

REDDING SENTINEL

MARCH 21, 2024

REDDING, CONNECTICUT

Volume 2 / Issue 38

\$3

“You can’t teach a hungry child”

Redding resident fights for increased access to free school meals

By Anne Young Albanese

Jill Kress, a Redding resident and the state and food service liaison for Norwalk Public Schools, is working with nutritionists and legislators across Connecticut and the country to expand the federal government’s free breakfast and lunch programs to all students in low-income areas.

In 2010, the federal government introduced an act to support schools in the lowest-income districts across the country. This program, called the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) allows the nation’s highest poverty schools and districts to serve breakfast and lunch at no cost to all enrolled students without collecting household applications. Rather, schools that adopt CEP are reimbursed using a formula based on the percentage of students categorically eligible for free meals based on their participation in other programs such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF). Schools that are eligible for the CEP program are those that have 25% or more with identified need.

According to Kress, the program has been extremely successful. Children are better able to concentrate because they are not worrying about hunger. “You cannot teach a hungry child,” she said. In addition, she noted that after the Norwalk Public Schools adopted CEP, the cafeterias have a more pleasant mood because there is no need to ask about money or embarrass those children who do not receive free lunch but are right on the cusp of qualifying so are unable to afford a meal.

While the Norwalk School District has decided to go CEP, cost challenges still remain. For the month of February, Norwalk served a total of 49,501 breakfasts and 102,718 lunches. The federal government determines the reimbursements of CEP districts based on a multiplier of 1.6%. Norwalk receives \$4.20 for free meals and \$0.42 for paid meals based on the percentage of students qualifying for free or reduced meals in the district. Norwalk meals currently cost \$4.30 to produce, and with the federal multipliers applied, the district can still experience a funding gap of approximately \$500,000 for providing these meals. At the end of the year when there is a loss in the lunch program, funds must be pulled out of educational budgets to put the lunch program back to a break-even.

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Photo by Pierce McCreary

The final rays of sun illuminate a moody cloudscape over Lonetown Farm. If you have a photo you’d like to see featured here, with credit of course, please e-mail editor@reddingsentinel.org

Allocation of Town’s opioid settlement funds still undecided

By Rob Sample

Connecticut municipalities have begun to receive money from an assortment of settlements to multi-state lawsuits brought as a result of the nationwide opioid crisis. However, most of them, including Redding, have yet to allocate the funds to specific initiatives.

The settlement money comes from lawsuits filed by Connecticut and other states against drug maker Purdue Pharma, various drug distributors such as Cardinal and AmerisourceBergen, and retailers including CVS, Walgreens, and Walmart. In Redding, the settlement money received thus far amounts to approximately \$19,500.

The money received to date has come from multiple opioid settlements, noted Jim Sanders, Finance Director for the Town of Redding.

“The funds have trickled in over time,” said Sanders. “We have not allocated any funds at this point – although now that the funds stand at about \$19,500, we’ve currently reached an amount that is meaningful.”

“There is some possibility that there is still money to come,” Sanders added. “But I believe we have gotten the majority of our settlement funds already.”

Sanders said any allocation decision would lean heavily on the input of two Town departments: the Redding Police Department, headed by Chief Mark O’Donnell, and the Department of Social Services, headed by Director Angelica Fontanez. First Selectwoman Julia Pemberton and the Board of Selectmen will also play a key role in the decision making.

According to Sanders, Redding has placed all its settlement funds in a special trust. The Town has also opted to let the money accumulate as multiple settlement payments come in.

“If you spend it as you receive it on one-off projects, you won’t have the same impact,” Sanders said. “Our trust account is set up so that the funds can only be used for purposes stipulated in the settlement.”

The opioid epidemic has accounted for more than 500,000 deaths over the past two decades. In a 2021 CDC study, Connecticut had the fourth-highest death rate per 100,000 residents. Only Ohio, Maine, and Kentucky reported higher death rates.

That has had a staggering cost at the state and local level. As a result, the attorneys general of many states – including Connecticut – have aggressively sought compensation from drug makers and distributors to mitigate that cost.

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ARPA clock runs out for Nest building Town to match funds raised

By Anne Young Albanese and Jessie Wright

Running up against a March 1, 2024 deadline to have building plans and matching funds secured for a new athletic field house called “the Nest” at Joel Barlow High School, the Region 9 school district will not receive the allocated \$250,000 American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) grant for the project.

Finance Director Jim Sanders noted that at the October 20, 2022 Town Meeting where voters approved the ARPA funds allocation to the project, the item included terms and conditions that stipulated the Board of Selectmen would hold the monies for up to one year, and they would only be released if the Board of Selectmen determines that:

- Plans have been created for the construction of a building at the stadium that provides an ADA-compliant restroom with related septic facilities, team room, and a functional kitchen

- Bids based on the plans are obtained

- All necessary approvals from Zoning Commission, Health Department, Planning Commission, and the Region 9 Board of Education are obtained

- There is certainty that the funds identified for both government and private sources are sufficient to complete the project

- The Town of Easton and/or Easton residents have provided a commitment of proportional funds

While an architect has been hired and renderings of the proposed building created in recent weeks, other terms of the ARPA grant have not yet been completed. At the Board of Selectmen meeting on Monday, March 18, the Selectmen opted not to extend the deadline to release the funds, which had been extended once before from October 2023 to March 2024.

Continued on page 3

REDDING’S BIG OUTDOORS

Topstone Park: Chase Long View Trail

By Justin Reynolds



Photo by Justin Reynolds

It’s been a long week of staring at computer screens, writing who-knows-how-many words about however-many topics.

To get away from the trance of my freelance copywriting workflow – hopping from this collaboration platform to that one, authenticating into apps nonstop, endlessly asking for access to Google Docs, and putting the word down intermittently – I force myself to hit Topstone for a trail run, productivity be damned.

This week, I made it to the park twice. Can the weather be any better in March? Our property abuts Topstone. Not too shabby. We’ve been here the last four

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EDITORIAL

Living alongside legends

Ever since moving to Redding, I've been amazed at how interesting the people who live here are. Perhaps my experience has been partially colored by the isolation of the early pandemic – after months in lockdown, was I hungry for any sort of human connection, eager to find interest in anyone's back story? Maybe, but I actually don't think so.

The breadth of talent and life's work of Redding residents seems to me special. Hardly a week goes by when I don't learn about a neighbor doing something quietly incredible, a local artist producing internationally-acclaimed work, an entrepreneur launching a business solving a unique problem, or a retiree whose legacy belongs on the shelves next to some of the greatest biographies (and some whose already do.) Names on street signs and mailboxes often point to world-renowned changemakers and notable figures. It is not an exaggeration to claim that people who live in Redding have shaped not only this community's history, but world history.

I've been equally amazed at how many "small world" connections I have uncovered here, in a town of roughly 8,000 residents in which my family has no far-reaching roots. I've met folks who grew up in the same Minnesota county as I did, those with long-ago relationships with former colleagues of mine, and those with nearly identical stories to mine of leaving "the big city" and finding beauty and solace in a town we'd never heard of before.

In this issue, there are several opportunities to learn about just a few of the amazing neighbors and historical figures we get to claim as Redding's own. In honor of Women's History Month, they are mostly women, people following their passions for social justice, scientific discovery, athletic achievement, the creative arts, and more.

I hope you enjoy learning about these people as much as I have – and if you know of other neighbors doing remarkable things, drop us a line. I know there are so many more stories we can help tell. ■

LEGAL NOTICES

Pursuant to Section 7-394 of the CT General Statutes, notice is hereby given to the Legal Voters and Taxpayers of the Town of Redding that the Annual Audit Report (Annual Comprehensive Financial Report) of the Town of Redding for the fiscal year

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

*Michele R. Grande
MCTC-MMC
Town Clerk
March 13, 2024*

At the regularly scheduled meeting of the Zoning Commission held on March 13, 2024 at 7:30 p.m. in person the commission reached the following decisions:

1. Application #24-01Z – 33 & 43 Lonetown Road (Onion Field) (Assessor's Map and Lot #21-13) – Town of Redding; Agent: Drum Hill Chapter NSDAR & Town of Redding Historic Cemetery Committee, Wilton CT 06897 – In accordance with Redding Zoning Regulations Section 5.11 request for a Special Limited Duration Permit for "Revolutionary War encampment and reenactment of by the Brigade of the American Revolution" on April 26-April 28, 2024 rain date

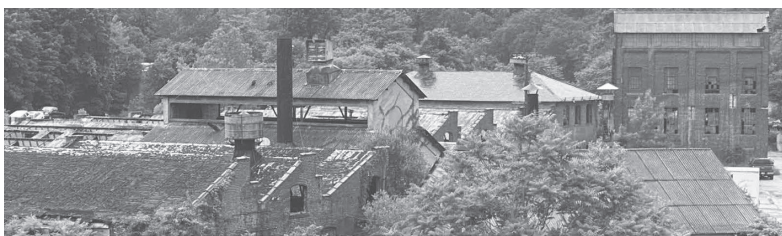
TBD. **APPROVED**

2. Application #24-03Z – 100 Redding Road (Assessor's Map and Lot #47-3): Owner Redding Life Care LLC C/O Senior Care Dev. LLC; Agent Verogy c/o Bradley J Parsons PE, 124 LaSalle Road 2nd Floor, West Hartford, CT 06107 – In accordance with Redding Zoning Regulations Section 5.2.2 request for a Site Plan Amendment for installation of Solar Carport System, totaling 609,40KW DC. **APPROVED** ■

*Matt Lecher, Chairman
Redding Zoning Commission*

Soil testing is now complete at former Wire Mill

By Rocco Valluzzo



The Town of Redding will soon get a clearer picture of what will be required for the eventual cleanup of the former Gilbert & Bennett Wire Mill property in Georgetown.

Tighe & Bond, a Middletown-based environmental engineering firm, completed the soil sampling on the property on March 1 as part of the Phase III environmental investigations. Licensed environmental professional (LEP) James Olsen expects to have the results later this month.

"We got our last report in today for what's going to our data management program," said Olsen at a meeting of the Gilbert & Bennett Wire Mill Advisory Committee on Thursday, March 14. "Once that's completed, we'll start comparing it to clean-up standards and evaluating that."

He noted that the wells to test the groundwater have been installed, except for two, due to access and safety issues. These were not at critical locations, however. Olsen expects to have the data on this by the Committee's next meeting in April.

With respect to soil contamination, Olsen said the soil sampling on the central and southern portions of the site is likely to reveal widespread polluted fill, which is not a surprise. There are a couple of options that can be used to cap it.

"Really what it's going to boil down to is what kind of cap are we going to do there?" he asked. "Are we going to do just a cap to address the exposure issue or address some of the leeching issues to groundwater or a combination of the two? There's actually a Brownfield presumptive remedy we're going to take a look at for these types of situations."

A cap requires environmental restriction. This requires maintenance and also prevents its disturbance in the future.

Olsen added the cap can be disturbed, provided there is a release of the environmental restriction with the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection. Buildings and other structures also would be permitted on the cap. ■

Expert offers guidelines on complying with Connecticut's Freedom of Information Act

By Rob Sample

Most of us think of the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) as the law that gives us the right to ask for information that government entities have compiled about us. While that's true, the law also has an important role to play in how government groups conduct business.

For starters, there are laws on both the federal and state level. The federal Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) governs the conduct of federal agencies, but all 50 states have passed versions of the FOIA as well. On Monday, March 11, Russell Blair, Director of Education and Communication for the Connecticut Freedom of Information Commission, conducted a workshop on how the state law works at Redding Town Hall.

"The Commission is not just a resource for handling FOIA complaints," Blair noted. "The Commission is also concerned with how the 169 municipalities in Connecticut conduct business, often through boards and commissions consisting of volunteers."

Connecticut now receives 600-700 FOIA complaints each year, and one way to avoid them is to properly educate the people who make up boards and commissions about the law. To accomplish that, the FOIA Commission publishes guidelines on how meetings should be conducted. Additionally, its statewide outreach workshops give citizen volunteers a better understanding of how the FOIA works, how to conduct business transparently, and how to avoid FOIA complaints.

By law, meetings of all municipal boards and commissions must be open to the public, with limited exceptions, and agendas must be posted publicly prior to the meeting date. Moreover, to constitute an actual meeting, a quorum of members or officers must attend. For a board of three people, that means two members.

In Connecticut, the FOI Commission distinguishes among regular, special, and emergency meetings. The board or commission must file a full year's calendar of its regularly scheduled meetings with the Town Clerk prior to the beginning of each year. Special meetings can be

scheduled 24 hours in advance.

