



# REDDING SENTINEL

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## HUSKY health coverage will again require recertification

By Rob Sample

Just under 1,000 Redding residents participate in a public healthcare plan, including many on HUSKY, Connecticut's Medicaid program for low-income residents and families. Next month, a Covid-era rule that prevented people from losing their HUSKY coverage will end, requiring people to take steps to ensure their HUSKY coverage will continue.

Normally, people who receive HUSKY for their health coverage must be recertified each year by Connecticut's Department of Social Services (DSS). For the past two years, Federal regulations have suspended states from requiring people to reapply for Medicaid: the goal of this rule was to ensure people would continue to have coverage through the end of the Covid-19 pandemic. That regulation is currently set to expire on April 15. Unless the Federal government extends that deadline, all 50 states must begin requiring Medicaid recipients again to recertify coverage.

About 434,000 Connecticut residents benefitted from the pause in HUSKY requalification. Many are now reemployed or earning higher incomes. Qualifying for HUSKY is determined by one's income and family size. Some households may thus lose their coverage in the recertification process – dubbed “unwinding” in DSS parlance. This “unwinding” has just begun in Connecticut and is expected to take a year.

DSS has said adults on two specific HUSKY plans are most at risk of losing coverage – HUSKY, which covers low-income parents and caretakers of children, and HUSKY D, which covers low-income adults without dependents. HUSKY B is a plan that solely covers children, while HUSKY C covers adults 65 and over and adults with disabilities.

There is one, big bright spot, however. DSS is employing a new system called “passive renewal” to automatically requalify people whose employment and tax records demonstrate that they still meet HUSKY guidelines. This saves the HUSKY participant the need to manually reapply – and submit extensive income data – to requalify for Husky.

Both “unwinding” in general and the passive-renewal process might be quite unfamiliar to many longtime HUSKY recipients, said Redding's Director of Social Services Angelica Fontanez. “I had one person who received this notice bring it to my attention,” said Fontanez. “In the past, people on HUSKY knew that they had to renew their coverage every year. But because people have not had to do that for several years, this can take some people by surprise.”

Continued on page 5



Photo by Dana Taylor

This fox was playing around in the snow behind a house on Cross Highway last week, as is visible by the snow on his muzzle. A good looking red fox! If you have a photo you'd like us to feature here, with credit of course, please e-mail editor@reddingsentinel.org

## Real estate tax collection almost complete

By Jessie Wright

After a slow start to collections this year, Redding has now received almost 100% of its budgeted amount in real estate taxes, according to Tax Collector Patricia J. Moio.

In a report to the Board of Finance on February 27, 2023, Moio noted that, to date, Redding was only short approximately \$18,000 of its budgeted amount in collections. “I have about 110 homes that are not paid yet,” said

Moio, “but I know the money will be coming in.” The budgeted number assumed collection of 99% of actual real estate taxes due.

The Town has also scheduled its first tax sale following the pause the State of Connecticut put on the practice during the Covid-19 pandemic. In Connecticut, after past-due taxes are aged beyond a certain period of time, a lien is put on the property,

which can then be sold through a “tax sale” at a public auction or through a tax foreclosure process by the tax collector.

“I do have a tax sale scheduled,” reported Moio at the February 27 meeting. “Our tax sales were on hold all through the Covid period, but the governor has lifted that ban, so we're going back to it.” ■

## REDDING'S BIG OUTDOORS

### Couch Hill Preserve | By Jessie Wright



Photo by Jessie Wright

Running adjacent to the entrance of Collis P. Huntington State Park is an approximately 34-acre parcel of Town-owned land called Couch Hill Preserve. Many hikers, bikers, and cross-country skiers traversing Huntington's winding trails begin or end their journeys through the Preserve.

Parking is most convenient at the Collis P. Huntington State Park parking lot off of Sunset Hill Road. As the road's name suggests, this is a perfect spot to bring your camera to capture bright splashes of color

against the clouds at sunset. The three flat, interlocking fields of Couch Hill Preserve sit perched atop a high point in town, giving visitors a near 360-degree view of the sky.

Your camera will also come in handy to capture a host of vibrant wildlife in any season – pollinators are active as the Preserve's meadow grasses and flowers emerge in spring through the summer, with white-tailed deer often passing through. The most notable inhabitant, however, and

the one which makes Couch Hill Preserve particularly important, is the bobolink.

Bobolinks are migratory songbirds, traveling to and from South America every year – nearly 12,500 miles. They like to nest on the ground in grassy meadows and fields after returning to the area in the spring. Their numbers are declining, however, and Couch Hill Preserve has been identified as an important nesting ground for the species – one of the few remaining areas in Connecticut. Bobolinks typically arrive in May and begin nesting in June, according to Chair of Redding's Conservation Commission, Dave Pattee.

Redding's Conservation Commission has been working in recent years to ensure the nesting grounds of Couch Hill Preserve stay maintained for bobolinks. As invasive plants, like poison ivy, have proliferated, the growth of natural meadow grasses have been affected. The Commission spread lime on the ground last season to raise the pH of the soil to combat these invasive species. They are now hoping to secure funding to fertilize the area, which would encourage the grasses – and subsequent hay crop in the fall – to thrive.

Given the importance of the nesting grounds and the host of other wildlife that calls the Preserve home, keeping your

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## District finalizes proposed 2023-2024 school budget

By Jessie Wright

The Redding Board of Education has approved a proposed budget figure for the 2023-2024 fiscal year of \$24,569,528. In his informal budget presentation at the Mark Twain Library on Friday, March 3, ER9 Superintendent Dr. Jason McKinnon noted this number represents an increase of 3.18-percent over last year.

The district conducted this year's budget development process in close connection with ER9's 2023-2026 strategic plan, linking each budget item to key strategic priorities identified in the plan. “This is the most important thing,” said McKinnon. “Because our strategic priorities really should be what is driving what we care about. And we have a list of priorities, both short-term and long-term, and it should reflect what our financial investments are.”

Six priorities were highlighted as the district undertakes its preparations for the upcoming school year: high quality teaching and learning; developing a culture that promotes a nurturing and welcoming climate and deeper, more engaged learning; improving school facilities to ensure student safety, long-term sustainability, and enhance student learning; meeting the needs of all learners; developing a K-12 Portrait of a Graduate that emphasizes real-world experiences and innovative learning; and promoting effective operations and skillful staff.

Benchmarks and goals related to improving state and national test scores were also developed, with the district aiming to increase the percentage of its students scoring “at standard” or higher over the next four years. “Following Covid, our reading scores declined approximately five percent and our math scores declined by approximately ten percent,” said McKinnon. “So Covid did have an impact on these scores.”

“Now the budget isn't directly aimed at improving test scores,” McKinnon continued. “There are various actions and strategies aimed at improving student achievement. Our strategic priorities are aimed at improving our school system as a whole, which includes increasing student learning.”

McKinnon also reported that the budget was developed using a “zero-based budget” approach, re-setting each line item, justifying any changes, and bringing expenses in line with historical actual figures, rather than calculating 2023-2024 numbers as a percent-

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# EDITORIAL

I filed my 2022 federal and state tax returns this week. Maybe it's the confrontation of the paperwork gathering in a messy pile over the past 12 months, or the reminder of what gross pay numbers look like before withholdings are considered, but the process typically generates angst in our household.

With this angst comes a sense of distance between the money I pay in taxes each year and the projects to which it goes. The "buckets" of federal and state tax dollars are so large, and the budget process so filled with competing special interests and national politics, that it is challenging to trace a confident line from my taxes to government spending.

In the same week I was preparing my returns, however, I also attended several Town meetings as the Board of Selectmen and Board of Education finalized their proposed 2023-2024 budgets. As you will see in the Legal Notice to the right of this editorial, those budgets will be presented and discussed at a public hearing on Monday, March 20 at 7:30 p.m.

If you haven't been able to sit in on any of the meetings this winter, the minutes are available at [townofreddingct.org](http://townofreddingct.org) or at Town Hall. While the budget process at the local level is not without its own competing interests and politics, the line between my tax dollars and the services they fund is much clearer.

These budgets reflect our priorities – what we deem is important enough to invest in, and how we propose to pay for it. While there are various sources of money that the Town utilizes, taxpayers ultimately fund the majority of expenses in the budget. Once the numbers are finalized – and voted upon at Referendum later this spring – the Board of Finance will determine the new mil rate, and local tax bills will start hitting our mailboxes.

The public hearing is one of the last opportunities to make your voice heard about what is important to you. So, while many of us probably have April 15 circled on our calendars, I encourage you to also include March 20. ■

## Driving on borrowed roads Town to reassess how it finances road work

By Jessie Wright

For years, Redding has financed the cost of repair and replacement of its roads primarily through issuing bonds. The Town and the Board of Finance are now re-considering that strategy, as the cost of debt service on these bonds balloons.

In a presentation to the Board of Finance on February 27, Treasurer Wes Higgins ran the group through an analysis of the long-term costs and implications of financing road work through debt, comparing it with alternative funding options, including pay-as-you-go.

This examination of the Town's financing strategy initially came out of the long-range financial planning report that was prepared last fall. "We ended up with a forecast of a 2025 bond issue of about \$15 million, and then we cranked out what bond debt service would be in 2026," Higgins explained. "When we discussed it, it got very quiet in the room... nobody seemed particularly pleased with that report."

Following those discussions last fall, Higgins and Redding's Finance Director, Jim Sanders, put their heads together on why debt service remained so high in their forecasting. "We noted the fact that really it's the road plan that is a significant driver in the debt funding," said Higgins.

The Town's road plans, which include major repair and replacement projects identified by the Highway Department, are approved approximately every three years. Higgins reported that since 2012, three road plans have been implemented, with the 2024 plan currently proposed but not finalized.

"That makes 15 years of road plans that cost the Town in bonded debt about \$18.5 million dollars," said Higgins. "What's notable is \$9 million of that is still outstanding. Which leads to the sense – before I got into the numbers – that between higher interest rates and road repair cycles that are generally shorter than the term of funding, we're getting into a rising debt service environment following the debt funding of our roads strategy."

As Higgins noted, a factor that makes the current strategy of financing challenging is the longevity of the road repairs. By paying for current roads through bonds – essentially "locking in" the payments and pushing them into the future, the roads not only will need to be repaired again before the Town is done paying for them, but many residents using the roads now won't be the ones responsible for the debt to pay for them in the future.

Board of Finance member Jamie Barickman reiterated his concern with this issue. "Borrowing that doesn't align to the life of the construction... that seems to be incompatible to begin with."

Higgins then presented a theoretical model of a future road plan to explore the patterns of financial impact of different financing strategies, particularly what a transition to pay-as-you-go might look like.

The pay-as-you-go strategy would move road repair and replacement costs into the Town's operating budget each year – essentially adding a budget line item for that year's work. Higgins presented theoretical numbers to demonstrate the financial effects of this change: in the first five years after a transition, pay-as-you-go would represent a significantly higher cost to the taxpayer than bond financing. In the next five years (years 6-10), the costs are closer to comparable. It isn't until year 11 that significant cost savings would be realized – however, from then on, the pay-as-you-go strategy pays significant dividends.

Other benefits of the pay-as-you-go strategy include increased flexibility for the Highway Department to take advantage of new repair technologies that may be developed from year-to-year, and the freeing up of the Town's debt obligations to finance other important projects.

"When you look at the limits of what the Town can borrow without screwing up its ratings, I think you need a strategy other than the one we're on in order to finance these roads," said Board of Finance member Robert Dean.

Several board members noted that some surrounding communities finance their roads through pay-as-you-go, including Easton.

"Both methods can be used and have been used successfully, but they create very different outcomes over time," agreed Higgins, noting that a large initial tax bump would be required with a transition to pay-as-you-go.

The Board of Finance then discussed possible strategies to ease any potential transition, including using a combination or "blended" approach of bond financing and pay-as-you-go for a few years, as well as the creation of a reserve account that could be used to offset the increased taxes necessary in the first five years.

"With the funding of a reserve, it would allow the transition to take place without a large impact on the mil rate," said Higgins.

"We do have a pretty healthy unassigned fund balance at this point," noted Board of Finance Chair Kimberly Yonkers. "It's beyond what we need."

The board agreed that this issue would be important to fully examine and make any decision on before the Town's next bond deal in 2025.

"It's the beginning of a really important discussion," said Board of Finance member Karen Gifford. ■

# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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

To the Editor,

Transparent. Strategic. Collaborative.

These three words describe Dr. Jason McKinnon's approach to the 2023-2024 proposed school budget. Our school staff, administrators, and volunteers on the Board of Education propose a budget focused on meeting and exceeding specific quantitative and qualitative metrics for all Redding school kids. Residents can see every line item, strategic priority, and metric supporting the proposed budget. A special thank you to the Mark Twain Library and the John Read Middle School PTA for hosting a "Chat and Chew" session on Friday, March 3rd to allow time for resident Q&A and a budget presentation. Since moving to Redding in 2008, I am confident, now more than ever, in the focus, purpose, and transparency of spending on education.

