

REDDING SENTINEL

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Cultivate, educate, donate... relocate UConn Extension and master gardener program face eviction

By Donna Christopher

A 3,000-square-foot demonstration garden in Bethel with blueberries, eggplant, and other produce is where master gardeners research, test, and cultivate growing ideas. The results are shared with the public, and the harvest is donated to local food pantries.

This is the UConn Extension-Fairfield County Extension Center, located at 67 Stony Hill Road in Bethel. Master gardener, 4H, and nutrition programs staffed by a team of six people are based here, with master gardeners receiving training at the Bethel location on rotation among the eight total UConn Extension sites throughout the state.

Once certified, master gardeners complete an internship and community service hours. Their role is to educate the public and provide beautification services in the communities around the county, such as planting at New Pond Farm Education Center and Redding's Parade Path, among other local sites.

Volunteers work the gardens, which are open to the public, several times a week. Visitors from across Fairfield County typically visit on Saturdays when the Bethel Farmers Market (which operates independently, but at the same location) is running. Seed giveaways bring people in usually in March ahead of the growing season. Master gardener volunteers help visitors identify insects and cuttings from non-native plants and troubleshoot common gardening issues.

"One person's wildflower is another person's weed," said Sandra Wilson, the UConn - Fairfield County Master Gardener Program Coordinator, about the kinds of plants people bring in asking for help to identify or mitigate. Japanese Knotweed, for example, is a common nuisance for gardeners, though some property owners find its red shoots, heart-shaped leaves, and white-flower blossoms attractive.

Wilson has been involved with the program for the past 23 years, coordinating for Fairfield County for 18. The Bethel location has served Fairfield County since the 1950's. The master gardener program has been around since 1978.

"The Bethel location was the first to bring the master gardener program to Connecticut," Wilson said. Joseph Maisano Jr., who died in 2019, brought the master gardener program to Bethel over 40 years ago. Maisano was a well-known horticulturist in Connecticut who worked as a county agent for the University of Connecticut Cooperative Extension Service for 28 years, from 1962 to 1990.

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Photo by Jessie Wright

Spring is here and so are the pollinators. This pussy willow on Cross Highway was positively humming with hundreds of bees on the first day of spring last week. If you have a photo you'd like us to feature here, with credit of course, please e-mail editor@reddingsentinel.org

Board of Finance approves budgets

By Rocco Valluzzo

Buy a unanimous vote, the Redding Board of Finance approved both the Board of Selectmen and Redding Board of Education proposed fiscal year 2023-24 budgets at its Monday, March 27 meeting.

Coming in at \$16,316,554, the Selectmen budget represents an increase of 2.54%, or \$704,897 over the current budget. It is also \$10,000 higher than the total the Selectmen initially approved at their March 6 meeting, which was a 2.48% increase.

According to First Selectwoman Julia Pemberton, this adjustment was due to a new, mandatory increase for the Town's contribution to Connecticut's Municipal Employees Retirement System (CMERS), which led to an increase of \$120,000. CMERS is the public pension plan provided by the State for participating municipalities' employees.

However, with offsets in line items such as legal expenses

(\$50,000), contingency (\$25,000), road salt (\$20,000), and police vehicle maintenance (\$15,000), the increase to the Selectmen's previous proposed budget was just \$10,000.

Pemberton said the Town is currently under expended in the current fiscal year's legal budget. As a result, she felt comfortable with removing \$50,000 from the legal budget, which is currently \$200,000.

"I would rather remove that \$50,000 then keep that in and increase the budget," she said. "I think that is a good bet that we could do without that. If there is an unanticipated legal action, then I know the Board of Finance has been willing to work with the Selectmen on that. But I would rather not tax people in advance for that this year."

For the last several years, the contingency budget, which is used for unanticipated circumstances,

was kept at \$50,000. Last year it was increased to \$100,000 because of the inflationary environment. Pemberton added that the Town would most likely use all of its contingency budget in the current fiscal year because of the increase in fuel and electricity costs. However, since fuel costs have recently gone down, the Selectmen proposed to reduce that figure by \$25,000.

The Town also did not use much road salt this winter. By reducing the salt budget by \$20,000, the Town can also use money from the road budget in the event it needs to purchase any salt next year and will also likely use the remaining funds in the current salt budget for next year.

Police vehicle maintenance is for anticipated expenses involving items such as oil changes, tires, spark plugs, etc. If additional funds are needed, they can come

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REDDING'S BIG OUTDOORS

Death, taxes, and hiking

By Scott MacMillan



Photos by Scott MacMillan

Consider this column a reflection on life's few certainties: death, taxes, and hiking. In the wilds of nature, we ponder our mortality, our worries and cares so insignificant in the scheme of the cosmos. This whole Earth is but a "mote of dust suspended in a sunbeam," in the words of Carl

Sagan.

Or, if you're like me, you're thinking about Schedule C and what to make of the Qualified Business Income Deduction, because you still haven't filed your 1040, which, as a reminder, is due April 18. Get on it!

Enter James Cunningham, the

Hiking CPA. James is a resident of Redding and a senior accountant at Gioffre & Company. In 2021, he started a YouTube channel that combines his love of the outdoors with his tax advisory skills. He hikes, and he talks about taxes. That's about the sum of it.

In an episode from last June, for instance, James hiked Redding's Saugatuck Trail while discussing whether it's truly advantageous to apply for the \$250-per-child Connecticut Child Tax Rebate. (Short answer: depends.) Other topics include international taxation during a trip to Canada and the Advance Child Tax Credit while hiking the Race Brook Falls in Sheffield, MA.

James, a father of three children in the Redding school system, says he and his wife, Laura, came up with the Hiking CPA idea while hiking parts of the Appala-

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State considers new comms tower on Hoyt Scout Reservation

By Rob Sample

Troubled by dropped cell calls? Improved service may be in Redding's future if a proposal for a new transmission tower at the Hoyt Boy Scouts Reservation on Marchant Road gets approved by the State.

"The proposal is now in the hands of the Connecticut Siting Council," said Aimee Pardee, Land Use Director for the Town of Redding. "The Siting Council has to approve all proposed communication towers in the State of Connecticut. We're waiting for their decision."

Pardee noted that until the Town receives notice of that approval, the name of the cellular service provider (or providers) who will use the tower will remain unknown. The Connecticut Siting Council handles applications for all kinds of transmission towers and lines. These include utilities and cable television operators in addition to cell-service companies. However, in recent years cell towers have constituted a large share of applicants.

The applicant in this case came from All Points Technology Corporation, of Waterford. All Points would operate the tower on behalf of MCM Holdings, a Hartford-based company that works with carriers to identify, qualify, and facilitate the installation of antennas and other wireless communication equipment at sites nationwide. If approved, the Boy Scouts would lease the land on which the antenna will sit.

"One important consideration for the Connecticut Siting Council is an application's compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act," Pardee noted. "The Council must evaluate the proposed tower and associate facilities for any possible impact on nearby historical areas."

As part of that, the Town sought input from Greenwich-based Aspetuck Landways on the matter. Its report arrived on February 27, and Pardee's office forwarded it to the Siting Council.

Aspetuck's recommendations included evaluating the Hoyt Reservation for National Register of Historical Places (NRHP) eligibility, as well as archaeological testing in areas of proposed construction. It also urged the council to consider the visual impact the proposed tower would have on three nearby properties that are on the registry, as well as several more that have been identified as eligible for the NRHP. All are in Redding.

The Hoyt Reservation consists of 170 acres of rolling woodland and fields in West Redding. The Boy Scouts Connecticut Yankee

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EDITORIAL

The decline of pollinator populations, such as bees and butterflies, is a growing concern among scientists and environmentalists in Connecticut. Pollinators play a critical role in our ecosystems by facilitating the reproduction of plants, but they are also responsible for pollinating a significant portion of the world's food crops. Habitat loss, pesticide use, and changes in climate have contributed to a significant decline in pollinator populations, many researchers say.

There are opportunities to get involved at the state level in advocacy efforts - "An Act Concerning Neonicotinoids for Non-Agricultural Use" is a bill that was introduced this February to the State Senate that would further strengthen Connecticut's restrictions on the use of neonicotinoids, a type of pesticide. As lawmakers consider this legislation, letters, phone calls, and e-mails to your representatives can make a difference.

In honor of the Sentinel's "garden issue" this week, there is also a way for every resident to help make Redding a welcome place for pollinators - planting native plants and flowers, which provide crucial habitats and food sources for these important species.

Native plants and flowers have evolved with local pollinators and are adapted to the specific environmental conditions of our region. They offer food and shelter for pollinators throughout the year, including during the critical times of migration, breeding, and hibernation. Additionally, native plants often require less maintenance and water than non-native species, making them more sustainable choices for landscaping. They are also beautiful - they provide a wide diversity of colors, textures, and fragrances.

There are several options for sourcing seeds of native plants. The Connecticut Audubon Society, based in Fairfield, offers a selection of seeds for pollinator-friendly plants, including milkweed, bee balm, and goldenrod (ct.audubon.org/news/getting-started-native-plants). The Pollinator Pathway initiative, which aims to create a network of pollinator-friendly gardens throughout Fairfield County and New England, also provides resources and information on how to participate in the program (pollinator-pathway.org).

If you need any inspiration, consider taking a walk along Redding's Parade Path adjacent to the Town Green. Filled with native and historical plant species (and informational plaques to accompany), it is a lovely walk and great place to start gathering ideas.

As we face the challenge of protecting our planet's biodiversity, planting native plants and flowers for pollinators is a small yet meaningful action that we all can take. By supporting pollinator populations, we can help to ensure the health and vitality of our local ecosystems. ■

LEGAL NOTICES

At the regularly scheduled meeting of the ZBA Commission held on March 21, 2023 at 7:00pm via ZOOM the commission reached the following decisions.

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

2. Application #03-02-23 - 3

The Redding Zoning Commission has scheduled a Public Hearing for April 12, 2023 at 7:30 PM in person at the Town Hall Hearing Room 100 Hill Road Redding CT. The purpose of the hearing is to consider the following application.

Application #23-01Z - Proposal to amend Sections 5.6.2 and 5.12 as they relate to Acces-

State considers new comms tower on Hoyt Scout Reservation
continued from page 1

Council uses the Hoyt Reservation for a variety of scouting activities, including district-wide meetings, picnics, hiking, and overnight camping.

"The scouts have sold some properties, but not the current Hoyt site," said Pardee. The proposed lease arrangement for the tower property will provide the Connecticut Yankee Council with revenue for programs of benefit to its member troops in Western Connecticut. These include the three Boy Scout troops in Redding.

One curious wrinkle about the telecom business is that in Connecticut, the Siting Council has the final say in the approval, location, and construction of towers on private land. Cities and towns have no jurisdiction, although applicants for building a tower are expected to consult with towns first to ascertain any

Board of Finance approves budgets / continued from page 1

from the police fund, which comes from special duty jobs and is controlled by the Chief.

The Board of Finance also approved the Redding Board of Education's budget of \$24,569,528 with no changes. This represents an increase of 3.18% (\$758,370) over the current fiscal year.

The consolidated budget of \$40,886,082, which is an in-

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.) **Approved** ■

Elizabeth Williams
- Chairman, Redding Zoning Board of Appeals

sory Residential Apartments.

All may attend the meeting and correspondence will also be accepted. The application may be viewed in the Zoning Office during regular business hours. Questions should be addressed to 203-938-8517. ■

Matt Lecher, Chairman,
Redding Zoning Commission

potential issues.

