spike in pediatric hospital admissions at NuVance Health, the health system which operates Danbury Hospital. Hospitalizations among small children are on the rise there where Dr. Beth Natt is the Director for Pediatric Medicine.

"I've been in pediatrics for two decades and have never seen a winter like this," Natt said. "We've had multiple surges of viruses. We started in October into early November with rhinoviruses, but we actually hospitalized small babies and toddlers. In late November we had an RSV surge, and it would primarily be children under a year of age. And now we're seeing influenza A."

"Over the past two weeks, we have seen an increase in the number of Covid admissions; the number of patients admitted with influenza has also increased... the number of RSV cases admitted to the hospital is decreasing," said Danbury Hospital's Vice President of Medical Affairs Aparna Oltikar, MD, FACP on December 14.

Natt said vaccination for Covid-19 and the flu is strongly recommended for protection, as treatment options for young children with these viruses can be limited.

"In the first few months of life, the younger ones, treatment for flu is Tamiflu and for the rest of these when kids get hospitalized, we're providing supportive care," she explained. "If they need help with their breathing or help with their oxygen, if they're not eating well, we help provide nourishment. We support the body through the process of fighting off (illness). The one thing I would say for families is they should worry if their child is using the muscles between their ribs or breathing fast, or if they're having so much trouble breathing and can't eat," Natt said.

Many of the viruses currently circulating at high levels act similarly, Natt continued. "By and large if your child is doing well, there is no need to run into the pediatrician to get them tested."

Like in many districts around the country, Redding schools have also seen an increase in illnesses this fall and winter.

"I am told that the schools are seeing a higher number of sick kids, but they have not been diagnosed with a particular illness. This may be because parents are keeping sick kids home but not having them tested," said Redding Health Officer Christopher

Continued on page 6

Happy Holidays

Wishing you a joyful season and a peaceful start to the New Year.

Sincerely, the Redding Sentinel team



REDDING'S BIG OUTDOORS

Saugatuck Falls Natural Area highlights

By Jeanne Ammermuller

The Saugatuck Falls Natural Area is a vast area of open space that is one of the oldest and most popular recreational spaces in Redding, offering miles of interconnecting trails – some easier and some more challenging. However you choose to explore the area, you will undoubtedly come across some reminders of the beauty of Redding's open spaces.

According to the Redding Land Trust's Book of Trails, "The Saugatuck Falls Natural Area was the Town's second, and remains the largest, purchase of open space. With the aid of federal and state funds, the Town bought the property, which otherwise would have been sold for development, at a net cost to Redding taxpayers of \$82,037, or \$263 an acre. The vote to buy the property with or without government aid had been virtually unanimous at a Town meeting."

Today's hike will explore the Hemlock, Hardwood, and Wall Trails – 2.6 miles in total. Park at John Read Middle School, then enter the trail across Route 53 between the stone pillars. The first landmark is the bridge across the Saugatuck River.

Just across the bridge, you will



Photo by Jeanne Ammermuller

come to your first decision point. Go straight? To the left? Or to the right? Today's hike bears to the right along the Falls Trail into the meadow. Look for informational signs about local wildlife. Cross a small footbridge and look for the trail off to the left.

The sign marking the beginning of the Hemlock Trail is a little hard to read. But the white blazes are very prominent, thanks once again to the intrepid Trail Tenders.

The trail through the meadow is an excellent place to cross country ski, and the hillier sections of Hemlock and the Burn Trail are an excellent place for

snowshoeing. Even on a snowless winter day, it is exceptionally quiet and beautiful. The trail winds around rock formations and a beautiful moss-covered stream. As the shortest day of the year approaches, the steeper angle of the sun adds extra drama to the stands of mountain laurel and the small brooks you will cross.

At just about a half mile, Hemlock Trail meets Knapp Way. Bear left to begin exploring some of the less-traveled parts of the Saugatuck Falls Natural Area.

After another tenth of a mile, you will reach a road and a

Continued on page 10

Index

Big Outdoors	1	Real Estate Update	7	Library Corner	9
Editorial	2	Business Spotlight	8	The Natural World	10
Sports	4	Book Review	9	Calendar of Events	11



1 96852 05801 3

EDITORIAL

December – especially late December – traditionally sees a wealth of media stories recapping the year just finishing, in pictures, numbers, and words. A fair few also provide a look ahead at the new year.

The Sentinel is not even a year old yet, so our recap is short and brief. We launched as a monthly publication in April to test the waters. Thanks to you – our readers, our many supportive advertisers, and generous editorial contributors – this improbable project built momentum and by September we were bi-weekly and in November went weekly. This issue is our 16th.

Between our subscription base and newsstand sales, we reach about 29% of Redding households in any given week. Not to get too jargon-y or prideful, achieving 29% market penetration within eight months of launching is quite an accomplishment by any measure.

Thank you all, who have helped us to make it this far.

Looking forward, 2023 promises to be a newsworthy year here in our small town. We’ll be following developments in Georgetown and elsewhere in town, the municipal election cycle, and important matters such as distribution of ARPA funds, Eversource’s resiliency program, and infrastructure needs at our schools. We’ll continue to shine a light on the doings of town government, explaining who and how it all works. Local businesses as well as activities at the Library, the Grange, and New Pond Farm among others will continue to be a focus.

Please don’t hesitate to reach out with suggestions of articles you’d like to see in the Sentinel. Many of you have done so this year, and those prompts and ideas are greatly appreciated. Your letters also provide insights into town issues and sentiments, so please keep them coming.

As I thought through this end-of-year editorial, it seemed to me the year back / year forward media tradition isn’t quite right for Redding or the Sentinel. We are fortunate to live in a town – and be responsible for a town – that takes a long view. Our Board of Finance has built up a solid reserve fund and strong financial position, supported by the Selectmen and town voters. Our land use officials and commissions, together with the Land Trust, work to protect our watersheds as well as our natural environment. The Board of Education keeps an eye on all the needs of all children, from traditional curricula to robotics to Project Adventure.

We’re by no means perfect. Top of the list, perhaps, is to tend to our aging infrastructure, especially the schools. We need to figure out how to meet State requirements for capital “A” Affordable housing as well as small “a” housing that is affordable in town. Small businesses could have an easier time starting up here. We have a massive opportunity – and challenge – to revitalize the Gilbert & Bennett Wire Mill property. And we haven’t yet worked through the extensive impact of Covid on Redding now and in the future.

So, 2022 has been a good year and 2023 looks full of interest. Let’s continue to be a town that looks to the long term. ■

A note on the Sentinel’s holiday schedule:

Due to the Christmas and New Year’s Day holidays, the next issue of the Sentinel will be published on Thursday, January 12. Please submit any event information by Saturday, January 7 and letters to the editor by Sunday, January 8.

Sentinel reader survey

reveals clear preferences | By Susan Clark

The Sentinel’s second reader survey (the first was in the spring, just as the newspaper launched) revealed that Sentinel readers want to know about the things that make a small town tick. The responses can be grouped into broad categories of interest.

You want us to cover the town budget and governance as well as economic development – and to a lesser extent, town politics and redevelopment of the Gilbert & Bennett Wire Mill. This seems to be an interest in, first, short-term pocketbook issues and, second, longer-term questions about what sort of town we wish to be.

You told us you want to know about town events and activities, local stories and achievements, and local businesses. Arts & Culture was high on the list. Sentinel readers are curious about life in Redding.

Local resources, organizations, and volunteer opportunities are of great importance to readers, as is the natural world and environment. It seems our readers are not just sitting at home, but actively part of the fabric of the town.

Interest in youth and children’s activities ranked slightly lower, as in the spring, but still garners significant interest. We

attribute this to how well social media handles dissemination of information for school-age families. Several people asked us to do more about children’s activities, and we plan to continue to increase our coverage of the schools and kid-focused events.

Police activity, obituaries, and real estate were not of primary interest to many, but of interest to almost everyone. The same is true for sports coverage.

There wasn’t anything we’re currently covering that readers really don’t want to know about. We received several suggestions of additional topics to cover.

One-third of respondents have been in Redding less than five years; one quarter between five and ten years, and the remainder more than ten years.

The youngest respondent was 32, the oldest 94. The average age was 51 and the median 40. The greatest number of respondents were in their 40’s.

Thank you all for sharing your thoughts with us. We’ll do frequent surveys to be sure we stay on top of your interests. Please don’t hesitate to reach out to editor@reddingsentinel.org to tell us anything at any time. ■

Need more copies?

Would you like additional copies of any issue of the Sentinel?

Perhaps your child was featured, or your photo illustrated one of our stories.

Perhaps we wrote about your business or home.

If you’d like more copies to pass around, just let us know.

E-mail publisher@reddingsentinel.org

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

We welcome letters to the Editor. Please be clear, civil and concise.

To the Editor,

“It takes a village...with a great library.”

It goes without saying that the Mark Twain library is a very special place here in Redding.

Of course, there are the treasure-filled shelves, the countless programs, and even a table with jigsaw puzzles for loan (with no missing pieces!), but that is not what makes it so special. What really makes it special is its magical elasticity.

For young children, the library is a place to explore, make new friends and develop a love of reading. For parents of these young children, it serves as a calm respite, if not just for forty-five minutes during story time. As these children grow, the library becomes a meeting spot for clubs and studying. For others, a place to escape from social media and hunker down with a good book for a few hours. And even for others, a place to collect their first paycheck.

This uncanny ability to morph and meet our needs, is what brings me to the point of this (love) letter.

With under an hour until my son’s best friend’s college interview, via Zoom, his internet went down. Frantic for a solution, he and his mother quickly started tossing around ideas, until... Eureka! A quick call to MTL, and within minutes they were in the car rocketing to 439 Redding Road.

They were met by two Twain associates, who quickly turned a spare closet into a makeshift office, and by 3:59pm, our intrepid young man was dialed in and ready to impress!

This all happened the day before the famous Art Show, and upon entering that Friday night (with his mother in tow) we were greeted by the same team who made the interview possible.

We all chuckled with an “all’s well that ends well”, and then sauntered into an art-filled brilliant cocktail party. Transformed, like magic, for us, not our children.

So, it really does take a village, and no better one than Redding with a special library we all can call home. Thanks, MTL for all that you do!

Holly Hill
Sanfordtown Road

To the Editor,

I have been puzzler for as long as I can remember: Crosswords, Sudoku, KenKen, etc. I love them all. So, imagine my delight when I opened the latest issue of the Sentinel to find a logic problem geared toward Redding! Thank you for continuing to make our local paper such a wonderful value!

Tami O’Connor
Wood Road

To the Editor,

The recent purchase and plans of the BeFoundation to turn the Granite Church in Georgetown into a non-profit performing arts and community gathering space is such welcome and exciting news to us and many other Redding residents. We have just read the Foundation’s proposal and financial plan available at befoundation.org/granite-church. We hope others will too.

We support their request to partner with the Town and encourage our leadership to engage in a public partnership with the Foundation in its efforts. The BeFoundation is a well-funded Redding-based organization that seeks to invigorate the Georgetown area in a way that makes good sense to us.

Scott Smith & Mary Wilford
Rock House Road

To the Editor,

We read the Sentinel from cover-to-cover last week! We have been involved with New Pond Farm from the beginning, and it was great see that Rachel and Mike got some press. They do a phenomenal job!

Also, I had Johnny Karrel in class and supported his dad on a couple of runs for First Selectman! I enjoyed reading his beautifully written article about his old homestead.

Can’t tell you how much we look forward to getting the Sentinel each week!

Marion and John Hichwa
Beauiles Lane

GET TO KNOW THE SENTINEL TEAM

Rocco Valluzzo, Reporter | By Jessie Wright



“I’ve lived in one state, two counties, and three towns my whole life,” Rocco Valluzzo said when explaining how much Connecticut means to him. “I joke with people,” he continued, “I say that Connecticut is an old Algonquin word – it means long tidal river – but I tease them and say it means ‘only state that matters’.”

Valluzzo is a third generation “Connecticut-lifer”, bringing decades of his own experience living in the area to his career covering local news in Fairfield County. He worked for Hersam Acorn Newspapers for many years as part of the Redding Pilot, Weston Forum, and Easton Courier staffs, before the publications were shut down in 2018. Valluzzo was happy to have the opportunity to come back to covering Redding when Sentinel Publisher Susan Clark approached him earlier this year.

“All these towns here – they all had their community newspapers before, and they all disappeared,” Valluzzo said. “You know people – they don’t miss something until it’s gone. It’s important to have a community newspaper so you can find out what’s going on in your town. You’ve got the big dailies, but how much coverage do they give to a town like Redding?”