Any gathering will constitute a meeting if there's a quorum and board or commission business is discussed, said Blair. Communicating electronically is equivalent to meeting in person. E-meetings don't necessarily require a tool such as Zoom, either: Any back-and-forth discussion that takes place via e-mail or phone can be construed as a "meeting."

"You have to be careful about communication when you are outside scheduled meetings," said Blair. "We don't want to see people coming to public meetings who have already discussed and decided upon the items on the agenda."

Blair said the law distinguishes between this type of scenario and a "working group." The latter type of group would be officially designated to meet to discuss a project or proposal, weigh alternatives, and then present recommendations to the larger group at its publicly scheduled meeting. Working-group meetings are acceptable, whereas unscheduled, informal meetings can be problematic if decisions are made.

The exceptions to the public-meeting requirement are meetings of personnel-search committees; meetings concerning collective bargaining agreements; party-group caucuses; social gatherings that do not discuss board business; and staff meetings of a single agency.

Blair outlined a case where a town's Board of Selectmen changed its mind about promoting an official – after it had already informed him that he was the number-one candidate for a leadership role. The Board then called an emergency meeting on a Saturday and fired that official – even though that individual offered to retire.

"We nullified that meeting," said Blair. "Firing someone is not an emergency." Nonetheless, the town appealed the matter. The case ended up four years later at the Connecticut Supreme Court, where the town lost.

"The town had to provide the guy with back pay because he was supposed to be on the town's payroll that entire time," said Blair. "I share this as a cautionary

tale. Emergency meetings are for when there's a risk of something dire happening if you don't act, such as the roof collapsing at a town building if you don't hire someone immediately to fix it."

Regular, special, and emergency meetings all require minutes to be recorded, filed with the Town Clerk, and publicly posted. In today's world, that usually means they are posted online. Minutes for regular and special meetings must be filed within seven days, but for emergency meetings the deadline is 72 hours.

The Covid shutdowns resulted in a surge in meetings held via Zoom and through other electronic tools. All-electronic meetings are the only ones that need to be recorded audio-visually. Currently, there's no requirement that meetings offer a remote-attendance option. "However, this expands access to people who might not otherwise go to a town meeting," said Blair.

The executive session is another meeting tool that Blair suggests boards and commissions use sparingly. For starters, the board or commission must vote to go into executive session. Employment matters, pending claims or litigation, and security issues are all appropriate topics for an executive session; so is the sale or purchase of property, and any other topic that the FOIA law specifies is exempt from public comment.

In addition to officers, a board can invite anyone to the session who can provide necessary expertise on a topic of discussion. "Avoiding public blowback is not a reason to go into executive session," Blair said.

A final note: Any member of the public can request records from any Town Hall or the boards and commissions charged with a particular topic. However, the Town entities are not required to conduct further research for the requestor.

Want more information about Connecticut's FOIA law or the FOIA Commission? You can visit them on the web at portal.ct.gov/FOI, which provides a quick guide to FOIA, a lengthier Citizens Guide, and answers to frequently asked questions. ■

Tired of picking up your *Redding Sentinel* each week?



Photo by John Hichwa

Jill Hichwa delivering newspapers in Redding in 1982 with her Shetland pony, Sam.

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(these days via USPS and rarely by pony!)

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News and Views of Redding, Connecticut

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

Contact us at:
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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.

Zoners approve spring Revolutionary War encampment

By Rocco Valluzzo

In a unanimous decision, the Zoning Commission approved a special permit for a “Revolutionary War encampment and reenactment by the Brigade of the American Revolution” at 33 and 43 Lonetown Road April 26-27. The decision came on Wednesday, March 14 immediately following a public hearing.

Organized by the Drum Hill Chapter of the National Society Daughters of the American Revolution and the Redding Historic Cemetery Committee, the event aims to educate the public on Redding’s involvement in the American Revolution and raise awareness of the approaching America 250 celebration in 2026. The two-day encampment and reenactment will be geared towards families, students, and history buffs.

The event will be funded through private donations and

no taxpayer money will be used, according to First Selectwoman Julia Pemberton. Ample parking has been coordinated with the Redding Community Center and Redding Elementary School.

On Friday, April 26, Redding Elementary School students accompanied by parents will visit Colonial Day at the Onion Field from 8:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. Seven stations of the American Revolution Patriot Reenactors will teach about life on the battlefield and the 18th-century colonial period.

The day will also feature discussions and demonstrations by craftspeople, exhibits, and a musket drill designed for student participation with 50 wooden muskets led by a Redding resident who is also a member of the Brigade of the American Revolution.

Traffic control will be present

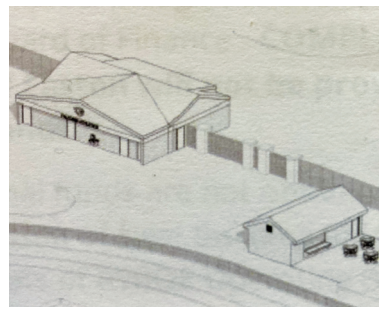
on Saturday, April 27. From 9:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. there will be a camping reenactment by the brigade featuring musket skirmishes, children’s musket drills, demonstrations, and exhibits. Fencing will be set up at the stone wall between the Onion Field and the Lonetown Farmhouse and at the back of the property to contain the event.

Ten or more tents will be on the high ground next to the forsythia row. Any grass lost as a result of small campfires will be reseeded.

In addition, vendors will be selling event memorabilia, sandwiches, salads, and drinks. Potable water will be trucked in and port-a-potties will be on site.

“We’ve done these lots of times for federal, state, and school levels,” said David Solek, Vice-President of Brigade of the American Revolution. “We have the highest standards.” ■

ARPA clock runs out for Nest building Town to match funds raised / continued from page 1



Conceptual drawing of the Nest building and concessions area

The turf field, parking lot, and lighting upgrades are nearly complete. The delays to developing the building plans and the source of cost fluctuations for the Nest building have primarily stemmed from the challenge of wastewater management at the site and the process of obtaining answers and approval from CT Department of Energy & Environmental Protection (DEEP). According to ER9 Facilities & Operations Manager Mike D’Agostino, CT DEEP had initially indicated a holding tank for wastewater would be an acceptable solution, but after months of back-and-forth and additional research, CT DEEP informed the district that digging trenching and pumping wastewater up to the existing septic system would be required,

at a considerably larger expense.

Following the May 2023 Budget Referendums in both Redding and Easton, the Region 9 Board of Education bonded \$4.5 million to fund the fields and facilities project. A combination of ARPA and municipal funds from both Redding and Easton as well as private fundraising was planned for to close the gap and complete the project. Private fundraising had brought in just over \$35,000 by March 18, 2024, though the campaign has been challenging without having renderings or architectural plans to reference.

The Town of Easton declined the district’s request to allocate any of their ARPA funds to the project. The Easton Board of Finance also declined a contribution out of the Town’s operating funds, according to Region 9 Board of Education Chair Todd Johnston.

While the Redding Board of Selectmen opted not to release the ARPA funds nor extend the deadline, they did unanimously vote on Monday, March 18 to match any private donations that had been raised to date as a show of support for the project. After Emily Eubanks, one of the community members leading the fundraising initiative, shared that an additional

\$15,000 donation had just been secured, the Selectmen approved matching up to \$50,000, given the funds have been transferred by March 19, 2024.

“I have no doubt that you will be able to raise a lot more money when you have more information,” said First Selectwoman Julia Pemberton. “I know there are a lot of people behind this project.”

“We’ve committed to do this project – we will go forward,” said Johnston. “We will work with the fundraising group that’s done a great job so far, we will look to our capital, our operating budget, we’ll look to spread the project out over a couple of years if we need to, but we have committed to the taxpayers in both towns to do this project.”

Next steps for the Nest project include a public outreach session held at Joel Barlow High School on March 27 to collect feedback on the architectural designs. A request for proposal for a general contractor will then be developed and sent out for bid.

The ARPA funds that would have been allocated to the Nest project will be used towards items on Redding’s long range capital plan, according to Sanders. ■

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Library breaks ground on outdoor space project



Photo by Jen Wastrom

Shovels broke ground on Monday, March 18 at the Mark Twain Library, as a project to create an outdoor patio and gathering space got underway. The project will be funded in part by an American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) grant and will provide space to read, gather, enjoy programming, and observe nature. Pictured left to right: Selvin Ramos, Environmental Site Developers; Walter Augustin, Environmental Site Developers; Nancy King, ASLA, Owner, Seventy Acres Landscape Architecture & Design; Eric Rubury, Mark Twain Library Trustee and Chair of Building & Grounds Committee; Loren Godejohn, Environmental Site Developers.

Region 9 approves 2024-25 budget

By Anne Young Albanese

On Thursday, March 14, the Region 9 Board of Education voted to pass its budget for the upcoming school year. The budget was approved at \$25,407,041 which is an increase of 2.4% or \$595,674 higher than last year.

The Redding portion of the budget is \$11,987,091, which is determined by the percentage of Joel Barlow High School students who will attend from Redding. There will be 343 students from Redding next year, representing 47.18% of the student population. The Easton portion is 52.82%, with 384 Easton students attending next school year. In Redding, the proposed budget increase will be \$432,457. Easton will have an increase of \$163,217.

The Board also continued their discussion about the steps needed to create a STEM Academy at Joel Barlow High School. Since the Board tried to keep the operating

budget as low as possible, the STEM Academy development will be stretched out for several years. This year, the Board plans to hire a consultant to produce a plan to develop a top-notch STEM Academy. In addition to the consultant, the Board plans to renovate room H101 to increase workshop and classroom space, the cost of which will be part of the operating budget.

There will be a Region 9 District Hearing on the approved budget on Monday, April 1 at 7:00 p.m. in the Joel Barlow High School Library Learning Commons where public comments will be heard.

While the Referendum on the Town combined budget has not been scheduled yet, it is expected to take place in May. ■

For complete details on the Region 9 budget, visit er9.org

Allocation of Town’s opioid settlement funds still undecided / continued from page 1

The allocation methodology used by the state to dole out the funds to municipalities was not exclusively based on population, though Connecticut’s larger cities and towns did receive larger sums. The composition of each town or city and how badly each has fared in the opioid epidemic also were determining factors.

Moreover, as outlined in the CT Mirror earlier this month, 98 of the state’s 169 towns and cities haven’t yet allocated any funds they’ve received from the opioid settlement. Of note, that included New Haven, which received almost \$600,000.

Some municipalities, on the other hand, have begun to spend the funds. Meriden, for instance, retrofitted a decommissioned ambulance. Other cities and towns are expected to fund measures such

as beds in treatment programs, educational outreach, response to overdoses, and other initiatives.

Some smaller towns are pooling their funds and partnering with local health districts and regional government councils, aiming to achieve greater impact. Sanders said there are no plans for Redding to do the same.

“But we will have discussions with those other towns on how they best plan to use the funds,” said Sanders. “Ultimately, it will be a balance as we start to evaluate how we can best serve the needs of our residents.

“As a smaller town, we always want to make sure we do what’s best for the people of Redding,” he added. “So, stay tuned.” ■

PRESIDENTIAL PREFERENCE PRIMARY ELECTION

Redding Community Center
37 Lonetown Road

EARLY VOTING

Tuesday, March 26	10:00 am - 6:00 pm
Wednesday, March 27	10:00 am - 6:00 pm
Thursday, March 28	10:00 am - 6:00 pm
Friday, March 29	- No Voting -
Saturday, March 30	10:00 am - 6:00 pm
Sunday, March 31	- No Voting -
Monday, April 1	- No Voting -

PRIMARY ELECTION DAY

TUESDAY, APRIL 2 6:00 AM - 8:00 PM

Redding Registrar of Voters Office
registrar@townofreddingct.org
203-938-5012

SPORTS

Girls basketball team wins sportsmanship award

By Rocco Valluzzo



Photo courtesy of Joel Barlow High School

The Joel Barlow High girls varsity basketball team won the Harold Swaffield Sportsmanship Award by the International Association of Approved Basketball Officials (IAABO) Board 9 for the third season in a row.

Good sportsmanship on the part of the Joel Barlow High girls varsity basketball team has not gone unnoticed in recent seasons.

For the third straight year, Barlow has been named the recipient of the Harold Swaffield Sportsmanship Award by the International Association of Approved Basketball Officials (IAABO) Board 9, the board of officials that services the majority

of the South-West Conference and surrounding area. The award is given to the program that demonstrates the best and most consistent level of sportsmanship throughout the season, including players, coaches, and fans.