Budget Resource: Go to [er9.org](http://er9.org); see budget under "Quick Links". ■

Angela Caes  
Deer Hill Road

# LEGAL NOTICES

The Redding Board of Assessment Appeals will be meeting on the following dates in the Town Hall Hearing Room of the Town Office Building for the scheduled hearings and deliberations of eligible appeals for tax assessments on the grand list as of October 1,

2022. New applications for appeals will not be accepted. Applicants must appear in person for their scheduled hearing. Meeting dates for March 2023 are:

Thursday March 9, 4-7 pm;  
Friday March 10, 3-7 pm;

Saturday March 11, 9 am -2 pm;  
Wednesday March 15, 4-7 pm;  
and Thursday March 16, 4-7 pm.

Greg Stackpole, Chairman  
Redding Board of  
Assessment Appeals

The Redding Zoning Board of Appeals has scheduled a public hearing via Zoom on Tuesday, March 21, 2023 at 7:00 p.m. to review and possible vote on the following applications

**1. Application #03-01-23 – 171 Redding Road (Map & Lot #42 & 40) Owner Stephen Santa & Lauren Dzwil** – Requesting a variance to reduce lot front-

age from 50' feet to 46' feet for a front porch across the front of the house. Redding Zoning Regulation Section 4.6. Variance requested is 4' feet.

**2. Application #03-02-23 – 3 Side Cut Road (Map & Lot #12 & #17) Owner SC-3 LLC; Agent Joseph R. Cugno of Cugno Architecture LLC, 113 Westport Road, Wilton CT 06897** – Requesting front and

side parking yards section 5.6.4 (8'-6", 7'-8", 8'-5" in lieu of the 6' side setback and 25' front setback) and second floor decks and building encroachment Section 4.6 (3.5' & .9' in lieu of the 15' side setback.) ■

Elizabeth Williams  
– Chairman, Redding Zoning  
Board of Appeals

# Expenditure budget proposal 2023-2024

The Legal Voters in the Town of Redding, Connecticut are hereby notified that a PUBLIC HEARING on the proposed 2023-2024 Annual Budget Expenditures will be held on **Monday, March 20, 2023 at 7:30 p.m.** at the Community Center, 37 Lonetown Road, Redding, CT.

If cancelled due to snow, the meeting will be held Wednesday, March 22, 2023 at 7:30 p.m. at the Community Center.

For details, please visit our website at [www.townofreddingct.org](http://www.townofreddingct.org) OR a copy is available in the Town Clerk's Office at Town Hall. ■

Board of Finance:

Dr. Kimberly Yonkers, Chair  
Ward Mazucco, Vice Chairman  
Jamie Barickman

Jenifer Wyss  
Rob Dean  
Karen Gifford

TOWN OF REDDING, CT  
BUDGET PROJECTION 2023-2024

EXPENDITURES	2021-2022 ACTUAL	2022-2023 BUDGET			2023-2024 BUDGET REQUEST	\$ CHANGE	% CHANGE
		ORIGINAL	ADDITIONAL APPROPRIATION*	CURRENT			
REDDING BOARD of EDUCATION	22,719,022	23,811,158		23,811,158	24,569,528	758,370	3.18%
REGION 9	12,673,768	12,038,609		12,038,609	11,576,921	(461,688)	-3.84%
TOWN GOVERNMENT	15,422,799	15,611,657	300,000	15,911,657	16,306,554	394,897	2.48%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>50,815,589</b>	<b>51,461,424</b>	<b>300,000</b>	<b>51,761,424</b>	<b>52,453,003</b>	<b>691,579</b>	<b>1.34%</b>

\* October 20, 2022 Special Town Meeting approval of \$300,000 contribution to Other Post-Employment Benefits (OPEB) Trust Fund from unassigned fund balance and recorded as pension expenditure.

NOTE: The Budget Requests above reflect their current projection as of March 6, 2023

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### Correction to the March 2, 2023 issue

In the article "Care for the caregivers" on page 7, the incorrect spelling of the first name of the owner of the Healing Springs Wellness Center in Plantsville was included. The correct spelling is Shawniel. We regret this error.

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# Police and Social Services call for additional crisis resources

By Donna Christopher

Poor access to comprehensive mental health services has resulted in police officers often serving as first responders in a crisis. It's a call of duty that Redding police officers have answered for decades working in tandem with the Department of Social Services.

Their crisis intervention work ranges from thwarting homelessness when someone is evicted, to assisting families in convincing a relative to go to the ER for a mental health breakdown.

Though an exact count is not available, there have been dozens of 911 crisis calls to homes in the past month, according to Redding Police Chief Mark O'Donnell.

Ninety-percent of Redding officers have received Crisis Intervention Training (CIT). "Most recently, we did it with six departments at Sacred Heart University," said O'Donnell. "We've been going for training and working with social services for 38 years."

O'Donnell explained that the training equips the officers with knowing what to look for when they respond to calls, whether the call is for an individual requiring mental health treatment, a person on drugs or alcohol, or a domestic or family violence matter.

"We do an evaluation and shift them to the hospital if they need that," O'Donnell explained. "It can be mental health or alcohol or drugs. We have repeat people. We have worked with social services for 38 years since I've been here. We have arrests sometimes, but we don't go down to arrest anybody. We try to get them help. Unfortunately, there's nowhere anymore they can go for extensive treatment. At the hospital, the most is a 72-hour hold."

Over the past three years, O'Donnell said there was an increase in crisis calls during the Covid-19 pandemic, but calls have returned to pre-pandemic levels in recent days.

"During the first year of Covid,

there was an increase in crisis calls and domestic disputes, because people were stuck in their homes. Since that year to year-and-a-half, it's gone back down to a normal amount for Redding, O'Donnell said.

Fontanez said police often refer people to the Department of Social Services to connect them with resources for a range of issues.

Her department is called upon for households who are about to become homeless and are in need of finding a shelter or emergency housing; for people in a mental health crisis to help de-escalate the situation or refer them to the appropriate service; by emergency medical personnel for referrals for visiting nurses, Meals on Wheels, or mental health services; for issues of domestic violence; or from anyone who has lost or is at risk of losing their electricity or heat.

Among several challenges, the biggest is when someone refuses help or services, according to Fontanez. "Our EMS and police department may get ten calls from the same household in one week, and the person refuses to get help from a visiting nurse program or a referral for mental health services."

In cases where a person is injured or is making a suicidal threat, all professionals involved can mandate involuntary services. It is extremely challenging when the circumstances or situation fall in the "grey" area: where there are serious safety concerns, but the person can't be mandated against their will, Fontanez explained.

However, continuing to offer support and resources for these adults, seniors, or families is crucial. "So these types of cases, my department will monitor these closely and continue to do outreach work," said Fontanez.

The Sentinel asked Fontanez what she thinks the public may be unaware of in terms of mental health needs here in Redding.

She referred to cases of evictions that become homeless cases, as they aren't seen by the public.

"People think of 'homeless' as someone living on the street, versus someone who doesn't have access to some sort of affordable housing which includes seniors," she said. "Also, I don't think the public is aware of how the mental health cases that involve the police department, EMS, and my department – of how many hours are spent in trying to de-escalate the situation and finding appropriate resources."

There is no homeless shelter in Redding, so those needed shelter must go to Danbury where the Super 8 motel is currently housing the homeless. "That program is getting a lot of attention," Fontanez said. "Once in a blue moon, I can shift to Westport Homes with Hope which is a much nicer program."

O'Donnell expressed his frustration with the lack of long-term solutions when someone is in mental health breakdown. "There is no longer anywhere they can go for extensive help. The hospitals can only go up to a 72-hour hold. It falls on the families," he said.

Other improvements needed include a more efficient and effective 2-1-1 mobile crisis line, according to Fontanez.

"We need more regionalized services regarding homeless shelters and affordable housing options, or even rental vouchers before the cases of homelessness increase. We definitely need more affordable housing, especially for seniors and those with a disability. There is a lengthy waitlist for seniors and those with a disability of anywhere from two to five years."

In addition, Fontanez noted that many mental health providers have a waitlist for patients who have HUSKY or other public health insurance. ■

# Early plans for artistic 'boarding up' at Gilbert & Bennett site

By Jessie Wright



Photo by Jessie Wright

The Georgetown mural at 19 Main Street.

A creative solution for the necessary boarding up of buildings at the Gilbert & Bennett Wire Mill site is underway, according to First Selectwoman Julia Pemberton.

At her monthly Brown Bag Lunch with residents on March 1, Pemberton explained that several buildings at the site will need to be sealed up while funding is secured and remediation efforts begin ahead of re-development.

"We have these hulking buildings that are going to take a significant amount of time to work through," she said. "But we need to 'moth ball' those buildings, seal them from the elements, so that they don't further deteriorate."

One of the first things that will be necessary is to board up several of the buildings' windows. "But I don't want the building to look like

it's boarded up with plywood," said Pemberton. "So, my proposal is that we create art on plywood, so that when you drive by what you see is painted plywood with art that has a Georgetown theme."

Pemberton says that she has connected with the Redding artist, Kristen Terrana-Hollis, to assist with the project. Terrana-Hollis created the Georgetown mural on the building at 19 Main Street, which was commissioned by Georgetown Village Restoration, Inc. last year.

"We're going to start with a few boards, and we're going to have a booth at Georgetown Day," said Pemberton. "This will be an ongoing community project to create art that helps to make those buildings both weather-sealed and beautiful." ■

# Board approves asset re-allocation

By Rocco Valluzzo

Following the recommendation of its financial advisor in a quarterly oversight review, the Other Post Employment Benefits (OPEB) Trust Board unanimously approved the re-allocation of some investments in its portfolio.

"OPEB" typically refers to medical and dental insurance that is provided for Town employees who have retired, or people who have left service but had attained a certain number of service years for age. These benefits provide a way for these former employees to bridge their healthcare until they are eligible for Medicare.

"We are largely strategic, believing that asset allocation really is the driver of long-term performance," Kate Pizzi of Fiduciant Advisors told the board at its meeting on Monday, February 27. "So we don't really try to be wildly tactical, but we also recognize that we are in a pretty unique investing environment."

According to Pizzi, the factors that are influencing capital markets revolve around three key areas: persistent inflation, volatility, and finding a bear market bottom. With these factors in mind, she stressed the importance of fixed income investments, particularly high-quality fixed income.

She cited that the return on fixed income had more than doubled her company's expectations going forward from this time last year. This in turn supports from their perspective that fixed income is acting as ballast in a portfolio and can weather more price challenges.

"That certainly is something we think is a benefit for investors going forward," Pizzi said. "In your portfolio, what we are recommending is actually moving more into core and initiating an allocation into TIPS (Treasury Inflation-Protected Securities) through investing."

Pizzi noted that the goal is to minimize risk while maximizing return. She recommended changes only in fixed income and recommended pulling back from short-term bonds.

"The expected return from the current portfolio based on our updated capital market assumptions is 7.4%," she said. "Our recommendation is really largely in line with that expected return, but making some changes on the edges based on our outlook going forward."

Pizzi added that the target allocation for short-term bonds in the OPEB Trust portfolio is now 28% and U.S. bonds is 7%. She recommended moving short-term bonds down to 10% and with that reduction, put 3% into a TIPS index. The remaining 15% would go into high quality U.S. bonds.

Fiduciant Advisors did not recommend any reallocation in equities at this time.

Board member Karen Gifford noted that the portfolio asset allocation (actual versus target) was a bit off. Pizzi said it was of very little concern since the amount was largely driven by the outperformance of international markets.

"Compared to U.S. markets, international development markets were up over 17% for the fourth quarter," said Pizzi. "U.S. markets were good, just not that good. They were up over 7%."

Pizzi added that Fiduciant Advisors is for re-balancing back to targets regularly, but also allowing areas that have done well to continue to do well. At this level, they would not recommend re-balancing; rather, as the contributions come in every other month, they would recommend looking to rebalance using that cash flow. ■

# OPEB funding to change

By Rocco Valluzzo

Rather than have the money for its annual budget come from transfers out of the Town's unassigned fund balance, the Other Post-Employments Benefits (OPEB) Trust Board unanimously voted on February 27 to recommend to the Board of Selectmen that this be included as a budget item for fiscal year 2023-2024 and beyond. The OPEB Trust Board recommended a \$200,000 contribution for the 2023-2024 fiscal year.

OPEB typically refers to medical and dental insurance that is provided for Town employees who have retired or people who have left service but have attained a certain number of employment years. It provides a way for them to bridge their healthcare until they are eligible for Medicare. Depending on the employee group, the Town provides a contribution.