While Sentinel readers will see much of Valluzzo’s work appear on the municipal news and sports pages, he said he is not much of an athlete himself. He is an avid boater, however, bringing his 17-foot outrider out to Candlewood Lake as often as he can in the summer and making a hobby of working on it throughout the year.

Valluzzo also performs as a semi-professional musician in the band “Sweet Redemption” playing bass guitar with four other bandmates he has become friends with over the years. “We all have day jobs,” Valluzzo said, “that’s why I say semi-professional.”

While he has been living in and covering the same region for all of his thirty years as a journalist, Valluzzo particularly enjoys the always-changing routine of reporting. “It’s something different all the time,” he said. “It’s never the same thing twice.” ■

Redding Sentinel Ltd
News and Views of Redding, Connecticut

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

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

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

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

Printed by Trumbull Printing
Telecommunications provided by CCi Voice
www.reddingsentinel.org
203.938.3800

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

Town appoints new Tree Warden

By Rocco Valluzzo

The Board of Selectmen formally appointed Charlie Hyatt as the Town's Tree Warden at its Monday, December 19 meeting. Hyatt, who was offered the position last month, is a licensed arborist and founder/lead conservationist of Evergreen Arborists based in Wilton. "I'm really looking forward to getting started," said Hyatt. "An arborist runs alongside of a tree warden. It's going to be a little different, but I think the principals are going to remain basically the same." As the Tree Warden, Hyatt will work hand-in-hand with Redding Director of Public Works James Gracy. Gracy is taking the tree warden course and exam from

the University of Connecticut and would be named Deputy Tree Warden once he passes. The position will come with an \$8,000 per year stipend and a \$500 stipend for use of Hyatt's personal vehicle. This assumes approximately 200 hours per year at \$40 per hour and would include an annual tree survey. The Town will also ask Hyatt to closely track his hours as to have a better sense of the position's true workload. The Selectmen researched surrounding towns and comparable tree warden positions to develop the model. Redding's model resembles that of Bethel's. According to the Selectmen, there is no need for a separate Tree Warden budget line. The

overall tree work budget sits in the Highway Department budget, which has a \$50,000 line item for tree work. With some town employees leaving positions and some remaining unfilled this fiscal year, there is room in the budget to move ahead with bringing Hyatt onboard. Redding's previous Tree Warden was former Director of Public Works Jeff Hanson. Prior to Hanson, the Tree Warden was Sean McNamara, who was offered a stipend of \$1,500, but did not take it as compensation for his time and expertise. McNamara remains Deputy Tree Warden for the Town's work with Eversource on the utility's proposed resiliency program. ■

Selectmen await input on tree ordinance

By Rocco Valluzzo

In order to move forward with the consideration of adopting a new tree ordinance, the Redding Board of Selectmen is awaiting input from the Planning Commission on a draft of the ordinance. The draft was received by the Planning Commission at its December 13 meeting. The Commission decided to examine the language of the new ordinance and discuss it with the new Tree Warden at its January meeting. The new ordinance is based in part on an ordinance drafted back in 2000. This was reviewed by legal counsel at the time; the Town was advised it did not need to adopt an ordinance and that it

could simply enact that proposed document as regulations. The minutes from a Selectmen's meeting at the time indicate that a motion was approved to adopt them, but there was no implementation of the regulations at the level of public works or with an active Tree Warden participating. According to First Selectwoman Julia Pemberton, the only evidence she could find of any additional consideration for trees were standards incorporated into the subdivision regulations for the protection of certain kinds of trees. "Taking that language and incorporating it into a new ordinance strengthens our

protections," said Pemberton on Monday, December 19. "As of now, we don't have a tree ordinance with that specificity at all. We just have that vague tree language." "We believe adopting that language as an ordinance is much stronger than just having them as regulations," she continued. "The goal was to adopt a tree ordinance rather than rely on an old motion from 2000." Pemberton added that the difference between a regulation and an ordinance is that a regulation does not give the town the authority to assess fines for violations. ■

LEGAL NOTICES

At the regularly scheduled meeting of the Redding Zoning Commission held Wednesday, December 14, 2022 at 7:30 p.m. in the Town Hall Hearing Room, 100 Hill Road, Redding, the commission reached the following decision: granted with conditions - Site Plan Approval for demolition and reconstruction of a hotel at 296

Ethan Allen Highway, Redding, Connecticut. Applicant Ridgefield Motor Inn, Inc. Publication of this notice initiates a fifteen-day appeal period after which the approval will be effective. ■ *Matthew Lecher, Chairman, Redding Zoning Commission*

Notice to Taxpayers, Georgetown and Redding

The Second Installment Of Real Estate And Personal Property And First Installment Supplemental Motor Vehicle Taxes On The Grand List Of October 1, 2021, Is Due And Payable January 1, 2023. Taxes Due January 1, 2023, Must Be Postmarked Or Paid Online, No Later Than February 1, 2023, Without A Penalty. **TAXES ARE DELINQUENT FEBRUARY 2, 2023. Payments postmarked, Paid in Person or Paid online, on or after February 2, 2023, are delinquent** and will carry a penalty of one half of a percent. Interest is charged at the rate of eighteen (18%) percent annually or one and one-half percent per month, from the January 1, 2023, due date. Supplemental Motor Vehicle Taxes are due in full January 1, 2023. Failure to make payment in accordance with the above will result in suspension of registration privileges in addition to the interest charges. Delinquent Motor Vehicle Taxes must be paid

in cash, certified check, money order or online by credit card, to obtain a registration clearance. **FAILURE TO RECEIVE A TAX BILL DOES NOT EXEMPT YOU FROM PAYMENT OF TAX OR PENALTY.** Oldest outstanding taxes must be paid prior to paying current. Taxes can be paid or viewed at www.townofreddingct.org. Credit card payments are not accepted in person at the Tax Office. You may call (866) 923-8245 to make a credit/debit card payment. Due to the Covid-19 virus, Town Hall hours may vary. Verify the Town Hall is open and the department you need is open before going in person. The Town Hall is closed on Fridays. We are located at 100 Hill Rd, Redding, CT; Telephone: 203 938-2706. ■ *Patricia J. Moiso, C.C.M.C., C.C.M.O Tax Collector Town of Redding*





The height of joyful living.

This holiday season, our residents are grateful for the enriching community and enduring friendships they have discovered here. They say moving to Meadow Ridge is the best gift they have ever given themselves and their children. As Lifecare residents, they are guaranteed to receive continued care at a predictable cost, even if needs change. Feeling confident about future care brings joy to the whole family, and that is something to celebrate.

To schedule a private tour, call **203-544-2711** or visit **MeadowRidge.com**



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



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

SPORTS

Father and son race at Cyclocross championships

By Rocco Valluzzo



Photo by Rocco Valluzzo

Eneas Freyre, left, and Caden Freyre of Redding both competed in the 2022 U.S. Cycling Cyclocross National Championships in Hartford earlier this month.

The 2022 USA Cycling Cyclocross National Championship this month was, in a way, a family affair for a Redding father and son.

Both Eneas Freyre and his son, Caden, took part in the five-day event, which was held at Riverside Park in Hartford from December 7 through 11. Thousands of cyclists from all over the country participated.

Cyclocross is an event often held in parks, in which cyclists race over a variety of terrains, including grassy areas, wooded trails, and pavement.

“It’s a traditional sport in Europe, and it’s very big in Belgium in particular,” said the elder Freyre, who also owns Total Training & Endurance, a Westport-based bicycle shop and training center. “It’s competitive, it’s easy to watch, it’s fun to watch.”

Cyclocross bicycles are basically road bikes but with different tires. The tires can be up to 33 millimeters wide and have knobs to allow for better traction off-road.

Races are not based on distance,

but rather on time and number of laps. Cyclists compete according to age group, starting from nine-year-olds and up.

“It’s really one of the best disciplines in cycling to develop a junior racer, because it’s competitive,” said Freyre. “There’s a really good culture to it. Kids develop a really high skill set for managing their bike. It’s a great way to get a kid into cycling.”

The junior level races are anywhere between 20 to 45 minutes. The masters level races are around 45 minutes and the elite level is around an hour, according to Freyre.

“Generally, you’ll have a course where laps are somewhere around 10-minute laps,” he said. “You race two laps, three laps, four laps, or five laps.”

Competing in the master’s division (age 45 to 49), Freyre finished fourth overall, doing four laps in 45 minutes. As a professional cyclist, Freyre has competed in the U.S. and abroad.

“I’m super happy with top five,” said Freyre, who was second in his division at last year’s race.

“My goal would be to win, but I was competitive, and I was in the front. I was excited about that.”

A sophomore at Joel Barlow High, Caden competed in the junior men’s 15-16-year-old division, which had the highest number of racers with around 90 competitors. Completing three laps in 30 minutes, he was 13th overall.

“He’s been racing since he was allowed to race,” said Freyre. “As he has gotten older, he has taken it seriously where he wants to compete on a national level now and hopefully get to Europe someday.”

Trevor Bobbin, a student at John Read Middle School who trains at Total Training & Endurance, was scheduled to race in the junior men’s 13-14-year-old division, but was ill the day of the race and could not compete.

“Trevor is similar to Caden,” said Freyre. “Trevor has that passion for riding. When he gets to Joel Barlow, hopefully he’ll be racing for us and I will guide him when he gets to that age.”

Now that winter is here, team Total Training & Endurance will be taking a break from competitions. In the spring, cyclists will race mountain bikes and road bikes before going back to Cyclocross season.

“We’re waiting to see what the calendar looks like,” said Freyre. “For the young kids like Trevor, those middle school kids, they’ll race locally in Connecticut and Massachusetts on the mountain bikes, and they’ll probably do their first events in March as shorter road races, criteriums, and mountain bike races. For a kid like Caden, he might travel to Arizona for an event in the winter time and maybe he’ll do a competition there.” ■

Girls basketball has split in first week

By Rocco Valluzzo



Photo by Rocco Valluzzo

Joel Barlow High’s Marin Kalamaras, right, battles New Canaan’s Tia Kivikko during a girls varsity basketball game on Thursday, December 15. Barlow lost 38-24, but beat Brien McMahon 35-33 in the season-opener three days earlier.

A strong defensive performance in the second half was just what the Joel Barlow High girls varsity basketball team needed in its season opener last week.

The Falcons held the Brien McMahon team to a mere 11 points over the third and fourth frames on Monday, December 12. That allowed them to catch up offensively for a 35-33 non-league win at home.

“The defense is always going to show up, which is awesome,” said Barlow head coach Joe Carollo. “As a coach, I love that the kids put the work in on defense.”

Offensively, Barlow played evenly with its opponent for the first quarter. Led by six points from Elyssa Kalamaras, the Falcons were tied with the Senators at 8-8.

Finding the hoop proved difficult for the hosts in the next frame, as the Falcons did not sink a field goal despite hitting two free throws apiece courtesy of Charlotte Beihl, Emily Green, and Mia Tartaglia. The Senators, on the other hand, were led by nine points from Jade Marin to go up 22-14 at the break.

Adjusting its defense at the start of the second half, Barlow switched to a 1-3-1 strategy, holding McMahon to just five points. At the other end of the court, the Falcons had much more success, sinking shots from the field as well as the foul line. Led by three field goals by Elyssa Kalamaras and three free throws from Marin Kalamaras, they tied things at 27-27.

The final frame proved to be a back-and-forth affair. Barlow took a 33-29 lead before McMahon came within two points later on but was ultimately unable to tie it.

“We made a few mistakes,” said Carollo. “They did have a chance to tie it at the buzzer. I’m just glad they missed it.”

Elyssa Kalamaras led Barlow with 12 points. Marin Kalamaras had seven, as did Tartaglia. Beihl, Green, and Kat Czerkowski each

sank a field goal while Julia Tartaglia and Mackenzie Sickenger each hit a free throw.

The Falcons also played good defense two days later when they hosted New Canaan in another non-league contest. Making the shots, however, was another issue, and they fell 38-24.

Overall, New Canaan was a bit taller, making it difficult for the Falcons to get rebounds. Second chance shots under their hoops were rare, while the Rams had enough opportunities to score at their end of the court.

Barlow’s first quarter lead reached 10-7 with the help of a steal and layup by Mia Tartaglia, but Barlow then turned over the ball several times early in the second frame, and the Rams battled back. Taking advantage of a couple of fouls by the host, New Canaan hit three free throws to tie it at 10-10 with 5:28 left in the half. The Rams took a slim lead with less than two minutes to go, but Czerkowski’s put-back of a missed one-and-one tied it at 16-16 going into the second half.