The Siting Council may also solicit input from municipal boards but isn't required to do so. It also typically schedules a public hearing on a proposed tower.

The cellular-service provider must eventually prove two things to the Siting Council: the site's necessity for phone service and that a proposed tower will have no significant negative impact on the environment.

More than three-fourths of these applications ultimately get approved by the Siting Council. However, there have been cases when municipalities have challenged Siting Board approval in court. In 2006, several residents of New Canaan sought to prevent the construction of a cellular tower at a local country club. That case was dismissed eventually by the Superior Court Judicial District of New Britain. ■

crease of \$2.93% (\$1,163,267), was also accepted by the Board. The proposed Region 9 budget (which includes Redding's share of Joel Barlow High School) of \$11,554,654 has not yet been formally voted on.

The annual Town budget meeting will be held on Wednesday, April 19, at 1:00 p.m. in the Town Hall hearing room. ■

Sentinel readers weigh in on short-term rentals

By Jessie Wright

In January, the Sentinel opened a survey to gather readers' thoughts on regulating short-term rental properties in Redding. The topic was prompted by the Board of Selectmen's intention as announced in September 2022 to form a committee to examine the issue and consider regulating short-term rentals in town. That committee is in the process of being formed.

Results from the Sentinel survey are in, and some of the results are outlined below. It should be noted, however, that after three months of answer collecting, only 18 people opted to participate. Any results or analysis should be taken with this limited sample size in mind.

All of the survey respondents were either residents or property owners with part-time residence in Redding. The majority had no personal experience with short-

term rentals in town, while a third of the respondents had a short-term rental operating in their immediate neighborhood, and 11% were operating a short-term rental here themselves.

Over three-quarters of the respondents agreed that short-term property rentals should continue to be permitted in some shape or form in Redding - 33% were for "with no restrictions", and 44% were for "with some sort of regulation". Just over 20% would like to see short-term rental properties disallowed altogether.

Survey respondents were thoughtful about their answers and gave a range of insight and feedback on the topic.

"Allowing owners to operate short term rentals brings economic growth to our town. Safety should be a concern and should be the focus of regulatory statutes created," one participant wrote.

"The only real beneficiaries from short-term rentals are the hosts, and certainly not the neighbors. It seems that the interest of the majority should outweigh the interests of the few," said another.

"No need to regulate per se," wrote another. "If there is a nuisance or disturbance created, that can be addressed through existing laws and regulations."

As the Town considers the issue, the top three most important factors that survey respondents identified were safety, noise, and property owner rights. Of importance, but to a lesser extent, were a group of factors that could be categorized as "possible aspects to regulate" - lot size, whether a rental property is owner-occupied, and length/frequency of short-term stays. ■

Phone scams remain a problem

By Donna Christopher

A local resident told police they were victims of an alleged fraud in which there was an unauthorized purchase of \$1,500 worth of Amazon gift cards.

Police responded to the person's home on March 17 where it was reported that the purchase was three gift cards from three different retailers each valued at \$500.

The victim told officers that

they had previously received a phone call from an unknown number, and the caller stated they were calling to question a purchase made of an iPhone. The victim replied that they had not purchased an iPhone. The caller then told the victim their computer was hacked, and that they needed to gain access to it in order to help.

The victim told police they then gave access to their computer and

views of their bank account but then realized there was something not right about the situation. The victim's wife then went to their bank and secured their accounts. Amazon was contacted, and the victim was told their account would be reimbursed.

Similar scams happen frequently "all the time," Redding Police Chief Mark O'Donnell said. ■

Tick-borne disease in Connecticut grows

By Jessie Wright



Ticks can be brought to the Redding Health Department Monday through Thursday between 8:30 a.m. - 3:00 p.m. We are located in the Town Hall at 100 Hill Road.

Cases of diseases caused by ticks more than doubled in the Northeast in the last ten years, according to a study by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Cases of Babesiosis, a relatively unknown, sometimes fatal disease, jumped 338% in Connecticut over that same period.

State lawmakers, along with the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station, announced millions of dollars in federal funds on Friday, March 24 to fight tick-borne diseases such as Lyme, Babesiosis, and Powassan. Of that funding, \$200,000 will go towards spending for the Connecticut Agricultural Station to monitor the state's tick population, as well as \$26 million for Lyme research at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. There will also be \$7 million in funding for the Department of Defense's Tick-Borne Disease Research Program, which aims to prevent, diagnose, and treat tick-borne diseases such as Lyme and Babesiosis.

Redding's Health Department issued a reminder to residents last week to take precautions to protect themselves and their pets against ticks. "Recently, we have been seeing many ticks that have been positive for the bacterium

that causes Lyme disease," the reminder said.

Free tick testing is available to all Redding residents through a partnership with the Connecticut Agricultural Station. "If you happen to find a tick on your body (humans only), we encourage you to bring the tick to the Redding Health Department for testing. The ticks will be identified and tested for three common tickborne diseases: the bacterium that causes Lyme disease, the bacterium that causes anaplasmosis and the protozoan that causes babesiosis. Ticks can be brought to the Redding Health Department Monday through Thursday between 8:30 a.m. - 3:00 p.m. We are located in the Town Hall at 100 Hill Road," the Health Department message continued. ■

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Developer to renovate, not demolish West Redding building

By Jessie Wright



Photo by Jessie Wright

The structure at 3 Sidecut Road to be renovated.

The Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) unanimously approved an application for variances associated with the ongoing redevelopment of 3 Sidecut Road in West Redding on Tuesday, March 21. Joseph Cugno of Cugno Architecture in Wilton presented the application on behalf of SC-3 LLC, the owner of the property.

The historic structure, which has fallen into significant disrepair, dates to the 1860's and has served several different purposes over the years, including a post office, general store, train depot, gas station, and restaurant. The property was purchased by SC-3 LLC last year and is being redeveloped by Greenwich Property Partners, Inc.

While SC-3 LLC was given approval last May by Redding's Historic Review Committee to demolish the structure, Cugno told the Board of Zoning Appeals on Tuesday that limitations of the existing septic system and contamination of other areas of the site have caused them to change their plans and look to instead renovate the existing building.

"Previously we had been to the (Historic Review Committee) to

tear the building down, and we were going to build this building on the other side of the lot, closer to the residence to the east," Cugno explained. "But the problem was, the septic system, which is behind the building, we had not one square inch of it... we barely could make it conform for three units. We had multiple engineers look at it, and they said the only way we can make this property work for a project, any project, was to use it as a renovation of an existing building on a pre-existing nonconforming septic system.

The property already had several variances granted to it in 2015, when a different redevelopment project was planned for the site. There is also an already-established "zero-setback" along the northwest side of the property, where the structure abuts the Metro North railroad tracks, according to ZBA Chair Elizabeth Williams.

SC-3 LLC's application primarily dealt with setbacks for front and side parking areas on the south and east sides of the property, a variance for an area in the back of the structure on the new second floor where decks will

be added and repaired, and where a pitched roof will replace the current flat one.

"What we've got is an application where we want to repair and restore to a certain degree a lot of the building that's there," Cugno said. "But the building is a pre-existing non-conforming building in many aspects."

Cugno noted that the parking areas are already paved, and the proposed designs to re-work them will introduce back in some green space in the form of islands. Williams also pointed out that there are limitations to any other uses of the proposed parking areas, due to contamination from buried gas tanks from when the property served as a gas station.

"You really can't use it for much of anything," said Williams.

"So essentially you're looking for a variance in the zoning regs, so that you can comply with the parking regs," asked another member of the ZBA. "Correct," replied both Cugno and Williams, almost in unison.

Williams also noted that a specific variance wouldn't be required for the proposed decks on the second floor, because they would be built upon already-existing built space.

While the project is now a renovation, rather than a demolition, significant work to the building will need to be undertaken.

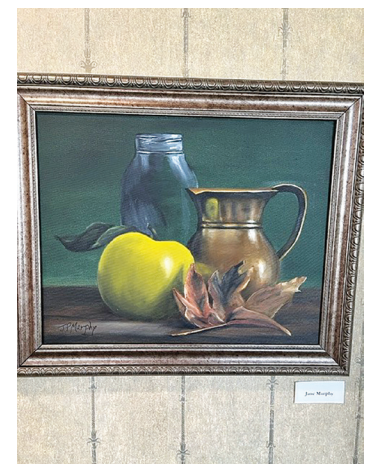
"We'll most likely be keeping the left side gable portion of it about 15-20 feet back," said Cugno, "but the balance of the rest of the building is so bad with mold and water damage, that we're going to take it down to the foundation and just rebuild it in character to the way the new proposed design is." ■

Meadow Ridge residents showcase talents in Art Show

By Carol Morgan



Photos by Carol Morgan



Meadow Ridge celebrated the arrival of spring last week with the opening of its Group Art Show, showcasing the work of several residents across different artistic mediums. The opening of the show on Tuesday, March 21 also included the music of a jazz trio and an art lecture by Meadow Ridge resident Joan Kaskell, who was staff lecturer at The Metropolitan Museum of Art for 40 years.

Photos of the works in the Art Show highlight the vivid array of creative talent at Meadow Ridge.

We are always surprised to see a lyric floral painting created by a person known for their scientific perspective, or a person with a political interest painting transporting travel scenes. Shows like this help to share new facets of our friends and neighbors in our Redding community.

The Meadow Ridge Group Art Show is open to the public by appointment. Some of the artists showcased also have participated in past years in the annual Mark Twain Library Art Show. ■

Zoners consider warehouse, turf field

By Rocco Valluzzo

Applications to build a warehouse on Ethan Allen Highway and the installation of a synthetic turf athletic field and expansion of an existing parking lot at Joel Barlow High School were received by the Redding Zoning Commission at its Wednesday, March 22 meeting.

Warehouse on Ethan Allen Highway

Located at 280 Ethan Allen Highway, the 5,000 square-foot, single-story warehouse would serve as a storage facility for Empire Fences. It would cover 7% of the property.

According to Wade Roese, agent for business owner Arianit Krasniqi, the warehouse will be used for storage and some assembly of fence materials as well as periodic storage of vehicles. The existing parking lot has sufficient parking for all existing uses on the property. Three new spaces will be added, one of which will be a handicap space.

There is also a storage pod for unloading vehicles that make deliveries to the fencing business. The proposal also calls for the removal of one of the existing residential buildings on the property which is currently unoccupied.

Roese noted that some plantings have been added along the buffer between the property and the proposed updates to the neighboring Days Inn.

"Some of that property also has some landscaping," he said. "So, what we propose is to intermix our planting schedule with the planting schedule that is on that property."

No plumbing or heating will be installed in the warehouse except for one half bathroom. That would be tied into the septic system that is now serving the three-bedroom residence in the far north corner of the property.

The only exterior lighting will be for the overhead doors of the warehouse and some building lighting for the work yard. No decorative or extensive lighting is proposed.

Turf field at Barlow

Part of the NEST athletic facilities improvement project at Barlow, a new synthetic turf field would be installed on Field J, an existing field adjacent to the stadium field which also currently has synthetic turf. The zoning application also calls for expanding the stadium field parking lot. The scope of the project does not extend beyond already developed properties.

"We are not expanding at all," said Region 9 Board of Education Chairman Mike D'Agostino. "We're all within the confines of what has previously been developed."

Along with new synthetic turf, athletic lighting would also be installed which would comply with Dark Sky International requirements, according to D'Agostino. The same light emitting diode (LED) lighting will be used in the parking lot as well, and it will conform to the lighting that is currently in the existing parking lot.