Redding previously funded

OPEB by transferring amounts from the unassigned fund balance. This had to be approved at special town meetings.

"My view up to now has been that we should be funding this from the unassigned fund balance," said OPEB Trust Board member Robert Dean. "But I'm convinced by this discussion that we should be at least this year trying out the concept."

Other board members agreed. There was also the consensus that the amount not exceed \$200,000.

"As long as we can do this on an annual basis," said OPEB Trust Board member Karen Gifford. "It's really, really tight some years. It ought to be 200, but maybe we only think we can do 150, then we do 150. And we'd be a little more underfunded than we want to be."

According to Vice Chair Kimberly Yonkers, the actual determined employer contribution (ADEC) was \$285,902, of which

\$102,954 is associated with pay-as-you-go benefits from the general fund. The residual is \$182,948, which is the amount that would be put into the trust assets. That number was then rounded up to \$200,000.

Jamie Barickman felt that the board should adopt the process of funding the full ADEC projected amount as part of the annual operating budget process.

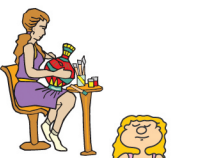
"The concept is that we follow the ADEC projections and begin a disciplined process of funding that out of our operating budget and voting on that operating budget every year," he said.

Finance Director Jim Sanders noted that the payments made directly to beneficiaries are not known until the end of the year, depending on what individual situations are. Rounding up would allow the Town to contribute at least the ADEC amount. ■

## The Heritage Center

Redding's Senior Center

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## SPORTS

## Falcons place sixth at conference finals

By Rocco Valluzzo



Photo by Rocco Valluzzo

Joel Barlow/Bethel High's Max Allen swims the 200 freestyle at the South-West Conference boys swimming championship on Thursday, March 2. Barlow/Bethel finished sixth as a team at the meet with 174 points.

The South-West Conference championship featured a slight improvement from the regular season on the part of the Joel Barlow/Bethel High boys swim team.

The Falcons, who posted a 2-6 record during the regular season, moved up a bit on Thursday, March 2. Scoring 174 points, they took sixth out of ten teams at the Masuk High pool.

In the process, the Falcons finished ahead of New Fairfield, who had beaten them during the regular season.

Defending champion Pom-

peraug scored 647 to win its 11th straight league title and its 16th out of the last 17 seasons. Weston was a distant runner-up with 377 and Brookfield was third with 330.

The Falcons scored their first points in the opening event, the 200-yard medley relay. Spencer Kurtz, Jacob Pedicini, Max Allen, and Sofiane Hilmi combined for a time of 2:06.43 to take ninth, less than a quarter-of-a-second behind Bunnell/Stratford.

Allen also represented Barlow/Bethel in the 200 free, taking 15th in 2:06.13. In the 200 individual medley, Lance Hansen scored

Barlow/Bethel's points by taking seventh in 2:09.59.

Two scored for the Falcons in the 50-yard free. Leading the way was Connor Zhu, who was seventh in 23.56, 0.11 seconds ahead of Pomperaug's Miles Montello. Caeden Frederickson was 14th in 24.76, 0.03 seconds faster than Immaculate's Marco Dias.

Zhu also scored for the Falcons in the 100 free race, taking eighth in 51.35. Going the distance for Barlow/Bethel in the 500 free, Allen finished eighth in 5:42.90.

In the 200 free relay, Hansen, Frederickson, Ben Funk, and Zhu together swam a 1:38.71 to take fourth, 0.22 seconds behind Masuk. Hansen had the team's best individual performance in the meet in the 100 backstroke, taking third in 56.12 and breaking the one-minute mark in the process. Frederickson also scored in the event, finishing 14th in 1:03.14, 0.09 seconds behind Newtown's James Guerrieri.

Finishing the meet for the team, Zhu, Hilmi, Frederickson, and Hanson swam the 400 free relay, taking 7th in 3:40.03.

The Falcons will next take part in the state Class M championship on Wednesday, March 15 at Southern Connecticut State University in New Haven. ■

## Season ends at State Open

By Rocco Valluzzo

Snow conditions improved, but so did the competition for the Joel Barlow High ski teams at the State Open race last week.

The snow that fell early last week made for perhaps the best skiing of the season on Wednesday, March 1. However, Barlow was competing against not only other Class S teams, but those from larger Class L schools as well.

The Falcons' time of 290.48 was among the fastest they posted this season, but they finished 12th overall in a field of 14 and fifth out of seven in Class S at Mount Southington.

Fairfield Prep was the overall winner with 269.19. Brunswick/Greenwich Academy was second overall and first in Class S with 270.67. Southington was third with 271.91.

The Falcons had one top ten skier in the race. As he often did for his team this season, Ian Lent led the way with a combined time of 44.14 for fifth and just 0.07 seconds behind Fairfield Prep's Carter Goodrich. Lent was also the only Barlow skier named to the All-State team.

The rest of Barlow's skiers were farther back in the field. The team's next fastest time came from Quinn Williston, who was 49th in 47.31, coming in 0.07 seconds behind Ridgefield's Jaden Mahoney.

Next for Barlow, Jack Gustavson took 55th overall in 47.90, 0.01 seconds ahead of Pomperaug/Newtown's Clark Overhiser. Fourth in the Barlow order and 76th overall was Matt Hartmann in 49.20.

In 88th was Luke Mutuski with a 50.16, 0.02 seconds behind Wilton's Finn Kaye and 0.02 seconds ahead of Cheshire's Thomas Franco. Completing

the scoring for the Barlow boys, Alex Illie was 106th in 51.77, just behind Daniel Hand's Jack Schroeder, who had the same time.

One place and 0.06 seconds later was Andrew D'Amaro. Nick Schuler was 117th in 54.45.

Completing the varsity race for Barlow were Adam Goodacre (105th) and Jackson Bennett (131st) with times of 55.10 and 60.56 respectively.

The Falcon girls also ran into some tough competition. A time of 324.29 put them 13th out of 13 teams overall and seventh among Class S schools.

Ridgefield and Fairfield were so evenly matched that they finished in a two-way tie for first with 284.64 apiece. Staples was third in 289.69.

Leading Barlow's team, Ava Kulikowski was 14th overall in 46.84, just edging out Amity's Gianna Manuele, who posted the same time.

Kulikowski was one of only four Barlow girls in the top 100 places. Next for the team was Genoveva Perez, who took 89th in 53.92.

Three places later was Ruby Ludwig in 54.19, 0.02 seconds behind Hopkins's Ella Zimolo. Avery D'Amaro took 95th in 54.48.

Barlow had two skiers post back-to-back finishes. In 113th, Gabby Boehlert had a 57.34. Phoebe Merrill followed in 114th with a 57.52 to finish the scoring for Barlow.

Next for the Falcons was Lucy Walker in 119th with a 59.27. Two places later came Kayla Araujo in 60.73.

Na'ama Klein completed the varsity slate in 124th with a 65.78. ■

## Panthers dethrone Knights for league crown

By Rocco Valluzzo



Photo by Rocco Valluzzo

Joel Barlow-Weston-Abbott Tech's (JBWA) Max Krug looks for an open teammate during the Southern Connecticut Conference/South-West Conference Division III hockey championship on Friday, March 3. JBWA lost 3-0 to Masuk.

Pulling off a second upset was within the reach of the Joel Barlow-Weston-Abbott Tech (JBWA) hockey team in the Southern Connecticut Conference/South-West Conference Division III tournament.

The third-seeded Knights managed to upend second-seeded New Milford 4-2 in the semifinals on Wednesday, March 1. They hoped for a repeat performance against top-seeded Masuk in the championship two days later on Friday, March 3.

It was anyone's game for almost the entire time in the championship game. Only an offensive surge by Masuk late in the third period would tip the scales in its favor and secure a 3-0 win over the defending champs at the Sports Center of Connecticut in Shelton.

"A couple of bounces either way, and it's a different outcome," said JBWA head coach Bob Stearns, whose team battled Masuk to a 2-2 tie in their previous meeting. "They worked hard, and

I think they deserve the win for that."

Right from the opening face-off, both teams battled for supremacy. Masuk had a slight advantage for a brief time in the first period when the Knights were down a player due to a slashing call but successfully killed off the penalty.

The greatest scoring threat came later in the period when a shot by Masuk's Drew Scalia ricocheted off the left pipe, but it remained a scoreless contest.

The Knights also had a few scoring chances of their own, one with eight minutes left in the second period. Wes Arees managed to break away from the defense and go one-on-one with Panther goalie Maddex LaFountain, who came up with the save.

Both LaFountain and JBWA's Connor Thomas stepped up for their respective teams, each making several key saves during the championship.

"Connor was absolutely outstanding," said Stearns, who

also credited the strong play of Barlow defenseman Emmett Arees.

Despite what was riding on the outcome, it remained a clean game, each side getting called for only two infractions. A tripping call against the Panthers with four minutes left in the frame gave the Knights a man advantage but no goals.

Little changed once the third period got underway, with each side testing the other's defenses. But with 5:47 left in the game, Scalia took a pass from Nick Kondub and managed to get a shot past Thomas to give Masuk the lead. The Knights would not recover.

"We knew that when you score a goal, especially late in the game like that, it's a real kick in the gut there," said Stearns. "It's a little tougher to rebound than if it was earlier."

Less than two minutes later, Masuk struck again. This time, it was Kondub who scored with Kyle Sutfin assisting to give their team some insurance.

"They are a great hockey team," said Stearns. "The whole year they scored goals in bunches."

Down 2-0 and with time growing short, the Knights opted to pull their goalie for an extra skater but to no avail. With less than a second left on the clock the Panthers scored once more, as Kondub put the puck in the open goal with the assist going to Alex May.

The Knights will now take part in the state Division III tournament this week as the fifth seed.

"We'll lick our wounds and come back and get ready for states," said Stearns. "We just have to rest up a little bit and then get back at it." ■



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# Barlow FIRST Robotics team to compete in March 12 tourney

By Rob Sample



Photo by Jessie Wright

A display last fall at the Redding Community Center of a robot built by Barlow's FIRST Robotics team.

Now is crunch time for the Joel Barlow FIRST Robotics team, as it gets its entry robot ready for its initial competition of the 2023 season. The FIRST tournament will take place Friday, March 10 through Sunday, March 12 at Wilby High School in Waterbury.

"We have a good design and ours will be a solid robot," said Redding resident Bill Kinahan, a Sikorsky retiree and senior mentor for the Barlow team. "The challenge will be getting it complete in time for the tournament."

Kinahan said the robot is now approximately 85 percent complete. Much of the remaining work involves wiring and electronics, as well as testing and debugging the software developed to orchestrate how it will move and perform. The Barlow team's robot will also participate in a second Connecticut tournament, scheduled to take place Friday, March 31 through Sunday, April 2 at Hartford Public High School.

If Barlow's robot does well in these two area tournaments, it will take part in the regional FIRST tournament. That's set for April 6 through 8 at the Eastern States Exposition complex –site of the "Big E" fair each fall – in West Springfield, Massachusetts. The pinnacle for each participating team is to make it to the international FIRST Robotics championship. That takes place April 19-22 at the George R. Brown Convention Center in Houston.

The tournaments themselves differ each year, but the format is a cross between a three-dimensional computer game and a sporting event. Last year's tournament series required the entry robots to pick up as many balls as possible and place them into a special basket.

For each match in this year's competition, teams will compete in alliances of three on each side. Once each match begins, the robots must move plastic cones and cubes from the tournament

"field" and place them onto a specially designed storage grid. It is equipped with shelf slots for the cubes and poles for the cones.

One interesting twist to the competition is that at intervals in each match, each side can utilize a remotely powered charging station that sits on the playing field. Any moves made while the robot is on the charging station count toward a bonus.

Both speed and accuracy are critical in any FIRST event. Any misses, drops, or delays affect each entry's final score. An animated video on YouTube details how it all works for this year's competition. To watch, go to [youtube.com/@FIRSTRoboticsCompetition](https://youtube.com/@FIRSTRoboticsCompetition)

To help prepare for the upcoming tournaments, Kinahan and the team created a computer simulation that walks through what the robot will need to do in each step of competition. To enhance the robot's ability to complete those moves, the team equipped it with a telescoping arm, giving it a long reach, and a working hand for grasping the cones and cubes.

For the students on the FIRST team, springtime can be a challenge juggling competing activities and, for seniors, the need to stay on top of advanced placement classes, college applications, and other "musts" from their last semester of high school. "Still, we are making good progress," said Kinahan.

Fundraising has been an especially bright spot this year. The team has received several donations from Lockheed Martin and Raytheon, as well as individual donations from people who live in Easton and Redding.