“As a school and as the basketball program, we are proud to be recognized for our outstanding sportsmanship,” said Barlow Girls Basketball Head

Coach Joe Carollo. “As coaches, we try to instill certain values in our players in all of our interactions.”

Carollo asks his players always to help not only each other up, but also their opponents. He and his staff strive to recognize not only good plays and games but also players on the opposing teams.

“I personally shake hands with officials after every game,” he said. “We all feel you can absolutely be competitive and fiery in competition but not at the expense of ‘playing the game the right way’.”

Founded in 1921, the IAABO’s primary purpose is to educate, train, develop, and provide continuous instruction for basketball officials. To accomplish this, it uses a variety of tools including its industry-leading online training known as IAABO University. IAABO officials are responsible for enforcing the rules of the game and ensuring fair play and safety for all players. It has more than 200 local boards around the world, with members in the United States, Canada, Europe, and Asia. ■

Odyssey of the Mind harnesses imaginative problem-solving

Two teams represent Redding Elementary School at state-wide competition

By Anne Young Albanese



The RES girls team getting ready to perform. From left to right: Merritt Levesque, Emerson Bedard, May Mercer, Charlotte Busk, Zosia Siciliano-Kularski, Ruby Roth, and Julia Kant.

On Saturday, March 16, two teams from Redding Elementary School (RES) participated in the annual state-wide Connecticut Odyssey of the Mind competition held on the campus of Southern Connecticut State University in New Haven.

Odyssey of the Mind is an international problem-solving competition for students from kindergarten to 12th grade in the United States, international students age 5-18, and college students. Both of Redding’s teams competed in Division 1, which includes grades 3-5 and younger than 12 years old by May 1. A maximum of seven children can compete per team. RES had a team of six boys and another team of seven girls.

The boys team consisted of Declan Cooper, Ari Flishenbaum, Max Mir, Ryan Perez, and Teo Scaviola in third grade and Owen Frenzel in fourth grade. The team is coached by Christina Parrinello

and Kristina Scaviola. The boys competed in the “Vehicle Problem” category, which was called “Drive-In Movie.” They needed to design, build, and run a vehicle that travels in a drive-in theater. The vehicle had to travel to pick up a ticket, visit a concession stand, and reverse into a parking space. The movie took place all around the vehicle when suddenly a team-created special effect made the vehicle part of the movie. The vehicle then traveled within the movie and performed a task before leaving the movie.

The girls team consisted of Emerson Bedard, Charlotte Busk, Julia Kant, Merritt Levesque, May Mercer, Ruby Roth, and Zosia Siciliano-Kularski, all in fourth grade. Their coaches were Donna MacLetchie and Jen Levesque. The girls competed in the “Performance Problem.” This competition required that the team create a performance about a rock band on tour. While the band was



The RES boys team with their props. In the concession stand: Declan Cooper. Standing, left to right: Ryan Perez, Teo Scaviola, Max Mir, Ari Flishenbaum, and Owen Frenzel.

playing an original song, the band was transported to an unexpected location. The band members had to figure out how to use music to get back on tour. Their performance included band merchandise and original hairstyles.

The teams also participated in a “Spontaneous Problem”. This is a competition where children must solve a problem without any advanced knowledge. The questions might be verbal, hands-on, or a verbal hands-on problem. The RES boys team won the Jill Riggles Award for Excellence in Spontaneous. This award goes to the team that scored the highest of their division and problem.

The boys’ total score in their division and problem was 229.35, good for sixth place. The girls’ total score in their division and problem was 209.2, good for ninth place. Both teams had a really great day. ■

Barlow/Bethel is 16th in Class L

Boys swimming | By Rocco Valluzzo



Photo by Rocco Valluzzo

Sofiane Hilmi was part of the 200-yard medley relay team for the Joel Barlow/Bethel High swim team at the state Class L finals on Tuesday, March 12. Barlow/Bethel took 16th out of 18 teams with 103 points.

As far as numbers were concerned, the Joel Barlow/Bethel High boys swim team was one of the smallest at the state Class L championships last week.

The Falcons had just four swimmers qualify and compete in the meet last Tuesday, March 12. Together, they combined for 103 points, taking 16th out of 18 teams at the Cornerstone Aquatics Center in West Hartford.

New Canaan was the winner with 760. Fairfield Prep was a distant second with 648, and Ridgefield took third with 552.

Barlow/Bethel competed in five events. Opening the meet with the 200-yard medley relay, James Jandura, Lance Hansen, Alex Erik-

sen, and Sofiane Hilmi finished in 1:51.25, taking 12th overall.

Hansen competed in four events, including the 200 individual medley. Beating his seed time, he finished in 2:05.69, taking 10th.

Eriksen just managed to score in the 100 free, taking 24th in 52.65. He swam the anchor leg of the 200 free relay, which also featured Hansen, Hilmi, and Jandura. Together, they finished 10th in 1:37.12.

The final event for Barlow/Bethel was the 100 backstroke. It also featured the team’s best finish, as Hansen placed eighth in exactly 57 seconds in the final swim of the season. ■

Redding’s Big Outdoors: Topstone Park: Chase Long View Trail / continued from page 1

years, and I never get tired of running off my deck and being immediately surrounded by more trees than any of us can ever count, finding myself in a beautiful park that’s usually empty enough to make me feel it’s mine.

In my perpetual quest to get away from writing and screens, I asked the editor of this paper whether she’d be interested in having me write about my experience getting away from writing and screens. Meta. The stars align, and here we are.

Today’s Saturday, and I’m at it again. Third time’s a charm. Gotta get photos to accompany the piece. I sneak into the park via Saddleback Trail by Old Redding Road, hang a left at Boulder Top, run through the parking lot, and pick up Pond Trail, careful not to break an ankle on any number of rocks cloaked with fallen leaves that are sprinkled throughout the park.

I run across the dam, say *hello* to a man walking two dogs who graciously moves onto the dock to let me through.

The doggos have different plans, though – of course they do – stopping me in my tracks for a quick little sniff. I oblige – what’s up with people who don’t like dogs? – and once their curiosity is satiated, I’m back on my way.

I scamper past McGee’s Swimming Hole. It’s empty. Bummer. But the Chase Long View Trail is only a stone’s throw from here, so I continue up the hill and hang a right once I start to descend again.

Here we are.

My iPod – already a relic, would you believe it? – is on shuffle and a song called “Rebubula” comes on. Just the fuel I need to conquer the mountain. I dart past the needs-to-be-replaced trail sign and begin the ascent.

I’ve been trying to run to the top of the mountain without taking a breather since forever, but no matter what I do, I just can’t seem to muster the endurance, well-turned calves or not. I pause about halfway up, maybe making it six yards further than last time. *Over a long enough timeline, it can and will be done...* I sort of tell myself, but not really. It still seems like a tall order. The word endurance makes me think of Shackleton, only because I read the book last year. Men have done far more impressive things.

Turning around to look back down, I spy Steichen’s old home

place through the trees to my left. Steichen was a dog man, you see, and boy did he find a good spot to call home. Infinite thanks to you for preserving this land, ole Eddie boy, you beautifully bearded bloke. I can’t help but wonder what that fella would’ve thought about iPhones and Instagram and Photoshopping. Ha! I bet the lad would’ve been a TikTok creator instead – before it was cool, of course, staying on brand.

Okay, that’s enough. I turn back around and continue up the mountain, passing by a placard with an E.O. Wilson quote I forget to study.

But the prize is just around the corner: the overlook atop the mountain.

In a couple minutes, I’m there. I’ve been here many times, and it never gets old. I glance over at The Hickories organic farm on the other side of Route 7; you can see it clear as day on this sunny morning.

As I’ll later learn in *The Book of Trails*, this here trail was named after Mister Open Space himself, Stuart Chase, who once wrote a newspaper column called *Long View*. I’ll also learn the word *escarpment* (noun: a long, steep slope, especially one at the edge of a plateau or separating areas of land at different heights) and the fact that you’re allegedly able to see Long Island Sound from the overlook, which I never have.

Fake news! I think to myself. Wait a sec: You’re 5’7”. It’s probably that. Then I have an aha moment: *Trees grow, dingus.*

Back to the woods: I turn away from the overlook, head down South Topstone Trail, see an ephemeral pond that emerges after heavy rains (have we had any of those lately?) and disappears shortly thereafter, leaving the casual parkgoer none the wiser. I hightail it down Topledge Trail to Base Trail (my favorite trail in the park, deserving of more ink in the future), and begin retracing my steps, with a brief sojourn at the beach.

Time to head home.

I lock in to a song called “Floridada” – a fantastic running tune – and begin the return journey. Soon enough, I’ve arrived, and before I know it, I’m staring at screens and writing words.

But this time, you’re actually reading them. ■

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First-ever musical at Redding Elementary School sells out in days

By Pamela Brown



Back row: Porter Lundstrom (Prince Eric), Director Matthew Farina, Luke Moorhouse (Scuttle), Grace Cole (Flounder), Grace Ray (Ariel). Kneeling: Darby Whittle (Sebastian), Michael Patrick (Student Director, Ensemble).

Students at Redding Elementary School are going “under the sea” to present their first-ever live theater production of the beloved Disney classic, *The Little Mermaid Jr.*

“There’s a high level of excitement in the building. We wanted to provide students of RES and the community with a theater experience, with a live full-scale production, and for the students to share their talents in a fun and different way,” said Matt Farina, Advanced Learning Opportunities Instructor who is directing the show. Madeleine Baker, music teacher and chorus director, is providing music direction, and Ashley Capalbo, a first-grade teacher is choreographing.

That excitement has translated to both the staging of the production and ticket sales, with both performances – April 5 and April 6 at 7:00 p.m. at Joel Barlow High School – selling out quickly after going on sale.

“Through the support of Melissa Labroschiano and Kim Roy, our Principal and Vice Principal, we decided to do a show. The PTA was very supportive,” said Farina, who recommended *The Little Mermaid*. “I thought it would be the perfect choice for us because it’s a crowd-pleaser, it’s Disney, and there are multiple roles for students to shine in lead roles, sup-

porting roles, and solos.

Labroschiano is looking forward to the event. “I’ve always been passionate about the performing arts. We have so many students with so many different talents, so why not provide an opportunity, through the school, to showcase those talents?” she said. “The message that elementary kids can do hard things is important and clearly that’s the case with this because it’s going to be quite a performance.”

The show comprises a cast and student-run stage crew of 74 third and fourth graders. “It was beautiful to see them shine and come alive at the auditions,” said Farina who has directed, choreographed, and performed in community theater for the last 20 years throughout western Connecticut. Most recently, he directed and choreographed productions at Joel Barlow High School. “I get to share my passion with them. I love the creative process, and I’m really enjoying it with these students,” he said of the community endeavor. “Parents are building sets for us and helping with costumes, props, and makeup. Staff members and other teachers are also helping.”

The students rehearse Monday through Friday after school. “They’ve really taken to it. They’re either blocking, doing scene work or choreography, and they’re practicing at home. The



Photos courtesy of Matt Farina

Michael Patrick (Student Director, Ensemble), Grace Ray (Ariel), Madelynn Saris (Ursula), Sonja Friedman (Jetsam), Jane Burgess (Flotsam)

camaraderie that occurs backstage and friendships that are formed make theater special for young performers,” said Farina. To keep K-2 students involved, there’s also an After-School Theater Club.

According to Farina, the one-hour production with intermission showcases all the beloved songs from the Disney movie, plus some extras. “It’s a colorful homage to the animated film and everything you’ve come to love from the characters.” To re-create an underwater setting, Farina explained they’re using technology along with “theater magic.”

For Farina, the production is a way to introduce students to theater. “A music curriculum education is available for K-12, but there’s no fine or theater arts. There’s been a lot of learning and instructing throughout the entire process,” he said. “I want audiences to see them come alive. I hope everyone leaves with a huge smile on their face and are proud of the students of RES. I hope they see how, through hard work, what students can achieve,” said Farina.

Labroschiano agrees. “I’m super excited to see everyone’s efforts come to life. The final product, celebrating their efforts and also our students, is going to be magnificent.” ■

St. Baldrick’s Fundraiser raises over \$16,000



Photo by Rocco Valluzzo

Barlow French teacher Ed Smith got his head shaved by barber Jimmy Serra at the tenth St. Baldrick’s fundraiser on Monday, March 18 at Joel Barlow High School. A total of 46 participants, including 32 shaves from Barlow and John Read Middle School, raised more than \$16,000 (\$170,000 to date) for research to find cures for childhood cancers.