The third quarter was a rough one offensively for the Falcons, who hit no shots from the field and sank just a pair of free throws courtesy of Mia Tartaglia. New Canaan went on a 9-0 run at the start of the quarter and led 27-18 by the end of the quarter.

New Canaan went on a 6-0 run at the start of the last quarter to ultimately put things out of reach.

“They were athletic; we were also athletic,” said Carollo. “If we played them 10 times I would like to think it would be 5-5. “They just had a better second half than we did, for sure.”

Mia Tartaglia led Barlow with six points. Elyssa Kalamaras and Julia Tartaglia netted five apiece. Marin Kalamaras had four, while Czerkowski and Sarah Ashgar each sank two.

Barlow visits Nonnewaug of Woodbury on Thursday, December 22 at 6:00 p.m. ■

Selectmen approve pickleball courts

By Rocco Valluzzo

The proposal to build two, dedicated pickleball courts at the Redding Community Center was approved by the Board of Selectmen at its Monday, December 19 meeting.

A total of \$113,000 from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) has been allocated for the project, which was approved by vote at a Town Meeting in October. The project has since also been approved by the Zoning Commission.

As this is a municipal improvement deemed significant in nature, it had been referred to the Planning Commission for a report. According to First Selectwoman Julia Pemberton, there is a time

constraint for the vendor to hold the quote for the project.





During the Planning Commission’s site walk of the property on Saturday, December 17, Park and Recreation Director Rob Blick pointed out the planned location of the courts as well as proposed fencing and entrances. Blick said that the posts for the nests will be permanent, that one sycamore tree will need to be removed, and that two existing parking spots will be shortened and designated as compact parking only. He also noted that an existing drain pipe will need to be extended beyond the edge of the new courts.

Also included in the project is the construction of a new practice

wall to replace one that was previously torn down, several new benches to be placed inside the courts, a weather-proof message board, and a new picnic table. Two of the four existing tennis courts have been renovated and now also include lines for pickleball.

At its special meeting on December 19, the Planning Commission unanimously supported the proposal for the project, and in its report recommended the Board of Selectmen approve it as well.

The Selectmen have authorized Pemberton to execute any documents and contracts that may be required to advance the project. ■



Environmental Education Since 1985


New Pond Farm Education Center

Best Wishes to our Redding Friends & Neighbors for a Happy & Healthy Holiday Season!

If you are still looking, we have some fantastic holiday gift ideas for you:

- A Family Membership to the Education Center!
- A week of summer camp adventures
- Our beautiful wall calendar!
- Skeins of yarn from our Romney Flock
- A bottle of our delicious Maple Syrup
- A half gallon of delectable chocolate milk
- Cards featuring native birds or wildflowers

Please call for more information 203.938.2117



101 Marchant Road
West Redding, CT 06896
203-938-2117
newpondfarm.org

Christmas tree pick-up dates

Redding’s Department of Public Works will be picking up Christmas trees from January 16, 2023 to January 20, 2023, weather permitting.

Trees must be put out curbside (at the end of each driveway) before the pick-up dates. The truck will be going road by road chipping the trees. No wreaths

or anything with wires, lights, garland, ornaments, or tree stands can be picked up – all decorations must be removed.

Residents can also drop their trees at the Redding Recycling Center and Transfer Station during its operating hours if they miss the curbside pick-up. ■

The Connecticut Society of Santas

Spreading Christmas cheer all year ‘round

By Justin Reynolds



Photo courtesy of CTSS
Bill Dexter as Santa Claus

Bill Dexter is a jovial man by nature — a trait that comes in particularly handy this time of the year.

For over a decade, Dexter has spread joy and cheer to countless folks across Connecticut and beyond playing Santa Claus and is Co-Founder and President of the Connecticut Society of Santas (CTSS).

CTSS “seeks to enhance the spirit and magic of Christmas by fostering fellowship among its members, community service groups, and organizations,” it explains on its website.

“It’s a group of like-minded individuals, men and women, who enjoy portraying holiday characters and enjoy spreading the spirit and joy of Christmas,” Dexter said.

A lifelong Georgetown resident, Dexter has operated a small septic and drainage business out of Georgetown since 1979. “Installing and repairing septic systems gets boring after a while,” Dexter said with a laugh. Playing Santa has been an enjoyable addition to his schedule — and a role for which he is uniquely suited. Dexter has had a beard since he was 19; he’s been married for nearly 50 years, and his wife has never seen his bare face.

In 2008, Dexter co-founded CTSS with Charlie Allen, who lived in Rocky Hill and has since passed away, and Bob Smith, who lives in Bethlehem. Together, they decided it would be a good idea to create an association of Santas, so that they could each learn from one another’s experiences.

“We have workshops a couple of times a year to help people expand their skills,” Dexter said. “For example, we’ve had sign language translators teach us basic sign language. Another member speaks Spanish and teaches us keywords we can use with Spanish-speaking children and their parents. We’ve also had workshops on photography and how to best present yourself in front of the camera, as well as workshops on special needs, wardrobes, and beard care. It’s an evolving thing, and we’re always looking for topics we haven’t covered.”

In addition to learning together, CTSS members — as a tight-knit community of Santas, Mrs. Clauses, and Elves — also fill in for one another if a member can’t attend a particular event.

“For a lot of these organizations, Santa and Mrs. Claus are the biggest part of the event,” Dexter said. “If someone can’t make it because they’re sick or they need surgery or something, it’s a big deal. If we have this group together that knows each other and likes each other, we can find coverage. Almost always, we find someone to cover for each other.”

In addition to playing Santa at events, photoshoots, holiday fairs, and other events, CTSS does a number of good deeds throughout the year, with each member being required to do at least one charitable deed annually.

“We do concentrated food drives in the summer, when food banks are lowest,” Dexter said. “This time of year, food banks are jammed because people are so generous. But in the summer, when school is out, kids who were getting breakfast and lunch in school might not be getting breakfast and lunch anymore. By helping out food banks in the summer months, we’re doing a better thing.”

Additionally, Dexter volunteers at hospices across the state, visiting with terminally ill children.

“If you can bring happiness to a family when there’s not much to be happy about, you have to do it,” Dexter said. “The kids realize they’re sick, but they don’t think they’re going to die. You give them a little bit of hope. You’re making somebody’s life better at a

time when it’s lousy.”

During these visits, Dexter makes it a point to stay in character. “When I get in the car and leave these places, I have tears coming down my face,” Dexter said.

While Santa is busiest during the holiday season, he doesn’t take time off in the summer.

“Every Santa has a summer outfit of some kind: red Hawaiian shirts, shorts with fur on the pants,” Dexter said. “Typically, I wear red pants with suspenders, a white shirt, a name tag, and a typical Santa hat that is very hot.”

Being Santa isn’t cheap. According to Dexter, a suit — which might last four years, tops — can cost \$2,000, the belt and boots might cost \$500, and a toy bag goes for \$200 to \$300. With transportation costs and the time required to prepare for each visit, expenses can add up quickly.

Even so, the money is well spent. What does Dexter like most about portraying Santa Claus?

“It’s gotta be the kids, the magic of it, the total faith that the children have in Santa,” Dexter said. “People just do this out of the goodness of their heart.”

This holiday season, CTSS’s Santas are presenting several fundraising events. The proceeds will be given to three needy families in Norwalk.

“So many immigrant families have come to the U.S. recently, and there are children who came here with absolutely nothing,” Dexter said. “One of the members of our planning committee is a teacher in Norwalk who identified three children that need clothing, and we decided we would raise funds for those three.”

Looking ahead, Dexter will be at Uncle Leo’s Not Just Coffee & Donuts in Georgetown the first weekend of the new year.

“We have a thank-you Santa food drive where kids can come in to say hello to Santa, thank them for their gifts, and leave a donation for the food bank,” Dexter said. “Redding food bank doesn’t accept food donations this time of the year, just cash donations.” ■

To learn more about CTSS, how to get involved, or how to donate to the cause, visit ctsocietyofsantas.org.

Golden Art Show concludes

Historic celebration raises funds for the Mark Twain Library

By Lisa Goldstein



Photo by Lisa Goldstein

The Joel Barlow Chamber Singers perform as the 50th Anniversary Mark Twain Library Art Show concludes on Sunday, December 11.

Artists, collectors, patrons, volunteers, and sponsors all came out to contribute to one of the most successful Art Shows in the fifty-year history of the Mark Twain Library Art Show. More than two-hundred artists entered the show from across Connecticut, plus an additional eight other states — from neighboring New York and Massachusetts to as far as Vermont and Maine. The golden jubilee Preview Reception attracted many guests decked out in gold to honor the milestone celebration and sold out well before the show began.

The Art Show is a Redding tradition and a very important fundraiser for the Library, generating revenue to cover a sizable portion of the Library’s annual budget. The entire sale of the silent auction items, which are donated by the artists, benefits the Library, and 35-percent of the proceeds from each work sold in the gallery supports the Library. Over two-hundred works of art were sold this year from the hanging gallery, an array of portfolios, and the silent auction.

The annual Art Show is a labor of love for the volunteers, as well as a special way to provide exposure and elicit sales for the venerable group of artists that live in the community. The majority

of the artists who exhibited at the 50th Anniversary Art Show live in Connecticut, with more than 30 coming from Redding. Four awards were given out for two-dimensional works and one for 3D, which went to Redding’s renowned artist James Grashow. The juror described his “Houseplant” sculpture as “An unusual choice of a hard, rigid medium to express a subject so soft and fluid...but it works!”

This year, two sets of families were juried into the show, one mother-son duo and another father-son pair. Richard Koleszar is an artist and has exhibited at the Library Art Show numerous times. His son Patrick grew up in Redding and now works as an engineer in Rhode Island. This was his first time in the show. He said he was thrilled to be in an exhibit so close to his old home. “I was so happy when I received the acceptance email and even more so upon seeing my dad’s name next to mine on the list of accepted artists!” he said.

The 50th Anniversary Art Show concluded on Sunday, December 11 as snow fell outside and the Joel Barlow Chamber Singers entertained artists and patrons who were viewing the artwork for a final time. ■

Young Redding musicians to perform

Christmas Eve

By Jessie Wright

A group of local vocalists and musicians, many from Redding, will perform as part of the Christmas Eve programming at St. Thomas Episcopal in Bethel on December 24.

Phoebe Madden, a Redding-based vocal instructor and Youth Music Director at St. Thomas, says that many of her voice students will showcase their talents during the program. “It’s a beautiful way for me to give opportunity for my

students to be featured,” she said.

Young Redding vocalists include Siobhan Reilly, Viviana Ciaccio, and Hope Madden, alongside fellow performers Victoria and Sarah Rausch from Newtown and Olivia Dalen, Cate Wormell, and Robert Roda from Bethel. Julian Davies, a Joel Barlow High student, will play acoustic guitar. Barbara Wyton, also from Redding, will play the flute, accompanied by organist

Clay Zambo.

The program will feature choral music starting at 2:30 p.m., followed by a candlelit church service. “It will be very serene and reflective,” Madden said. There will be Christmas carols, s’mores, and crafts for children following the program. “Everyone is welcome,” Madden said. “That’s the most important thing right there.” ■

Stuff-a-Cruiser toy drive

brings in donations for Toys for Tots

By Jessie Wright



Photo by Jessie Wright

The Redding Elementary School (RES) PTA hosted a toy drive last week to support families through Toys for Tots this holiday season. Hosting collection opportunities at the tree lighting event on December 10 and at Redding Elementary School on December 17, the drive received

over three dozen donations.

The toys will be brought to the Ridgefield Marine Corps League to be donated to Toys for Tots. A charity program of the U.S. Marine Corps, Toys for Tots has distributed over 627 million toys to children in need since 1947. ■

INSIGHT COUNSELING
PRIVACY, COMPASSION, & POSITIVE CHANGE

Teen and Young Adult Individual, Family, and Group Therapy are LIVE at Insight Counseling!

“After a long trip through the treatment system with our 21-year-old daughter, we were so grateful to come to Insight. Imagine a therapist who calls and texts back in a crisis! We have grown as a family as well, learning to “Let go” and focus on our own issues and needs as well as our daughter’s illness. Thank you all!”

If you are seeking effective assessment and counseling or a structured program for your child aged 12-26, we have two programs designed to treat anxiety, depression, mood disorders, and all types of compulsive behaviors (i.e., alcohol and other drug use, gambling, overuse of screens, and gaming, etc.) You and your child will receive personalized care, continuous support, and communication until your teen’s functioning is restored.