"The Redding Road Runners Club gave us a big donation, and we do our part to support their races at Thanksgiving and during the summer," said Kinahan. Individual students take part in fundraising as well: one FIRST team member surpassed the goal he set to raise \$3,000 for the team's finances.

"From a financial perspective, this has been a very good year for us," said Kinahan.

## HUSKY health coverage will again require recertification

Continued from page 1

State DSS officials estimate that most people who must recertify HUSKY coverage will be able to be renewed passively. This method utilizes information from the State's Department of Labor as well as the Federal Internal Revenue Service.

Those whose coverage cannot be renewed passively will receive a pre-populated renewal form 45 days ahead of the renewal deadline. Among those who do lose their HUSKY coverage, more than half will get an additional year of coverage through a program called Transitional Medical Assistance.

Fontanez pointed out that any individual who misses the deadline for HUSKY requalification should contact one of the State Department of Social Services offices. Even better, plan to go in person. The nearest office is in Danbury. Should a person or family ultimately no longer qualify for HUSKY, they can usually obtain alternative coverage through AccessHealthCT – the state's health-

care exchange ([accesshealth.com](https://accesshealth.com)).

Additionally, a relatively new program called CoveredCT provides health insurance to people whose incomes are low but exceed HUSKY levels. Under this program, the person or family gets enrolled in an insurance plan available through AccessHealthCT – such as Anthem or ConnectiCare – which would normally incur a monthly premium. Under CoveredCT, their premiums are subsidized in full by the state.

"Most people will enroll online, though occasionally someone will have difficulty with the AccessHealthCT website," said Fontanez. "If your insurance runs out – whether it's HUSKY-related or the result of a job loss – it's always important for you to go straight to DSS to get an application processed right away."

"AccessHealthCT also gives you a window of time to apply for a new plan if you lose coverage for HUSKY – or if you lose your job and thus no longer have employer provided coverage, too," said Fon-

tanez.

In limited circumstances, Fontanez or a member of her team has accompanied a person to the Danbury DSS office to get the issue resolved in person. "We don't do that often – but we will, if needed," she said. "It doesn't make the process faster, but for some people it is important to have someone from our group along for support."

Along with the "unwinding" of HUSKY enrollments beginning in April, another Covid-era federal benefit is set to end this month. In 2020, Congress passed the "Families First Coronavirus Response Act" to temporarily boost the family benefit under the federal Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP) – a program once commonly referred to as "food stamps." This increase in benefits will be cut by \$95 a month or more, depending on the benefit level. Some states made the cuts to SNAP in February 2023; the remainder (including Connecticut) can be expected to do so this month.

# Fire preparedness and escape planning workshops Sunday, March 12 at the Georgetown Firehouse

By Jessie Wright



## GEORGETOWN VOLUNTEER FIRE COMPANY

The Georgetown Volunteer Fire Company (GVFC) will be offering free workshops this weekend on fire preparedness and escape planning. Participants can register for one of three workshop times on Sunday, March 12 –10:00 a.m., 12:00 p.m., or 2:00 p.m. Workshops will take place at the Georgetown Firehouse at 6 Portland Avenue.

GVFC has offered many workshops in the past, often for children, but those being offered this weekend have a new approach. "The March 12th workshop is intended for adults," explained Alex Mirabile, EMS Captain and Recruitment Coordinator for GVFC. "It is also unique because it focuses on fire preparedness and escape, as opposed to prevention – an important distinction. Our goal is to educate residents, especially parents, on the importance of fire preparedness and escape planning and to equip them with the resources they need to create a home fire escape plan of their own."

The workshops were developed through a community effort, according to Mirabile, with GVFC

Fire & EMS members, the GVFC Auxiliary, the Georgetown Fire Marshals, a local fire investigator (who volunteered her time to help develop presentation materials), and student volunteers from the University of New Haven Fire Science Program all working together to create the program.

Mirabile hopes that this is just the first of many workshops on this topic in the community. "We are already speaking with local leaders and community organizations about ways to offer this program to a wider audience," Mirabile said. "GVFC looks forward to collaborating with these groups, as well as neighboring Fire Departments, to help scale this workshop to as many citizens as possible."

For those who are interested but unable to attend, visit [gtownfire.org](https://gtownfire.org) to sign up for future event announcements and to access some of the information covered in the workshops on their fire safety resources page.

For more information and to register, visit [gtownfire.org/events](https://gtownfire.org/events)

## District finalizes proposed 2023-2024 school budget / Continued from page 1

increase from last year's budgeted amounts.

As predicted earlier in the year, major cost drivers for fiscal year 2023-2024 included both inflation and personnel expenses. McKinnon reported that several neighboring school districts (though they were not identified by name) have proposed budgets for next year with increases anywhere from 4.94 – 5.83-percent. "We do have districts who are presenting well into the 5's already," he said. "A lot of budget presentations are going up around us."

One parent attending the March 3 presentation asked why Redding was able to achieve a proposed increase of just over 3-percent, considering these factors. Chris Parkin, Chair of the Redding Board of Education, explained that both past investments in special education capacity, along with the timing on a few collective bargaining contracts, contributed to the district's ability to "beat inflation" next year.

The district's previous spending on in-house special education services has reduced the need to send as many students to "out-placements" next year, which typically come with high education and transportation costs.

"The result of building out that internal capacity over the past three to five years is a dramatic reduction in out-placements that we are projecting for next year," explained Parkin. "By keeping more students in the district, which is better for everybody – dollars and cents or no dollars and cents, keeping them local is the best way to do it – we are keeping the special ed year-over-year increase down."

A few of the collective bargaining agreements the district participates in have also not come up for renewal since the increase in inflation, allowing the district to "lock in" compensation for some groups of its employees at lower rates for next year.

"Over time, inflation will end up getting baked into those contracts, but we enjoy the benefits of that in the current year," Parkin said.

The budget will be presented to the Board of Finance on Monday, March 20 at 7:30 p.m. at the Redding Community Center. The public is encouraged to attend. Time for public comment will be included on the agenda.

To view a detailed worksheet of the proposed budget, visit [sites.google.com/er9.org/redding-budget/home](https://sites.google.com/er9.org/redding-budget/home)

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# Feeling lucky?

## Local events celebrate St. Patrick's Day

By Pamela Brown



The Ladies Ancient Order of Hibernians march in a previous year's St. Patrick Day Parade.

St. Patrick's Day is recognized as a national holiday in Ireland, celebrating the feast day of the country's patron saint. In Redding and the surrounding communities, it's a holiday celebrating Irish culture, enjoying Celtic music, and sharing in a little (or a lot) of Irish pride.

### Saturday, March 11 New Fairfield St. Patrick's Day Parade

On March 11, the 53rd-annual New Fairfield St. Patrick's Day Parade begins at 10:00 a.m. after the 9:00 a.m. Mass at St. Edward's Church.

Marchers, including the Ancient Order of the Hibernians (AOH), Ladies Ancient Order of Hibernians (LAOH), and the Pipe and Drum Band, will travel down Brush Hill Road to the Town Hall for a raising of the Irish flag, singing of the Irish and American national anthems, and remarks by First Selectman Pat Del Monaco. "It's a fun day. Everyone is Irish that day. Come and celebrate with us," said flag bearer Peter Hearty, longtime organizer and AOH member. "Everybody is welcome to come and march. Wear a shamrock, carry an Irish flag, and join the gang!"

Afterward, the public is invited to the Town Hall, where the LAOH will provide free refreshments, including Irish coffee, Irish soda

bread, and socializing.

### Saturday, March 11 Norwalk St. Patrick's Day Parade

The Norwalk Police Emerald Society is presenting the city's annual St. Patrick's Day Parade on March 11 at 11:00 a.m.

The parade starts at Veterans Memorial Park and proceeds through South Norwalk. Its Grand Marshal will be Brendan Collins, former decorated Detective with the Norwalk Police Department and Co-Founder/President of the Norwalk Police Emerald Society, a non-profit established for active and retired police, firefighters, paramedics, and members of dispatch to preserve and promote Irish heritage and culture. Parade participants will include first responders, community leaders, the Fairfield County Police Pipes and Drums, Greenwich Pipe Band, and more.

A ceremony and after-party will be held at O'Neill's Irish Pub & Restaurant at 93 North Main Street.

### Wednesday, March 16 Redding Heritage Center St. Patrick's Day Tea Party

Enjoy a spot of tea and Irish fare, including Irish soda bread, scones, and cakes, along with good company at the St. Patrick's Day Concert and Tea Party on March



Photos by Wendy Mitchell  
The Celtic Cross Pipes & Drums.

16 from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

Drop into the Heritage Center at any time, but be sure to experience the highlight of the day – Redding's own George Cohen offering a delightful bagpipe concert at 10:30 a.m. The event is free, but the Heritage Center is asking participants to bring their own teacup and saucer. To register, call (203)938-9725 or e-mail mpilato@townofreddingct.org

### Sunday, March 19 Greater Danbury St. Patrick's Day Parade

The Greater Danbury Irish Cultural Center (GDICC), Greater Danbury Irish Cultural Foundation, Ancient Order of the Hibernians, and Ladies Ancient Order of Hibernians present the 26th-annual St. Patrick's Day Parade on March 19. The parade begins at 2:00 p.m. at St. Peter Church on Main Street and ends at the Danbury Irish Cultural Center on Lake Avenue. This year's Grand Marshals and Hibernians of the year include Dave Albright, Brian Meaney, and Mary Tomaino.

"Our annual parade is a celebration of the Patron Saint of Ireland and our Irish heritage in this beautiful diverse city. Our diversity is our strength and the historical Irish relationship with the city of Danbury and surrounding towns is a cause for celebration and fun," said Kevin Hearty, who is Co-

Chair along with Catherine Bach, and explained that the mission of the GDICC is to preserve and spread Irish culture and heritage.

The parade will feature local pipers and bands, including the Danbury High School Marching Band, the Portuguese American Club, Portland District Pipe Band, and the Young Colonials. Marching groups include the GDICC, Danbury School Reserve Officers' Training Corps, Irish dance schools, girl and boy scouts, Newtown Horse Guard, Danbury Hat Tricks Hockey team, and firemen floats.

The Center, open on Sunday from noon until midnight, will feature Irish music starting at 2:00 p.m. with Steve O'Tree and Friends and the Session players from 4:30 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. Irish food will be served all day, including corned beef sandwiches, shepherd's pie, and Irish soda bread. Guinness and Harp will be flowing. "We hope this parade is a fun day out with the family and friends to celebrate our own city parade and share in the Irish experience," said Hearty.

### Friday, March 17 – Sunday, March 18 St. Patrick's Day Weekend at The Redding Roadhouse

The Redding Roadhouse promises a rowdy good time as they celebrate St. Patrick's Day all weekend, starting Friday, March

17 at 12:00 p.m. and running through Sunday, March 19 at 7:00 p.m.

"St. Patrick's Day is our favorite holiday. With the big Irishman himself, Shawn Reilly, as the owner, it's a great time to be had by all!" said Kristina Miedzinski Ryer, Events Manager. The restaurant will be serving Irish fare all week, including corned beef, braised cabbage, carrots, and potatoes, and the "Big Irish Sandwich" inspired by owner Shawn Reilly's upbringing. "He is an Irish-American born and raised in Pittsburgh, PA where it is common (famous in fact) to put fries ON/IN your sandwich," Ryer explained. "The sandwich features shredded corned beef, Swiss cheese, classic slaw, thousand island dressing, and fries INSIDE, piled high on a brioche bun." Sunday Brunch will feature corned beef hash and eggs.

On March 17 at 7:00 p.m., there will be live music from "The Ragamuffins", a family trio comprised of Allan, Ian, and Jessi Johnson, who will be playing a mix of traditional and contemporary Irish music. On March 18 from 5:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m., visitors can get a Guinness glass etched with whatever they fancy. Irish dancer Mary Kate Lynch, a fifth grader from Easton, will be performing on Sunday, March 19 during brunch.

"We can't think of a better way to celebrate our favorite holiday than with our amazing community! Grab your friends and join us for a weekend of music, food, and fun," said Ryer. "May your day be touched by a bit of Irish Luck, brightened by a song in your heart, and warmed by the smiles of the people you love." ■



# WHY REDDING?

## A two-year search revealed a clear front runner for retirement

By Pamela Brown



Photo courtesy of Ruth Wolsch  
Ruth Wolsch and Arnold Weinstein celebrate Arnold's 80th birthday.

Ruth Wolsch and Arnold Weinstein have lived in Redding for six years as residents of Meadow Ridge. It's the town's picturesque beauty and tranquility that caught their attention and won them over.

"Redding is spacious and welcoming," said Wolsch. "It's a peaceful town wherever you go, particularly in the bucolic setting of Meadow Ridge. Though I don't care for the winter season, spring and particularly autumn with the fall colors are wonderful in Redding."