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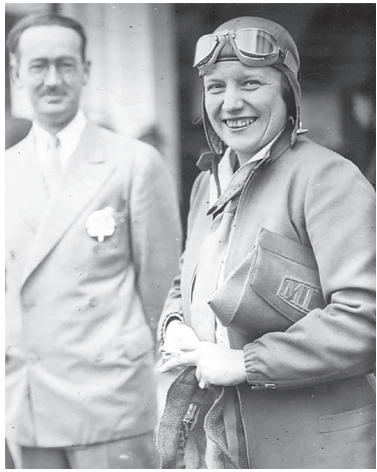
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REMEMBERING REDDING

Margery Louise Doig – pioneering woman aviator | By Bruce Nelson



Margery Louise Doig in 1932.



Doig owned her own aircraft and flew it competitively across country.



Doig's Pitcairn PA-7S aircraft, which she purchased in 1930.

Redding has long been the home of many strong, intelligent, and talented women. Sculptor Anna Hyatt Huntington, suffragist Elsie Hill, actress Carmen Mathews, playwright Rachel Crothers, and singer Mary Travers are among the most well-known women who have called Redding their home. But there were also dozens of other women with lesser-known names who were either pioneers or highly accomplished in their chosen profession.

To celebrate Women's History Month, this March we examine the accomplishments of one-time Redding resident, Margery Louise Doig, a competitive woman aviator who stood alongside the likes of Amelia Earhart in the early 1930s when few women even considered piloting an aircraft, never mind owning one of their very own and flying it across the country.

Margery was born in New York on August 14, 1900. Her father, William George Doig, was the manager of the New York office of the American Brass Company. The family resided in Brooklyn for much of the year, but sometime after the death of Redding farmer Lemuel Benedict in 1903, the last member of his family to own the farm at today's 150 Seventy Acre Road, William Doig purchased the property as a summer home.

Fifty-four-year-old William Doig died suddenly of a heart attack at the Redding house in early September 1914. The family kept the house, using it as their summer residence throughout the 1920s; but, following her mother's death in 1927, Margery took over sole ownership of the property and

resided there during much of the summer through at least the mid-1930s.

By day, Margery was a buyer of women's fashions for a large New York department store. An ordinary job indeed, but it was her hobby that brought her both fame and notoriety.

On June 10, 1929, Margery drove from Redding to Bridgeport where she would take her first flying lesson in a Curtis Fledgling biplane. Her first instructor was John Battle. He would teach her for the first two months until she met Marion Grevemberg, the new head instructor for the Curtis Flying School where Margery was learning to fly.

Grevemberg had over 3100 hours of flight experience, including many hours teaching American pilots to fly during WWI. He had also recently competed in the New York to Los Angeles air race of 1928 where he placed high enough in the standings to earn some of the prize money. While no one knows for certain, it is likely that through her association with Grevemberg, Margery began contemplating the thrill of competitive flying.

On September 26, 1929, Margery earned one of the first pilot's licenses issued to a woman in Connecticut. The number on her pilot's certificate was 190, making her a member of a rather select group of people who had been deemed worthy enough to earn their wings. Surprisingly, she had flown a total of only 18 hours when she took her check ride to pass her pilot's test.

In 1929, there were only 124

registered women pilots in the United States. Ninety-nine of them formed the first club for women flyers. Margery was one of those women, and the next name listed alphabetically after hers was that of Amelia Earhart.

Margery continued to fly with Grevemberg during the spring of 1930. By then, she was seriously contemplating entering that year's National Women's Air Derby, an event that would begin in Long Beach, California, and end in Chicago. It would be only the second such national competition. The 1929 race had been dubbed the "Powder Puff Derby" by American humorist Will Rogers.

In April, Margery and Grevemberg flew to the Pitcairn Aircraft factory in Willow Grove, Pennsylvania. At the time of her arrival at Willow Grove, Margery had spent all of 70 hours in the pilot's seat. They test flew two Pitcairn PA-7S aircraft. They each purchased one, Margery signing an order for tail number NC 96W in the amount of \$8,372.59. That aircraft was delivered to her on May 29, 1930.

Twenty-one days after taking delivery of her new aircraft, Margery entered her first air race in Allentown, Pennsylvania. She took home the prize money for first place. Convinced that she could compete, she decided to enter the upcoming Woman's Air Derby that would begin in August. While her aircraft could have been disassembled and transported west by rail, Margery decided she needed more experience before beginning the race and convinced Grevemberg to fly to

California with her. The route would, by necessity, take them across the southern Rockies where a low enough altitude could be maintained for flying an open cockpit aircraft.

On July 20, 1930, the pair took off from Bridgeport on what would be a 13-day, 20-leg journey across the continental United States. Upon take-off, Margery's experience as a pilot had added up to 112 hours and 48 minutes. By the time they reached Long Beach, California on August 2, she had added another 29 hours and 33 minutes to her log. Amazingly, the entire cross-country flight had been mechanically uneventful; a rarity in the early world of aviation.

The race to Chicago began on August 17. The event would encompass a total of 15 legs, each flown against the clock and not against the competition, so the first aircraft to reach Chicago was not necessarily going to finish in first place. It would be only the time in the air that counted.

At the end of the first leg in Calexico, California, Margery had the fastest time. She fell to second on the Calexico to Phoenix run, and during the Phoenix to Tucson and back run, a failed tire on her landing at Tucson almost took her out of the competition. A quick repair had her back in the air, and she was able to maintain her second place standing at the end of the day.

On the morning of August 23, Margery had barely left Wichita when she had a piston failure and her engine caught on fire. She put the aircraft into a dive to put the flames out, but it was to no avail.

She landed in a field in Olpe, Kansas and was able to extinguish the flames before the entire aircraft was lost. She telephoned Pitcairn for the required replacement parts, and the company dispatched them by air to Kansas. While the repairs set her back by two full days, she was able to continue, falling only to fourth place by the time she reached Kansas City.

She was able to regain second place by the time she landed in Chicago on August 28. During the following day's closed-course race, she briefly took the lead before missing a pylon and having to circle around again. Despite her troubles, Margery Doig finished the competition with an overall second-place ranking.

Margery continued to fly until November of 1934 when she made the final entry into her flight log. By that time, she had flown a total of 299 hours and 35 minutes. Her experience was amassed by piloting no less than 17 different aircraft. Why she gave up flying may never be known, but perhaps the Great Depression may have been a factor in her financial ability to continue. In 1939, she gave birth to her only daughter, Susan. Margery later moved to West Hartford where she became a partner in the Modern Women's Dress Shop. She passed away in 1973. ■

Bruce Nelson is Co-Historian for the Town of Redding and Co-Founder of the Redding CT History Project

Christ Church Episcopal welcomes new Priest in Charge

By Pamela Brown



Pastor Emilie Finn is happily settling in as the new Priest in Charge at Christ Church Episcopal Parish. "Being called to serve here at Christ Church is the fulfillment of a lifelong dream. I'm so glad to be here," said Emilie, who felt at home ever since stepping inside a church when she was a teenager. "At age 13, I walked into the sanctuary of St. Luke's Episcopal Church in Prescott, Arizona. I was struck immediately by the beauty of the sanctuary, and the equally beautiful words and music of the liturgy that surrounded me – incomprehensible, yet familiar," she recalled. "I had never experienced anything like it, and yet, somehow, I knew that I had come home. Since that moment, all I've ever wanted is to be a parish priest."

Emilie was inspired to apply to

the Christ Church Episcopal Parish when she learned the Parish was discerning who they are called to be as Christians. "I'm very excited to learn how I can support them in their individual ministries, and to discover with them where God is leading our community," said Emilie. She serves two Sundays each month and has weekly office hours on Mondays and Thursdays.

Originally from Arizona and now residing in Bridgewater, Emilie had a seamless transition. "I love New England. I attended seminary at Yale Divinity School, so it was already a little bit familiar to me, and my wife grew up in Bridgewater, so it's been lovely to share in her homecoming," she said. "I've fallen in love with the trees, in both Redding and in Bridgewater, and our Labrador, Cleo, has fallen in love with the squirrels and birds that live in them!"

Todd Eubanks, Co-Warden of Christ Church and a member of the selection process, said the committee was impressed with Emilie's personal and professional qualities. "We were instantly drawn to Pastor Emilie's warm and welcoming personality, which we knew would be well-received by our parishioners and the broader Redding community. She brings a wealth of experience in the areas of outreach, adult and youth

church education, pastoral care, and general leadership," said Eubanks, adding, "We're grateful to have found someone who aligns perfectly with our congregation and vision for the Parish."

The extended search process for a new Priest in Charge at the 76-active-member parish lasted 15 months. The selection process was overseen and facilitated by the Episcopal Diocese of Connecticut, Office for Transition Ministry. "We started with a financial assessment to ensure that we were appropriately matched with a Priest or Priest in Charge on a full-time or part-time basis. This led us to seek a part-time Priest in Charge, which is becoming a relatively common arrangement for many other parishes undergoing transition in Connecticut," said Eubanks, noting their search followed certain criteria to find a "good fit" for the Parish. "This involved assessing temperament for pastoral care visits, strength of leadership skills, and style of liturgy, among other personal and theological attributes. We also wanted to give potential candidates good visibility into our Parish's history, our outreach/mission programs, and our vision of Christ Church's role in the Redding community."

Emilie previously served as the Associate Rector of Advent Epis-

copal Church in Sun City West, a retirement municipality in central Arizona. "My ten years of ministry as a priest in the Episcopal Church have given me a deep and diverse range of experience, and I enjoy working with people of all ages and backgrounds," she said. "At Emmaus Episcopal Church Plant in Surprise, Arizona, I served as half of a church planting team, reaching out to a community of mostly unchurched and church-wounded youth, young adults, and young families. Together, the Emmaus community built an open and affirming multigenerational congregation from scratch and created a unique youth and young adult program designed around student-requested study topics and outreach projects." Emilie also developed and oversaw programming for children, youth, and families; coordinated parish outreach ministries; and taught lower school religion classes at All Saints' Episcopal Church and Day School, a larger church and preparatory school in north Phoenix.

Emilie's approach to ministry is collaborative. "The most exciting part of ministry for me is learning what the Holy Spirit is doing in a community and discovering the ways in which I can support and participate in that work," she said, sharing two ways she's focusing

her ministry at Christ Church. "First, through worship, preaching, pastoral care, and programs of various kinds, I want to support the spiritual life, health, and ministry of each member of the congregation, and to maintain and deepen the life of the congregation as a whole." Secondly, she will actively listen and engage with the Redding and broader community to communicate what the Parish has to offer others.

In her free time, Emilie enjoys reading, writing, yoga, walking and hiking, and spending time with her wife, Deb, and their dog, Cleo. "I'm also passionate about education on many levels and spend a lot of my free time researching and developing educational programs and workshops for adults and young people," she said. Since arriving, she's immersed herself in the community, enjoying breakfast with Redding's BSA Troop 306, meeting neighbors, and supporting the organization. "I look forward to finding many other ways to become involved in the Redding community, as I learn about the good work that is already happening here and discover ways in which our community can support and participate in it." ■

"You can't teach a hungry child" Redding resident fights for increased access to free school meals / continued from page 1

Kress and her colleagues at the School Nutrition Association (SNA) aim to make Connecticut a Universal free state, where all students in the state will receive

free lunches, or get the multiplier raised to cover the costs for CEP districts.

Kress and 17 of her colleagues from different districts – many of

whom are food service directors, nutritionists, and school administrators – have spoken with Connecticut legislators as well as federal congresspeople representing

different regions of Connecticut to see about improving the school lunch reimbursement.

To make up the deficit, Norwalk is currently seeking donations.

Residents can donate by sending checks to Jill Kress, 1 Park Street, Norwalk, CT 06851. Checks should be made out to the Norwalk Public Schools Lunch Program. ■

Acclaimed Redding writer brings family play *Aanika's Elephants* to Broadway

By Justin Reynolds



After graduating college, Annie Evans started writing plays and doing theater in New York City. Though theater was a passion, it wasn't paying the bills.

As fate would have it, Evans met Martin Robinson in 1992 at the National Puppetry Conference held at the Eugene O'Neill Theater Center in Waterford. Robinson was an accomplished puppeteer. He'd worked on *Sesame Street* since 1981 playing multiple roles, including Mr. Snuffleupagus, and was also the driving force behind the carnivorous plant Audrey II in *Little Shop of Horrors*, an original off-Broadway production "that just happened to take over the world."

After the conference, Evans gave Robinson some *Sesame Street* skits she had written to pass on to the show's head writer.

And the rest, as they say, is history.