"It's a beautiful grass field, but it's a beautiful grass field between the mid-to-end of June and like the first two weeks of September," said D'Agostino. "The rest of the time it's a muddy mess."

"We have one turf field," he continued. "We feel very strongly that we have equity - that all of our teams can have access to the field. We need to do something to increase our playing surfaces. The only way that we can find a sensible solution is to go to a synthetic surface in that area."

The Zoning Commission will hold a public hearing on both applications on April 26. ■

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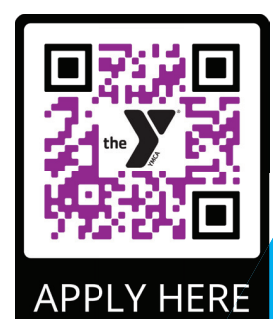
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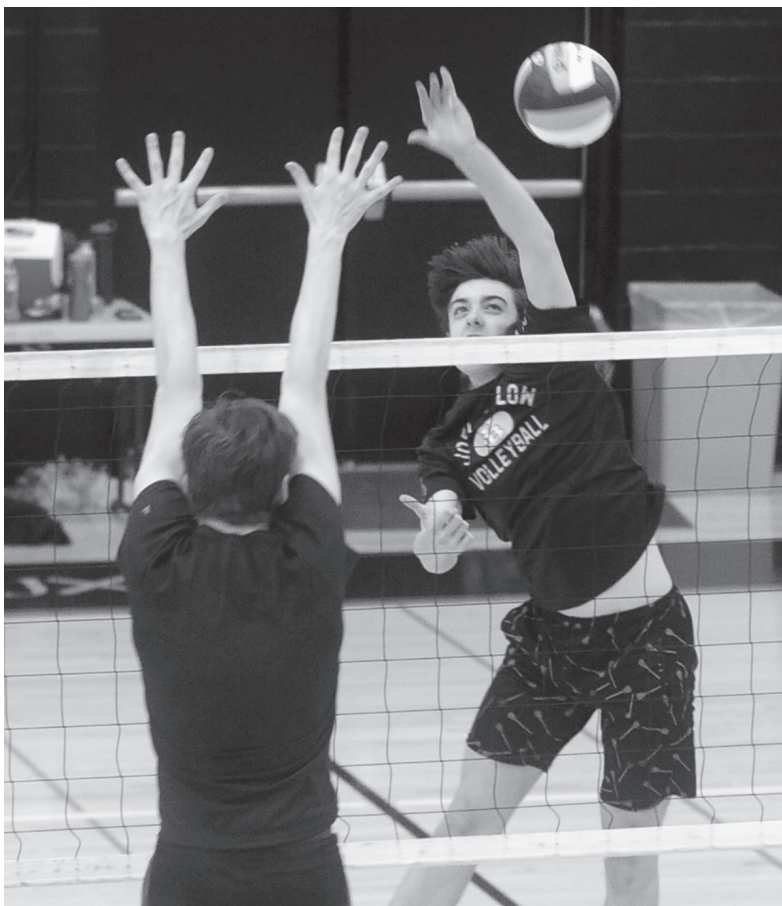
Barlow again sets the bar high | *By Rocco Valluzzo*

Photo by Rocco Valluzzo

Sophomore Mark Meschi goes up for a kill during Joel Barlow High boys varsity volleyball practice last week. The Falcons have again set the bar for success high this season.

It may be a new season, but the Joel Barlow High boys varsity volleyball team has some familiar goals in mind as it prepares to take on the competition in 2023.

Once again, the Falcons have set their sights on a couple of championships, in the South-West Conference (SWC) as well as the state Class M tournament. Time will tell if these goals are within reach.

“Our expectations always remain the same,” said Head Coach Kevin Marino, whose team started practice more than a week ago. “Our expectation is just to compete for the league and state championships and work hard enough hopefully to win them.”

A few pre-season scrimmages along the way will help get the Falcons ready. Marino was pleased with what he saw against Westhill of Stamford last Thursday.

“It went well,” he said. “We tried out a bunch of different line-ups. Hopefully it was a good starting point for us.”

Marino is also happy with the numbers Barlow has this season. About 28 players came out for the program, which includes varsity and junior varsity teams, among them quite a few freshmen and sophomores.

The Falcons also have a few players back from last season’s squad. Posting a perfect 25-0 record, Barlow did not lose a single

set in any match in 2022. Along the way, it claimed its second straight SWC and state Class M titles, beating Masuk and New Canaan, respectively.

However, a number of key players have graduated since then, including setter Leo Houser, an All-SWC first-team selection. Another is outside hitter Will Villhauer (All-SWC first team).

Barlow also graduated Carter Janke and Ben Cerbin, both All-SWC second team selections. Ashton Silich and Mark Maraffi have also graduated.

If they are going to have a shot at reaching their goals, the Falcons will need a number of returning players to step up and fill these vacancies. These include senior captains Ryan Schmid (All-SWC first team) and Nick Collins.

The former is a hitter and the latter is a libero. Classmates Ian Cendusky (hitter) and Will Bartlik (libero, defensive specialist) are also returning.

From the junior class is captain Alex Llach, who was a starter last year. Also on the varsity are Noah Avery, Dan Parkin, James Pereira, Zach Ashgar, and Cameron Lynn. A sophomore who could see varsity time is Erik Schmid.

“They’re learning and coming along fast,” said Marino. “I’m excited to see how they do in the coming weeks.”

As far as the competition is concerned, Marino expects SWC opponents Masuk, Newtown, and Pomperaug will have good teams. In Class M, Barlow will again have competition from Newington, New Canaan, and Farmington.

“It’s just day by day for us right now,” said Marino. “We’re really working on things and seeing how everyone is doing.”

The Falcons open the season on Monday, April 3 at home against Fairfield-Ludlowe at 6:00 p.m. ■

Barlow Beat | *By Griffin Ellis*

Joel Barlow High School is divided into two semesters, with each semester composed of two quarters. On Thursday, March 30 the third quarter of school ends, leaving one more to go until the school year is over.

The spring athletic season has already begun, and student-athletes are in the midst of practices and scrimmages, with most conference games beginning in early April. Joel Barlow is one of fourteen high schools who participate in the South-West Conference (SWC). Other schools include Weston, Newtown, Bethel, and Brookfield, with all of these schools located in the Southwest corner of Connecticut. Barlow athletic teams play in-conference games (against teams in the SWC) as well as state games (against schools

outside of their conference) during the regular season. If Barlow athletic teams have a good enough record, they can qualify for the SWC tournament and Connecticut Interscholastic Athletic Conference (CIAC) state tournament. Baseball and Boys Volleyball are two teams that won the CIAC state championship last spring.

On Thursday, March 23, Barlow hosted the Tri-district concert where students in K-12 from Redding and Easton performed. Jazz band, orchestra, and choir were a few of the groups who performed in front of a large audience. The Tri-district concert shows the musical talents across all schools in our district and is a great unifying moment for students of various ages who share a common

love for music and song.

At this time of the year, most seniors who have applied to colleges have heard back from their schools. Most colleges require you to inform them of your commitment to attend by May 1. Before moving onto college or pursuing other careers, however, students still need to graduate. Barlow recently announced that graduation will be held at the high school stadium on June 13. In previous years, graduation was held at Western Connecticut State University; it’s great that graduation is taking place at the high school stadium this year instead of another venue, because that’s where we have spent all our time these last four years. ■

Redding Big Outdoors: Death, taxes, and hiking / *continued from page 1*

chian Trail. I asked him to recommend a few Redding trails for me.

Among his top choices are the Great Ledge, a Redding favorite – during peak foliage season in 2021, he did the ins and outs of student loan repayments while ascending the Great Ledge, which rewards visitors with breathtaking view of the Saugatuck Reservoir –

and parts of the Saugatuck Trail, where it partially circumnavigates the reservoir.

James called my attention to the newest part of the Saugatuck Trail, a section that salamanders its way down the reservoir’s eastern edge, hugging the shoreline in parts, in contrast to the Great Ledge’s elevated views on the opposite side. This portion opened only five years ago, when the trail was extended to link up with the seven-mile Aspetuck Trail, which cuts across Redding’s southeast corner.

To hike this section, be sure to download the updated trail map, for it is still not to be found on the standalone map for the Saugatuck Trail. You’ll need the combined map of the Saugatuck and Aspetuck Trails for Centennial Watershed State Forest.

The easiest place to enter is the footbridge across the Little River, just off Newtown Turnpike, at the bottom of Sherman Turnpike. Within minutes of crossing the bridge, the water comes into view. The leaves are still bare in the deciduous canopy, until one enters a

pine forest near the water’s edge.

The forest noticeably darkens here, and a sense of foreboding takes hold. Surely, I think to myself, this is connected to the dreaded Form 4562 on depreciation and amortization, which waits for me at home like a long-avoided argument.

Only later do I learn we are not far from the former site of the old Burr Cemetery. When much of Hull, the former name for this section of Redding, went underwater in the early 1940’s to create the reservoir, this cemetery was in the flood zone.

What happened to the dead – and an account of the remainder of this hike – will be covered in next week’s column. ■

Scott MacMillan is a volunteer Trail Tender and author of the book Hope Over Fate: Fazle Hasan Abed and the Science of Ending Global Poverty, which is available at Byrd’s Books in Bethel, Books on the Common in Ridgefield, and the Mark Twain Library.

Cycling in Redding

Hitting the road | *By Matt Miller*

Basic road riding:

By now, I hope, you have refurbished your old bike or have invested in a new one. And... you’ve climbed on, with all the essential equipment, and taken a spin. If not, you’re close. Congratulations!

This week’s installment is dedicated to riding safely out there – and there’s more to think about than you might imagine.

First of all, let’s make sure you are not distracted. Apart from some basic techniques and bike handling skills, you need to be alert ALL THE TIME. That may seem obvious, but most accidents occur when you aren’t paying attention. Until you are more comfortable, you should probably be riding alone or at least not talking to anyone else on another bike. And you should never be listening to music on a headset or, obviously, talking on the phone. The combination of distraction and impaired ability to hear a car is a recipe for disaster.

Cars:

Yup, that’s the big issue. No surprise. There are some basic rules for dealing with cars:

1. Never trust them. Ever.
2. Watch and listen. Try to know where all the cars are in your vicinity – behind you, in front of you, and coming at you from the other direction.
3. Cars will be passing you. That’s a given. Most will give you a wide berth, but some will not respect your right to the road and will cut it close. Some will pass you on blind turns by going into the other lane, but then swerve back if another car is coming the other direction. Thus, always be ready to swerve onto the shoulder or even off it if necessary. Most cars will see you, respect you, and acknowledge your rights. Just don’t assume it!
4. Make eye contact. Whenever possible, make eye contact with drivers, particularly at intersections.
5. Be nice. Waving on a car to pass you, allowing a car to make a turn in front of you, and moving a bit more to the side to give them room – these gestures are appreciated and promote good karma.
6. Use hand signals – especially when turning. Putting your left hand down facing back tells a car (or another bike) that you are slowing or stopping. Waving to say “OK to pass” also helps.
7. Intersections are, of course, tricky. Nothing magic here – just trust no one, and make sure the way is clear for you to turn, either way. This also means cars turning into your lane, even if you have the right of way.