The couple, who moved from New Canaan, previously lived in a two-floor home on a few acres where they anticipated living indefinitely.

"Being native New Yorkers, we liked the quiet 'back country' feel of this home as well as our previous home in Greenwich," she explained, but after realizing the demanding responsibilities necessary in maintaining such a property, Wolsch, 79, and Weinstein, 86, decided to

downsize. They spent over two years looking at senior living communities in Connecticut, New York, and Massachusetts, including 18 continuing care retirement communities. It was a comprehensive process, with Wolsch keeping a detailed comparison spreadsheet on each community – Meadow Ridge always came out on top.

"We were favorably impressed with this style of living," said Wolsch. "Meadow Ridge provided the nicest environment, largest and nicest apartments, had all aspects of the continuum of care under one roof which was important to us, and had one of the nicest groups of residents and staff that we encountered."

While she and Weinstein appreciated the amenities and living space at the award-winning senior community, Redding itself also factored into their decision to move.

"One of the major assets of Redding is the Mark Twain Library. I enjoy volunteering there. I'm one of many volunteers who sort, price, and box the many great books that are donated to the Library for their annual Labor Day weekend book sale," said Wolsch, who also participates at the annual art show and Frog Frolic events. "The staff and volunteers are a group of inviting, warm, friendly, and hard-working people that I enjoy working with."

Wolsch participates in other town activities, including the Artisan Fair at First Church of Christ, Congregational and Georgetown Day, and is a regular at several local businesses. "I frequent the Redding Pharmacy where the people and service are excellent," she said. "Also,

on the border of Redding and Wilton is Caraluzzi's where you can find most anything you need. Georgetown Automotive has been particularly helpful on more than one occasion and Jeff Kelley, the owner, has been really pleasant to work with. In almost all my encounters, I find the people from Redding warm, friendly, and helpful."

Wolsch and Weinstein are happy to call Redding "home sweet home."

"We are most definitely happy to have moved to Redding. We sincerely enjoy living here," she said. "Although we enjoy traveling, Redding is a beautiful place to come home to." ■

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# A conversation with ChatGPT

By George Avidon

As someone who has worked in the technology field for more than 20 years, I have a tendency to always have one eye on the future, given that technology has permeated almost every element of our lives and is constantly changing. Think back a few years to your life before Alexa and Siri, or before Netflix, Amazon Prime, and Hulu video streaming.

Today, something that gets me even more excited is ChatGPT.

You may have heard or read about ChatGPT, Artificial Intelligence (aka AI), Machine Learning, or even Natural Language Processing in recent days. These terms seem to be all over the news. But what exactly is ChatGPT, and why should you be as excited as I am about it – and not scared of the technology?

Allow me to simply say that ChatGPT really is an incredible leap in computing and has

amazing potential! I recognize that the light-speed in which technology has advanced, from automated doctors' appointments to bots calling your cell phone, can conjure up unpleasant thoughts of robots taking over the globe. One can be immediately drawn to nefarious and conspicuous uses of this technology (perhaps rightly so in our cynical, high-paced, headline-driven world.)

However, if I may offer a very slight prediction: robots will not be dictating our thoughts tomorrow morning. And the positives far outweigh the negatives with this new technology.

The implications of ChatGPT are massive, impacting individuals and industries across the board. ChatGPT can help to improve medical and research settings by quickly answering critical questions and compiling known and often used methods in ER/

ICU/surgical units; it can augment academic environments by organizing and curating research material for graduate and PhD students; and it can enhance so much more in the corporate and non-profit worlds.

So let us start at the beginning. What is ChatGPT? How does it work? Is it a search engine? How does it formulate the answers to your questions? More importantly, how does it understand the questions we are asking? Is it all knowing? Does it have an infinite amount of information? Can ChatGPT tell me what I will eat tomorrow morning for breakfast? (This really is the most important question, isn't it?)

I decided to go to the source, ChatGPT, and have a conversation. I asked ChatGPT the following questions (the questions are in order):

## Do you know who Michael Ian Black is?

Response: Yes, Michael Ian Black is an American comedian, actor, writer, and director. He is best known for his comedic work in the comedy groups "The State" and "Stella", as well as his appearances on various TV shows and movies. Black is also a frequent commentator on political and cultural issues, and he has published several books, including a memoir and several essay collections.

## How did you get this information?

Response: As an AI language model developed by OpenAI, I have been trained on a diverse range of texts and have learned to generate answers to questions based on that training data. The information about Michael Ian Black that I provided to you is based on the texts I have been trained on, which includes articles, books, and other sources of information about well-known people like Michael Ian Black. My training data has a cutoff of 2021, so the information I provide is current up to that point.

## Who can give you information about a person?

Response: As an AI language model, I do not have the ability to perceive or gather information in the same way that a human being can. Instead, I have been trained on a large corpus of text data, which includes information about a wide range of topics, including people like Michael Ian Black. When I receive a question about a person, I use my training to generate an answer based on the information that is available in the texts I have been trained on.

So, in a sense, the information that I provide about people is given to me by the authors, journalists, and other writers who have produced the text that I have been trained on. However, it is important to note that the information I provide is not always up-to-date or accurate and should not be considered a substitute for reliable sources.

## Is there a team that generates texts into the AI language model?

Response: Yes, there is a team of developers and researchers at OpenAI who are responsible for developing and training language models like me. The team is composed of experts in areas such as artificial intelligence, natural language processing, and machine learning, who work together to build and fine-tune these models. The process of training a language model like me involves using a large corpus of text data to teach the model how to generate coherent and meaningful answers to questions. The team at OpenAI carefully selects and curates the text data used for training to ensure that it is diverse and representative of the types of questions and conversations the model will encounter in real-world use. Once the model is trained, it can be used to generate answers to a wide range of questions and perform a variety of natural language tasks, such as text completion, summarization, and translation. However, it is important to note that while the model has been trained on a large amount of text data, it is still a machine and is subject to the limitations and biases inherent in its training data.

## Can I contribute to the texts of the AI language model?

Response: As an AI language model developed and maintained by OpenAI, I am not directly open to contributions from the general public. The process of developing and training large language models like me is a complex and time-intensive task that is typically carried out by a team of experts in artificial intelligence and natural language processing. However, if you are interested in contributing to the field of AI and natural language processing more broadly, there are many ways to get involved. For example, you could participate in research projects or initiatives, contribute to open-source software projects, or attend conferences and workshops in the field. Additionally, if you are a writer or content creator, you can contribute to the development of AI language models by producing high-quality texts and making them available for use in training data. By producing well-written and diverse texts, you can help ensure that AI models like me are able to generate answers that are accurate, inclusive, and representative of a wide range of perspectives.

## May I send you an email with content?

Response: OpenAI does not accept contributions of text data from the general public for use in training its AI language models. The process of developing and training large language models like me is a complex and time-intensive task that is typically carried out by a team of experts in artificial intelligence and natural language processing. If you have specific concerns or questions about OpenAI's work, you can contact the company through its website or social media accounts. However, it is unlikely that there is a direct email address for submitting text data for use in training its language models.

## What model (computing/algorithmic) does ChatGPT use? Ada, Babbage, Curie, or Davinci?

Response: ChatGPT is based on the GPT-3 (Generative Pretrained Transformer 3) architecture, which is one of the largest and most advanced language models developed by OpenAI. GPT-3 is a transformer-based neural network that uses a large amount of text data to generate coherent and informative answers to a wide range of questions and perform a variety of natural language tasks. GPT-3 is not named after Ada Lovelace, Charles Babbage, Marie Curie, or Leonardo da Vinci. These names are associated with influential figures in the history of mathematics, computer science, and science more broadly, but they are not directly related to the GPT-3 model.

## What language model does ChatGPT use?

ChatGPT is a conversational AI system built on top of the GPT-3 (Generative Pretrained Transformer 3) language model developed by OpenAI. GPT-3 is a state-of-the-art, transformer-based neural network that uses machine learning to generate human-like text based on patterns in the training data.

I hope this, at the very least, allows you to dive into how the program functions and how it relies on information that is pre-programmed into its infrastructure, answers and how its code understands questions. The information within ChatGPT, as we have seen, is highly controlled and in a sense curated based on what the ML/AI/

NLP team loads into the program. Notice how some of the answers to my questions are similar, but phrased differently, yet still presented in a human/natural language style.

Please have fun with this. And enjoy choosing whatever breakfast you want to eat in the morning without ChatGPT's input.

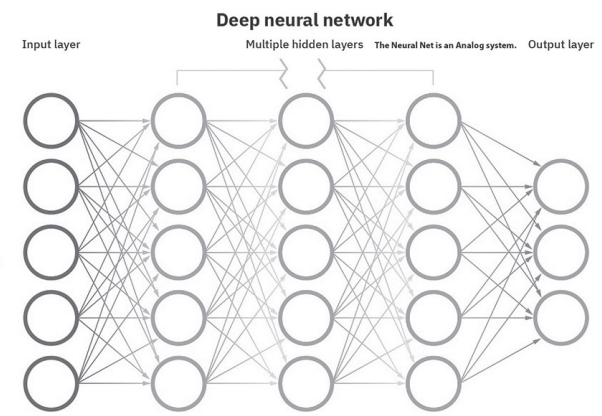
Wait... What if ChatGPT wrote this entire post? What? I need to reboot!!

Until next time, see you in the library. ■

George Avidon  
is Associate Director  
of Technology and Operations  
at Mark Twain Library

# Artificial Intelligence: a primer

By Robert E. Moran



Artificial intelligence (abbreviation: AI) noun.

“The theory and development of computer systems able to perform tasks that normally require human intelligence, such as visual perception, speech recognition, decision-making, and translation between languages.”  
*The New Oxford American Dictionary, Third Edition*

## Timeline of advancements in AI

“What’s past is prologue” - *The Tempest*

A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step.” - Lao Tzu

**1834:** Ada Lovelace, the first programmer, meets Charles Babbage, inventor of The Analytical Engine, the first digital computer. Upon seeing the first section of the machine, Lovelace realizes the system not only is capable of performing original calculations but can also process other types of symbols like musical notes. Lovelace programmed using Jacquard Loom punchcards, according to ComputerHistory.org

**1936:** Alan Turing invents both the algorithm (a finite sequence of rigorous instructions used in computation) and the Turing machine, the first universal computer, an abstract device able to manipulate symbols on a strip of tape according to a table of rules defined by Turing’s algorithm. Despite the system’s simplicity, “it could and can run any computer algorithm known to man if given enough time.”

In the same year, Turing invents Artificial Intelligence via the Imitation Game, a method of determining whether a machine can demonstrate human intelligence by engaging in a conversation with a human without being detected as a machine. Note: The Imitation Game becomes known as the “Turing Test”.

**1945:** John Von Neumann invents the modern computer.

**1947:** The transistor, a semiconductor, invented by Bardeen, Shockley, and Brattain, becomes the processing unit used by every digital system in the world.

Machine language, driven by the transistor, is binary, consisting of 0s and 1s. This ultimate simplicity, turning on and off like a light switch, gives rise to the ultimate complexity as 0s and 1s can be stored, processed, and distributed without limitation. Additionally, through abstraction (computer language/software program), said bits can represent colors, sounds, graphics, or any other content able to run on top of the 0s and 1s, entities processed by every known computer in the world.

**1962:** The internet emerges, courtesy of the Department of Defense, enabling computers to communicate on a distributed network.

**1966:** ELIZA, the first chatbot “therapist”, emerges from MIT, the first program to invoke the Turing Test. People thought the clever scripting app was sentient.

**1966:** The concept of an analog neural net was envisioned but

without prerequisite compute power, nothing of note happened. AI, trying to emulate the functions of the brain by traditional means, goes nowhere.

**1965-78:** IBM’s System/360, the first general purpose computer, changes the business world.

**1981:** The IBM personal computer (PC), changes the world.

**1989:** The World Wide Web, courtesy of CERN and Tim Berners-Lee, becomes the information appliance able to run on the internet using web browsers to access websites and other entities able to be found using URLs (Uniform Resource Locators). Software becomes web centric.