Fast-forward to today, and Evans — now married to Robinson — has earned 13 Emmy Awards for her work on *Sesame Street* and has written for many other children's shows like *Oswald the Octopus* on Nickelodeon and *Pinkalicious* on PBS. Over the years, she's also brought several plays to stage. Now, Evans is returning to the theater with a new family play, *Aanika's Elephants*, a collaboration between her and Robinson that can be seen at the New Victory Theater in New York City from March 29 – April 7.

"*Aanika's Elephants* is a memory play about conservation, elephants, family, and love. There's

one actress on stage, and she's a storyteller," Evans said. "I wrote the play during the pandemic when I was locked in on Topstone Road. I think anyone in the community would really like this play if they have kids over six."

For years, Evans had been toying with the idea of producing something about elephants.

"I always loved elephants," Evans explained. "Before I was married, I'd take the three-month *Sesame Street* hiatus and go on humanitarian trips. Once, I went to Africa and studied elephants in Kenya, tracking them with scientists and volunteers, trying to follow the migratory paths. I got really up-close-and-personal with elephants, learning a lot about them. I always knew I wanted to write something about elephants but didn't know how to."

After writing the play, Evans gave it to her husband and other friends to read. Whenever Robinson reads a story, his creative juices start flowing.

"I start visualizing them immediately," he said. "I read the script and read it over and over again and started thinking about the simplest design I could make that would be engaging for the audience and pique the imagination and mind. A puppet is an empty vessel; half of the soul is provided by the puppeteer, and the other half is provided by the audience. Once you have the audience engaged, it's truly collaborative. The puppeteers in the play are very experienced, so there's a lot of personality and life to these characters."

Robinson brings his artistic creations for the stage to life in a workshop in his garage.

"All of the characters are made out of natural materials," Robinson said. "The play takes place in the bush in Africa, and I wanted the materials to reflect that. So, I used rattan, bamboo, and rope."

Once the husband-and-wife creative team put the final touches on *Aanika's Elephants*, they rented out the Ridgefield Theater Barn for a week to stage the play and see if it was ready.

"They were so gracious to us," Evans said. "We invited people to come see it and realized the play really worked and was ready to go. Then the phone started ringing."

Aanika's Elephants is directed by Pam Arciero, a puppeteer and voiceover artist who's also a *Sesame Street* performer and Wilton resident. Usually, Robinson prefers designing, building, and performing in shows he participates in, but this time he's taking a step back and only doing design.

"I decided to help Pam with specific puppetry movements and really just watch from the outside," he said. "It's good theater — a really engaging story."

Robinson moved to Redding in 1994, and Evans joined him here in 2007; they got married the following year. Today, the couple has two daughters, both freshmen at Joel Barlow High School.

At long last, Evans is excited that she's been able to produce art inspired by the animals she holds in such high esteem.

"My main love for elephants stems from the fact they are a matriarchal society," Evans said. "They really do raise their young as a village. Once a male elephant reaches maturity, they mostly roam by themselves. Females make herds and stick with them. I think a more matriarchal vision is a great way to live on this planet." ■

For more information on the play and tickets, visit newvictory.org

To learn more about the artists, visit annieevans.com and martinprobinson.com

Meadow Ridge resident on her longstanding career as an art lecturer

By Pamela Brown



Photo by Carol Morgan

Joan Kaskell, a former Metropolitan Museum of Art lecturer, is a resident of Meadow Ridge, where she continues to give lectures.

If you've ever been to The Metropolitan Museum of Art, you know it is a breathtaking Fifth Avenue locale filled with extraordinary works from European masters to present-day artists. To Joan Kaskell, the Met, as it's widely known, is a place of joy and inspiration where she enjoyed a successful 40-year career as a staff lecturer. "You would step inside and ideas were radiating from the walls," said Kaskell, a resident of Meadow Ridge since 2017. "I loved learning about all the things there and giving lectures. It was the kind of atmosphere that was very alive to me, very humming."

Those words also describe Joan. A former 50-year resident of Wilton, the vibrant senior embodies the resilience it took to pursue a career in a field she loved. "I've always sort of forged ahead to do things that seem to come up that I thought I'd like to take on," said Kaskell.

After earning a Bachelor of Arts Degree in English from Wellesley College, Kaskell assumed she'd become a writer. "I've always written, in school and in college," she said. That interest was initially cultivated as a young girl. "In eighth grade, I had written a full novel and my mother had typed it for me and had sent it around, but needless to say it didn't get anywhere," she said. Kaskell ended up working for Proctor and Gamble, traveling all over the U.S. "I had been to England, but I'd never been any place in the U.S.," she said. Upon marrying, she started her own small market research business then moved from New Hampshire to Connecticut. "A very close friend was starting up a volunteer program at The Met and suggested I apply," said Kaskell, who commuted daily to New York. Realizing her passion for the subject matter and wanting to increase her knowledge base, she earned a Master's degree in Art History from Hunter College and became a full staff member.

"I decided that's what I really liked to do," she said. "I loved the research. I would create one-hour gallery talks on a subject that interested me, or it was paralleled with a special exhibition or part of a general collection. I wrote everything for it and talked to all the curators." It was the perfect role for Kaskell, who is outgoing and meticulous with her studies. "It was what I was geared to do and good at. I liked to speak to people and give the lectures. I also liked working in the library at The Met. I got so interested in everything

— the history, the language, how the art got to Europe. I always connected things." During that time, Kaskell also lectured outside of the Met, traveling up and down the East Coast to museums and clubs, speaking both at the Mark Twain Library and Wilton Library.

Despite her work at the Met, Kaskell insists she's not an artist herself. "It was about relating the art to history, almost like illustrating a study of history with painters," she said. For the last 20 years, Kaskell developed and ran "Behind the Scenes", a program for the Museum's high-level donors. "That was the best job I had. It was very exciting. My job was to think about what would be interesting for my patrons and donors to see," she said. In the Trustees Room, Kaskell presented a scholarly lecture on a particular subject, then the group would go behind-the-scenes to the curatorial department. "That, to me, was special. I loved doing it. I was constantly learning. Every week I was studying up on something new."

Although retired in the 1980s, Kaskell remains involved in the arts at Meadow Ridge, where she gives several art lectures each year. At the end of the month, she will offer a presentation on the history of New England art and landscape for the Meadow Ridge annual art show. She also enjoys writing poetry and serves as Editor-in-Chief of the Ridge Record, a 16-page bi-monthly newspaper. "I've finally gone back to writing. The circle comes around," she said. ■

OBITUARIES

Jane Ellen Bradford

September 29, 1934 – March 13, 2024



Jane Ellen Bradford passed away peacefully on March 13, 2024, at the age of 89, at Waltonwood Cotswold, in Charlotte, NC.

Jane was an amazing, active, independent, and open-minded woman, especially for her generation. She was always growing and learning new things both personally and professionally. She traveled to many unusual places, embracing diverse people and cultures. She kept active — enjoying tennis, swimming, yoga, cycling, ice skating, bridge, watercolor painting, and dancing. She was devoted to her family and was loved as a spouse, a mother, and a grandmother. Jane's independent, "can do" feminist spirit lives on in her daughters and even her granddaughters!

Jane was born on September 29, 1934, in Elmhurst, NY, the only child of Victor and Helen (Martin) Trivilino. She graduated from Newtown High School in Elmhurst in 1952; then completed a bachelor's degree in mathematics at Barnard College of Columbia

University in 1955, which was no small feat for a young woman in those days. She later earned a master's degree in education.

She started her professional career as a math teacher and later transitioned to the field of computer programming. She was employed for several years by the Purdue Frederick Company and subsequently by Kraft General Foods. She retired from Kraft in 1999 and moved from her home in Westport to Florida with her life partner, Lenard Blackman. She and Lenard enjoyed their retirement years in Naples and eventually moved to Charlotte, NC to be closer to family.

She was predeceased by her partner of 45 years, Lenard Blackman. She is survived by her son, Darrell Bradford and his wife, Xin (Cindy) Bradford of Redding; her daughter, Janelle Hill and husband, D. Bruce Hill of Philadelphia, PA; her daughter, Robyn Jacobs of Matthews, NC; and, by eight grandchildren and one great granddaughter.

The family deeply appreciates your support during this difficult time and asks that you consider making a contribution in lieu of flowers to the Alzheimer's Association at act.alz.org. Messages to the family can be posted here: dignitymemorial.com/obituaries/charlotte-nc/jane-bradford-11712354/add-memory ■

Mary Frances Deakin Edwards

September 12, 1933 – March 10, 2024

Mary Frances Deakin Edwards died peacefully with family by her side Sunday, March 10, 2024 at Danbury Hospital due to natural causes. She was 90 years old.

Missy, as she was known to family and friends, was born September 12, 1933 in Danbury. She was the daughter of Helen Cuff Deakin and John J. Deakin. She attended St. Peter Elementary School, Danbury High School, Class of 1951, and Danbury State Teachers College (now known as Western Connecticut State University), Class of 1955, where she earned her degree in Education. She taught 4th and 5th grades at the Baker Elementary School in Darien from 1955 - 1958.

In 1957, she married N. Donald Edwards of Georgetown, CT and they lived on the estate of actor Carmen Mathews in West Redding for five years. As their family grew, they moved to Ridgefield in 1962, a town she would call home for the next 30 years. She and her husband first lived on Tanton Hill Road and then moved to North Salem Road and then to Peaceable Street. After they divorced, she moved to Limekiln Road. In Ridgefield, she raised six children. She was an active member of the St. Mary Parish. Later she obtained her realtor's license and worked out of several offices but spent the most time working for the William Pitt Real Estate office located on Main Street in Ridgefield.

When she became an empty nester in 1992, she moved to

Williamsburg, VA where she continued to sell real estate for William E. Wood and Associates. While in Williamsburg, Missy was an active member of St. Bede Catholic Church. After her retirement, she moved back to Connecticut in 2016 and, for the last six years, was a resident of Hancock Hall Nursing Home in Danbury.

Missy enjoyed raising her kids and serving as designated driver to all their practices, meets, games, and events. She also enjoyed interior design, traveling, playing bridge, going to live theater, reading, and sharing and hearing stories that made her laugh with family and friends.

She is survived by her children: Jim Edwards, Boise, ID; Mary Lacasse, Hillsboro, OR; John Edwards (Nettie), Flower Mound, TX; Stephen Edwards (Pati), Penacook, NH; Paul Edwards, New Britain, CT; and Chris Edwards (Jennifer), Manila, The Philippines. She also is survived by 12 grandchildren, seven great-grandchildren, her sister-in-law Mary Deakin Fredlund (Henry), Southbury, CT; and several nieces and nephews. She is predeceased by her parents and her brother James C. Deakin.

Donations in her memory may be made to either St. Mary Parish, 55 Catoonah St., Ridgefield, CT 06877 (smcr.org/online-giving) or to the St. Peter School, 98 Main Street, Danbury, CT 06810. ■

Winifred McCaffery

February 3, 1933 - March 11, 2024

Winifred Nan (Harvie) McCaffery, age 91, of Hilton Head Island, SC passed away Monday March 11, 2024 surrounded by loved ones in Redding. "Winnie" is survived by her husband of 64 years, William McCaffery.

Born February 3, 1933, in Jersey City, NJ, to parents James and Ann (Davidson) Harvie, Winnie embarked on what would become the epitome of a life well lived. As a young mother, Winnie was a partner in a small catering business, and imbued in her children her love of skiing, swimming, and the

outdoors. Following an illustrious career with Johnson & Johnson, Winnie joined her husband, Bill, in extensive world travel. Together they gathered friends and memories, living in Taiwan for three years before retiring to Hilton Head Island, South Carolina, where their adventures continued for over three decades.

Never one for sitting still, Winnie spent her days walking the beach with Bill, biking the island, playing tennis, bridge, attending

Continued on page 9

BUSINESS SPOTLIGHT

Staff – and popcorn – that sparkles

Prospector Theater provides memorable movie-going experience and job opportunities

By Donna Christopher



Photos by Sam Burkardt of Prospect Productions

Prospector Theater, a four-screen first-run movie theater in Ridgefield founded in 2014, is a non-profit whose mission is to provide competitive and inclusive employment for people with disabilities through the operation of a first-run movie theater and online popcorn business.

Movie-goers can now enjoy “Down to Sparkle” gourmet popcorn, which features 21 ingredients like pretzels, chocolate, marshmallows, and carmel, as a nod to the two sets of chromosome-21 people who have Down Syndrome are born with.