For More Information, Please Contact

- www.insightcounselingllc.com • 105 Danbury Road, Ridgefield, CT, 06877 •
- 203-431-9726 • info@insightcounselingllc.com •

Are you enjoying the Sentinel?

Consider giving a gift subscription to family or friends this holiday season!

e-mail subscribe@reddingsentinel.org or call 203.938.3800 and we’ll set it up for you.

Putnam Park’s new mobile app brings untold stories to life

By Pamela Brown



Photo by Steve Laschever

Ellery Thomas Leary, Park Historian and President of the Friends and Neighbors of Putnam Memorial State Park, and CRIS Radio Executive Director Diane Weaver Dunne demonstrate a new mobile app that will provide an audio walking tour of the encampment.

Many of us are aware of important figures in U.S. history; however, there are many unacknowledged women, African Americans, and Native Americans who played an integral role in the Revolutionary War’s winter encampment in 1778-1779.

“I run into a lot of common misconceptions about the Revolutionary War. Some of the assumptions are about the makeup of the Continental Army and the community that traveled with it,” said Ellery Thomas Leary, Park Historian at Putnam Memorial State Park in Redding. “There’s a common idea that only men were present in the Army. In fact, women made up a significant labor force that was crucial to Continental logistics. There’s also a shared vision in popular culture of what the average Continental soldier looked like, and that doesn’t leave room for the reality of the Black and Indigenous soldiers who fought for liberty.”

Now, their stories will be told through Putnam Park’s new mobile app, which is part of a National Park Service (NPS) project called The Forgotten

Voices of the Revolutionary War. Last year, Connecticut Radio Information System (CRIS Radio) received \$46,241 through the NPS American Battlefield Protection Program to create an audio tour that will be accessible through the app and to assemble a team of researchers to uncover more about these individuals.

To demonstrate the app, Friends and Neighbors of Putnam Memorial Park (FANS) and CRIS Radio recently co-hosted a community event at the Visitors Center for Veterans Day that was attended by historians, archivists, anthropologists, and interested citizens. Available on the Google Play store as CRISAccessTours, the app is accessed through a visitor’s mobile device or smartphone by scanning QR Codes. Android users can download the app and scan the QR codes affixed to park signage to hear the audio version of the sign. The park plans to have the QR codes in place by the start of 2023. The app will also soon have Apple approval for iOS. Currently, the app must be downloaded offsite because the park’s public WiFi isn’t running yet, but the

guest network will be available soon.

Another objective of the project is to improve the historic site’s accessibility, particularly for individuals with low vision or other print disability.

“We’re looking to expand this aspect even further, by adding audio descriptions of specific locations. Once we add the primary source documents CRIS has recorded, the app will greatly enhance the experience for all visitors, by making it possible to hear the words of Revolutionary War soldiers and their families,” explained Leary. Soon, the QR codes will also allow visitors to hear recordings of primary source documents written by those who served at the Redding Encampment.

“The Redding Revolutionary War Winter Encampment, designated as Connecticut’s first State Archaeological Preserve, offers state residents a unique opportunity to visit one of the few Revolutionary War winter encampments in the U.S. that has not been disturbed due to development,” said Diane Weaver, Executive Director of CRIS Radio. “We will share these stories by leveraging technology, such as the development of a new CRISAccess Audio Tour mobile app and posting on the CRIS Radio/CRISAccess websites.”

Leary is always seeking ways to improve the park experience.

“In 2022, the park had an incredible Interpretive Guide team that invested a lot of time in expanding their knowledge and sharing it with visitors,” said Leary. “In addition to highlighting some of the overlooked demographics of the encampment, I hope this project will inspire people to keep digging for the stories not yet told. That, to me, is a vital way to honor everyone who fought and suffered in the Revolutionary War.” ■

Sledding spots for winter fun

By Jessie Wright



Photo by Jessie Wright

Winter break kicks off this week – so save this round-up of some of the best local sledding spots for kids (and adults) to enjoy on the upcoming snowy days. Each spot is ranked by “difficulty”, with one being the gentlest ride for the youngest of sledders, and three being the most challenging, with speed and bumps for the most thrill-seeking winter revelers.

- Redding Elementary School**
33 Lonetown Road
Difficulty rating: 1
A gentle sloping “bowl” around the north side of the school provides a perfect starter hill for toddlers and young sledders. Take care to avoid any wood stumps that may be place for outdoor classroom programming.
- Gilbert & Bennett Cultural Center**
49 New Street, Georgetown
Difficulty rating: 1
Around the back of this historic school building-turned cultural center is a large field bordering Route 7. One side features a small, gentle hill and the other has a slightly larger run for adventurous youngsters to try.
- Collis P. Huntington State Park**
Sunset Hill Road entrance
Difficulty rating: 2
Enter the park at the Sunset Hill Road entrance, and a large, sloping hill will greet you immediately beyond the iconic wolves

sculpture. Enjoy miles of trails and winter scenery starting at the bottom of the hill after wrapping up your sledding runs.

Veterans Park Elementary School
8 Governor Street, Ridgefield
Difficulty rating: 2
A nice, intermediate favorite for families looking for spots west of Redding. This spot is close to the festive shops and restaurants along Ridgefield’s Main Street.

Joel Barlow High School
100 Black Rock Turnpike
Difficulty rating: 3
The slopes at the back of Joel Barlow High School near the tennis courts have plenty of parking and are best for older kids looking for a fast run.

Christ Church Parish
59 Church Road, Easton
Difficulty rating: 3
An east-side location, the hill behind the Christ Church Parish church building in Easton has long been a gathering for sledders on snowy days.

Gilly Lane Sledding Hill
14 Gilly Lane, Wilton
Difficulty rating: 3
Part of the Woodcock Nature Center grounds, Gilly Lane Sledding Hill features a sharp, fast run directly off a dead-end roundabout lane. The grounds are free and open to the public from dawn to dusk. ■

Danbury Hospital sees rise in pediatric admissions | Continued from page 1

Wegrzyn.

Nurses at Redding Elementary School (RES) said students there have come down with “a significant number of illnesses.”

“We are aware that many students have been getting one illness and then getting another shortly after. Many of our students have had limited exposure to some of these illnesses and it is taking everyone time to rebuild their immune systems,” said RES nurses Jen Connolly and Deanna Carley in a December 11 newsletter to parents.

“In many cases, it is taking longer for individuals to recover from these illnesses,” the message continues, urging “everyone to do their best to attend school as much as possible”, but for children to “stay home even if they have more than nine absences”, the maximum number of absences allowed. Parents are asked to provide a note from the child’s doctors to the school and test results for the flu, Covid-19, RSV, and strep throat.

While many children and adults recover with no issue from these viruses, measures can be taken to prevent transmission and protect young children and adults with compromised immune systems.

“The truth of the matter,” Natt said, “are babies, especially ones that go to school or daycare, are little Petri dishes. They definitely get their parents and grandparents sick. The best way to protect themselves is avoidance or wearing a mask. We know masks work. This is our first season of not wearing masks.”

Many people currently wear

an N95 mask, though “technically you have to be fitted for them and a lot of people are wearing them incorrectly,” Natt said. “A regular surgical mask is fine.”

Chelsea Smith MD is a primary care doctor with Nuvance Health Medical Practice in Wilton, where she treats adult patients. She said that the ones most at risk from complications from viruses are the elderly and people with certain health conditions such as “poorly controlled heart failure, lung disease, asthma, smokers, COPD, cancer patients especially blood cancers, immune compromised and people with autoimmune diseases who are on steroids, immunosuppressants.”

She recommends washing hands and ensuring kids are well before returning to regular activities. “If you know your child’s sick, don’t give them Motrin and send them to school. Keep them home and make sure they are well before going back to school,” Smith said.

Smith has noticed patients have been coming in to see her more often with cold symptoms this year than they have in past years. A quarter of her patients in recent weeks have come for upper respiratory infections, she said.

“I think it’s because of all the press out there between Covid and flu. They come to get the testing. Everyone doesn’t trust the home tests. And they often can be incorrect. They’re coming in to be tested for the coronavirus. We do test also for RSV if we feel it is warranted. It is a very respiratory illness and less the body aches and diarrhea like coronavirus. It could

have shortness of breath and is less likely to have diarrhea than covid. Wheezing is a good time to see the doctor,” said Smith.

Anyone who knows they’re traveling or planning a holiday event and is sick should have themselves tested before they go, she added.

The Connecticut Department of Health and the State Department of Education sends out information on procedures for attendance in case of illness to the Superintendents of Schools. The schools follow these guidelines. The schools also send out information to parents regarding keeping sick kids home.

The district nurse sent the following communication to the five nurses in the Easton-Redding-Region 9 School District about what to watch for in viruses, according to the Superintendent’s office:

“It’s that time of year... Cold & Flu Season. And RSV. And Covid. How can we control the spread? We all should be taking necessary precautions to stay safe and healthy: washing our hands, covering our mouths when coughing or sneezing, staying well hydrated, eating healthily, and staying home if not feeling well. When can my child return to school after being ill? Children must have an improvement in symptoms, be feeling well, and be fever-free for 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medication. It is recommended that a mask be worn for 10 full days after symptoms begin. Masks are available at all ER9 schools.”

- Flu symptoms include:**
 - A sudden fever (usually above 100.4°F)
 - Chills
 - Headache, body aches, fatigue (unusual tiredness)
 - Sore throat
 - Dry, hacking cough
 - Stuffy, runny nose
 - Some children may vomit and have diarrhea
- RSV symptoms include:**
 - Fever (temperature of 100.4°F or higher)
 - Cough
 - Congestion
 - Sneezing
 - Runny nose
 - Poor appetite
 - Fast breathing
 - Flaring of the nostrils
 - Rhythmic grunting during breathing
 - Belly breathing
 - Wheezing

Covid-19 symptoms include:

- Fever (temperature of 100.4°F or higher)
- Cough
- Shortness of breath
- Fatigue
- Muscle/body aches
- Loss of taste or smell

Doctors say all ages should take special precautions to avoid getting sick from the three viruses going around this winter.

“With the colder weather, there is potential for an increase in infections,” said Wegrzyn in an e-mail. “This is due, in part, to decreased immunity from vaccines and prior infection. Also, as people spend more time indoors, contagious viruses like Covid-19 and influenza can spread more easily. Residents are encouraged to get vaccinated against Covid-19 and influenza. Many locations nearby offer the influenza vaccine and the updated Covid-19 vaccine at the same time. They can visit Vaccines.gov to find locations with the new, updated vaccines near Redding.” ■



DANBURY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

NOW HIRING!

SPECIAL EDUCATION PARAEDUCATORS

Make a difference every day!

- Work 1 on 1 with students receiving specialized services
- Work with classroom teachers to help students with disabilities
- Work in a collaborative and supportive environment
- Make a long lasting impact in the lives of students
- Perfect for graduates, parents of school-age children, or college students considering entering the field of education!



APPLY ONLINE TODAY OR SCAN THIS QR CODE!

\$800 SIGN ON BONUS!

Benefits:

- Full time elementary & secondary positions available (10-months)
- Family friendly work schedule
- Excellent health & welfare benefits including full medical, dental, and vision insurance.

Please support our advertisers

- CCi Voice

Coldwell Banker

Danbury Public Schools

Insight Counseling
- Meadow Ridge

New Pond Farm

Education Center

Redding Grange

REAL ESTATE UPDATE

By John Talley and Bill Whitehead

Redding’s real estate activity slowed in November, as is typical when the market moves into the quietest time of the year – the holidays. Ten houses sold in November at prices that were at, close to, or over their asking price.

Currently, there are 17 houses for sale in Redding with an additional ten houses with “accepted offers” and/or under contract that can be expected to close over next 30 to 60 days. In general, inventories remain at historic lows even during this slower point in the market.