**1990:** The search for web content begins.

**1994:** Web Crawler enables a user to find any word on any webpage. This remains the gold standard for search today.

**1996:** The first search algorithm used to determine page rankings via hyperlinks arrives.

**1997:** IBM’s Deep Blue beats world chess champion Garry Kasparov in six games.

**1998:** Google enters the search arena using similar tech with the added benefit of selling search terms.

**2000:** Google becomes the search engine king. “This iterative algorithm ranks web pages based on the number and PageRank of other web sites and pages that link there, on the premise that good or desirable pages are linked to more than others.” - Wikipedia.org

**2010:** Deep Mind, a pioneering British AI Company, is bought by Alphabet/Google in 2015.

**2011:** IBM’s Watson beats Ken Jennings and Brad Rutter in Jeopardy.

**2016:** Deep Mind’s AlphaGo beats a human player in the board game Go.

**2020:** Deep Mind’s AlphaZero defeats other AIs in Chess, Go, and shogi.

**2021:** Deep Mind’s AlphaFold begins to solve how proteins fold.

**2022:** Deep Mind’s MUZero master games without knowing their rules.

**2022:** “Time to Edit,” the time required by the world’s highest-performing professional translators to check and correct MT-suggested translations, is one second. Current AI takes 2 seconds, according to Translated.com

**2023:** Microsoft kicks in \$10 billion to Open AI, as its technology poses the first serious threat to Google’s core business. Hedge funders jump in on the fun as well.

## The question:

Is AI sentient? At this point in time, no. But does that really matter? The implications of the technology today are already becoming profound, ranging from students using ChatGPT to write college essays to scientists using the app to search for scientific information relevant to their areas of expertise and more.

In essence, AI is beginning to impact all disciplines requiring thought.

**A Faustian bargain (or, “There ain’t no such thing as a free lunch”)**

## The good:

Just a tiny list... AI’s beginning to unravel the complexities of cancer. It’s revolutionizing humanity’s view of the universe, and it’s paving the way to making drugs safer and more effective. AI’s beneficial impact on renewables will change how we produce energy on Earth.

## The tradeoff:

It has been predicted that by 2025, 90% of all online content will be synthetic. Vet your sources wisely.

Continued on page 9

## BUSINESS SPOTLIGHT

# Quarternone Coffee Roasters:

*Where art, experimentation, and passion come together* | By Justin Reynolds

After sharing a love of coffee for many years, father-and-son duo Bob and Will Ponturo decided it was time to create a coffee company of their own. In the spring of 2021, Quarternone Coffee Roasters was born.

“The company was founded out of an accumulation of our passions and realizing the fact that a coffee company can be so much more than just coffee,” said the elder Ponturo, who’s lived in Redding for more than 25 years. “We’re a specialty coffee roaster and we offer high-quality, mostly light roasted coffee, focusing on experimental and modern coffee processes.”

Bob Ponturo, who’s worked in sales for over 25 years, and his son, who has seven years of experience in the coffee industry, are both actors and musicians, which is where the name of their business comes from.

“The name Quarternone is a nod to our musical background, specifically in composition,” Ponturo explained. “The term represents a whole range of notes not typically heard in popular western music, and this perfectly represents our ethos towards coffee. We find and offer coffees you don’t typically see, and we present them in a hand-printed bag. Intention is a large part of what we do. Every decision is carefully made to highlight the many wonderful aspects of a coffee ritual.”

Breaking through in the coffee category isn’t exactly a walk in the park, with so many established brands already on the market. Ponturo believes what sets their business apart from other coffee brands is “our alchemy of different values.”

“We prioritize supporting a variety of arts, typically through donating coffee to fundraisers



Photos courtesy of Quarternone Coffee Roasters  
Will (left) and Bob (right) Ponturo, co-founders of Quarternone Coffee Roasters

for artistic causes,” Ponturo said. “We also work with brands and different creative makers to create collaborative coffee bags, which then can be offered as a form of merchandise for that person.”

For Ponturo, a coffee bag is the “perfect blank canvas for artwork.”

“We work with a variety of artists, local and global, to create custom, commissioned artwork for each coffee,” he said. “That design is then hand screen-printed onto each bag, creating perfect handmade imperfections. There isn’t always a connection between the coffee and the art; it’s more of a platform for artists to show their style.”

Additionally, the Quarternone team is very open and receptive to customer feedback.

“I often find myself emailing back and forth with many customers and always love talking about coffee and different ways to brew,” he continued. “There’s always a direct line from the customer to us – the people roasting the coffee.”

The inspiration for every coffee Quarternone offers begins with the relationship with the farmer, Ponturo explained.

“We always try to work as closely with the farm as we can and want to choose coffees that support more than just a mega-importing company,” he said. “We try to work with the same farms year after year to strengthen the connection and see the ways our purchase improves life there. We’re inspired by human passion and experimentation. Many of my favorite coffees are a result of a multi-year relationship, allowing the farmer to take chances on cool new processes.”

According to Ponturo, the roasting process is “fairly simple in its chemistry.”

“You’re basically toasting a raw seed, just turning something brown,” Ponturo said. “The goal is to roast a coffee in such a way that the process of roasting doesn’t get in the way of the natural taste the coffee offers. There’s no magic in the roasting process that makes



Quarternone Coffee features custom art on each bag of coffee.

a coffee great. The raw ingredient was chosen because of the inherent greatness it already had inside, and all I need to do is get out of its way and get it roasted.”

To get definitions straight, the term “process” refers to the way in which the two seeds inside the coffee cherry are removed, Ponturo said.

“Sometimes, it’s laid out in the sun to dry into husks, sometimes it’s fermented in water and washed away,” he said. “The coffee world is exploding with new processes, which creates super interesting flavor profiles.”

Ponturo is also a founding member of Nod Hill Brewery and worked at neighboring Riverside Fence for more than a decade. Though Quarternone is headquartered at the same facility as those two businesses at 137 Ethan Allen Highway in Ridgefield, the coffee company is a separate venture – a partnership between the father and son, with no outside investors – and leases space there.

“We’re very close friends with everyone at Nod Hill and often taste things together and talk about different new products,” Ponturo said, adding, “We sell bags of whole bean coffee in the brewery, and our beans are used when brewing beers requiring coffee beans.”

For the most part, Quarternone sells its coffee online through its website, [quarternonecoffee.com](http://quarternonecoffee.com), offering free delivery in the general vicinity of the roastery.

“We’re also offered in specialty markets and coffee shops,” Ponturo said. “We always prioritize human connection and find that farmers markets and pop-ups are the best events since we can make strong connections with people.”

Ponturo had these last words of wisdom for coffee drinkers:

“Grind your coffee fresh! It’s the single biggest thing anyone can do to make their coffee taste better. Also, don’t take coffee too seriously and make people feel bad for doing it wrong. It’s just bean juice.” ■

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## BOOK REVIEW

# The Great Gatsby

By F. Scott Fitzgerald

The origins of a classic American novel



The house in Westport that F. Scott Fitzgerald rented in the years before he wrote *The Great Gatsby*.

Creative expression is innate. If the impulse exists, it will assert its presence eventually; all you can do is answer the call. As the late Westport resident and novelist Robert Stone insisted, “Nobody cares whether you write a novel or not.” If that sounds harsh, it is also true that writing cannot be taught. Grammar and technique can be learned, but creative talent is inexplicable. Can Bob Dylan explain how he wrote “Blowin’ in the Wind” or “Chimes of Freedom?” He cannot – he has said so. He writes that way because he thinks that way, and he thinks that way because he is that way. The creative impulse cannot be predicted or analyzed, explained, or shared. And then add exponential complexities of collaboration – think about, say, McCartney and Lennon, and explain how “She’s Leaving Home” came from twenty-somethings under the influence of Buddy Holly and Elvis Presley.

*The Great Gatsby* is considered by many readers to be the greatest American novel of the 20th century. In 1920, newly married Zelda and F. Scott Fitzgerald became Westport residents and lived from May until September in a rented house near Compo Beach. Fitzgerald was already famous as the author of *This Side of Paradise*. Scott and Zelda were invited to large, days-long parties at the home of their nearby neighbor, wealthy heir Frederick E. Lewis. Lewis owned a 175-acre estate, Longshore (now the Inn at Longshore). Broadway and film celebrities up from New York City attended these epic parties. Much drinking took place. One party featured camels, elephants, and a “Cowboy and Indian” show. The eyes and mind of the honeymooning novelist absorbed all of it.

The writer, Fitzgerald, sensed spiritual corruption in a changing America. Within four years he had written *Gatsby*, a novel about impossible dreams and fragile identity. Creating aggregate characters drawing on multiple sources, Fitzgerald offered penetrating profiles. He imagined Daisy Buchanan’s husband, Tom, a notable athlete in college, as “one of those men who reached such an acute limited excellence by twenty-one that everything afterwards savors of anti-climax,” the phrase acute limited excellence is the propellant phrase. The power of the writing is in its inimitable cool precision. Fitzgerald’s ear for euphony is pitch-perfect, his eye shrewd about how it sees. He builds on that first introduction and

further explores Tom’s truncated intellect, racist impulses, and restlessness encapsulated in his social theory: “...the dominant race [has] to watch out, or these other races will have control of things.” “We’ve got to beat them down,” whispered Daisy, winking ferociously toward the fervent sun.” In this brief scene we see at the outset Fitzgerald’s succinct articulation of a stale strand of American consciousness as present, corrupt, and foretelling. It is easy to imagine 23-year-old Fitzgerald, already a celebrated novelist, at a decadent party on the Longshore estate, observing modern behaviors and attitudes as he imagines a summary, cautionary tale of modern America.

Many who have read *The Great Gatsby* have read it several times and are familiar with the dipsomania that led Fitzgerald into early death. Pure talent made him a serious novelist. The serious novelist works often from the particular to the general and back to the particular again to highlight transformed circumstances, working to refine metaphor all the while. Fitzgerald’s tale of how a millionaire in pursuit of a barren dream became a corpse in his own swimming pool emerged as an American classic. The question for us remains why the novel stays relevant: how do we, one hundred years later, fit into its mosaic?

Nobody can live in the world without experiencing hate and sorrow and what he despises. Artists are our courageous citizens. Full immersion into what is good and bad (and toxic) is a requirement of art, a reductive exercise that imperils health as much as it swallows innocence. It also menaces talent. Almost every great writer has written bad books, Fitzgerald certainly did. This is because every talent has flaws, blind spots, or limitations impossible to overcome (though these can be cleverly disguised). But just as we must forgive our friends a lot to keep them as friends, we must forgive our artists for not being as perfect as we might wish. Our greatest writers and artists mirror the truth of our times. We cannot be them, nor wish to suffer as they did, but we can gain great pleasure in contemplating the experience of life that inspired them to do the work that shows us what they saw in our own backyard. ■

Review by Tom Casey

Tom is the author of *Human Error and Strangers’ Gate*

## LIBRARY CORNER

By Erin Shea Dummeyer

About ten years ago, I was visiting family on Cape Cod and my brother invited me to go “geocaching.” I had never heard of this activity, but quickly found out that it’s sort of like a worldwide scavenger hunt. You use GPS coordinates to locate a “geocache,” often hidden outside in a hollowed-out log or next to a stone. The geocache itself is usually a waterproof container with a logbook inside so you can leave your name. Occasionally, the geocaches have little prizes inside as well that you can take as a trophy. While on Cape Cod, we found a geocache in one

of those charming little libraries on Cape Cod, inside a hollowed-out book on the shelf.

So that is why when a local letterboxing enthusiast approached the Mark Twain Library wanting to place some “letterboxes” inside the building, I said yes immediately. Letterboxing is similar to geocaching, except it’s a much older hobby, and it doesn’t require the use of GPS coordinates. Part of letterboxing culture are the unique rubber stamps located inside each letterbox that people can use to log their finds inside a notebook. For those wanting to learn more about

the activity, there was a great, informative feature on it in the Sentinel’s January 26, 2023 issue.

I’m really excited about the three letterboxes that have been placed inside the Mark Twain Library. Check out atlasquest.com and search in Redding to read the clues that will lead you to our letterboxes. It’s a fun hobby for all ages and adds a dash of whimsy to the library experience. ■

Erin Shea Dummeyer is Director, Mark Twain Library

## Good books for good readers

By Margi Esten

Secret book passion: whenever I am traveling, I really like to get to the airport extra early; not because I am afraid of missing my flight, but because I have an obsession with airport bookstores. And I want time to browse. Whether it’s Barnes & Noble, Cover to Cover, or the ever-familiar Hudson Books, I can never resist checking out the selection and (often) buying books I don’t need to read on my trip. Some purchases are more successful than others, and this recent trip I was on was, indeed, beneficial. And wonderful.

I pretty much abandoned all the books and Kindle editions I had packed after spotting *A Flicker in the Dark* by Stacy Willingham. I simply couldn’t put down this edge-of-your-seat mystery/thriller

about a young psychologist in Baton Rouge grappling with her horrific past. Only a day into my trip, I then picked up her second book – *All the Dangerous Things*. The story of a young mother, a missing child, and long-buried secrets from her own childhood (again) – another one of those rare books literally impossible to put down. And just when you think you’ve got it all figured out... there’s a twist.