The new flavor was developed for this year’s World Down Syndrome Day on March 21. The month-long awareness campaign on social media and in-house will advance the global awareness theme of “End the Stereotypes”.

The Prospector opened to provide meaningful employment for people who identify as having autism, Down syndrome, or any

other disability. The popcorn sales, a cafe with coffee drinks and cocktails, and merchandise sales, are all part of the experience.

Since opening in 2014, the Theater has provided 312 jobs. Seventy-five percent of their workforce self-identify as having a disability.

Movie offerings typically change every one to two weeks and fall into various popular genres, said Joe Gillotti, who has been working at the Prospector since just before its opening in 2014.

Gillotti, 29, lives in Ridgefield where he spent some of his childhood. He then moved to Redding and attended Joel Barlow High School, then transferred to Winston Preparatory School in Norwalk. He was attending Norwalk Community College when the Prospector hired him.

Primarily an usher, Gillotti fulfills multiple roles at the Theater, a common experience for

the Prospector’s staff members or “Prospects”.

These include selling tickets, making popcorn, filming, hosting events, programming, landscaping, editing, embroidery, service learning, marketing, information technology, strategic planning, game design, grant writing, baking, research, web design, data analytics, and costume-making. Prospects are paired with jobs that highlight their strengths and passions, Gillotti said.

“We don’t outsource. Everything is done in-house...with our mission in mind, providing competitive and inclusive employment for people with disabilities,” he said.

Gillotti enjoys going to movies and relies on the opinions of the Prospector’s audiences over reviews. Part of his job is greeting and talking to guests as they leave their theater.

“Movie tastes are subjective. Sometimes they say they liked it

and others not so much,” he said. Looking back on almost 10 years on staff, he said, “I’ve loved every minute.”

The Prospector is celebrating a decade of memorable movie-going and job opportunities this year.

“This year is important to us because we are going to hit our 10-year anniversary in November,” said Ren Burkardt, Director of Theater Operations.

She said movies are selected that will appeal to most movie-goers and often families with small children.

“Movies like *Kung Fu Panda 4*, which we have right now, are always going to pull people. Ridgefield is a family town. We love movies in general, because they all provide dozens of job opportunities for Prospects,” she said.

Going to the theater should feel entertaining, said Burkardt, and the Theater offers special touches like opening night events, in-

house amenities such as the coffee cafe and drink concessions, and Prospects greeting moviegoers when they arrive, and ushering them out after the screenings.

“Our whole point is we wanted to bring back the romantic movie-going tradition, where going out to the movies is an event and it’s supposed to feel like a red carpet was rolled out,” said Burkardt.

“There’s something beautiful about the movie-going experience in itself. When the lights go down and the story is now on screen. Everybody is experiencing that person’s life together. And there’s a shared feeling of empathy that you just don’t get at home around streaming where distractions happen. We want to make sure that when people come in here, it’s a beautiful experience and show the world that this is a talented, diverse workforce that just needs the chance at employment.” ■



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PERFORMANCES BY
Williams Family Band, Voodoo Dream,
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PHOTOGRAPHY EXHIBIT OPENING
by Elyse Shapiro

Kids’ Arts & Crafts Activities
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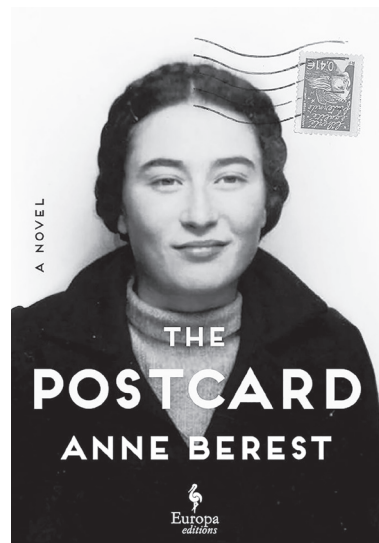
FREE ADMISSION

BOOK REVIEW

The Postcard

By Anne Berest, Translated by Tina Kover

Europa Editions / 464 pages / \$28.00



The Postcard is the award-winning story of a thriving and successful Jewish family in France that (mostly) holds steadfast to the belief that they are so settled in the life of their town and their country that everything will be, if not all right, at least acceptable as anti-Semitism rises in the lead-up to World War II.

From the first scene in 2003, when a mysterious postcard is received by the author's mother, to the finish when the impetus behind the postcard is revealed, the book quietly shines a light on the decisions that people make as life happens.

The story begins farther back and distant from the Holocaust. The Rabinovitch family is well-established in Moscow in the early 20th century when the patriarch senses that danger lurks. He insists that his children leave Russia, at his expense; he and his wife have

bought land in Haifa. The author's great-grandparents, with her infant grandmother, leave for newly independent Lithuania.

Eventually, this branch of the family, the focus of the story, ends up in France. Thriving, successful. The family history from the years in Moscow seems to be repeating itself. As the outlook in France becomes clearer, decisions again must be made.

Who decides to flee, and to where? Who decides to stay, why and for whom? Who fights, who retreats? Who helps, and who decidedly does not?

The writing, in the first person, is warm yet unembellished. The straightforward tone makes the re-created wartime scenes all the more horrific.

The author weaves her quest to learn more about her family's life and wartime experiences into her own life in France, giving us insights into her life and that of her mother, whose archives provided a solid foundation for her research.

While the book is billed as a novel, it is really the story of the author's maternal great-grandparents and their children. A novel, because the author chose not to use the real name of the town in France her family left, among other identifying details. This consideration for the third-generation of survivors and perpetrators of World War II and the Holocaust is extraordinary. ■

Review by Susan Clark

“Fasten your seatbelts, it’s going to be a bumpy night” Local actors to present reading of *All About Eve* to benefit New Pond Farm

By Anne Young Albanese

On Saturday, April 6 at 7:00 p.m., professional performers from Redding and the surrounding area will be performing an *All About Eve* play reading in the Parish Hall of Sacred Heart Church at 30 Church Street in Georgetown. The event, put together by Nancy and Bob Ponturo, will help raise funds for New Pond Farm Education Center.

The reading consists of a radio performance based on the movie *All About Eve* from 1950. The play was developed from the short story, “The Wisdom of Eve,” published in 1946. The performance will last an hour, followed by a half-hour of refreshments while guests can mingle with the performers.

The play tells the story of theater star Margo Channing. She is past her peak when she meets Eve Harrington. After hearing Harrington's story, Margo brings Eve on as her assistant. Eve, unbeknownst to Margo, plans to replace Margo in her life as a star actress and partially succeeds. Then Eve meets Phoebe, who is expected to do the same thing to Eve as she did to Margo.

This annual reading event first launched in 2015. It was the Ponturos' 30th wedding anniversary and was the 30th anniversary of New Pond Farm as well. Different performances have followed every year, and the show is one of the non-profit's most popular fundraisers.

Nancy has a close relationship with New Pond Farm, having directed its Shakespeare program for middle and high school students for 17 years. She also directed performances at both Joel Barlow High School and Weston High School.

Bob owns Quartertone Coffee Roasters in Ridgefield. He has performed in the New Pond Farm play reading series since 2015 and also performs at the Stray Cats Theatre in Newtown.

Don Striano has been a working actor since the '80s. He has

appeared on daytime soaps as well as on *The Sopranos*. He did a comedy special with Jeanine Garofalo and HBO pilots with Louis CK. He has appeared in several films and has been a performing guitarist since his teens.

Kate Katcher appears with Newtown's “Flagpole Radio Café”, performing comedy and music. She has appeared both on and off Broadway. As a playwright, she has won the Dorothy Silver Playwriting Competition and was a finalist for the Julie Harris Award and FutureFest.

Fred Newman is an actor, author, musician, and sound designer for stage, screen, cartoon, and concert hall. Newman has won awards for his work on shows for PBS, Nickelodeon, and Disney.

Molly Garbe Brown has performed in plays and musicals both regionally and nationally. She has performed in many children's productions in Connecticut and Westchester, NY. She is a member of the Theater Artists Workshop in Westport and Bridgeport.

David Morgan has toured world-wide with national and international artists such as Jane Lynch, Neshama Carlebach, and his own jazz trio. He also runs the Music Shed, a Redding-based music school focused on training musicians to collaborate in a band with other musicians at their level.

Katie Kozlowski is currently performing in the Ridgefield Theater Barn's night of *One Act Plays*, a production directed by Nancy Ponturo.

Tickets for the event are \$60 for New Pond Farm members and \$70 for non-members. They can be purchased at newpondfarm.org or by calling (203) 938-2117. Tickets are expected to sell out early – those interested are recommended to secure tickets as soon as possible. ■

LIBRARY CORNER

By Erin Shea Dummeyer and Sarah Zimmermann

While many consider Mark Twain the godfather of American humor, he also had a keen interest in technology. Twain was an early adopter of the typewriter, telephone, and fingerprinting. He even invented a self-pasting scrapbook, which enjoyed moderate success. A friend of both Tesla and Edison, Twain was interested in cutting-edge inventions and even made financial investments in many of them. For this reason, I know he is smiling down on the Mark Twain Library's “Golf-the-Stacks” workshop.

Designed and facilitated by Redding resident and certified

STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Math) educator Caroline Hunter, our Golf-the-Stacks robotics workshop series challenged a group of 12 students in grades 4-8 to build their own holes for a playable mini golf course right here in the Library. The program welcomed coders and builders of all levels to create robotics projects in a supportive, collaborative environment.

Over the past six months, the groups used microprocessors, Microsoft MakeCode, assorted craft materials, and their imaginations to create mini golf holes that feature diverse themes including a

circus, pirate ship, castle, and of course *Harry Potter* and Taylor Swift. After the groups share their finished projects with other participants as well as their families, we hope to invite the public to join us to play a few holes in our stacks! How delighted Mark Twain would be to hear that we have young students creating themed golf holes using the latest technology. ■

Erin Shea Dummeyer is
Director, Mark Twain Library

Sarah Zimmermann is
Teen and Reference Librarian,
Mark Twain Library

Good books for good readers | By Margi Esten

As expected, novels are beginning to surface in which the pandemic is a major character; or at least a driving force behind the narrative. The exquisitely written *Day* by Michael Cunningham (author of the Pulitzer Prize-winning *The Hours*) is one such novel. It is a moving story of the exploration of love and loss,

the struggles and limitations of ordinary family life, and how we all need to learn how to live together – and apart. This portrait of the life of an extended family in Brooklyn, New York takes place before, during, and after the pandemic. We all will recognize a bit of ourselves in this book.

With regard to Michael

Cunningham and why you should read his work, I must leave you with this from *The Washington Post*: “The only problem with Michael Cunningham's prose is that it ruins you for mere mortals' work. He is the most elegant writer in America.” ■

Nod to the pod On the Media, “Breaking News: Biden is Old.” Plus, Bobi Wine's Fight for Democracy” | By Amy Maloof

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

On the Media, a Peabody Award-winning WNYC podcast, pulls back the curtain on how media is made. It pays special attention to the crafting of news media, whose influence and presence in our lives can feel unrelenting. Brooke Gladstone hosts, shining a light on the hidden motives behind what we are presented and the political agendas that drive so much of what we consume. She questions what we're being sold and why, investigates threats to free speech, and employs a healthy – but never

over-the-top – skepticism while she does so.

This episode examines the recent uptick in reporting over Biden's age and discusses whether the vast amount of coverage is balanced, helpful, or high-quality. It focuses especially on *The New York Times* and its unique ability to steer the public political discourse in the direction it chooses. There are also conversations about Jon Stewart's return (on Monday nights, through the presidential elections) to *The Daily Show*, and a documentary about a popstar-turned-politician in Uganda.

In the best of times, consuming

too much news media isn't great for my mental health. I start to become agitated, negative, and a little hopeless when I'm taking in 24/7 updates on the world's many meltdowns. To mitigate this, I only read – never watch – the news, and try to limit my intake; I want to be informed and educated, not spiraling into a blackhole of information while ordering fallout shelter supplies online. *On the Media* helps me choose the most straightforward coverage, focus on quality over quantity, and keeps me skeptical but not paranoid – quite a feat these days. ■

New to podcasts? We're your people | By Carolyn Prusa

I was a latecomer to podcasts.

Actually? I was confused by them. My friends would text me links with comments emphasizing the hilarity or fascinating stories of certain episodes. Laughing emoji. Blushing emoji.

I thought, *I don't need to be on my phone any more than I already am, people*. Also: *don't we have enough digital information to sift through?* I was probably judgey to early podcast enthusiasts. (Correction: not probably. I was.) Like, *guys, unplug from the Matrix, look at a tree, I don't know, smell a lemon*.