Redding Sold - November	Sale Price	List Price	%/ List Price	Days on Market
76 Gallows Hill Rd	\$ 599,900	\$ 599,900	0.00%	36
33 W. Woodland Dr	\$ 610,000	\$ 575,000	6.09%	17
38 Stepney Rd	\$ 675,000	\$ 675,000	0.00%	54
48 Old Stagecoach Rd	\$ 700,000	\$ 699,000	0.14%	37
5 Winding Brook Ct	\$ 735,000	\$ 735,000	0.00%	42
24 Indian Hill Rd	\$ 749,000	\$ 759,000	-1.32%	46
208 Redding Rd	\$ 790,000	\$ 795,000	-0.63%	143
8 Quarry Rock Rd	\$ 1,250,000	\$ 1,275,000	-1.96%	52
74 Sport Hill Rd	\$ 1,750,000	\$ 1,750,000	0.00%	20
87 Seventy Acre Rd	\$ 1,775,000	\$ 1,775,000	0.00%	15
Average	\$ 963,390	\$ 963,790	-0.04%	46

November 2022													
Town	Current Inventory	Homes Sold		Avg Days on Market		Avg List Price		Avg Sale Price		Percent Sale Price >/< List Price		Avg Price/SqFt	
	As of Dec. 12	November	YTD	November	YTD	November	YTD	November	YTD	November	YTD	November	YTD
Redding	17	10	136	46	51	\$ 963,790	\$ 889,398	\$ 963,390	\$ 897,206	-0.04%	0.88%	\$ 270	\$ 296
Ridgefield	40	21	348	36	45	\$ 834,829	\$ 960,866	\$ 848,290	\$ 986,003	1.61%	2.62%	\$ 314	\$ 294
Weston	25	11	189	49	54	\$ 1,272,273	\$ 1,275,399	\$ 1,285,172	\$ 1,325,613	1.01%	3.94%	\$ 325	\$ 309
Wilton	20	21	245	47	46	\$ 986,519	\$ 1,099,238	\$ 1,010,629	\$ 1,156,918	2.44%	5.25%	\$ 350	\$ 306
Easton	20	14	103	44	58	\$ 905,671	\$ 925,209	\$ 895,964	\$ 948,860	-1.07%	2.56%	\$ 228	\$ 261
Bethel	13	10	134	74	44	\$ 537,700	\$ 500,799	\$ 529,500	\$ 510,994	-1.53%	2.04%	\$ 241	\$ 247
Newtown	46	25	314	55	54	\$ 547,456	\$ 564,871	\$ 557,122	\$ 577,662	1.77%	2.26%	\$ 239	\$ 246
Average	26	16	210	50	50	\$ 864,034	\$ 887,968	\$ 870,009	\$ 914,751	0.60%	2.79%	\$ 281	\$ 280

John Talley and Bill Whitehead are Realtors with Vincent & Whittemore Real Estate.

Redding to begin disbursing housing assistance grants

Second round of applications set for 2023 | By Rob Sample

Approximately \$23,000 in applications for assistance have been received to date for the Town of Redding’s new Housing Assistance Fund grant program.

The program, which was funded through a \$50,000 American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) grant, debuted in late November. The application deadline, which was originally set for December 1, was extended to December 9 to accommodate a larger number of applications. The United Way of Western Connecticut is managing the application process and the distribution of grant money, in conjunction with Redding’s Social Services Department.

The Housing Assistance Fund was one of the first funding proposals approved by the Town for the use of ARPA funds, which aims to assist people

and communities affected by the Covid-19 pandemic and the shutdowns that occurred in 2020 and 2021. The housing grants will help families and households that fell behind on rent and mortgage payments during that time.

“Applications are being reviewed by a committee consisting of town officials, United Way representatives, and other people from Redding who have worked with the United Way in the past,” said Ashley Gaudiano, Vice President for Resource Development and Marketing at the United Way of Western Connecticut.

Guadiano said the first funds are expected to be awarded before the start of 2023. “We also expect the average grant amount to be in the ballpark of \$3,000 to \$5,000 [per applicant],” she said.

Over half of the fund will remain un-dispersed once the new year begins, she added. “As a result, we plan to run a second wave of applications sometime in early 2023,” Guadiano said.

This grant program – and ones like it run by the United Way and other Connecticut municipalities – meets an acute need in Western Connecticut. While public awareness of poverty and homelessness is strong, the housing challenges faced by the working poor are more hidden in communities such as Redding. Housing costs are high throughout the region, and the Covid-19 pandemic and associated shutdowns and job layoffs added to the difficulty many residents had in meeting rent and mortgage obligations. The home-price inflation of 2021

and 2022 exacerbated that burden, particularly among renters.

“The stark reality is that people who are income-challenged are not just those who fall below Federal and state poverty lines,” Gaudiano said. For that reason, the United Way developed the term ALICE, which stands for Asset Limited, Income Constrained and Employed, to describe people who might not be officially “poor,” but nonetheless have difficulty affording food, childcare, housing, healthcare, and transportation for their households.

Many continue to struggle with housing costs even more than a year after they’ve returned to full-time employment, Gaudiano pointed out. They may, for instance, lag on their payments as an after-effect of the shutdowns. They may also be simply unable to afford steep

housing costs while meeting other household obligations.

Of key importance, Gaudiano noted, is that programs such as the Housing Assistance Fund can act to stem future homelessness. “That’s because without such assistance, people’s housing arrangements can be insecure,” she said. “We are hoping that through our second application wave, more Redding residents will realize that help is available to them.” ■

For more details on the Housing Assistance Fund, contact Angelica Fontanez, Redding’s Director of Social Services, at afontanez@townofreddingct.org, or via phone at 203 938-3580.

Redevelopment of hotel site approved

By Jessie Wright

The Redding Zoning Commission voted unanimously on Wednesday, December 14 to grant approval, with conditions, for the demolition and reconstruction of a hotel at 296 Ethan Allen Highway. The site is the current location of the Day’s Inn Ridgefield hotel; the new site plan proposes demolition of the existing building and redevelopment with a Home2 Suites by Hilton.

The application was submitted by Ridgefield Motor Inn, Inc. and its owner, Alex Patel. A previous site plan application by Patel, which he withdrew in 2021, had also included the building of a restaurant on the site. That piece of the project has since been separated from the initial hotel redevelopment, with the Commission

specifying any restaurant would need to be applied for and permitted through its own process.

“Right now, we are doing it in two phases,” Patel said. “First phase we are going to go through with the hotel... second phase we are going to apply for the restaurant.”

The redevelopment presents an opportunity for Redding, as the area boasts very few quality hotels that can accommodate a large number of guests.

“After this many years, I know the area, I know everything here,” Patel said. “I’ve lived here in Redding for 35 plus (years)... so I know we can make it something better. The Ridgefield Playhouse – we get lots of calls from the Playhouse every weekend, every week,

all year you know... and they have to go far to Norwalk or Danbury.”

After a short window for appeals has passed, Patel said he and his architecture and engineering teams are ready to move forward with breaking ground.

“I hope it’s going to move quickly,” he said.

Plans for redevelopment started over two years ago, with Patel presenting his original site plan application to the Zoning Commission at their meeting on November 11, 2020.

“Congratulations,” Zoning Commission Chair Matthew Lecher said to Patel following the vote at the December 14 meeting. “It’s been a long trek.” ■



Redding Grange wishes you and yours a wonderful holiday season!

We are grateful to the community for supporting the revitalization of this Redding classic!!

Do you have fond memories of Redding Grange or wish to help preserve an historic building in our community?

Consider making an end-of-year gift to the Grange. Our mailing address is PO Box 177, Redding Ridge CT 06876 and our Venmo is ReddingGrange15.

If you would like to make a special donation in someone's honor, please contact community@reddinggrange.org

Or call 917-797-3898 to learn more about our upcoming capital campaign and potential naming opportunities.

Gifts over \$500 may be tax deductible. Please contact us for more information!

BUSINESS SPOTLIGHT

The natural world is the classroom at Westbrook Nature School

By Justin Reynolds



Photos courtesy of Westbrook Nature School



In 2013, Suzanne Fogel felt the need to provide an opportunity for young children to get to know the natural world – and Westbrook Nature School was born.

“We are a true outdoor nature school, and we are outside all day every day,” Fogle said. “Through sunshine, rain, mud, wind, and snow, our children learn to love the earth.”

The school, a non-profit, licensed, nature-based preschool located at 7 Long Ridge Road in West Redding, serves children ages three through six.

To Fogle, children have an inherent understanding of the earth as a place that’s alive and filled with spirit and beauty.

“We have a responsibility to honor this awareness by giving the child time to explore and discover nature for themselves in our woodlands, fields, and streams,” Fogle said. “They learn bird and frog calls, tracking, animal behavior, plant, fungi, and tree identification. We enliven these experiences with song, dance, festival celebrations, and storytelling.”

Students also learn outdoor skills, including the four directions, how to manage difficult terrain, endure weather conditions, how to be safe around a river, and how to feel home in nature.

“With time, they develop a deep understanding and empathy for living things,” Fogle explained.

Most preschool and kindergarten programs take place within the confines of four walls;

Westbrook embraces an alternative approach to education.

“We are outdoors in all kinds of weather, moving naturally, exploring the natural world,” Fogle said. “Our senses are filled with the aliveness of nature. Our children naturally become physically and emotionally resilient, confident in their knowledge of and relationship with the natural world.”

Students come from all nearby towns, including Redding, Ridgefield, Weston, Easton, Wilton, Newtown, Bethel, and Danbury. “We are dedicated to providing this education to all families, regardless of their socioeconomic status,” Fogle continued. Westbrook has a staff of seven, including two administrators, three kindergarten teachers, and two parent-child leaders.

In addition to its nature-based school program, Westbrook also offers parent-child classes for parents and caregivers with children from birth to three years of age. Groups meet once a week for two hours in the spring and fall and for 90 minutes in the winter. Attendees enjoy woodland walks, crafts, group activities, homemade snacks, free play, and circle time with songs, puppets, and movement.

“This group time is a great way for parents and children to socialize and become part of a real community,” Fogle said. “It’s also good preparation for the preschool-kindergarten experience and gives parents an opportunity to

discuss parenting issues with each other and with our group leaders.”

Each year, Westbrook Nature School hosts three festivals: the Woodland Halloween festival, which celebrates the harvest season, the Illuminated Forest festival, which takes place on the winter solstice, and the May Fair festival, which celebrates “the springing forth of new life in nature and in ourselves.” Each of these festivals are open to the public, but space is limited, and registration is required.

“Our festivals create a space and time to give thanks for what we have and to celebrate each other and the generosity and beauty of nature,” Fogle said.

Westbrook’s school year runs from September through early June. The school offers priority enrollment for in-house families from November 1 through December 31 for the following school year. After that, the school accepts applications from the general community and always maintains a wait list.

Next year, the school will be celebrating its 10th anniversary.

“We are very grateful that we have become a model for other independent, nature-based schools,” Fogle said. “This is helping to fulfill our mission to bring this type of education to every young child.” ■

For more information, visit westbrooknatureschool.org

Ring in the New Year

at these local spots

By Donna Christopher



From black tie affairs to catering for a cozy meal or party at home, local restaurants are offering special menus and events for New Year’s Eve (and New Year’s Day) celebrations of all kinds.

Milestone
2 Main Street
Georgetown
milestonect.com
Reservations recommended

Milestone will offer a Classic Prime Rib dinner special along with its regular menu on New Year’s Eve, with service until 9:00 p.m. There will be live music with Louder Daddy of Redding and a champagne toast to ring in 2023.

Then, enjoy brunch on the first morning of 2023 with BOGO (Buy One Get One) Bloody Marys and Mimosas, followed by a regular dinner service and football games on TV.

Wire Mill Saloon & Barbecue
12 Old Mill Road
Georgetown
wiremillbbq.com
Reservations recommended

Early dining on New Year’s Eve is available when the day’s smoked specialties will include ribeye steaks and duck breast, along with Wire Mill’s robust regular menu centering on smoked meats such as pulled pork, beef brisket, chicken, and homemade sausage. The hours on New Year’s Eve are 12:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.

Lombardi’s Trattoria
22 Main Street
Georgetown
lombarditrattoria.com
Catering orders required three days in advance

Enjoy Italian cooking from the comfort of your own home or cater your own New Year’s Eve bash with Lombardi’s New Year’s Eve catering options. Catering orders

must be placed as soon as possible, with a minimum of three days in advance.

Lombardi’s regular menu will be offered for lunch or dinner from 11:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. on New Year’s Eve for those wishing to dine out.

Barbarie’s Grill
7 Backus Avenue
Danbury
barbariesgrill.com
Reservations required

Dress up for New Year’s Eve at one of Barbarie’s three dinner seatings (5:00 p.m., 7:00 p.m., and 9:00 p.m.), or attend just the New Year’s Eve black tie after-party starting at 10:00 p.m.

Aquila’s Nest Vineyards
56 Pole Bridge Road
Newtown
aquilasnestvineyards.com
Reservations/tickets required

This local vineyard will be hosting a New Year’s Eve Dinner & Live Music Party from 6:00 p.m. – 10:00 p.m. with wine, dinner, and dancing to live music by Frank Louis Pisani & Pat Matto. Tickets include indoor seating, dinner, and your first glass of wine.