8. It’s important to obey all traffic signs completely (stop signs, yields, and lights). It may be tempting to “roll” through a stop sign if you see the way is clear so you don’t have to take your foot out of the cleat to stop. But do so with great care and at your own peril.
9. Beware of parked cars and the dreaded nasty accident – getting “doored.” As you pass parked cars, if possible, give a wider margin and look for drivers or passengers exiting on the left side.

Where on the road to ride:

I find it amazing that so many bikers are riding in the wrong part of the road. Some ride right down the middle of the lane (middle of right side for two lane roads). This makes for bad relationships with passing cars and is ONLY okay if you are certain there is nothing behind you for a long distance in either direction – like a long straightaway.

But should you ride directly on the right edge, or inside the “white line” separating the traffic lane from the narrow shoulder? In

other words, should you ride in the shoulder, if there is one?

NO! You should ride, when you can, on the road and outside the shoulder, or at least with a margin on your right.

WHY? This is important!

1. The shoulder has road detritus – sand, glass, garbage, etc.
2. Cars need to respect your right to be “on the road.” It’s okay if they have to slow down a little and give you space.
3. If you have three or four feet of space on your right, you have somewhere to go if you need to.
4. The white painted line itself, if there is one, is slipperier than the asphalt. Avoid it when you can.

When should you ride in the shoulder?

1. A car is passing you and can’t or won’t go into the other lane. And by the way, if you’re moving over for a passing car, check behind you for another one before you move back to the left. You won’t hear that second car!

2. Blind turn to the right. Get over so anything coming from behind won’t suddenly come up on you.

3. There’s a very wide shoulder, at least 5 feet, with ample room “inside” the white line.

Braking:

Try to use both brakes at the same time, but you can slow yourself more safely by just feathering the front (left hand) brake. Jamming the front brake alone can make you flip, while jamming the rear can cause a skid. If you need to stop fast, squeeze both brakes on and off – there are no antilock brakes on a bike! Skids are handled like a car: let off the brakes and turn into the skid.

Falling:

I hope you never will, but you might. It’s worth practicing in your yard, especially with cleated pedals. Try to relax and roll to the side, landing on your thigh and hip. Tuck your head. Don’t put your hand out – that’s how you break your wrist. I know, all that advice is easy to say in advance, hence the value of practicing a few times on grass, going very slowly.

Riding with others:

We’ll talk about that more in the next part, but biking with others is great, once you are comfortable. If you are riding with others, the rider in front should be looking out for things on the road (detritus, potholes, storm grates/drains) and pointing at them. The front rider also alerts others to cars coming from in front – “Car up!” The back rider calls out cars coming from behind – “Car back!”

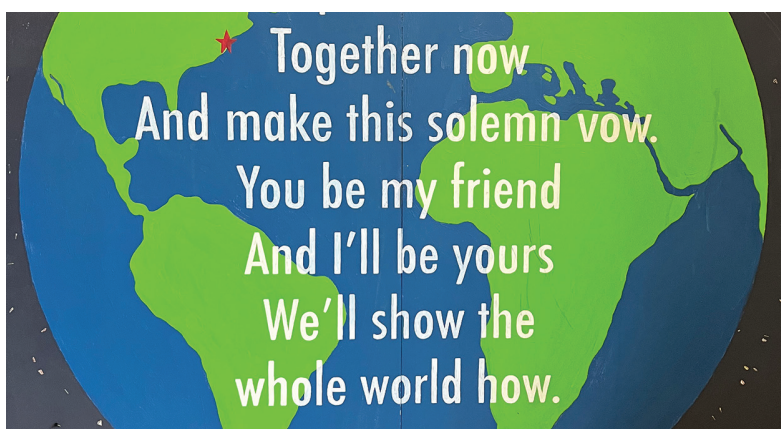
Other hazards:

Apart from cars, bikes, and people, keep an eye out for road issues and animals. Sand, gravel, leaves, or water on the road promote skidding. Slow down, don’t brake, try to avoid sharp turns. And animals can appear at any time. Just be alert. If you are passing another bike or a runner/walker, let them know you’re coming – “on your left” works well.

In the next installment, we’ll get into odometers and basic riding techniques. I hope any discussion here about risks and hazards doesn’t put you off. The bad stuff is really uncommon if you’re careful and pay attention.

Now go outside and play! ■

RES PTA International Festival | Photos by Debora DeCarlo Rosa



Families flocked to the Redding Community Center on Saturday, March 25 for the annual Redding Elementary School PTA's International Festival. Countries from around the world were represented, with residents creating cultural displays at different country tables, playing international music and games, and enjoying tasty fare from a host of food trucks with cuisines ranging from Greek souvlaki to Japanese ramen.

Cultivate, educate, donate... relocate UConn Extension and master gardener program face eviction / continued from page 1

"There have been thousands of master gardeners that have gone through the program since," Wilson said.

In order to become a master gardener, one has to take classes through the programs that are offered from January to April at five different locations, including Bethel.

"One week it might be botany, the next week soil, then plant pathology. They have to take and pass an exam and then receive a designation of the University of Connecticut Certified Master Gardener," Wilson explained.

In addition to the initial 60 hours of community service and 30 required for a master gardener to keep up their certification, the volunteers usually do much more, according to Wilson.

"In Fairfield County, we have a vibrant program. We have close to 100 active master gardeners, and lots are working out in the community. There are many more that haven't kept up their certification but help out in the community."

Wilson said that in 2022, over 30 master gardeners tended the demonstration garden at the UConn Extension in Bethel, and approximately 100 master gardeners were actively affiliated with the site. Fairfield County master gardeners volunteered 1,279 hours in the Extension Office and 3,896 hours on projects throughout the community last year. Hundreds of homeowners visit the master

gardeners office each year to ask gardening questions, and master gardeners identified over 300 plant samples in 2022.

The master gardener program aims to cooperate with the Agricultural Extension System of the University of Connecticut and the U.S. Department of Agriculture in the planning and conduct of educational programs for the improvement of agriculture, home life, and youth of Fairfield County, according to Wilson.

Jamie McDonald is a volunteer master gardener who went through the program in 2021. "We all take on different projects after we become certified," she said. Her projects include a student garden at Frank A. Berry Elementary School in Bethel, where she helped the manager make improvements with raised beds and to obtain grant money.

McDonald also works on a rotating schedule in the demonstration garden at the UConn Extension site. The endeavor is shared by the volunteers three days a week for watering, weeding, tending, maintenance, and welcoming visitors.

"Because it is a demo garden, they can see different techniques we use, companion plantings, how we handle pest issues, disease issues...someone can say 'my eggplant has pinholes in it', and they look at ours, and it's the same, and we tell them what we are doing," she said.

Over 1,300 pounds of freshly picked fruits and vegetables from the garden are donated during the growing season from June to October.

McDonald said the feedback from the pantries is that "it makes a huge difference. Usually, they have dried goods and don't usually have vegetables and fruits. They get it the day it is harvested or the day after, right off the vine, so it's fresh."

"This year, we were going to enhance the donation by working with the nutrition program that is at the Extension to provide recipes for things we are donating," McDonald continued, "to combine with easy instructions."

The site and its programming are facing uncertainty, however, after its landlord, Stony Hill Preserve (SHP), notified UConn last year that it did not intend to renew its lease at the property. UConn received a notice to quit and to leave the location in early March.

Before SHP took ownership, the property had been owned for over 60 years by the Fairfield County Agricultural Extension Council (FCAEC), a non-profit chartered to assist UConn in managing the land, assisting with fundraising, and supporting educational programs at its extension sites. In 2017, FCAEC transferred ownership of the Bethel property to Stony Hill Preserve (SHP) and the Extension continued as a tenant under a lease agreement.

Now, the master gardeners want to see the property transferred back to the FCAEC and a GoFundMe page has been established to help FCAEC with legal fees.

McDonald said the property location is ideally suited for several reasons and believes it was deeded and should remain used for agriculture education.

"It is a flat piece of property, perfect for the garden. It gets great sun. It has a water source. We put in irrigation that we run from the building. It's right there on Stony Hill (Road) where we get exposure. People see it and come by. Being in Bethel, we're pretty centrally located for the county. We have easy access from 84 and Route 6," said McDonald. Additionally, she noted a lot of master gardeners that work the garden live within a 10-mile radius. "To move it you would possibly lose a lot of your volunteers."

Attorney for SHP, David F. Bennett, clarified the decision to terminate the university lease is between SHP, the landlord, and UConn, the tenant, "not the master gardeners" opposing the eviction.

"The matter of litigation at this point is Stony Hill Preserve filed a notice to quit (March 10)

because the lease is over," Bennett said. "They haven't left. We think it's a financial boondoggle that we don't want to participate in anymore. The property has to be used for charitable purposes. My client does not believe it is used

for charitable purposes; they think there are much better charitable uses for the (property). The lease is up. They should go."

In response, Wilson said, "After an investigation into the issue, the CT Attorney General's Charity Division issued a letter to SHP in September 2022 stating that the land and funds transferred from FCAEC to SHP were confined to the original charitable purposes of FCAEC, which is to support UConn Extension programming."

SHP's recent actions are defying the Attorney General's position, according to Wilson.

"SHP has no authority to take land and donations that were acquired for Extension use and give them to another charity," she said.

Elizabeth Benton, Chief of Communications and Policy for the Office of the Attorney General, told the Sentinel, "The Office of the Attorney General intends to vigorously defend UConn against this eviction action, and plans to intervene to protect the public interest in charitable gifts."

Bennett said SHP had instructed him to find more suitable locations for agricultural use, and another property in Bethel has been suggested. "We can help find a better spot," Bennett said. He noted a farm location in Bethel has been proposed. ■

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The Gardening



Composting

For beginners, experts, and everyone in-between | By Susan Clark



Photo by Susan Clark

There are as many ways to compost as there are types of gardeners – “all-in”, “good enough to get by”, “if I must”, and more. (If you’re reading an article with the word “compost” in the title, let’s assume you already know there are benefits to this natural process and don’t need to be told why compost is the best thing you could do for your garden.)

While composting – the breaking down of often-wasted organic matter into usable goodness for growing better garden plants – is a natural process, there are things you can do to make the process produce more, with less effort, at a quicker pace, and be less attractive to pests. What you can’t really do is accomplish all these things with only one approach. So, here are several approaches to turning your kitchen and garden goodies into rich organic stuff to improve your garden, no matter what type of gardener you are. See which one is best for you.

But first, consider your inputs. What material are you hoping to compost? There are two main groups: kitchen scraps and leftovers, and garden trimmings of various sorts and sizes. I’ll address both groups in each section below.

Easiest: Buy a kitchen composter, such as a LOMI machine. It will take all your kitchen scraps and turn them into dehydrated goodness you can sprinkle on or work into your garden. No smell, easy – but expensive. If you go

with a machine in the house, compost your yard clippings and trimmings by dumping them in a pile in the corner of the yard somewhere.

Almost as easy: Enroll in the Town composting program through the Redding Transfer Station. You’ll get free buckets into which you can put all manner of organic matter, importantly including meat and bones which could attract unwanted interest from critters if put in an outdoor compost pile. As an enrollee in the program, you’re entitled to pick up compost from the Transfer Station under certain guidelines. Gather and dump your yard material in a pile as described above. It will break down over time.