Also mysterious to me was when people listened to them. I barely had enough energy to stay awake for *Game of Thrones* with my husband after the kids were asleep. (We had to wait until they were actually asleep. A toddler wandering into the TV room during certain scenes would not be the best parenting move.) But seriously. I didn't understand podcast-listening people. How do they set aside time, energy, and focus to listen to an hour of entertainment?

Marc Maron was my gateway drug. My friend Chelcy insisted I listen to an interview with the charming Irish actor, Chris O'Dowd. That I would love it.

She was right. I was surprised how easily I fell into the intimacy of two people chatting. It was like listening to someone's conversation behind me on an airplane but instead of being creepy, I had been invited. I traveled down a wormhole of Maron's backlog of *WTF* episodes, enjoying thoughtful conversations with creative people, often comedians.

Next, I went all in on *NYT Modern Love* podcast. Each episode felt like a treat. Glorious, heartbreaking, thoughtful voices. (You're welcome, people driving by who saw my ugly cry while I listened to *Modern Love* on dog walks.) I moved on to topical journalism (*The Daily*), more comedy (*Conan O'Brien Needs a Friend*) as well as nostalgic musical criticism (*60 Songs That Explain the 90s*).

I also figured out when people listen to podcasts! During in-between times. When you are a parent with small children, there are so many. It was a lightbulb moment when I discovered that mundane tasks like folding laundry and sitting in parking lots during soccer practice can be transformed. I can be learning, or laughing, sometimes *both*. It made me feel better about myself as a human.

What makes podcasts awesome is the connection to storytelling. Absolutely we are on our phones too much. Totally, technology tends to separate us from the senses. However, podcasts are a unique offering because they are a way of staying connected to the human experience in the digital age. When we find ourselves more divided than ever, we can listen to stories and voices. And remember we are alive and not alone.

You all know the delightful and brilliant Amy Maloof from her Nod to the pod podcast column in the *Sentinel*. Well. We have started a Podcast Club at Mark Twain Library. (It's called Pods and Ends. Stay tuned for merch.) Our mission is to share the joy of podcast listening in discussions with humans. No earbuds invited. Come on over. Because we need and deserve stories!

Pods and Ends meets Monday, March 25 at 7:00 p.m. Check marktwainlibrary.org for the link to the first episode. ■

Carolyn Prusa
is a local author in Redding.
Follow her literary
adventures on
IG @carolynprusa

Obituary: Winifred McCaffery February 3, 1933 - March 11, 2024 | continued from page 7

weekly board-game nights with friends, volunteering at the “Bargain Box”, and attending the Providence Presbyterian Church of which she was a long-time member. The pair split time between HHI and Speculator, NY, located in the Adirondack Mountains. On mountain time, Winnie continued to be inexhaustible. She enjoyed tending to the beach, early morning walks, kayaking and jet-skiing across the lake to visit her

sister, honing her green thumb in an impressive native garden/hummingbird habitat and basking in the company of her family. It was in those mountains that her competition on the tennis court and at the game table shifted from old friends to family, specifically, to her scheming grandchildren.

Winnie loved with her whole being, friends and family alike. She will be missed and certainly not forgotten.

In addition to her husband, Bill, Winnie is survived by her son David (Coleen); daughter, Jill Nilsen (Dave); sister, Audrey Miller (Al); four grandchildren: Taylor Nilsen, Jack McCaffery, Lindsay Reynolds (Richard), and Emmie McCaffery, and one great granddaughter, Scarlett Reynolds, whom she was able to hold and know. She was predeceased by her beloved son, Billy McCaffery. ■

THE NATURAL WORLD

Hudson River Source to Sea Expedition “The Voice of the Hudson”

By Tim Keyes



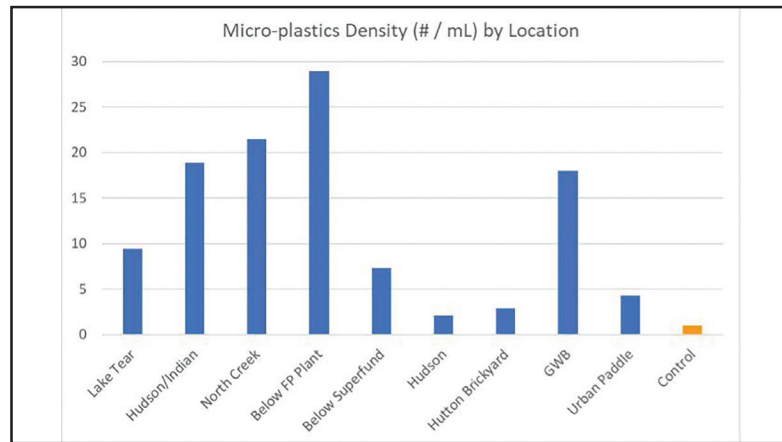
Atop Mount Marcy



Photos courtesy of Barnfly
Taking water sample measurements



Sea-kayaking past NYC



Micro-plastics density (#/mL) by location, compared to control sample

The Concept

A chance meeting in Saranac Lake in the Adirondacks incubated the expedition. Joe Dadey of Adirondack Hamlets to Huts (AHH) was minding the Trails Center when relatives of Greg Morrissey of Mountain Goat Movement (MGM) popped in. AHH facilitates guided and self-guided trips throughout the storied Adirondack Park. MGM, out of New Jersey, leads area high-schoolers on epic adventures – climbing Kilimanjaro, skiing in Greece, surfing in Costa Rica, etc. I was a client trekker with AHH and served on the Board. My Redding-based company, Evergreen Business Analytics (EGBANA), supports non-profit Community Science. AHH and MGM allied and, with student input, agreed to partner on a big regional project in July 2023.

An experiential learning expedition was born: eight high-schoolers enjoined to trek over Mount Marcy, the highest point in New York and navigate the length of the Hudson River from its source at Lake Tear of the Clouds to its mouth in NYC solely under human power (perhaps a “first” for a such a team). Students also engaged in a study of the Hudson’s water quality – for general pollution levels and microplastics. They learned about themselves and their outdoor capabilities, simultaneously experiencing the history, culture, and ecology of America’s first river. Filming was led by fellow Explorers Club member and Emmy Award-winning cinematographer John Barnhardt of Barnfly Productions.

The expedition was intended to be inspirational for all youths, enticing them into challenges outside their comfort zone and digital world, and engaging them in outdoor pursuits and science outside the lab. In particular, microplastics and its impact on environmental and human health is a relevant story – one for which

the ending may depend on youths of today.

The Team

We sought team diversity – socio-economically, geographically, and culturally. Practical considerations were made, however: our “pilot” expedition would host young males, rising juniors and seniors. Ideally, geographic representation would include the entire Hudson River watershed – from the Adirondacks to greater NYC. In the end, two students were selected from the Adirondacks, four from greater NYC, and two from California. Students were largely strangers to each other. All were screened for character, physical ability, and outdoor experience. Three of eight were Eagle Scouts. Four had never visited the Adirondacks before, and two had never hiked a mountain! The overall expedition included three leaders, five support guides, and four in the documentary film squad, for a crew of 20, with a mix by gender, age, and ethnicity. Most of us had no experience supporting film production but were eager to learn. Key among the guides was Bhima Gaddy, a seasoned educator and dedicated resource for MGM, and Kari “Safari” Fitzgerald who provided logistical support, ensuring gear and provisions were supplied.

The Plan

The plan was ambitious and challenging. Long, hard days under mixed modes of travel, interspersed with periods of haste and waits lay ahead. No one was 100% sure a large party would avoid mishaps or injury, though much preparation was done to reduce risk. A cultivated team *esprit-de-corps* and mutual support was crucial.

The Hudson is 315 miles long and tidal to Albany. The salt front varies, reaching to the Newburgh-Beacon Bridge. The river emanates

from Lake Tear in the Adirondacks, trickling downslope through a succession of rivulets and creeks until becoming navigable by whitewater raft, canoe, and kayak. The trip was to be two weeks in duration, which required biking the Empire State Trail (EST) from Troy, NY to Edgewater, NJ. The final leg was sea kayaking the length of Manhattan to NY Harbor.

The Science

Scientific goals were developed to be practical yet meaningful. They included gathering of data using hand-held devices: meteorological observations, Total Dissolved Solids / Electrical Conductivity, pH (acidity level), Chloride levels, and microplastics (samples were sent to a lab en route). There was a tacit assumption, and hope, that the High Peaks region of the upper Hudson would be the purest in the watershed, potentially free from pollution and microplastics – especially at Lake Tear. Data were recorded on waterproof ledgers and analyzed post-trip. There were 20 river sampling locations, 10 for microplastics.

The Journey

The expedition began inauspiciously but ended gloriously. Day One was an 18-mile hiking odyssey, with 3,600 feet of elevation gain (and greater descent), as we accommodated the filming and water sampling needs. The “day hike” ended up being over a 20-hour ordeal for the team, but we were primed henceforward for challenges that lay ahead. With the hiking portion largely completed (aside from canoe “carries” or portages), the paddling and pedaling portion commenced, with 350 more miles to go...150 on water!

The Upper Hudson presents class III-IV rapids in the Indian River-North River section, which were navigated in whitewater rafts. Below North Creek, where we enjoyed our first hotel stay of the

journey, we used inflatable kayaks (“duckies”) to descend a 20-mile boulder-strewn gauntlet under bluebird skies on Day Five. Hard as it was to take water samples, we continued to meet the challenge.

Heavy, cumbersome canoes were deployed below Warrensburg where waters were calmer, and the weather remained good. Significant obstacles lay ahead – the crew encountered its first canoe portage around a dam – hoisting heavy canoes along a mile-long path with 300-foot gain in elevation.

Violent thunderstorms and strong headwinds added to the challenges of portaging around dams, rapids, and feeder canals. Strong headwinds and thunderstorm threat caused the expedition to terminate paddling at Stillwater, 16 miles short (north) of Troy, NY. We backtracked the following day to continue “solely under human power” and biked the EST on gravel bikes from Stillwater to Edgewater, NJ over the next four days, taking further water samples as we neared the river. Our planned 50-mile ride to Hudson, NY became 70 miles under a heat advisory. When we biked past Troy, where the Hudson is roughly at sea-level, we’d descended over a mile from the top of Mount Marcy! By this time, we’d retrieved 16 samples, six including microplastics.

Leaving the EST briefly, we followed the Rip Van Winkle Bridge to Catskill, where we enjoyed a self-guided tour of Thomas Cole’s residence/studio. Violent storms again thwarted progress after crossing the Kingston/Rhinecliff Bridge, so we stashed bikes for later retrieval. To continue traveling “solely under human power,” on Day 12 we again backtracked to the bikes, requiring a 70-mile bike ride from the bridge to Brewster, NY, crossing the Walkway Over the Hudson several times to get good video footage.

Our last biking on Day 13

ended in Edgewater, covering 60 road miles, but also navigating the Bronx and up and over the George Washington Bridge.

On the final day, we were driven north along the Hudson to Bloomer Beach, where we launched sit-atop kayaks, guided by Urban Paddle, and paddled the final 12 miles to Jersey City, in choppy water but under magnificent skies with stunning views of the Manhattan skyline. We’d made it!

The River’s Voice

Despite the challenges and uncertainty, expedition objectives were successfully achieved! We were met on the docks at Manhattan Yacht Club by joyous friends and family, and a well-deserved celebration/awards ceremony ensued. Everyone was happy and sad the journey was over; new experiences were shared, new friends for life were made, yet new discoveries about the region and ourselves were found, and memories of a lifetime were etched in everyone’s psyche. We’d all become ambassadors of the Hudson. What remained were the expedition scientific results. Were we to be relieved or troubled?

We ultimately took all our planned samples. The pollution data rendered what we’d imagined: higher pH in the Adirondack Park portion of the river than below, and dissolved solids – indicative of general pollution levels – increases by river mile south, influenced around NYC by saltwater.

Sadly, microplastics were observed in every sample taken. The astonishing result is that microplastics were *more prevalent* in the Upper Hudson than southward. This could be from rainfall dilution outside the Adirondacks, and/or from added tributary volume. More research over a longer time span is needed to verify these results...but we’d made a dent.

The Epilogue

The Hudson River Source to Sea expedition was perhaps a once-in-a-lifetime adventure. The moment is upon us to seize on another once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for the *voice of the river* to be spread throughout the region...the country...the world – that this waterway, indeed all waterways, should be stewarded with greater care.