Rancho Alegre
6 Main Street
Georgetown
ranchoalegrect.com
Reservations recommended

Rancho Alegre (Happy Ranch) serves bold flavors in a fun atmosphere. It even has its own song “Over in Georgetown, little bit of Mexico” and an option for lunch or dinner on New Year’s Eve, when it will be open from 12:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. Authentic Mexican entrees include Pollo Al Gusto, chicken breast served with mole, green tomatillo, pipian or adobo sauce, and beef or chicken flautas. ■

Georgetown Holiday Fair

Photos by Jessie Wright

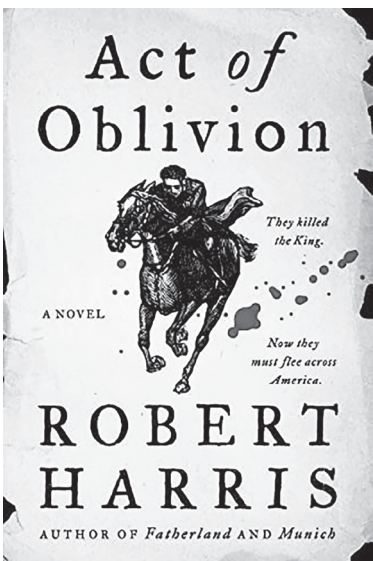


Neighbors gathered along Main Street on Sunday, December 18 for a festive, sunny day at the Georgetown Holiday Fair. Following a parade that brought Santa (played by Bill Dexter) into town, attendees enjoyed crafts, tractor hay rides, carols performed by the Joel Barlow Chamber singers, hot chocolate at Uncle Leo’s served by the The Lions Club, holiday shopping, a raffle with prizes donated by local businesses, games and face painting at Crystals and Cones, and professional photographs with Santa at Lombardi’s Trattoria.

BOOK REVIEW

Act of Oblivion | By Robert Harris

Harper. 463 pp. \$28.99



W. Somerset Maugham claimed to rank himself in the first tier of second-rate writers. Steven King once said, “I am the literary equivalent of a Big Mac and fries.” Graham Greene characterized a portion of his novels as “entertainments”. Robert Harris is in a writer’s gene pool of that kind. In the end, it’s not bad company. *Act of Oblivion* is an entertainment.

British bestselling storyteller, Robert Harris, has written historical fiction previously. For example, *Enigma* is about the Bletchley Manor codebreakers of World War II (though criticized by actual codebreakers as inaccurate). A chase through colonial Connecticut drives *Act of Oblivion*’s narrative. Harris has imagined an earnest, though obsessive and cruel, 17th century monarchist in pursuit of two regicides of Charles I of England.

Harris is lucid and direct and makes straightforward writing almost into a virtue. What is not virtuous in a writerly way is somewhat flat, however, making the novel perhaps over-reliant on plot. But he plots well; it is his gift. Hunt, Hide, and Kill are his cleanly delineated beginning, middle, and end parts. We experience with astonishment in this story the slow pace of travel and transaction. Indeed, his story begs a comprehension of temporal intervals so that, in a way, time is the story’s Macguffin (that which drives narrative but never appears). This means there is rarely a “hot” pursuit (there are moments, but they are contrived, as when hunter and quarry share the same dark cave one night).

The heroes of this tale experience some rough going through our familiar Connecticut landscapes. Highways of today were paths then, and shelters on these paths often no more than lean-to caves created from Ice Age dropstone glacial erratics. (One such dropstone can be seen in nearby North Salem NY, “The Balanced Rock”).

Harris’s workmanlike prose is conspicuously without powerhouse lines — lines like John Le Carre’s “His mother beat him for not saving string” or Raymond Chandler’s “A blonde to make a bishop kick a hole in a stained-glass window”. But what Harris successfully achieves are convincing descriptions of travel in late 1600’s. Walking with laden horses from Boston to Hartford, and then to New Haven, and on to Guilford, Connecticut, was a harsh proposition; there are nights spent in wigwams of the day, animals killed for food, their pelts cut, removed, cured, and worn as clothing, horses run to death, and two-month voyages across the Atlantic. Religious thought of the time is unnerving; Puritan practices of the day were onerous for their parochial certitudes and cruel tribal intolerance. These notions seem suffocating and quaint to modern sensibilities, until one gives serious thought to universal human impulse, and that modernity’s social forums today often express precisely the same certitude, animus, and intolerance.

The execution in 1649 of King Charles I was justified at trial on the basis of the Bible’s Book of Numbers, chapter 35 verse 33, (the Bible a problematic reference, since an English king rules by divine decree, a larger authority than his insurrectionists could claim). We have seen, in America’s recent memory, civil war; and in living memory, political assassination; and most recently, insurrection and an attempted coup. While Oliver Cromwell’s cohorts in regicide are the predicate for pursuit, Harris seems to understand how political obsession, dishonor, and disingenuous justifications of violence are relevant to today. ■

Review by Tom Casey
Tom is the author of *Human Error* and *Stranger’s Gate*

LIBRARY CORNER

By Erin Shea Dummeyer

As of this Library Corner, Redding residents have borrowed over 86,000 items from the Mark Twain Library this year. I thought it would be fun to share what the ten most-borrowed adult titles were in 2022, sort of like a New York Times bestseller list for Redding. The following books were the most popular in our town this year:

1. *The Personal Librarian* by Marie Benedict and Victoria Christopher Murray - This work of historical fiction tells the story of Belle da Costa Greene, J.P. Morgan’s personal librarian. She becomes a powerful figure in the art and literature scene of New York City while guarding a secret about her identity.
2. *Oh William!* by Elizabeth Strout - The third book in Strout’s Lucy Barton series is an excellent selection for book clubs. Lucy Barton is recently divorced from her ex-husband so it’s a wonder why she agrees to join him on a

fact-finding mission.

3. *The Midnight Library* by Matt Haig - What if you could visit a library of your life, with each book exploring a different decision that led you down a different path?
4. *Apples Never Fall* by Liane Moriarty - From the bestselling author of *Big Little Lies*, this family drama begs the question - if you thought your father murdered your mother, would you turn him in?
5. *Better Off Dead* by Lee Child - The latest in the blockbuster Jack Reacher series.
6. *Rock Paper Scissors* by Alice Feeney - This twisty, domestic thriller is another hit from the bestselling Feeney, with an ending you won’t see coming.
7. *The Great Alone* by Kristin Hannah - Ernt Allbright comes home from the Vietnam War a volatile man. On a whim, he decides to move his family to Alaska to start a new life. This is a modern

pioneer story set in 1970’s Alaska.

8. *It Ends with Us* by Colleen Hoover - It seems like everyone is reading Colleen Hoover lately. This thought-provoking novel deals with domestic abuse. Another great choice for book clubs.
9. *One True Loves* by Taylor Jenkins Reid - Emma Blair loses her young husband in a helicopter accident when they’re in their 20s. She has a second chance at love a decade later, finally engaged to another wonderful man. But when her first husband reappears, she must choose between her husband and her fiancé.
10. *The Lincoln Highway* by Amor Towles - Towles has done it again with this gem of a book. A road trip novel through America in the 1950’s. ■

Erin Shea Dummeyer is
Director, Mark Twain Library

Good books for good readers | By Margi Esten

“Would you like something to read?” is my favorite line (not surprisingly) from one of my favorite Christmas books – *A Child’s Christmas in Wales* by Dylan Thomas. The Welsh poet wrote and recorded this work (for the BBC) in 1950. This short story recalls the celebration of Christmas and the feelings it evoked for him as a child – a romanticized version portraying a nostalgic and simpler time.

A Christmas Memory by Truman Capote is my favorite piece of writing by Capote (and I love everything written by Truman Capote!) This short story was originally published in *Mademoiselle* magazine in December of 1956. Another autobiographical work, *A Christmas Memory* describes his childhood memories and, in particular, the real-life Sook, a distant relative who was remarkably the only stable person in his young life. A piece of Truman Capote trivia: he was a very close friend of Harper Lee,

author of *To Kill a Mockingbird*, and her character Dill (the summer friend of Scout and Jem) is based on Capote.

Another favorite!: *A Christmas Carol* by Charles Dickens is – you guessed it – the book I love most by the brilliant author. First published in 1843, this is the story of miserly Ebenezer Scrooge who is visited by his former deceased business partner Jacob Marley and the three ghosts (Christmas Past, Present, and Yet to Come) who help to transform him into a kinder, gentler man. There are many film versions available, but the best (I think) is the one with Reginald Owen, Gene Lockhart, and Leo G. Carroll, released in December of 1938. (My husband and children still maintain that *The Muppet’s Christmas Carol* reigns supreme!)

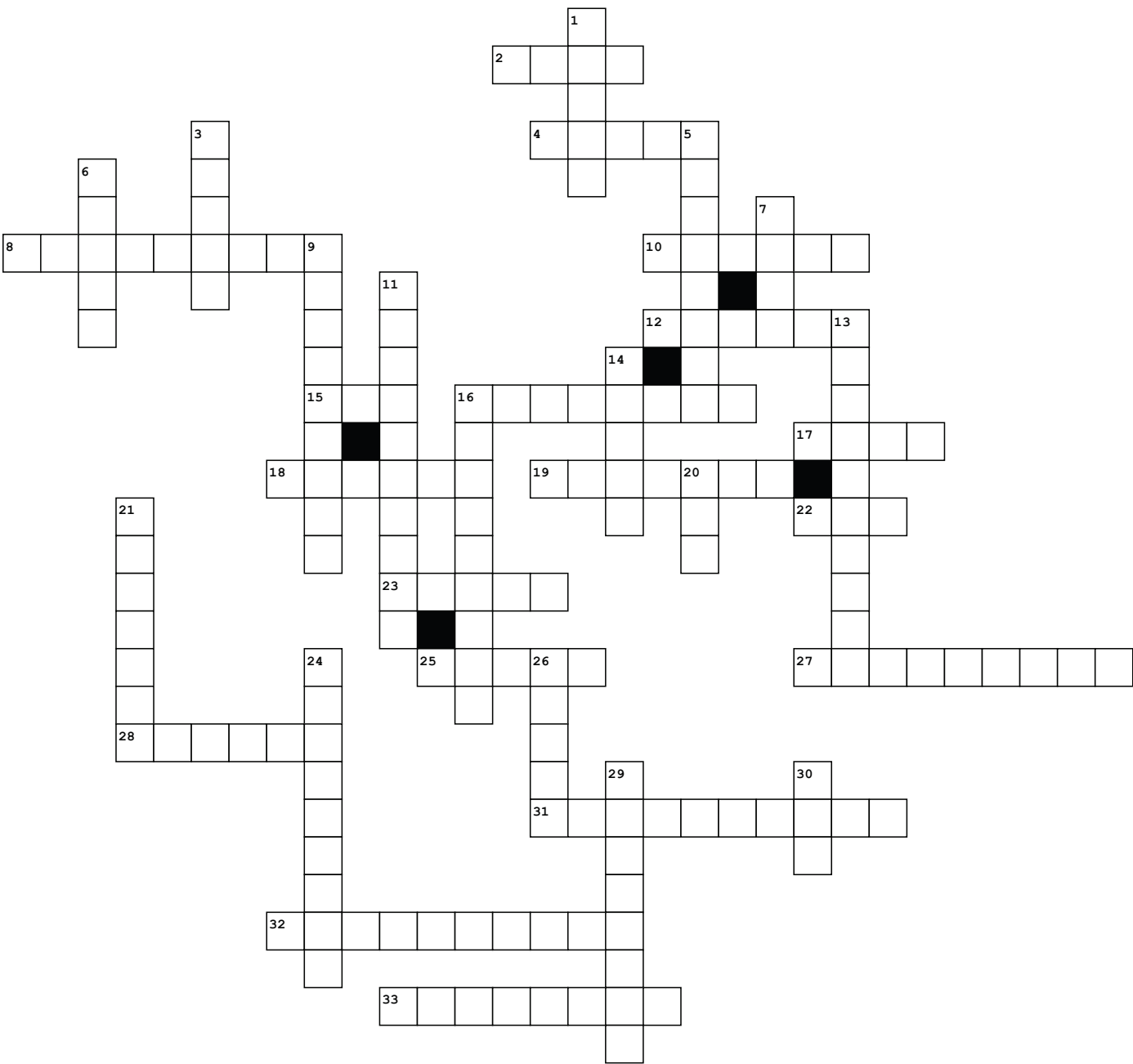
A delightful book for children (and adults) is the award winning *The Polar Express*, written and illustrated by Chris Van Allsburg and published in 1985. It is the story of a young boy who boards a

mysterious magical train headed to the North Pole on Christmas Eve. During the ride, he embarks on a journey of self-discovery which shows him that the wonder of life never fades for those who believe.