Midway to obsessive: Save small sticks and lots of leaves (brown). Save grass clippings and garden trimmings (green). Build a pile in a partially shady spot in your garden. Make it at least three feet deep and around by layering brown and green. You’ll want twice as much brown as green. Water between each layer on top of the brown. Each layer of your compost “cake” should be roughly six to nine inches thick. So, brown layer / water / brown layer / green layer / brown layer / water / brown layer / green layer and so on. End with a brown layer, and water the pile. If you have some leaf mold or rich hummus somewhere in your yard, throw some on top of a

couple of the brown layers to speed up decomposition. You may now ignore the pile for as long as you like. Depending on how big it is and the ingredients, it may or may not become a hot pile that will kill seeds. I don’t worry about this. If it happens, nice. If not, don’t stress – you’ll have volunteer tomatoes, potatoes, squash and even melons. You can dig holes in the pile and bury kitchen scraps (not meat or bones), but you’ll risk varmints digging in to get at the goodies. Worth a try depending on your situation. If you’d like, you can surround your pile with chicken wire to keep it tidy.

Getting fancy: Use pallets or chicken wire – not solid material like plywood – to mark out a three-bin system like the one at the Parade Path by Town Hall. Build a pile in the left-most bin as described in the paragraph above. In three months or so, pitchfork everything in that bin into the middle bin and build a new pile in the left-most bin. In another three months, fork the middle bin contents into the right bin, the left bin contents into the middle bin, and build a new pile in the left bin. The contents of the right bin should be well decomposed and usable now.

Going semi-pro: The more I have composted – I started in the Ruth Stout era in the 70’s – the more relaxed I’ve become about it. Compost happens. And anything organic can be composted. Old woolen sweaters. Worn out cotton towels. It’s better to toss them on the compost than put them in landfill. Even though I take a relaxed approach, I have a large three-bin system, pictured above. It is made of hardware cloth panels framed with wood, which are removable to allow for easy movement of compost from bin to bin. There is a separate lid panel for each bin. This system allows me to compost pretty much anything without fear of critters.

Whichever approach you decide to use, composting is worth it. Your garden will be grateful. ■

5 easy ways to add nutrients to your soil

By Redding Garden Club



Spring is here, and many of us are making gardening plans. Healthy and happy plants need good soil to thrive. While there are plenty of products to buy, there are also simple things you can do yourself to boost the health of your garden soil.

1. Banana Peels

Banana peels are rich in potassium, which helps plants resist drought and promotes fruiting and flowering. They also contain calcium, magnesium, sulfur, and phosphate to encourage healthy plant growth. Cut the peels into small pieces and bury them around the plant. Don’t use whole peels, which could attract squirrels and other small animals.

2. Raw egg

Before you put soil in your pot, place a raw egg in the bottom (without the shell). Eggs are high in protein and a good source of nitrogen. Over time, the egg will decompose and become fertilizer for your plant. The shell can be placed with other compost material.

3. Use Compost

Compost improves soil structure by adding nutrients and enriching the soil. Create your own compost by combining brown material such as dried leaves and stems, and green material such as (non-meat and dairy) food scraps, coffee grounds, and grass clippings. How do you know if a compost pile is finished? First, it should appear dark in color, like regular dirt or topsoil. It should also appear crumbly in texture, and none of the organic materials used to make it should be recognizable (as in, if you see half a lemon sticking out, it’s not done). A finished compost pile should be about half its original size.

4. Epsom Salts

A low pH soil level in your garden can indicate magnesium deficiency. Using Epsom salts (magnesium sulfate) increases magnesium levels, boosts chlorophyll production, and increases seed germination and growth. To use, dilute the Epsom salts with water and spray on plants.

Before using Epsom salts, or any product that can alter pH, make sure to test your soil. We recommend sending a sample to UConn’s Soil Nutrient Analysis Laboratory for analysis. <https://soiltesting.cahnrc.uconn.edu/sampling/>

5. Leaves

When the growing season is over, fall leaves are gardening gold. They retain moisture and keep the garden warmer, and as they decompose, they provide nutrients to replenish the soil. Shred leaves to hasten decomposition and spread them over your garden. Use ash, maple, fruit tree leaves, poplar, and willow. These “good” leaves will typically break down in about a year. Do not use “bad” leaves, which take longer to break down because they are higher in lignin and have lower nitrogen and calcium content. These include beech, oak, holly, and sweet chestnut. ■

Learn more about Redding Garden Club at www.reddinggardenclub.org and join our Facebook community at facebook.com/groups/reddinggardenclub

RGC is a member of Federated Garden Clubs of Connecticut and National Garden Clubs



Yard not right for gardening?

Consider Redding’s Community Garden | By Jessie Wright

At the end of a small, winding road between the Community Center and Lonetown Farm is a hidden gem – Redding’s Community Garden. There, a fenced-in area with 23 plots lies waiting for intrepid gardeners of all skill levels whose yards are either too shady to grow produce, or who prefer a bit of socializing while they weed. The garden is managed by the Park and Recreation Department; while there is a wait-list for plots, a few new gardeners typically are able to come off the list each season.

The Sentinel spoke with Alice Fuchs Garrard, a gardener with a plot at the Community Garden for the last 13 years. (Note: the conversation has been edited for length and clarity).

Why choose to get a plot at the Community Garden?

The thing is, in Redding, everyone has shade – that’s the problem. So it’s very difficult to have a garden at home sometimes. And there are so many deer and animals wandering around.

I used to plant ornamentals, but then I switched to vegetables, so I got a plot 13 years ago. I didn’t even know the garden existed... so I waited for three years, and then I got a plot. It’s really wonderful, it’s just great.

What resources/set-up does the Community Garden provide that help you garden successfully?

The fence! The garden is fenced, and it’s 23 plots. There’s a gate, and a lock. (Rob Blick, Park

and Recreation Director) put in a shed, so you can keep your stuff there if you want.

What is gardening at the Community Garden like?

All the gardeners come at different times, so you don’t get to see everyone at the same time; but if you’re an active gardener as I am, I get to see everyone, because I’m there. I’m friendly with people who have similar interests to me... you get to know the people whose plot is next to you of course. I’ve made quite a few friends there. It’s really lovely.

When I started, I knew a lot about ornamentals but not about vegetable gardening – it’s so neat, several people helped me a lot;

Continued on page 8



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Season Begins



The care and raising of seedlings

By Susan Clark



Photo by Susan Clark

I wrote about starting seeds indoors for the Sentinel a few weeks ago. In this article, I'll tell you what to do with those babies now to get them ready to transplant outside when the weather warms up.

Once most seeds have sprouted, they no longer need bottom heat, so you have more flexibility about where to raise them. They also no longer need a cover or "humidity dome" over them. They not only no longer need a cover, they really should not have a cover. At this point, they need good air circulation or risk succumbing to the dreaded "damping off". Without getting scientific, damping off is a condition caused by a fungus that kills young seedlings. It happens to the best of us occasionally. A home preventative that works for me is to sprinkle the surface of the seedling soil with cinnamon. Or, mix one non-buffered aspirin and a teaspoon of cinnamon in a quart of warm water and water your germinating seeds with this mixture just once during their early days.

What seedlings DO need now is light, and lots of it. I move my seedlings in their containers from their starting place on heat mats

into bright light. In my case, they go to all-in-one units that sit on my kitchen counters. You can have a set-up with overhead lights on a rack, or you can use a bright south-facing window. The south-facing window solution requires the least amount of work and is the least expensive. But be sure you can get the seedlings right up close to the window as light levels drop off quickly the farther from the window you go. Rotate the trays every week. Also, top tip, if the south-facing window is in a nice room, do be sure the seedlings are in a waterproof container.

Once the seedlings are an inch or two tall and looking strong, it's time to transplant. We transplant for two reasons. One, to give the plant's roots space to grow and, two, to introduce nutrients the plant needs to thrive. For this step in the care and raising of seedlings, you'll need individual containers and good potting soil. I recommend you go with a decent brand – Espoma, MiracleGro, etc. – and not a generic bag from a big box store. You can easily mix your own, if you'd like. My usual mix is roughly one-quarter compost or well-rotted leaf mold, one-quarter old but sterilized potting soil, with the remaining half made up of

one-third peat moss or coir, one-third vermiculite and one-third perlite. Mix it thoroughly and have it slightly damp.

You can use any pots for the transplant stage as long as they are not too big (2-4" in diameter is good). Give them a quick sterilization with a light bleach solution. Fill the pots almost to the brim with your potting mix. It's easiest to do this on a large baking sheet or other tray – dump the soil into the tray, then work at your potting-up on top of the soil.

The best approach to getting the seedlings out of their container and into their new pot is to turn the container over onto your hand and gently prise the container off. Turn the upside-down seedlings right-side up onto your tray of potting mix. Gently separate the seedlings, holding them by their leaves NOT the stem. Taking one, use your finger to make a bigish hole in the pot the seedling is going in to. Put the roots into the hole, and gently firm the potting mix around the plant's stem at about the same level it was in the previous container. (This rule about planting at the same level holds true for most plants with the exception of tomatoes, which are happiest and will thrive buried up to their bottom leaves.) Be sure to label each and every seedling.

Water with warm water, preferably by sitting the pot in a dish of water. The next time you need to water, use a very diluted solution of fertilizer and increase the strength of the fertilizer each time you water until you're at full strength. When to water? Lift up the pot and if it feels light, it probably needs watering.

Let the seedlings grow on for a few weeks and I'll be back to tell you how to get them ready for the outdoors. ■

How the environment affects plant growth

By Terry Karpen

"Spring has newly sprung / the hills are full of grass..." - Ogden Nash

The warmer weather invites you to walk outside, listen to birds sing, and inspect your landscape. That's when you might observe, "What's wrong with my rhododendron? Why do my boxwood shrubs have dead leaves? Why are the tips of the needles on my pine tree rust-colored?"

The answer is: winter injury called "winter burn". Winter burn is a common problem of needle evergreens, such as hemlock, arborvitae, chamaecyparis, pine, and juniper, and those with "broad leaves", like boxwood, hollies, and rhododendrons. Leaves do not actually burn, but rather dry up. Leaves turn yellow or brown in response to low soil moisture, freezing temperatures, and blowing wind. On a windy winter day, broadleaf evergreens can become water deficient in a few minutes. Evergreen plants hold on to their foliage in winter and need tons of moisture to keep their needles or leaves green throughout the season. Since the ground is frozen, plant roots are not able to take up enough water from the soil to replace the lost moisture. Winter injury may occur when water is transpired through plant tissue more quickly than it can be absorbed through the roots. A rapid drop in temperature after a warm and sunny winter day can also cause further injury to the plant.

As described by Dr. Sharon Douglas at The Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station, "The factors that contribute to winter injury are diverse, and results often do not appear on woody ornamentals until the following spring and summer. In addition, the extent and severity of the injuries that develop are often more extreme on plants weakened from drought stress, transplant, or from other environmental and site-related stresses."

Environmental factors affecting plant growth – Most plant problems are caused by environmental stresses. The main factors that affect plant growth are light (sunlight), temperature, moisture, and nutrients. Each of these factors can cause beneficial or detrimental effects. The detrimental effects manifest as symptoms, the visible reaction or alteration in a plant that result from the plant being sick or injured.

Light – Photosynthesis, the process by which plants transform light energy into chemical energy, is dependent on quantity, quality, and duration of sunlight.

Temperature – Air temperature affects the rate of photosynthesis, the production of food molecules for energy. Air temperature also affects respiration, the burning of food molecules for energy. Soil temperature affects the rate

of nutrient absorption and root growth.

Moisture – Excess or insufficient moisture affects the rate of nutrient absorption, as water is the transporter of nutrients. Water is necessary for photosynthesis. Plants still need water during the winter, and when the soil is frozen, the movement of water into the plant is severely restricted.