The documentary film is expected to be released in April 2024. A similar but smaller expedition is being planned for the Norwalk River in our own neighborhood here in Redding. Stay tuned! ■

Thanks to Joe Dadey, Greg Morrissey, and John Barnhardt for their contributions to this report.

Tim is a consultant, educator, and explorer who resides at the foot of Redding’s Topstone Mountain with wife Jennifer. He also serves on the Board of New Pond Farm Education Center.

NEW POND FARM EDUCATION CENTER

PRESENTS

“**all** about **eve**”
A PLAY READING

“Fasten your seat belts, it’s going to be a bumpy night.”

SATURDAY, APRIL 6 • 7:00 PM - 8:30 PM

SACRED HEART CHURCH, PARISH HALL • 30 CHURCH STREET • GEORGETOWN, CT

Please join us for the play reading, libations, homemade desserts, and lively conversations with the actors!

DIRECTED BY NANCY PONTURO • MUSIC BY DAVID MORGAN

Thank you for supporting our educational programs. Tickets: \$60 per member, \$70 per non-member. Seating is limited. Reservations Required: newpondfarm.org or call 203.938.2117



NANCY PONTURO



BOB PONTURO



KATE KATCHER



DON STRIANO



FRED NEWMAN



MOLLY GARBE



KATIE KOZLOWSKI



DAVID MORGAN

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

\$ = fee applies
R = registration required

This Week's Featured Events

Welcome Spring Open House

Thursday, March 21
6:30 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.
Learn about RN&N social clubs and the library. Meet your neighbors and enjoy light refreshments, an interactive talk with Redding historians, and a free raffle.
Mark Twain Library
439 Redding Road
marktwainlibrary.org

Redding Historical Society Lonetown Farm and Museum Public Open House with Guided Tour

Saturday, March 23
1:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.
Members and children free; Non-members \$10.
Lonetown Farm and Museum
43 Lonetown Road
Call (203) 938-9095 with questions.
\$

Redding Grange's 3rd Annual Seed Exchange and Giveaway

Sunday, March 24
10:30 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.
Free seeds and some seedlings, supplies, and baked goods for sale.
E-mail seeds@phineus.com for information on how to donate.
Redding Grange No. 15
399 Newtown Turnpike
reddinggrange.org

Want to feature an upcoming event?

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

MEETINGS

Thursday, March 21

Tabulator Testing
5:30 p.m.
Redding Community Center
37 Lonetown Road
townofreddingct.org

Thursday, March 21

Historic Review Committee
7:00 p.m.
Town Hall / Hearing Room
(subject to change to virtual or hybrid)
100 Hill Road
townofreddingct.org

Monday, March 25

Board of Finance
7:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.
Town Hall / Hearing Room
(subject to change to virtual or hybrid)
100 Hill Road
townofreddingct.org

Tuesday, March 26

Presidential Preference Primary - Early Voting
10:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.
Redding Community Center
37 Lonetown Road
townofreddingct.org

Tuesday, March 26

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

Wednesday, March 27

Presidential Preference Primary - Early Voting
10:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.
Redding Community Center
37 Lonetown Road
townofreddingct.org

Wednesday, March 27

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

Thursday, March 28

Presidential Preference Primary - Early Voting
10:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.
Redding Community Center
37 Lonetown Road
townofreddingct.org

Thursday, March 28

CT DOT Virtual Public Information Meeting
6:00 p.m.
Virtual
portal.ct.gov/DOT300-215

Thursday, March 28

Republican Town Committee Special Meeting
7:00 p.m.
The Redding Roadhouse
406 Redding Road
townofreddingct.org

Thursday, March 28

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

Saturday, March 30

Presidential Preference Primary - Early Voting
10:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.
Redding Community Center
37 Lonetown Road
townofreddingct.org

Monday, April 1

Region 9 Board of Education Annual District Hearing
7:00 p.m.
Joel Barlow High School / Library Learning Commons
100 Black Rock Turnpike
er9.org

ARTS

Saturday, February 24 - Sunday, March 24

The Ridgefield Guild of Artists' Focus On: 3-Dimensional
12:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.
Wednesdays - Sundays
34 Halpin Lane
Ridgefield
rgoa.org/focus-on-3-dimensional

Tuesday, March 26

Jazz Journeys with David Morgan
11:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.
Live jazz and interactive session.
Mark Twain Library
439 Redding Road
marktwainlibrary.org
R

Wednesday, March 27

Great Composers Part I: Bach's Pursuit of Musical Perfection
7:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.
In-person and virtual.
Mark Twain Library
439 Redding Road
marktwainlibrary.org
R

Saturday, April 6

All About Eve: A Play Reading
7:00 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.
Local and professional actors present a lively reading to raise funds for New Pond Farm.
Sacred Heart Church Parish Hall
30 Church Street
newpondfarm.org
\$, R

CHILDREN | TEENS

Thursday, March 21

Special Education College Fair
5:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.
For high school students and families.
372 Danbury Road
Wilton
bit.ly/WDSSPEDCollegeFair
R

Sunday, March 24

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

Thursday, March 28

Finding College Scholarships
7:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.
Virtual
Mark Twain Library
marktwainlibrary.org
R

CRAFTS

Sunday, March 24

Easter Egg Trees
12:00 p.m. - 1:00 p.m.
New Pond Farm Education Center
101 Marchant Road
newpondfarm.org
\$, R

Sunday, March 24

Needlework Drop-In
2:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.
New Pond Farm Education Center
101 Marchant Road
newpondfarm.org

FOOD | WINE

Saturday, March 23

Family Cookie Swap (grades K-4 and grown-ups)
11:00 a.m. - 11:45 a.m.
Make 12-24 of your favorite cookies and swap with neighbors and friends.
Mark Twain Library
439 Redding Road
marktwainlibrary.org
R

Saturday, April 6 and Sunday, April 7

In the Kitchen, cooking Earth Day Cookies
10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. Saturday (Grades 2-5)
10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. Sunday (Grades 6-12)
New Pond Farm Education Center
101 Marchant Road
newpondfarm.org
\$, R

HEALTH | WELLNESS

Thursday, March 21

Memory Tips with Dr. Wendy Hurwitz
1:00 p.m. - 2:00 p.m.
Heritage Center
37 Lonetown Road
E-mail mstillman@townofreddingct.org or call (203) 938-9725
R

Tuesday, March 26

Yoga Nidra
4:00 p.m.
Heritage Center
37 Lonetown Road
E-mail mpilato@townofreddingct.org or call (203) 938-9725
R

Wednesday, March 27

Meditation
12:00 p.m.
Heritage Center
37 Lonetown Road
E-mail mpilato@townofreddingct.org or call (203) 938-9725
\$, R

Tuesday, April 2

Free Community Yoga Class at Open Farmhouse
9:30 a.m. - 10:30 a.m.
For beginner to advanced, in partnership with Yoga Station and Open Farmhouse.
Open Farmhouse
11 John Read Road
yogastationct.com/book-class
R

HOLIDAY

Saturday, March 23

Ridgefield Parks and Recreation Free Annual Egg Scramble
11:00 a.m. - 11:15 a.m.
Egg hunt for all ages and meet-and-greet with Easter Bunny.
Ballard Park
485 Main Street
Ridgefield

Saturday, March 23 and Sunday, March 24

Rising Starr Horse Rescue Bunny Hop
2:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.
Meet the horses and enjoy some Easter fun with activities, snacks, and prizes.
Rising Starr Horse Rescue
93 Silver Spring Road
Wilton
risingstarrhorserescue.org
\$, R

Sunday, March 24

Purim Carnival
9:30 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.
Games, inflatables, crafts, DJ, food, and more.
Temple B'Nai Chaim
82 Portland Avenue
Georgetown
templebnaichaim.org

Friday, March 29

2024 Egg Hunt
2:00 p.m. Games and activities
3:00 p.m. Hunt begins
Rain date: Saturday, March 30.
Open to kids 8 and under
Presented by BGCRE Torch Club and Redding Neighbors & Newcomers
Boys & Girls Club of Redding-Easton
170 Cross Highway
bgcre.net
\$, R

Friday, March 29

Easter Egg Hunt
3:30 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.
Giggling Pig Art & Party Studio
4 Library Place
Bethel
Call (203) 919-1153
R

NATURE

Sunday, March 24

Redding Grange's 3rd Annual Seed Exchange and Giveaway
10:30 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.
Free seeds and some seedlings, supplies, and baked goods for sale. E-mail seeds@phineus.com for information on how to donate.
Redding Grange No. 15
399 Newtown Turnpike
reddinggrange.org

RELIGIOUS SERVICES

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

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

Christ Church, Episcopal
Sunday, March 24 (Palm Sunday worship) at 9:00 a.m.
Thursday, March 28 (Maundy Thursday worship) at 6:00 p.m.
Friday, March 29 (Good Friday liturgy) at 6:00 p.m.
Sunday, March 31 (Easter worship) at 9:00 a.m.
184 Cross Highway
christchurchredding.org

First Church of Christ, Congregational
Sunday, March 24 (Palm Sunday) at 10:00 a.m.
Thursday, March 28 (Maundy Thursday) at 7:30 p.m.
Sunday, March 31 (Easter Sunday) at 6:00 a.m. sunrise service at 442 Rock House Road.
Sunday March 31 (Easter Sunday) at 9:00 a.m. and 11:00 a.m.
25 Cross Highway
firstchurchredding.org

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

Sacred Heart / St. Patrick Parish

Sacred Heart Church:
Sunday, March 24 - Palm Sunday: Vigil Mass at 9:00 a.m., 10:30 a.m., 4:00 p.m.
Mass with procession: 12:00 p.m.
Monday, March 25 - Holy Monday: Mass at 6:00 p.m.
Tuesday, March 26 - Fig Tuesday: Mass at 6:00 p.m.
Wednesday, March 27 - Spy Wednesday: Mass at 6:00 p.m.
Thursday, March 28 - Maundy Thursday: Mass with procession at 9:00 p.m.
Friday, March 29 - Good Friday: Solemn Liturgy of the Passion at 3:00 p.m.
Candlelit Stations of the Cross at 6:00 p.m.
Lenten Soup and Bread Saturday, March 30 - Holy Saturday Blessing of Easter Foods at 10:00 a.m.
Eater Vigil at 8:30 p.m.
Sunday, March 31 - Easter Sunday Mass at 7:00 a.m., 9:00 a.m., 10:30 a.m., 12:00 p.m.
30 Church Street

St. Patrick Church:
Fridays during Lent: 7:00 p.m. Stations of the Cross
Saturday Vigil Mass: 5:30 p.m.
Sunday Mass: 8:30 a.m. & 10:30 a.m., 5:00 p.m.
Weekday Mass: Monday - Friday at 8:30 a.m.
Mondays and Thursdays Eucharistic Adoration: 7:00 p.m.
169 Black Rock Turnpike
sacredheart-stpat.org

SPECIAL PROGRAMS

Thursday, March 21

Welcome Spring Open House
6:30 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.
Co-presented with Redding Neighbors & Newcomers
Learn about RN&N social clubs and the library. Meet your neighbors and enjoy light refreshments, an interactive talk with Redding historians, and a free raffle.
Mark Twain Library
439 Redding Road
marktwainlibrary.org

Saturday, March 23

Redding Historical Society Lonetown Farm and Museum Public Open House with Guided Tour
1:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.
Members and children free; Non-members \$10.
Lonetown Farm and Museum
43 Lonetown Road
Call (203) 938-9095 with questions.
\$

Monday, March 25

Pittsburgh & Beyond: Antisemitism from the 18th Synagogue Shooting to Today
7:00 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.
Talk with Mark Oppenheimer and book signing
Presented by The Wilton Library and Wilton Coalition to combat Antisemitism
Wilton Library
137 Old Ridgefield Road, Wilton
wiltonlibrary.org
R

Tuesday, March 26

Digital Parenting: Tips & Triage
7:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.
In-person and virtual
Mark Twain Library
439 Redding Road
marktwainlibrary.org
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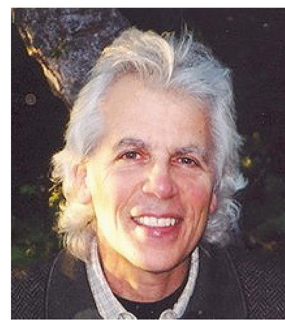
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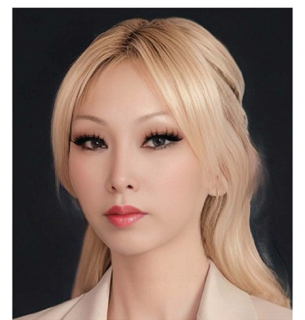
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