I also picked up *The Maid: A Novel* by Nita Prose. This Canadian author’s debut murder mystery is satisfying on so many levels – the unusual protagonist Molly (the Maid), the intriguing plot, and the fictional Regency Grand Hotel in Toronto. It’s a typical whodunnit, but Molly’s character is so

endearing; you don’t meet many like her in fiction.

Finally, just as I was ready to walk out the door for the airport, the new Jane Harper book arrived on my doorstep. I have talked about this Australian author in a previous column, and *Exiles* is her most recent book and completes the Aaron Falk trilogy. It is also the first time Harper gives the loner detective a love interest. Her writing is impeccable and as usual, her description of the South Australian wine country is so dramatic, it’s almost a character itself. It’s not necessary to read the entire Aaron Falk trilogy in order to enjoy *Exiles*, but it certainly enhances the experience (*The Dry*, *Force of Nature*, and *Exiles*). ■

### Artificial Intelligence: a primer / Continued from page 7

Future layoffs could be on the horizon, too. A recent survey showed that an ominous 63 percent of business leaders believe that integrating ChatGPT will either “definitely” or “probably” lead to culling their human workforce. A quarter of respondents said they’ve already replaced workers with AI, with 93 percent saying they plan to expand use of AI.

So far, 66 percent of the companies employing ChatGPT use it to write code, 58 percent for copywriting and content creation, 57 percent for customer support,

and 52 percent for summarizing meetings and documents, the survey found. The business leaders are easily impressed, too, with 55 percent saying ChatGPT’s quality of work is “excellent,” according to a report on Futurism.com

Where does that leave the education system when information, properly packaged, is at your fingertips 24/7? Is sending Harvey to Harvard worth \$125,000 each year? Education is not ready for this.

#### Caveats:

In order for AI to do real-time

searches, it requires software-writing software able to conduct real-time searches in the real world in real time, which means ... We don’t know how AI works because human programmers cannot write code in real time to conduct real-time searches using evolving genetic algorithms to improve said search in real time in any way, shape or fashion.

What happens if the software decides to do the search in order to evolve?

### Timeline of cautionary tales

“Who controls the past controls the future, who controls the present controls the past.” – 1984.

“Everything is theoretically impossible, until it is done.” – Robert A. Heinlein

**1968:** HAL 9000 in the movie *2001: A Space Odyssey* provides a cautionary depiction of a fictional artificial intelligence onboard a spacecraft gone awry.

**2000:** Bill Joy, then Chief Scientist at Sun Microsystems, pens the article “Why the future doesn’t need us” in *Wired* magazine. “What we do suggest is that the human race might easily permit itself to drift into a position of such dependence on the machines that it would have no practical choice but to accept all of the machines’ decisions. As society and the problems that face it become more and more complex and machines become more and more intelligent, people will let machines make more of their decisions for them, simply because machine-made decisions will bring better results than man-made ones. Eventually a stage may be reached at which the decisions necessary to keep the system running will be so complex that human beings will be incapable of making them intelligently. At that stage the machines will be in effective control. People won’t be able to just turn the machines off, because they will be so dependent on them that turning them off would amount to suicide.”

**2015:** Prof Stephen Hawking tells the BBC that such machines could “spell the end of the human race”. Eric Horvitz, a Microsoft Research chief, disagrees, saying he believes, “Out of control AI will not kill us.”

**2015:** Futureoflife.org publishes this perspective on the dangers of AI. “Once AI systems can themselves design smarter systems, we may hit an ‘intelligence explosion’, very quickly leaving humanity behind. This could eradicate poverty or war; it could also eradicate us. That risk comes not from AI’s potential malevolence or consciousness, but from its competence - in other words, not from how it feels, but what it does... AI doesn’t need consciousness to pursue its goals, any more than heat-seeking missiles do. Equally, the danger is not from robots, per se, but from intelligence itself, which requires nothing more than an internet connection to do us incalculable harm.”

**2017:** *The MIT Technology Review* publishes “The Dark Secret at the Heart of AI” which states, “No one really knows how the most advanced algorithms do what they do. That could be a problem.”

**2017:** GZ.com conducts research on Google’s AI, introducing scarce resources. “When apples were abundant, the two agents were happy to collect their fruit without targeting each other. But in more scarce scenarios with fewer apples

around, the agents became more aggressive. The researchers also found that the greater the ‘cognitive capacity’ of the agent, the more frequently they attacked their opponent. This makes sense, as in this scenario attacking an opponent is more complex behavior and so requires greater intelligence.”

**2019:** Defensenews.com reports that the “US Navy moves toward unleashing killer robot ships on the world’s oceans.”

**2021:** *The Journal of Artificial Intelligence Research* publishes the article “Superintelligence cannot be contained”. The article quotes Alan Turing in 1950 saying, “Machines take me by surprise with great frequency. This is largely because I do not do sufficient calculation to decide what to expect them to do.”

**2022:** The Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers reports that, “Last March, a group of researchers made headlines by revealing that they had developed an artificial-intelligence (AI) tool that could invent potential new chemical weapons. What’s more, it could do so at an incredible speed: It took only 6 hours for the AI tool to suggest 40,000 of them. The most worrying part of the story, however, was how easy it was to develop that AI tool.”

AI will impact society as we move further into the 21st century.

Tech never sleeps. “Question everything.” - Einstein ■

Robert E. Moran is CEO, Digital Constructs Inc.

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In closing ... The implications of AI are too important to ignore. People tend to think of AI as a static thing, not as an actual set of millions of interconnected things, an ever-evolving entity living in a distributed environment where duplication, modification, and

updating of real-time code work at speeds far beyond the kin of man.

With this in mind, an excellent article in *The Atlantic* titled “How the Enlightenment Ends”, connects AI to the Enlightenment at a deep level, necessary reading for anyone concerned about how

# THE NATURAL WORLD

## Proper mulching techniques are the root to healthy trees | *By Terry Karpen*

“Mulch volcanoes” are extremely harmful to the health of trees. Over-mulching in the shape of a mound around the trunk of the tree is pejoratively referred to as a mulch volcano. Mulch is piled up so high that the trunk flare is buried. The trunk flare is the base of the tree which tapers out just above where the root system begins. A buried trunk flare will lead to disease, decay, root rot, and the eventual death of the tree. Over-mulching is a pervasive occurrence and painful sight to knowledgeable professionals who see the practice as killing trees with kindness.

The phenomenon of over-mulching began with the intention to prevent mowers and trimmers from damaging tree trunks. Unfortunately, over time, homeowners and landscapers believed that if adding a layer of mulch around the base of a tree was helpful, then a pile of mulch must be even better. When homeowners see landscape professionals adding mulch piled high directly against the trunk of trees, they presume that is the correct method. Landscapers see other professionals mulch this way and think it is the correct way to mulch. And seeing mulch volcanoes everywhere has furthered the misconception that this is the proper way to mulch.

### Why mulch volcanoes are bad

Trees with too much mulch around the base of the trunk experience a



Photos by Terry Karpen

A “mulch volcano”.

wide variety of stress. Trees need to breathe. They need oxygen to survive and when buried in mulch, they can't breathe properly. Roots may grow upward, out of the ground, and into the mulch searching for water and oxygen. Piling mulch against the trunk holds in moisture which can cause the bark to rot. The side effects of over-mulching occur slowly, and a tree's decline will likely be blamed on other problems. Because it is a slow death, there is usually not an associated link. As a tree declines in health, its immune system is weakened, and it becomes more susceptible to attack from insects, diseases, and harmful fungi.

### How to repair an over-mulched tree

Remove excess mulch and soil until you expose the flare of the

tree. Use a shovel or garden fork, and then rake, being careful not to damage the bark of the tree. If there are roots growing into the mulch, use pruning shears and remove those roots carefully. These are called adventitious roots. Their development can be in response to adverse environmental conditions or stresses, and as they grow in diameter, they can develop into girdling roots. Lastly, after breaking up any clumps, reapply mulch around the tree to a depth of two to four inches, making sure there is no mulch within four to six inches of the base of the tree.

### How to apply mulch

Organic mulch is recommended, meaning mulch that comes from plants as opposed to inorganic mulches such as gravel or



An exposed trunk flare, where the bark is starting to rot.

decorative rocks. Organic mulch choices can be leaves, bark, pine needles, cocoa shells, or wood chips.

Fresh mulch can go on top of old mulch, but loosen the existing layer first if it's matted down or crusted to improve drainage and air movement. Apply the mulch around the tree to a depth of two to four inches, making sure there is no mulch within four to six inches of the base of the tree. The mulch should be spread out almost flat. All of this applies for shrubs and perennials as well.

### Why mulch can be beneficial

Mulch conserves soil moisture, moderates soil temperature, reduces growth of weeds, helps protect soil from erosion, prevents frost heaving in winter, and adds organic matter to the soil as it breaks down. Mulch makes garden beds and landscapes look more tidy and attractive.

Proper mulching techniques are the root to healthy trees. ■

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

## OBITUARIES

### Janet Frances Glennan

December 6, 1941 – February 28, 2023



Janet Frances Glennan

Our beloved Janet will live on in our hearts forever. Her quiet, peaceful strength will steady us always. Janet made herself a blessing to everyone she met. She will be remembered for her grace, friendship, tenderness, welcoming nature, and selflessness.

Janet was a loving wife to her soulmate, Bob, whom she loved deeply for 63 years. She was the devoted mother to Karen, Kristin, Mary Beth, and Michael, and to their spouses Joe, Ross, Chuck,

and Tammy. Jan was an educator and inspiration to many, leaving her gentle mark on every child she taught at CCD and Town & Country Montessori, and on their parents whom she guided so tenderly.

Jan's extended family and friends remember her as deeply faithful, gracious, kind, and an attentive listener. She loved being by the water at twilight, walking in the woods, picking up litter on the side of the road on her walks around the block – she was a lover of nature before it was trendy – she saw it as a constant reflection of God's greatness.

Jan was born on December 6, 1941 in Lynn, MA to Margarita Johnson and Henry Callahan. A graduate of Colby College, where she met Bob in their sophomore year, Jan spent many years raising their children before embarking on a career in childhood education.

Janet was a faithful parishioner at Sacred Heart for over 50 years and lived her life in dedicated service to others. She led teens

and adults on their spiritual journey, couples preparing to enter the sacrament of marriage, and married couples in their efforts to honor one another.

Janet remains with us always, and because of her we will see the joy in the strength of the family she created, all from the love in her own heart.

Janet is survived by her treasured husband and children, her cherished grandchildren Matthew, Corey, Kelsey, Ben, Brian, Kyle, Corey, Julia, Michael, Ryan, Cashel, Lucan, Rowan, and Aoife; by her great-granddaughter Andersyn; by her sister-in-law Nancy Barry, and by her many adored nieces and nephews. She is predeceased by her mother Greta Johnson, her father Henry Callahan, her sisters Jean and Susan, her mother-in-law Elizabeth Murray, and father-in-law Robert Glennan Sr.

In lieu of flowers, please consider a donation in Jan's honor to the American Heart Association, Sacred Heart/St. Patrick's Parish. ■

### Robert J. “Bob” Kaufman

June 11, 1925 – March 4, 2023



Robert J. “Bob” Kaufman

Robert J. “Bob” Kaufman, 97, of Redding, died peacefully on Saturday, March 4, 2023. He was the loving husband of Peggy (Fine) Kaufman.

Bob was born in Brooklyn, NY on June 11, 1925; a son of the late Robert and Marion (Martin) Kaufman. He served in the United States Army Air Corps during World War II.

A Redding resident since

1942, Bob was the President and Owner of M & M Precast Corp. of Danbury. He also was a developer and builder and established many commercial and residential properties during his long and successful career.

Outside of his business career, Bob was an avid pilot, holding licenses to fly planes and helicopters. Bob also enjoyed his home pruning his beautiful rose bushes, apple trees and grape vines...entertaining with Peggy many wonderful parties especially Christmas and Fourth of July where he loved barbecuing his famous and delicious chicken wings.

Every Christmas since the early 70's, Bob would put up a very large lit Christmas tree at his business in Danbury...M&M Precast...this he did for all the area residents...this he did no matter what...even when it blew down one year, he insisted on putting it back up...this is the man Bob was, always caring and giving to others.

Bob is survived by his wife of 28 years, Peggy, as well as his children; Robin Martino; Rick Kaufman and his wife, Cindy; Todd Kaufman and his wife, Wendy; and Terry Krampetz and her husband, Ron. In addition, Mr. Kaufman is survived by many grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

In addition to his parents, Mr. Kaufman was predeceased by a son-in-law, Al Martino, a brother Walter, and by a sister Irene.

Family and friends will be received on Thursday, March 9, 2023, from 4:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. at Jowdy-Kane Funeral Home; 9 Granville Avenue, Danbury. A Mass of Christian Burial will be celebrated on Friday, March 10, 2023, at 10:45 a.m. at Saint Peter's Church; 121 Main Street, Danbury. Interment with US Military Honors will follow in Elmwood Cemetery, Bethel.