Nutrients – Excess or insufficient nutrients can have adverse effects on plant growth.

Other environmental factors can be poor planting or mulching practices, mechanical damage from mowers or trimmers, chemical injury from pesticide application, and pollution.

All environmental stress factors are referred to as *abiotic*, meaning they are non-infectious, non-living; rather than *biotic* factors such as bacteria, fungi, and insects.

Are your plants going to survive from winter burn? The signs of winter injury usually don't appear until months after the winter season. Identification can be difficult, because it can look different in every plant. Plants with winter burn usually survive. Once the ground thaws, damaged plants can recover by watering them well if there has not been adequate rainfall. While there is no remedy for damaged areas, new needles or leaves sprout and replace the dead ones.

"Pruning out the browned parts will have different effects on different species of evergreens," according to Doris Taylor from The Morton Arboretum in Illinois. "A yew or a boxwood can sprout new growth from farther down a branch if you cut off the end, but a pine can only grow from a bud at the branch tip. If you cut that off, the branch will never grow longer." Taylor recommends, "Don't rush to prune out branches that may not really be dead. On many plants, the leaves are discolored, but the buds are still alive. That means the branch is still alive too."

It is best to wait until late May to determine what is alive and what isn't. Needles or leaves that are affected by winter burn will drop off on their own as the season progresses.

Winter burn prevention – All plants, and especially evergreens, need to be fully hydrated in fall, all the way up until the ground freezes. Applying three to four inches of mulch at the base of trees and shrubs can also be beneficial since it helps to conserve moisture during the winter.

Now it's time to celebrate nature and spend time outdoors to walk or rest, think or dream, or sit under a rustling tree, smell the flowers, and listen to birds sing. ■

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

Exercise your green thumb

at these upcoming events | By Jessie Wright

Friends of the 2nd Company Governor's Horse Guard Annual Compost Drive
Saturdays on April 1, 15, 22 and 29 from 9:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.
Behind Newtown Dog Park, 21 Old Farm Road, Newtown
Suggested \$20 donation
Volunteers will be on site to assist in collecting compost drop-offs. Visitors should bring their own bags, pails, tubs, and containers to fill with compost and take home. No trucks or trailer loads will be permitted – only while supply lasts.

The Dos and Don'ts of Vegetable Gardening
Monday, April 10 from 7:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.
Wakeman Town Farm, 134 Cross Highway, Westport
Registration required, \$10 admission
Learn what the farm has done to prepare for the growing season, what they will be doing in the following weeks, and what mistakes were made in the past that were actually great learning lessons. All ages and gardening levels are welcome. If you have your own tips, learning lessons, or gardening stories, they will be welcome to share.

Native Container Gardening Pollinators with the Stamford Garden Club
Tuesday, April 11 from 11:00 am - 12:00 pm
Bartlett Arboretum, 151 Brookdale Road, Stamford
Free
Honoring Native Plant Month, The Stamford Garden Club will present guest speaker Kim Elerman, the Founder of EcoBeneficial LLC. She is an environmental horticulturist and ecological landscape designer specializing in native plants.

Efficient and Affordable Hydroponic Gardening with Easton Garden Club
Wednesday, April 12 from 12:30 p.m. – 2:00 p.m.
Easton Library Community Room, 691 Morehouse Road, Easton / Free
Learn about the benefits and opportunities of simplified hydroponic gardening, including reducing the time, space, and water required in traditional gardening. Interested Club members will be able to purchase their own simple hydroponics for their gardens this season.

Gardening Basics: Spring Planting
Saturday, May 27 from 2:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.

New Pond Farm Education Center, 101 Marchant Road
Free, drop-in program
Stop by New Pond Farm's vegetable garden to learn some of the many ways you can grow food for you and your family. Come just to observe and ask questions, or get your hands dirty and help out.

Redding Garden Club Spring Plant Sale
Saturday, May 13 from 9:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.
Lontown Farm/Redding Historical Society, 43 Lontown Road
Free community event
Shop for annuals, perennials, herbs, and Mother's Day baskets. Many plants are donated by garden club members.

Gardening Basics: Garden Tasks – Feeding, Staking, Thinning, and more
Saturday, June 10 from 2:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.
New Pond Farm Education Center, 101 Marchant Road
Free, drop-in program
Stop by New Pond Farm's vegetable garden to learn some of the many ways you can grow food for you and your family. Come just to observe and ask questions or get your hands dirty and help out. ■

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BUSINESS SPOTLIGHT

A new salon revives a familiar location Metro Salon looks towards West Redding renaissance

By Jessie Wright



Photos courtesy of Metro Salon

Tiffany Broderick and Charles Anthony, co-owners of Metro Salon, opened their doors in West Redding in January.

Charles Anthony was not in the market to own another beauty salon. A New York hair stylist, he had already owned four salons over the course of his career and had settled in working as a stylist in Ridgefield. But when he met fellow stylist and friend, Tiffany Broderick, he realized what a great team they would make; going into business together felt like an unmissable opportunity.

Then one day, one of his regulars in Ridgefield asked Anthony if her mother-in-law could come in as a new client.

"She explains that her mother-in-law's salon closed, and she doesn't know where to go," Anthony recalled. "So, she brings her mother-in-law in, her mother-in-law and I get along right away, and after a few times of doing her hair, I asked her, 'so where did you go?' And she says, 'I went to a little salon in West Redding.'"

His curiosity piqued, Anthony met with the landlord of the space at 2 Long Ridge Road, where the Whistle Stop Beauty Shop was housed for years before closing amidst the Covid-19 pandemic. Not long after in June 2022, he and Broderick took over the space, renovated, and opened the doors of Metro Salon in January.

"We renovated it, tweaked it – I felt great karma when I walked in here. This salon has been open for 42 years. I figured, you know what, this is always going to be a salon, it should always be a salon," Anthony said.

Located in a strip of shops nearby the West Redding Train Station, Anthony and Broderick aim to bring a high-end, boutique experience to their clients in Redding, Ridgefield, and the

surrounding areas. The inside of the salon is bright and stylish – jazz greets you when you walk through the doors, an enormous, comfortable sofa available while you wait.

"It's a relaxing, cool space, with a great vibe to it," said Anthony. "It's like Anthropologie has met Restoration Hardware."

Anthony and Broderick are the only two stylists at Metro Salon, though he hopes to bring on and mentor a junior stylist from a training school in Newtown by the summer.

"It's only made for a few staff members, so it's not that factory setting where you're in and out," Anthony pointed out. "It's more of a one-on-one setting where we have time to really have a good consultation with each and every client and learn what their needs are and their lifestyle."

Metro Salon specializes in all the current hair treatments and styles, including keratin treatments, balayage, and precision cuts; they use an organic color line of products and offer a line of CBD products called Leaf & Flower.

"You don't need to venture into Ridgefield anymore, you don't need to venture into Westport, you don't need to venture into Greenwich... you have two super talented stylists here that can take care of your needs," Anthony said.

Noting the impending renovation of the historic building

at 3 Side Cut Road next door and the influx of new, young families to Redding in the last few years, Anthony thinks West Redding is poised for a business renaissance.

"I really think that we entered West Redding at a really great time," he said. "Between us being here as a new business and that building being refurbished, I really think it's going to launch the new beginning of West Redding business district."

Several of their clients from Ridgefield have followed Anthony and Broderick to Metro Salon, and word of mouth has begun to bring in a steady stream of new clientele.

Not long ago, Anthony was cutting the hair of his client's daughter whose mother-in-law had initially drawn his attention to the West Redding location.

"Two weeks ago, I had my client's daughter here under the dryer. And she said, 'You know, Charles, this is full circle now. My great grandmother used to bring my grandmother here. Now my grandmother comes to you, my mother comes to you, and I am here. It's four generations of my family that came to this space, getting their hair done.'"

"I think that's a pretty cool story," Anthony continued. "I really feel like this was meant to happen." ■

Yard not right for gardening? Consider Redding's Community Garden / continued from page 6

they gave me a lot of advice and I listened. They were fabulous, and now I try to pass on what I know to newer gardeners, too.

Is there a piece of advice that was helpful or something you like to tell new gardeners?

Don't plant things too close together because they need space. It's not exciting advice, but it's important. And you need to weed – that's the deal. You know

gardening, it's a lot of work... but when you work harder, it becomes more rewarding.

When does the gardening season start for you?

I start seeds at home a lot. I like growing from seed. I like to plant leeks, tomatoes, onions, garlic, squash, broccolini, peppers, carrots, beets... the usual. And I also have flowers – I plant zinnias and sunflowers as well.

What is your favorite part of the gardening season?

As long as it's not hot, I like it. I must also add that Lonetown Field is the most beautiful place in town. It's gorgeous. It's a hidden secret. ■

For more information, visit townofreddingct.org/community/18731-2

Honored for his commitment to others

By Pamela Brown



Photo by Carol Morgan

Jack Neafsey and his wife, Rilla.

Jack Neafsey is a forward thinker, knowing that to be the best you can be throughout your life, you need to nurture both your mental and physical health.

"Staying involved is what you need to do to keep yourself young, healthy, vibrant, and active, and more importantly, interesting," said Neafsey, 83. "There've been hundreds of studies done looking at the whole process of aging and the one single thing that jumps out is that the more involved, the more you stimulate your mind, and the more physical and mental activity you have, the younger you'll stay and the more interesting you'll be, and that's what I intend to be."

Neafsey, 83, a resident of Meadow Ridge, encourages that mindset through his ongoing support of the award-winning programs of the Stepping Stones Museum in Norwalk where he has served as a member of the Board of Directors for over 20 years. On March 24, the non-profit honored Jack and his wife of 63 years, Rilla, at its Game On! celebration. Retiring from the museum board, he will serve as a member of its Professional Advisory Board.

"We are thrilled to honor Jack and Rilla Neafsey and Jennifer Toll for their unwavering support of the museum's mission to broaden and enrich educational opportunities for children ages 10 and under to enhance their understanding of the world," said Rhonda Kiest, President and CEO, Stepping Stones Museum for Children. "Thanks to the support of the philanthropic leaders like Jack, Rilla and Jennifer, our award-winning, non-profit children's museum is able to expand its community impact throughout Connecticut and beyond as a safe environment that inspires lifelong learning and inspires parents, caregivers, and educators as facilitators of children's explorations."

Years ago, a neighbor introduced Neafsey to Stepping Stones, knowing he had philanthropic interests. "I liked what I saw. I became very much involved," said Neafsey, believing education is vital, especially at an early age. "I've been a benefactor and helped foster programs like the museum's Early Learning and Language Initiative (ELLI)," he said. "We've learned through various studies and our own experiences that experiential learning – learning by doing as opposed to learning by textbook – is a much more effective way to teach young minds. The

ELLI program at Stepping Stones builds on play and experiences and amplifies them to help children learn about the things they're interested in."

Neafsey's additional philanthropic work includes being a Trustee at Cornell University; a Fellow of Cornell Medical College; a benefactor for Hole in the Wall Gang Camp in Norwalk, and a benefactor of the Naval War College, among others. He is also an avid supporter of the Mark Twain Library's annual art show and book fair.