Who doesn’t know *The Night Before Christmas*... well, this iconic children’s poem was written by Clement Clarke Moore originally titled *A Visit from St. Nicholas* and originally published anonymously in the *Troy Sentinel* in 1823. By the author’s own account, he wrote it purely for the enjoyment of his children on Christmas in 1822.

A Christmas note from this columnist: Amidst all the hustle and bustle of this busy season, if you can take some time with your family and friends to sit and just enjoy the lights on the tree, consider reading some of these books aloud – everyone can join in and take a turn. It’s magical. I promise. Merry Christmas to all and to all a good night... ■

Redding crossword puzzle | By Jessie Wright



- Across**
- 2. When New Pond Farm opens
 - 4. West Redding building to be demolished
 - 8. Festive feature of Rock ‘N Roots
 - 10. Concert on the Green pastime
 - 12. Garden path along the Town Green
 - 15. Star of the Mark Twain Library’s December show
 - 16. Redding Ridge Market
 - 17. Funding source for COVID-19 relief
 - 18. “Connecticut’s Valley Forge”
 - 19. Local Lane popular with trick or treaters
 - 22. Type of hunting
 - 23. Redding Sentinel’s first issue month
 - 25. Historian Charley
 - 27. Redding Neighbors and __
 - 28. Toad sounds
 - 31. Twain’s Redding home
 - 32. Barlow 2022 undefeated state champion team
 - 33. Park with swimming beach
- Down**
- 1. Founder of Redding’s library
 - 3. Former Redding newspaper
 - 5. Center for seniors
 - 6. Incoming Redding Historical Society President
 - 7. Sculptor featured at Huntington State Park
 - 9. Natural Area across from JRMS
 - 11. Watershed in Redding
 - 13. Utility company
 - 14. Bagels found in Georgetown
 - 16. First Selectwoman Julia
 - 20. Tax
 - 21. Common invasive plant
 - 24. Nature school in West Redding
 - 26. Highway targeted for tree removals
 - 29. Couch Hill Preserve nester
 - 30. Uncle in Georgetown

Answers to this puzzle can be found at reddingsentinel.org

The Natural World

Lichens: rock stars that never had a number one hit

By Terry Karpen



Photo by Terry Karpen

All of the world’s animals, plants, fungi, and microbes are connected. Being curious about nature can inspire you to explore the wonders of the natural world. Have you ever taken a close look at lichen? Lichens are all around us and are mostly ignored. But if you tune in to your surroundings, perhaps you will begin to become aware of lichens on rocks, tree bark, soil, gravestones, wood benches, roofs, or fences. Lichens can also grow on glass, metal, plastic, and cloth.

Lichens are living organisms. Although it looks like a plant, it’s not. In order to survive, lichens need water, light, air, nutrients, and a surface on which it can grow. They get water from rain and fog, absorbing water vapor from the air.

What are lichens? Until the use of microscopes revealed otherwise, lichens were once classified as single organisms. Magnification showed lichens were two organisms living together in symbiosis: a fungus and an algae. The word symbiosis was in fact invented to describe lichen. The fungus provides support, water, and minerals for the algae, while the algae photosynthesizes,

producing food for the fungus. In recent studies, it has become evident that while lichens contain at least two different kinds of life made up of organisms belonging to different kingdoms, they are also ecosystems for many other microorganisms, such as bacteria, yeast, and additional algae and fungi. Lichens are now understood as a community of organisms rather than a simple fungi-algae association.

Appearance: Lichens come in different forms, colors, and sizes. There are four main lichen body types: crustose (crusty), fruticose (shrubby), foliose (leafy), and squamulose (scaly). Lichens can range in color from grey, green, black, white, yellow, orange, or red, and almost everything in between. Individual lichens often form mosaics of color. When dry, lichens appear dull-colored, the color of the fungus. But when wet, they are completely transformed when the colors of the algae layers shine like superstars. Lichens range in size from as small as a shirt button to strands that can be several feet in length.

Lichen habitat: Lichens are everywhere throughout the world. They are the dominant form of life on approximately eight percent of the earth’s surface. Lichens grow in temperate, tropical, and polar regions. They survive in some of the most extreme environments on earth: arctic tundra, high mountain peaks, deserts, and rocky coasts. Lichens can survive a complete loss of water, become dormant, and then rehydrate when water becomes available. To ensure survival, “Lichens produce an arsenal of more than 500 unique biochemical compounds that serve to control light exposure, repel herbivores, kill attacking microbes, and discourage competition from plants,” according to the “Lichens of North America” site.

Uses: Lichens provide forage, shelter, and building materials for deer and other large animals, as well as birds, rodents, and insects, as described by the USDA Forest Service. Lichens are used in deodorant, toothpaste, ointments, extracts, perfumes, and dyes for fabric. Some species of lichens are also thought to have medicinal properties.

Are lichens on trees harmful? Tree-dwelling lichens are not harmful to trees. They are often mistaken for destructive fungi or diseases, but they are not pathogens or parasites, and do not cause disease. Lichens attach to trees but do not feed off the bark. They produce their own food using sunlight energy (photosynthesis). On a final note, lichens are a partnership between organisms unlike any other on earth. They are all around us, yet we hardly notice them. ■

Saugatuck Falls Natural Area highlights

Continued from page 1

parking area. Just before the kiosk, take a sharp right onto the Burn Trail. You’ll notice warning signs for bow hunting. According to Stuart Green, a member of the Conservation Commission and a leader of the Trail Tenders, “Typically there is a bow hunting season for deer on a number of Town properties, including Saugatuck Falls Natural Area. However, the season was cancelled this fall/winter.” At just about nine-tenths of a mile, you’ll reach another intersection with a clear sign that says “Cut Off” to the right. You can avoid the steep hill of the Burn Trail by bearing right; however, the hill is short, and it is the only way to get to the next segment of the walk. So, follow the white blazes to the left up the hill. At the top of the hill, take a moment to catch your breath and orient yourself. The white blazes turn to the right and continue the Burn Trail. Straight ahead is the Hardwood Trail, a slightly less-traveled route marked by blue blazes. At about one mile you will have to traverse a swampy area. There are rocks and tree roots to help keep your feet dry. Next, the trail crosses under the powerlines next to a huge stanchion. The elevation here

provides a lovely view. A right turn here would bring you back to Knapp Way. Instead, continue under the power lines. At the bottom of the hill, the blazes will direct you up a small, rocky knoll, but past hikers have preferred a flatter route. Either trail leads to the same destination. Revisit this trail in the early spring to observe some thriving vernal pools. The Hardwood Trail continues to the left and will connect with the Firehouse Trail eventually. For this hike, continue straight on the Wall Trail. After a few hundred feet, the trail will bear to the right and follow along one of Redding’s iconic stone walls. At about 1.7 miles, you’ll encounter another intersection. The Wall Trail ends and connects with Knapp Way. Bear right at the intersection to return towards the powerlines and the route back to John Read Middle School. There are several stands of mountain laurel in this section that offer welcome greenery on a cold winter day and gorgeous flowers in late spring. Stay on Knapp Way until you reach the Hemlock Trail. Bear left to return to the meadow. ■

Tri-board meeting reveals main budget drivers for 2023-2024

Continued from page 1

The Board of Education has been undergoing a strategic planning process which has identified six main priorities over the next three years. “These priorities were integral to our budget planning process, because it allows us to identify whether a priority has a dollar value or not or whether it just has a time commitment value,” McKinnon said. The Board of Education identified contractual wage increases, inflation, and the cost of special education as key budget drivers for 2023-2024. The Board anticipates wage increases around 2 to 2.5-percent next fiscal year. It will also be entering union contract negotiations with two of its four union contracts in spring of 2023. Inflation is projected to affect expenses, according to Sara Scrofani, ER9 Director of Finance, Operations & Technology. The presentation outlined an anticipated three to five percent increase in the cost of instructional supplies and eleven to thirteen percent increase in the cost of utilities. “We are in a particularly tight inflationary environment right now, but that doesn’t mean

that our priorities are not important,” McKinnon added. “And so therefore we do need to plan very carefully about where we set the things that are important to us. That doesn’t mean that we postpone them indefinitely. Because if we want to be a high-quality school system that is going to contribute to the value of our towns, we need to continually invest in our schools so that we’re being competitive with our neighbors.” Finally, the cost of providing Special Education services was identified as a budget driver for the schools. McKinnon noted that Special Education services are mandated by the State and saw a 2.8-percent increase in expenses last year. Special Education services make up 25-percent of Redding’s budget, according to McKinnon. D’Agostino also highlighted the budget impact of Special Education services during his Region 9 update, noting that the State requires Region 9 to provide these services until students are 22 years old. “I want everyone to understand that we really are providing for special education services for eight years rather than four years for many students,” he said. ■

The most wonderful time of the year

Meadow Ridge residents share their holiday traditions

By Pamela Brown



Photo by Carol Morgan

Left to Right: Carol Morgan, Frank and Judi Sewell, Joy Styles, and John and Sue Corcoran in front of the Meadow Ridge Christmas tree.

The holiday season is a special time for recalling fond memories and taking part in annual traditions that make spirits bright. Some of the residents of Meadow Ridge senior living retirement community shared what makes Christmas meaningful to them. Joy Styles has a special way of decorating for Christmas that is full of meaning for her family. “When you have a name that goes along with a holiday – like Holly for Christmas or Rose for Valentine’s Day – you can count on getting cards and gifts that go along with your name. That was the case for me. When my daughter was little, she started giving me ‘Joy’ ornaments every Christmas. We have a seven-foot tree in our home covered in ‘Joy’ ornaments. When my husband, Bob, died, we started a ‘heart’ tree for him decorated with heart ornaments. Every year we decorated our Joy tree and our Heart tree. When I moved to Meadow Ridge, I passed the tradition on to my children by sharing my ornaments with them. Here I have two little trees on my

mantel – my own Joy and Heart trees. My hope is my children will pass the tradition on to their grandchildren and there will be Joy and Heart trees for generations.” For many years, Carol Morgan enjoyed Christmas gatherings in Connecticut with her special friends, the Pierot family, who decorated with the littlest guests in mind. “Photos in handmade frames made of clay, simulating cookie dough, featured images of the grandchildren taken when they were very young. They were initially hung on the lower branches so the little folks could immediately spot them. Each year they decorated higher branches as the children grew. It was magical! At Meadow Ridge it’s like a little village. Outside each front door are vintage holiday decorations embodying heartfelt memories of decades past. They nourish the spirit! Susan and John Corcoran created homemade Christmas ornaments with their three children. Now 50-years-old, the ornaments adorn their tree at Meadow Ridge. “Mery Christmas in a red frame was penned by our older daughter, Katy, when she was about five. We bet her teacher was too late to correct her spelling of ‘Merry’ but loved her mistake. The angel on top of our tree was created by Betsy when she was four. The angel is wearing a tulle skirt and has bright blue eyes and a halo, flat on the top of her head like a hat. We made lots of figures out of salt clay, but they were fragile, and there’s only one left. There are innumerable felt ornaments, mostly hearts and gingerbread men, but be sure to look for the one next to Mery Christmas. The gingerbread man is holding a string of lights in his hands. There’s a snowman with a

red and white scarf, a small girl wearing a kimono, a Christmas scene in a Styrofoam egg decorated with gold braid, and more.” Judi and Frank Sewell enjoy sharing holiday humor in their annual Christmas card. “My husband, Frank, and I have been married for 23 years, and he never really liked Christmas – until he married me. Now, we have a tradition each Christmas where I wear a pretty Santa hat and he wears one that says, ‘bah humbug.’ We take a photo in our hats with me smiling and holding a plate of festive Christmas cookies while he stands there frowning. We send the photo to all our friends and it always make them laugh.” Whatever Christmas memory or tradition you look forward to, may it fill your heart with the beauty and warmth of the season. ■

Here’s how to subscribe to the Sentinel

Visit www.reddingsentinel.org/subscribe

Or Call us at (203) 938-3800

Thank you



Not Just Talk.® Open Communications.



Do you run a business in Stamford, Westchester or NYC?

We want to be your phone company!

We are CT-based, and make remote work EASY.