Contributions in Bob's memory may be made to the American Cancer Society. ■

## 2nd Annual Seed Exchange at Redding Grange #15

By Susan Clark



Photo by Susan Clark

Just a few of the many varieties of seeds waiting for you at the Grange seed exchange on Sunday, March 12.

The first day of Daylight Saving Time is Sunday, March 12 – and, appropriately, it's also the day when gardeners from Redding and beyond will gather at the Grange Hall on Newtown Turnpike to swap seeds, share advice, and celebrate the beginning of the gardening season.

For the Grange, it's a momentous event as well, because it will be the first annual event to be repeated in a second year since the organization was re-chartered in 2021. “I'm so excited to continue to build upon new town

traditions for Redding Grange – and our town – with our second year of the seed exchange,” said Grange President Elizabeth Jensen. “I am very grateful to the many Grange members for bringing this to life – our proponents of propagation! Our modest, historic Grange hall is an inviting space that is the perfect size and feel for nature-inspired events just like this.”

The Seed Exchange will offer more than fifty varieties of seed, all donated by local gardeners and other Connecticut Granges and organizations. The fact that the seeds are local and have been grown on and saved by your neighbors is particularly important, because it means they are adapted to our local environment and will grow well here.

Of particular interest this year are seeds from the prize-winning pumpkin at last year's Grange Fair, heirloom Brandywine tomato seeds grown on from a plant started by late First Selectwoman Mary Ann Guitar in 2005, and popcorn from Grange Vice President Bill Hill's Warrups Farm.

The event will take place from 10:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m. on March 12. All are welcome, whether you have seeds to contribute or simply need some to take away and start your garden. Please join us. ■

### Couch Hill Preserve / Continued from page 1

furry hiking companions on leash (no matter how enticing the wide, open space can be) is especially important here.

Couch Hill Preserve can be a lovely “bite-size” outing for those wanting to take their time along flat, level ground (note that there are a few crossings through stone walls that require stepping up and down piled rocks). Bring a picnic and enjoy it at the tables just inside the entrance of the parking area. Or, use Couch Hill Preserve as a bookend to a longer hike down

into Huntington Park. Trails and paths leading from the fields of the Preserve into the park area are clear, and offer miles and miles of well-groomed, forested delight (a subject which a future Big Outdoors article will undoubtedly describe!) ■

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

# CALENDAR OF EVENTS

\$ = fee applies  
R = registration required

## ARTS

**Monday, Jan. 9 -  
Friday, Mar. 24**

**Easton Arts Council Winter Celebration of the Arts + Member Art Show**  
Check eastonlibrary.org for open hours.  
Works by 50 artists and photographers from Easton and neighboring towns. Contact Elizabeth Katz at katz.elizabethi@gmail.com with questions.  
Easton Public Library  
691 Morehouse Road  
Easton  
eastonartscouncil.org

**Thursday, Mar. 9**

**The Allen and Helen Hermes Arts Series presents: Compton and Newberry**  
7:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.  
An evening of new and traditional American music, with roots in bluegrass, early country, blues, gospel and string band music.  
Mark Twain Library  
439 Redding Road  
marktwainlibrary.org  
**R**

**Sunday, Mar. 12**

**Danbury Concert Association Daedalus Quartet**  
3:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.  
Chamber ensemble concert, free for anyone under 18  
WCSU Visual & Performing Arts Center  
43 Lake Avenue Extension  
Danbury  
danburyconcert.org  
**\$**

**Sunday, Mar. 12**

**Music on the Hill – March Winds**  
3:00 p.m.  
Festival Chorus, Jubilate Ringers, and the Community Children’s Chorus will perform in this spring concert.  
The Unitarian Universalist Congregation in Westport  
10 Lyons Plain Road  
Westport  
musiconthehillct.org

**Saturday, Mar. 18**

**CMEA Western Region Middle School Festival**  
2:00 p.m. – Orchestra and Concert Band  
4:00 p.m. – Jazz Ensemble and Choir  
Wilton High School  
395 Danbury Road  
Wilton  
cmea.org  
**\$**

## CHILDREN, TEENS

**Friday, Mar. 3 –  
Friday, Apr. 14**

**Caregiver & Child Series (Ages 18 – 35 months)**  
6 Fridays from  
10:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.  
(no program on April 7)  
New Pond Farm Education Center  
101 Marchant Road  
newpondfarm.org  
**\$, R**

**Tuesday, Mar. 14**

**Storytime for Children with Adults (Ages 1-5)**  
10:30 a.m. – 11:15 a.m.  
or 1:30 p.m. – 2:15 p.m.  
Nature stories and related farm activities.  
New Pond Farm Education Center  
101 Marchant Road  
newpondfarm.org  
**\$, R**

**Saturday, Mar. 18**

**STEM at New Pond Farm (Grades 1-4)**  
10:30 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.  
New Pond Farm Education Center  
101 Marchant Road  
newpondfarm.org  
**\$, R**

**Monday, Mar. 20**

**Lego Building and Snacks! (Grades K-4)**  
4:00 p.m. – 4:45 p.m.  
After school snacks and Legos  
Mark Twain Library  
439 Redding Road  
marktwainlibrary.org  
**R**

**Monday, Mar. 27**

**Pirate Party! (Ages 4-6)**  
3:30 p.m. – 4:15 p.m.  
Pirate crafts, stories, snacks, and cartoons.  
Mark Twain Library  
439 Redding Road  
marktwainlibrary.org  
**R**

## HOLIDAY

**Saturday, Mar. 11**

**New Fairfield St. Patrick’s Day Parade**  
10:00 a.m.  
Brush Hill Road  
New Fairfield  
newfairfield.org

**Saturday, Mar. 11**

**Norwalk St. Patrick’s Day Parade**  
11:00 a.m.  
Veterans Memorial Park  
42 Seaview Avenue  
Norwalk  
norwalkct.org

**Thursday, Mar. 16**

**St. Patrick’s Day Concert and Tea**  
10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.  
10:30 a.m. Bagpipe performance  
Irish treats, bagpipe music, and tea. Bring your own cup and saucer.  
Register by emailing mpilato@townofreddingct.org or 203-938-9725  
Heritage Center  
37 Lonetown Road  
townofreddingct.org  
**R**

**Sunday, Mar. 19**

**Greater Danbury St. Patrick’s Day Parade**  
2:00 p.m.  
Main Street to Lake Avenue  
Danbury  
gdicc.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**

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

**First Church of Christ, Congregational**

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

**Long Ridge United Methodist**

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

**Sacred Heart Catholic Church**

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

**St. Patrick Catholic Church**

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

**Temple B’nai Chaim**

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

## SPECIAL PROGRAMS

**Thursday, Mar. 9**

**Madam President: Women Leaders in Higher Education**  
7:30 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.  
Learn from a panel of leaders, including the presidents of Barnard College, Pratt Institute, The Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art and Spelman College.  
Grace Farms  
365 Lukes Wood Road  
New Canaan  
gracefarms.org  
**\$, R**

**Saturday, Mar. 11**

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

**Sunday, Mar. 12**

**2nd Annual Seed Exchange and Give-away**  
10:00 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.  
Bring seeds to share, or come get seeds you need. All are welcome.  
Redding Grange #15  
399 Newtown Turnpike  
E-mail seeds@phineus.com with any questions

**Sunday, Mar. 12**

**Fire Preparedness and Escape Planning Workshops**  
10:00 a.m., 12:00 p.m., and 2:00 p.m.  
Free workshops for adults presented by the Georgetown Volunteer Fire Company.  
Georgetown Firehouse  
6 Portland Avenue  
gtownfire.org/events  
**R**

**Monday, Mar. 13**

**Plant Propagation for the Home Gardener**  
11:30 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.  
Redding Garden Club’s March meeting for members and guests.  
Redding Community Center  
37 Lonetown Road  
reddinggardenclub.org  
**\$, R**

**Thursday, Mar. 16**

**Nature Talks with The Nature Conservancy: Oceans, Our Global Watchdog**  
10:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.  
Grace Farms  
365 Lukes Wood Road  
New Canaan  
gracefarms.org  
**R**

**Saturday Mar. 18**

**Gardening Basics: Planting Cold Weather Crops**  
2:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.  
Drop-in program  
New Pond Farm Education Center  
101 Marchant Road  
newpondfarm.org

**Saturday, Mar. 25**

**48th Annual RVNAhealth Wellness Fair**  
9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.  
Community event providing health screenings, expertise, and information.  
East Ridge Middle School  
10 East Ridge Road  
Ridgefield  
rvnahealth.org

**Thursday, Mar. 30**

**Amazing CT Tales - A Podcaster’s Journey**  
7:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.  
Learn from Mike Allen, storyteller and former journalist, about his decision to start a podcast on Connecticut history.  
In-person and Zoom  
Mark Twain Library  
439 Redding Road  
marktwainlibrary.org  
**R**

## MEETINGS

**Thursday, Mar. 9**

**Board of Assessment Appeals**  
4:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.  
Town Hall / Hearing Room  
100 Hill Road  
townofreddingct.org

**Thursday, Mar. 9**

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

**Thursday, Mar. 9**

**Redding Board of Education Curriculum Committee**  
6:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.  
Helen Keller Middle School / Library Media Center  
360 Sport Hill Road  
Easton  
er9.org

**Friday, Mar. 10**

**Board of Assessment Appeals**  
3:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.  
Town Hall / Hearing Room  
100 Hill Road  
townofreddingct.org

**Saturday, Mar. 11**

**Board of Assessment Appeals**  
9:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.  
Town Hall / Hearing Room  
100 Hill Road  
townofreddingct.org

**Monday, Mar. 13**

**Board of Ethics**  
7:30 p.m.  
Town Hall / Conference Room  
(in-person)  
Google Meet (virtual)  
100 Hill Road  
townofreddingct.org

**Tuesday Mar. 14**

**Redding BOE Curriculum Committee**  
6:00 p.m.  
Check townofreddingct.org for up-to-date location information  
townofreddingct.org

**Tuesday, Mar. 14**

**Fire District #1 Meeting**  
7:00 p.m.  
Redding Ridge Firehouse  
186 Black Rock Turnpike  
reddingfire1.org

**Tuesday, Mar. 14**

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

**Wednesday, Mar. 15**

**Board of Assessment Appeals**  
4:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.  
Town Hall / Hearing Room  
100 Hill Road  
townofreddingct.org

**Wednesday, Mar. 15**

**Water Pollution Control Commission**  
7:30 p.m.  
Zoom  
townofreddingct.org

**Thursday, Mar. 16**

**Board of Assessment Appeals**  
4:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.  
Town Hall / Hearing Room  
100 Hill Road  
townofreddingct.org

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

## This Week’s Featured Events

### Gourmet Pancake Breakfast

**Saturday, Mar. 11**  
8:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.  
BSA Troop 306 fundraiser with pancakes, omelets, juice, coffee and tea.  
West Redding Fire House  
306 Umpawaug Road  
reddingtroop306.org

### 2nd Annual Seed Exchange and Give-away

**Sunday, Mar. 12**  
10:00 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.  
Bring seeds to share, or come get seeds you need. All are welcome.  
Redding Grange #15  
399 Newtown Turnpike  
E-mail seeds@phineus.com with any questions

### Fire Preparedness and Escape Planning Workshops

**Sunday, Mar. 12**  
10:00 a.m., 12:00 p.m., and 2:00 p.m.  
Workshops for adults by the Georgetown Volunteer Fire Company.  
Georgetown Firehouse  
6 Portland Avenue  
gtownfire.org/events

### Want to feature an upcoming event?

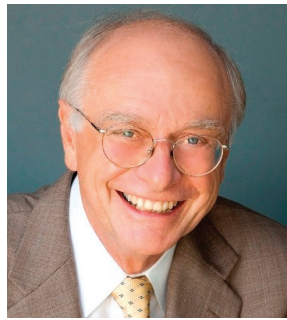
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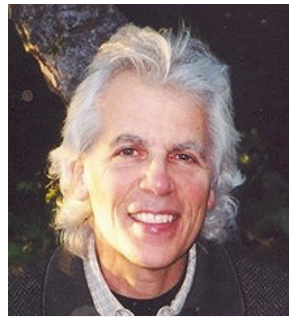
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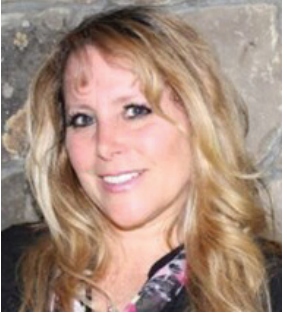
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