To sharpen his intellect and that of others, Neafsey co-hosts, along with fellow MR resident Dan Sharp, the Great Decisions program at Meadow Ridge, a two-hour bi-monthly seminar on world affairs. "He and I are a good pair. We appreciate and respect each other. Doing it together is very advantageous because I've got more background on the historical side, and Dan, perhaps, has more background on the foreign affairs side, so we complement each other," said Neafsey. Topics include Energy Geopolitics, War Crimes, China and the US, Economic Warfare, and more. "It sharpens my knowledge of foreign policy and allows me to engage and lead lively discussions with the residents."

Earning a bachelor's degree in Engineering and an MBA in Finance, both from Cornell University, Neafsey had a rewarding 25-year career at Sunoco where he served as Executive Vice President responsible for all Canadian operations, Coal Operations, and Real Estate and Leasing, and was concurrently Chief Financial Officer and a Director of the company.

"It was an ideal job. I loved it. I grew and matured in the energy business," said Neafsey. "It's dynamic and challenging. Every day was different. You had to adapt and be fleet of mind and fleet of foot."

Finding ways to keep the next generation thirsting for knowledge is Neafsey's priority. "I want to try and bring younger families into Stepping Stones, get them interested and involved and maybe become members. Too many children are left behind without a decent education," said Neafsey who attended college on a full academic scholarship. "Someone before me paved the way for me, now it's my turn. Education is a must if our society/country is to thrive." ■



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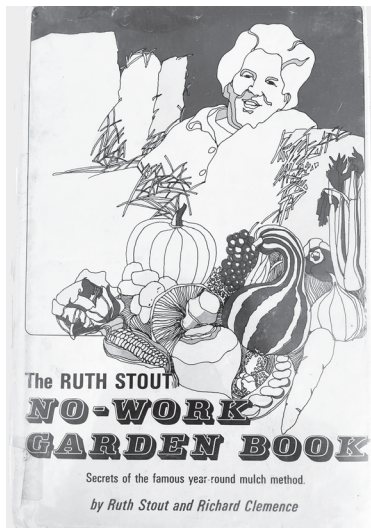
Redding Land Trust is requesting expressions of interest from marketing and communications professionals and firms interested in contracting to support social media, membership outreach, and website upgrades (<https://reddingctlandtrust.org/>). Interested parties should contact Richard Wenning, Redding Land Trust Board member, for more information, at rich@befoundation.org or 203-938-9000. ■

BOOK REVIEW

The Ruth Stout No-Work Garden Book

By Ruth Stout and Richard Clemence

Rodale Press, 1971



having to depend on others to plow, deliver goods, harvest etc. She changed her approach and fed the household – which included her sister and mother – by growing their vegetables and flowers using a permanent, constantly replenished, hay mulch. She wrote about her growing methods in magazine columns, most notable *Organic Gardening* and *Farming* – this book is derived from those columns.

Stout’s conversational style convinces you to at least give the permanent mulch, no-dig method a try, with straightforward, visual, and personal writing. Literary skill may run in the family, as her younger brother Rex Stout, who lived in Danbury, was the author of the Nero Wolfe mystery series. An under-current in the book is their shared competitive, yet cooperative, approach to gardening.

The Stout method, as it has come to be known, uses mulch, preferably hay, as a way to keep weeds under control, replenish the soil, and avoid hard work. No digging, no serious weeding, no spraying, no watering. There seem to be few bugs, slugs, and other pests. The approach makes a lot of sense today, with a few exceptions. We would be unlikely to sprinkle either cigarette ashes or salt around our gardens to deter pests.

Of certain interest to Redding gardeners are her comments about the seasons here. “We practically always get a real frost around the middle of June, and one in early September,” she writes. Wish it were still so!

My favorite line from this book? “Learn as you go. But don’t be too sure of what you’ve learned.” ■

Review by Susan Clark

The frontispiece of the signed copy of this book from the Mark Twain Library includes this note: The paper in this book has been made from waste paper that normally winds up at the city dump. This reclaimed paper is an example of how today’s wastes can be converted into a worthwhile resource, thereby helping to solve the solid waste disposal crisis and preserving the quality of our environment.

A book printed on recycled paper these days is not unusual – and we have Ruth Stout and her ilk to thank for this attention to reducing waste.

But *The Ruth Stout No-Work Garden Book* is not primarily about reducing waste. It is about growing better produce and flowers with less effort by working with nature rather than fighting it. Just as Stout was ahead of her time in looking to recycle waste to paper, she was equally prescient in recommending what we would today call “no-dig” gardening.

Ruth Stout and her husband Fred moved to Redding in 1930, to a 55-acre farm in Poverty Hollow. After many years of conventional gardening, she became frustrated

LIBRARY CORNER

By Mary Hoskinson-Dean

A few weeks ago, I highlighted the 2022 children’s and young adult books that received top national awards. But they are not the only books that are deserving of your attention.

My colleague Lisa Cederbaum and I have lots of books to recommend from this past year, ranging from board books to picture books to horror novels.

Some of those board books just plain made us giggle! See if you can keep a straight face while you read *I’m the Boss* by Elise Gravel. Lulu Monster wants a garbage truck (and a robot... and a dinosaur... and an elephant...) A BIG ONE - RIGHT NOW! Does she get them? Ask her mom!

In her pair of board books, Antoinette Portis writes about a very energetic baby, who states *I’m Up!* because the birds are up, and the sun is up, and the tree is up – but where is everybody else? Mama and Papa finally get the message! They may be a little tired by the end of the day, however, because even though they may be comfortably in bed, baby wants them to know that *I’m Still Up!* Fortunately, things are a little quieter in Alisha Sevigny’s *Give Me a Snuggle*. Did you know that if you combine a snuggle and a tickle, you’ve got a snuggle? Expand your vocabulary with this delightful book.

Farmhouse is an extraordinarily attractive picture book illustrated with a collage of images retrieved from the real lives of the people who lived in the actual farmhouse shown in the story. But it received relatively little recognition this year – for an unusual reason: the illustrator, Sophie Blackall, had already won the top illustrating prize twice! (What DO you do when an

artist just keeps producing better and better work?)

Lisa and I both loved the perfect picture book for grandmothers – *See You Someday Soon* by Pam Zietlow Miller. A little child and his grandma are missing one another. So, they spend all their time planning how they can get together – by telephone, by mail, by rocket – and what they will do when “someday soon” becomes “now”.

An obvious, but previously unremarked theme in a picture book, is presented in *Beautiful You, Beautiful Me* by Tasha Spillet-Summer. A young girl is upset that she does not “match” her mother’s hair, skin color, eye color, and so on. Her mom makes it clear that these differences are of little significance since they so clearly love one another.

New readers also have some great books to choose from! If you’re looking for bright and sunny, the book we would recommend is Ed Emberley’s *I Did It*, an easy read starring a monster (lizard? iguana?) who is learning to ride a bike. He sure makes it look like fun! As opposed to *Free Kid to Good Home* by Hiroshi Ito, a Japanese classic now finally translated into English. A young girl is mightily annoyed by the arrival of a “potato-faced” baby brother and takes herself out to the sidewalk and into a box with “FREE KID TO GOOD HOME” prominently displayed. We won’t tell you how it ends...but this book is quite the exemplar of deadpan humor.

The middle-grade graphic novel *Swim Team* by Johnnie Washington is distinguished by its beautiful illustrations and its poignant narrative. Bree starts the fall new in town and new to her middle

school. She ends up on the school’s hallowed swim team, and surprisingly one of its stars. The historical context of the story, that Black children were banned from many public pools and subsequently developed an undeserved reputation as fearful of water sports, adds to its impact.

Probably the most amusing non-fiction book for children published in 2022 was *Packing for Mars for Kids* by Mary Roach. It’s gross, laugh-out-loud funny, and very informative. Perfect!

Some of our young adult book choices turned out to be...weird. That would fairly characterize *When the Angels Left the Old Country* by Sacha Lamb. A Jewish angel and a demon and all their pals head to 20th century America to avoid pogroms and poverty – but find corruption and violence instead of streets paved with gold. Unusual but intriguing. And *Man-made Monsters* by Andrea Rogers? A unique mashup of Cherokee folktales and classic horror tropes is surprisingly entertaining.

Which also describes the rigorously academic explanation of human evolution found in *How To Build a Human* by Pamela Turner. Ms. Turner provides a straightforward “just-the-facts” account but enhances it with a running commentary of witty observations on the sophisticated subject matter. This book will appeal to a wide range of ages.

Lisa and I hope you find something to enjoy on this list! ■

Mary Hoskinson-Dean is Assistant Library Director and Head of Children and Teen Services at Mark Twain Library

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Thank you

REAL ESTATE

February 2023 real estate report

A look at trends in the local housing market

By John Talley and Bill Whitehead

Redding’s real estate market continues to show strength, with eight homes sold in February with an average 48 “days-on-market” for the month and 45 “days-on-market” for 2023 to date. Inventories in Redding and its neighboring towns remains tight but should grow as the spring market kicks into full swing in April and May. ■

Redding Sold - February	Sale Price	List Price	%/ List Price	Days on Market
130 Gallows Hill Road	\$265,250	\$199,000	33%	41
26 Peaceable Street	\$346,000	\$325,000	6%	5
101 Pinetree Road	\$380,000	\$369,000	3%	84
15 Middlebrook Pond Road	\$677,000	\$699,000	-3%	113
11 Indian Hill Road	\$875,000	\$950,000	-8%	18
94 Mountain Road	\$985,000	\$939,000	5%	4
10 Beech Lane	\$1,100,000	\$1,199,000	-8%	82
33 Sherman Turnpike	\$1,355,000	\$1,395,000	-3%	33
Average	\$747,906	\$759,375	-2%	48

February 2023													
Town	Current Inventory	Homes Sold		Average Days on Market		Average List Price		Average Sale Price		Percent Sale Price > / < List Price		Average Price/SqFt	
	As of March 21	February	2023	February	2023	February	2023	February	2023	February	2023	February	2023
Redding	13	8	11	48	45	\$759,375	\$715,273	\$747,906	\$706,568	-2%	-1%	\$270	\$288
Ridgefield	30	12	29	53	57	\$1,118,492	\$1,072,203	\$1,131,533	\$1,070,324	1%	0%	\$319	\$326
Weston	22	7	14	77	62	\$1,074,543	\$1,086,557	\$1,110,857	\$1,090,786	3%	0%	\$354	\$328
Wilton	21	9	16	59	49	\$1,085,333	\$1,055,688	\$1,099,667	\$1,072,125	1%	2%	\$365	\$347
Easton	12	6	12	69	72	\$693,800	\$790,817	\$682,333	\$724,792	-2%	-8%	\$222	\$275
Bethel	12	7	19	35	44	\$424,857	\$443,716	\$425,000	\$443,942	0%	0%	\$260	\$257
Newtown	27	16	30	62	55	\$632,977	\$599,211	\$627,228	\$593,422	-1%	-1%	\$266	\$264
Average	20	9	19	57	55	\$827,054	\$823,352	\$832,075	\$814,565	0%	-1%	\$294	\$298

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

THE NATURAL WORLD

The wood thrush returns

By Jen Wastrom



Photo by Gilles Carter, CT Audubon Society.

The flutelike “ee-oh-lay,” which echoes through the forest at dawn and dusk is that of the wood thrush, one of the more noteworthy birds found in our neck of the woods. This cinnamon colored, spotted-breasted bird is known for its unique and hauntingly beautiful song (heard often, for example, in the hemlock forest along the

Ravine Trail, a Redding Land Trust designated trail).