Formerly known as



CCI Voice Since 1980

Visit Us At CCIVoice.com Phone: 203-938-8400

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

\$ = fee applies
R = registration required

ARTS					SPECIAL PROGRAMS	MEETINGS
<p>Tuesday, Dec. 27 – Friday, Dec. 30</p> <p>Songs of the Season 2:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m. Curated list of musicians playing seasonal music, sharing insights into their craft, and opportunities for end-of-year reflection. Grace Farms 365 Lukes Wood Road New Canaan gracefarms.org R</p>	<p>Wednesday, Jan. 25</p> <p>Garden to Kitchen Cooking Class 6:00 p.m. – 8:30 p.m. Harness hearty winter flavors during this cooking class led by Director of Culinary Operations and Chef Neena Perez. Grace Farms 365 Lukes Wood Road New Canaan gracefarms.org</p>	<p>Friday, Jan. 6</p> <p>How to Hunt Ghosts: A Program for Teens and Adults 7:00 p.m. – 8:30 p.m. Mark Twain Library 439 Redding Road marktwainlibrary.org R</p>	<p>Monday, Dec. 26</p> <p>Redding Land Trust Boxing Day Hike 11:00 a.m. Saugatuck Trail No dogs allowed on Centennial Watershed land Meet near 56 Deer Hill Road (don't park on the grass, please) reddingctlandtrust.org</p>	<p>Tuesday, Jan. 3</p> <p>Economic Development Committee 8:30 a.m. Town Hall / Conference Room 100 Hill Road townofreddingct.org</p>		
<p>Thursday, Dec. 29</p> <p>Open Mic Night 7:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m. All ages open mic – LGBTQIA+ friendly! Co-hosted by Bethel CT Pride Molten Java 213 Greenwood Avenue Bethel bethelctpride.com</p>	<p>Monday, Dec. 26 – Friday, Dec. 30</p> <p>Holiday Break Activities 11:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. Craft and color, free play Lego build, family movie, scavenger hunt, and mural making Ridgefield Public Library 472 Main Street Ridgefield ridgefieldlibrary.org</p>	<p>Friday, Nov. 25 – Saturday, Dec. 31</p> <p>A Holiday Wonderland at the Mansion Lockwood-Mathews Mansion Museum (Wed. – Fri.) 12:00 p.m., 1:00 p.m., 2:00 p.m., 3:00 p.m. (Sat. – Sun.) 12:00 p.m., 12:30 p.m., 1:00 p.m., 1:30 p.m., 2:00 p.m., 2:30 p.m., 3:00 p.m. 295 West Avenue Norwalk lockwoodmathewsmansion.com \$, R</p>	<p>Sunday, Jan. 1</p> <p>Redding Land Trust New Year's Day Hike 11:00 a.m. Rock Lot/Scott Preserve Meet on Peaceable Street near the power station. Well-controlled, leashed dogs are welcome. reddingctlandtrust.org</p>	<p>Tuesday, Jan. 3</p> <p>Conservation Commission 7:30 p.m. Zoom townofreddingct.org</p>		
<p>Thursday, Dec. 29</p> <p>An Evening of Comedy 7:30 p.m. – 10:30 p.m. 3 Keys Restaurant & Georgetown Tavern 19 Main Street Eventbrite.com/e/an-https://www.eventbrite.com/e/an-evening-of-comedy-tickets-467540465117 \$</p>	<p>Wednesday, Dec. 28</p> <p>Paint and Pizza Night for Kids 6:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m. Paint & Pizza session for high school and middle school kids with instruction by artist Agata Lipnicka-Tria. Norfield Grange 12 Good Hill Road norfieldgrange.com \$, R</p>	<p>Thursday, Dec. 22</p> <p>Christmas at the Coley House Explore Christmas during the 1940's at a WWII-era home 1:00 p.m., 2:00 p.m. and 3:00 p.m. guided tours Weston History and Culture Center 104 Weston Road Weston westonhistoricalsociety.org \$, R</p>	<p>Thursday, Jan. 5</p> <p>Lecture: Safari with Linda Haines 3:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m. Ridgefield Public Library 472 Main Street Ridgefield ridgefieldlibrary.org R</p>	<p>Monday, Jan. 9</p> <p>Park and Recreation Commission 7:00 p.m. Redding Community Center 37 Lonetown Road townofreddingct.org</p>		
<p>Friday, Jan. 13</p> <p>Lyrics Coffeehouse – Richard Neal and Friends 7:30 p.m. – 9:30 p.m. Redding Community Center 37 Lonetown Road townofreddingct.org/parks-and-recreation \$</p>	<p>Thursday, Dec. 29</p> <p>INDOOR Winter Break Checkout Chat & Chew 10:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m. Mark Twain Library 439 Redding Road marktwainlibrary.org R</p>	<p>Saturday, Dec. 24</p> <p>St. Thomas' Christmas Eve 2:30 p.m. Choral music 3:00 p.m. Worship service 4:15 p.m. Christmas carols, s'mores, and crafts St. Thomas' Episcopal Church 95 Greenwood Avenue Bethel stthomasbethel.org</p>	<p>Thursday, Jan. 5</p> <p>Financial Fraud Awareness – Protecting You and Your Family Members from Everyday Threats 7:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m. Mark Twain Library 439 Redding Road marktwainlibrary.org R</p>	<p>Tuesday, Jan. 10</p> <p>Fire District #1 7:00 p.m. Redding Ridge Firehouse 186 Black Rock Turnpike reddingfire1.org</p>		
	<p>Thursday, Dec. 29 – Friday, Dec. 30</p> <p>Pop-In Winter Games, Stories, and Crafts 1:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m. Listen to stories, play games and create crafts inspired by the lifeways and lessons of local Native Americans The Institute for American Indian Studies Museum 38 Curtis Road Washington iaismuseum.org \$, R</p>	<p>Friday, Dec. 30</p> <p>Through Wednesday, Dec. 28</p> <p>Holiday Ornament Decorating Check library website for open times Decorate holiday ornaments to take home or to hang on the Bethel Library tree. Bethel Library 189 Greenwood Avenue Bethel bethellibrary.org</p>	<p>Wednesday, Jan. 11</p> <p>Pulitzer-Prize Winning Author David Zucchino - Conversations: Truth, Myth & Democracy 7:30 p.m. – 9:00 p.m. Zoom Mark Twain Library marktwainlibrary.org R</p>	<p>Tuesday, Jan. 10</p> <p>Planning Commission 7:30 p.m. Town Hall / Hearing Room 100 Hill Road townofreddingct.org</p>		
<p>Saturday, Dec. 24</p> <p>Bethel Farmers' Market 9:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. 67 Stony Hill Road Bethel bethelfarmersmarket.org</p>	<p>Saturday, Dec. 31</p> <p>Noon Year's Eve 10:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. Explore the museum, enjoy a balloon drop, take photos at a virtual NYE Times Square, make crafts, and more EverWonder Children's Museum 31 Pecks Lane Newtown everwondermuseum.org \$, R</p>	<p>Friday, Dec. 30</p> <p>Families United in Newtown presents Home for the Holidays 10th Anniversary F.U.N. Benefit Concert 7:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m. A night of magical holiday music to benefit Families United in Newtown Newtown Congregational Church 14 West Street Newtown bit.ly/FUNconcert2022</p>	<p>Saturday, Jan. 14</p> <p>Winter Tree Identification 2:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m. Join David Beers, the Western Connecticut Service Forester for CT DEEP on a walk along Woodcock trails. Woodcock Nature Center 56 Deer Run Road Wilton woodcocknaturecenter.org R</p>	<p>Wednesday, Jan. 11</p> <p>Commission on Aging 9:00 a.m. Heritage Center 37 Lonetown Road townofreddingct.org</p>		
<p>Saturday, Jan. 14</p> <p>BBQ, Bluegrass & Beer with Walrus Alley & Hitch and the Giddyup 6:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m. 10:00 p.m. cut off Nod Hill Brewery 137 Ethan Allen Highway Ridgefield nodhillbrewery.com \$, R</p>	<p>Saturday, Dec. 31</p> <p>Noon Year's Eve Party 11:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. All ages Dancing, crafts, and a countdown to noon complete with a balloon drop! Snacks and drinks will be provided. Newtown Community Center 8 Simpson Street Newtown \$, R</p>		<p>Sunday, Jan. 22</p> <p>Volunteer Open House 4:00 p.m. – 5:30 p.m. Gather in the pavilion for refreshments and a tour of the many volunteer opportunities available at Woodcock Nature Center. Woodcock Nature Center 56 Deer Run Road Wilton woodcocknaturecenter.org R</p>	<p>Wednesday, Jan. 11</p> <p>Zoning Commission 7:30 p.m. Town Hall / Hearing Room 100 Hill Road townofreddingct.org</p>		
<p>Wednesday, Jan. 18</p> <p>Cooking with the Thirsty Radish – Warming Winter Soups 7:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m. Zoom Mark Twain Library marktwainlibrary.org R</p>	<p>Saturday, Dec. 31</p>			<p>Thursday, Jan. 12</p> <p>Redding Board of Education – Budget Presentation 7:00 p.m. John Read Middle School 486 Redding Road johnreadps.org</p>		
				<p>Tuesday, Jan. 17</p> <p>Zoning Board of Appeals 7:00 p.m. Zoom townofreddingct.org</p>		
				<p>Tuesday, Jan. 17</p> <p>Board of Selectmen 7:30 p.m. Town Hall / Hearing Room 100 Hill Road townofreddingct.org</p>		
				<p>Tuesday, Jan. 17</p> <p>Conservation Commission 7:30 p.m. Zoom townofreddingct.org</p>		

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

This Week's Featured Events

Redding Land Trust Boxing Day Hike

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

Redding Land Trust New Year's Day Hike

Sunday, Jan. 1
11:00 a.m.
Rock Lot/Scott Preserve
Meet on Peaceable Street near the power station.
Well-controlled, leashed dogs are welcome.
reddingctlandtrust.org

Lyrics Coffeehouse Richard Neal and Friends

Friday, Jan. 13
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

Want to feature an upcoming event?

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



COLDWELL BANKER | REALTY



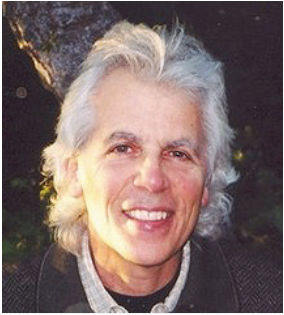
Mike Anderson
203.770.3349



Peri Barto
203.240.5919



Alexis Bennett
203.313.3110



Kim Cuniberti
203.733.6976



Tim Dent
203.470.5605



Lara B. DiBari Tersigni
203.482.2790



Donna DiBartolo
203.858.0597



Margi Esten
203.241.8453



John Frey
203.240.0624



Liz Furrer
203.733.0678



Sarah Nicole Goguen
773.343.6498



Debbie Gore
203.417.5692



Joanne Grasso
203.733.9344



Jefferson Guthrie
203.788.9400



Carol Hanlon
203.240.1233



George Hanlon
203.240.1234



Deb Haws
203.241.7977



Sharon Hoverman
203.733.5073



Charlie Knoche
203.731.7770

HAPPY HOLIDAYS!

COLDWELL BANKER
REALTY



Jodi Langford
203.733.8804



Marge Lanzara
203.994.5301



Heather Lindgren
646.932.4075



Carissa McMahon
203.442.4159



Kenn/Betsy Olbrych
203.526.0697



Sarah Patterson
203.417.6254



Rita Craig Rush
917.846.2281



Anne Schmiedel
203.470.9159



Lonnie Shapiro
203.731.7722



Marilyn Sloper
203.770.6240



Ira Stone
203.240.5754



Denise Taylor
860.977.3699



Terri Tournas
203.561.5893



Adrian Voss
203.241.7957



Applicant subject to credit and underwriting approval (2022102-1745808)
Equal Housing Lender Mary Dent NMLS ID: 260216 | CT - LO-260216 | GRA NMLS ID #1598647 (Nationwide Mortgage Licensing System www.nmlsconsumeraccess.org) • CT - Lic # MCL-1598647

Call Mary to discuss
your mortgage options.



Mary Dent

VP of Mortgage Lending

C: (203) 715-8584 grarate.com/MaryDent
O: (203) 974-1733 Mary.Dent@grarate.com

230 Greenwood Ave, #1A, Bethel, CT 06801



Joseph Porricelli Branch Vice President

203.515.6310
joe.porricelli@cbrealty.com

Ridgefield Office 398 Main Street, Ridgefield, CT 06877 | 203.438.9000
Redding Office 16 Old Mill Road, Redding, CT 06896 | 203.544.9591



COLDWELLBANKERHOMES.COM