The male wood thrush appears in early spring and begins singing to establish his territory and attract a mate. The female will build the nest and incubate the four or five greenish-blue eggs for about two weeks. Together, the pair will feed the young. The wood thrush is a thorough hunter, hopping across the forest floor turning over leaves with its thin beak in search of insects. The rapidly growing chicks will leave the nest in as little as ten days.

In September, they fly south to winter mostly in the broad-leaved forests from southeastern Mexico to Panama.

According to the International Union for Conservation of Nature “Red List,” the wood thrush is classified as ‘Near Threatened.’ The primary reason is the fragmentation of forests in both their breeding and non-breeding habitats.

Fortunately, when the day’s light fades and most other birds are quiet for the night, the bell-like tones of the wood thrush can still be heard from the darkening woods here in Redding.

Four interesting facts about the wood thrush:

- The male wood thrush can sing a duet by himself using two separate voices: one a continuous series of complex elements, the other - a steady trill at a lower frequency. The female wood thrush does not sing.
- The wood thrush uniquely places something white (a blanched leaf) on the exterior edge of the nest to break the recognizable shape of the nest to deter predators.
- The wood thrush was adopted as the official state bird of Washington, DC in 1938, but scientists fear there is a 75% chance that the wood thrush will no longer inhabit that metro area by 2100.
- Before migration, the wood thrush switches from eating insects to eating berries with high lipid levels to ready themselves for the long journey. ■

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Butterflies in our backyards *Mourning Cloaks*

By Victor DeMasi



Photo courtesy of Connecticut Butterfly Atlas

Mourning cloaks are first out, maybe mid-March or earlier if a group of warm days in a row interrupts winter’s grip. This is one of our spectacular, large butterflies that hibernates as an adult. They are fly-ready for spring. You might find a wintering individual under a house shutter or stonewall, totally immobilized. Any good crevice will do.

Mourning cloaks fly only in forested areas, so take a hike! Forested sites warm before more open sites on the first days of spring. No flower nectaring for

them, but a tree wound with sap might get a visit. On the wing they are a blur, but a warm shaft of sun in the woods on a rocky outcrop will receive numerous return visits and lazy basking wings outstretched. I have found the same spots on Topstone mountain are reliable for finding my quarry year after year.

Another brood flies mid-summer, less commonly seen and more to open habitats. Rarely, mourning cloaks are blown “across the pond” where butterfly enthusiasts cherish the rare sighting. In the United Kingdom, it is called the “Camberwell Beauty”.

If you see mourning cloaks, send me a message at monarchvictor@gmail.com (and a picture too) if you can sneak in close enough. I am entering all sightings in the Peabody Museum database.

Victor DeMasi is a curatorial affiliate at the Yale Peabody Museum of Natural History. His field work with butterflies contributed almost a thousand citations to the Connecticut Butterfly Atlas.

Good books for good readers

By Margi Esten

Who knew that when I googled novels with “garden” in the title I would come up with a plethora of wonderful books. My favorite, and one I had originally plucked off my bookshelf, is *Elizabeth and her German Garden* by Marie Annette Beauchamp. Published in 1898, it is the first book by Beauchamp, who was also known as Elizabeth Von Arnim. It is a

semi-autobiographical diary about Elizabeth’s experiences learning gardening and interacting with her friends. “May 7th – there were days last winter when I danced for sheer joy out in my frost-bound garden in spite of my years and children. But I did it behind a bush, having a due regard for the decencies...” And so it goes.

Frances Hodgson Burnett’s

The Secret Garden was first published in book form in 1911, after serialization in *The American Magazine*. Set in England, it has become one of Burnett’s most popular novels and seen as a classic of English children’s literature. As you probably know, several stage and film adaptations have been made.

In 2008, Australian author

Kate Morton had *The Forgotten Garden* published. Historical fiction lovers will adore this mystery of why a four-year-old child was found abandoned on an Australian wharf in 1913. (Note: all of Kate Morton’s books are a bit on the light side, but she is a gifted storyteller and her novels are so readable and fun. Look for them in a future column.)

Dame Penelope Margaret Lively is a nationally bestselling British writer of fiction for both children and adults. She has won both the Booker Prize and the Carnegie Medal for British children’s books. *Life In the Garden* is a philosophical and poetic memoir with her reflections on garden, art, literature – and life. So good. ■



New Pond Farm Education Center

PLEASE JOIN US FOR OUR SPRING OPEN DAYS!
Sundays, April 2, May 7, June 4

Drop by anytime between 1 and 4 PM and spend a joyful afternoon with members of our staff and board. Meet some of our youngest barnyard residents, tour our Woodland Indian encampment, explore our trails, visit with our delightful program animals, and enjoy a delicious farm treat!

We can’t wait to welcome you!

If you have any concerns about the weather, please check our website after 9 AM.



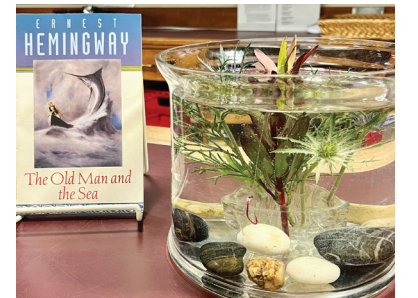
101 Marchant Road
West Redding, CT 06896
203-938-2117
newpondfarm.org

Blooming Books

By Redding Garden Club



Photos by Sharon Epstein
“A Walk in the Woods”
Muriel Badinelli



“The Old Man and the Sea”
Karen de Friesse

The Redding Garden Club welcomed spring last week at Mark Twain Library with floral arrangements inspired by some of their favorite books.

Participants included:

Muriel Badinelli
Andrea Brundage

Mary Lou Carlson
Sarah Cummings
Pat Dielman
Karen de Friesse
Kelsey de Friesse
Leslie Freyberg
Catherine Riordan
Margaret Saggiomo
Bert Webbe

Crossword Puzzle

Redding by the numbers

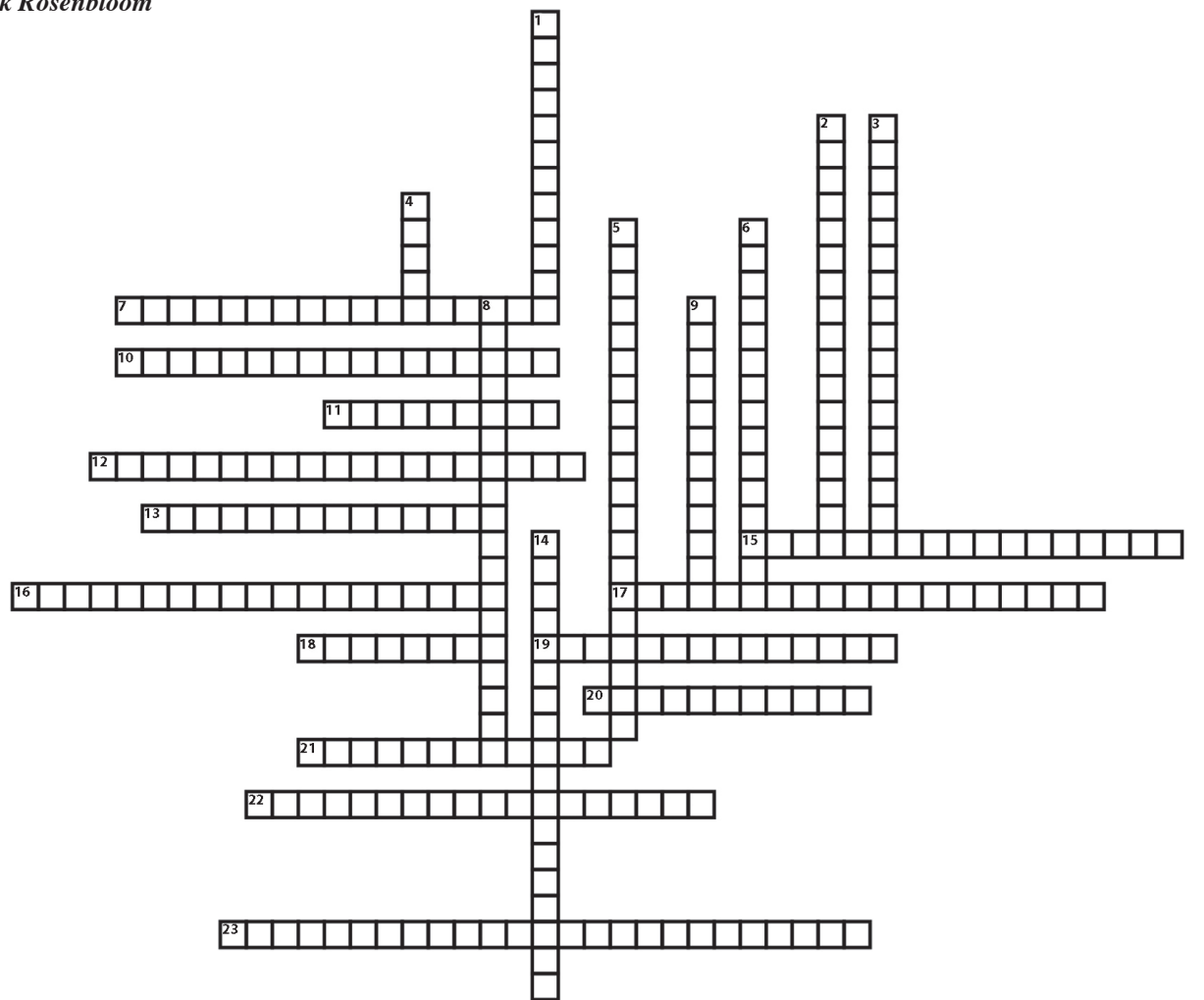
By Susan Clark and Mark Rosenbloom

Down:

- Granite Church built
- Redding Land Trust founded
- Number of households
- Number of public schools
- Size of Huntington Park (acres)
- Garbage cost per pound
- Train ticket to New York
- Georgetown Day!
- G&B Wire Mill founded

Across:

- Center Historic District
- Big flood year
- How vast are we? (square miles)
- Scenic Cross Highway
- Mark Twain Library founded
- Emporium burned
- Year of incorporation
- Population
- Concerts on the Green end
- Meadow Ridge opened
- Topstone opens each year
- How high are we? (feet)
- Town Hall address
- Mil rate



Answers to this puzzle can be found at reddingsentinel.org

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

\$ = fee applies
R = registration required

ARTS

Sunday, Apr. 2

The Four of Us
2:00 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.
The Michael Chekhov Theatre Festival presents an On the Road free production of The Four of Us by Itamar Moses.
Ridgefield Library
472 Main Street
Ridgefield
ridgefieldlibrary.org
R

Saturday, Apr. 15

All Ages Discovery Tour
1:00 p.m. – 2:00 p.m.
Guided group tour of the museum's current collections. The Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum
258 Main Street
Ridgefield
thealdrich.org
R

Sunday, Apr. 23

MTL Open Mic: A Literary Event for Teens and Adults
3:00 p.m.
All literary genres welcome, readings limited to five minutes each.
Mark Twain Library
439 Redding Road
marktwinlibrary.org
R

CHILDREN, TEENS

Sunday, Apr. 2

Family Campfire
2:00 p.m. - 3:30 p.m.
Theme: Animal Sounds
Make s'mores and meet an animal ambassador at this fun, family-friendly campfire.
Earthplace
10 Woodside Lane
Westport
earthplace.org
\$, R

Thursdays, Apr. 6, Apr. 20 and Apr. 27

Nature Explorers (Grades K-2)
4:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.
Three-part series full of outdoor nature adventures.
New Pond Farm Education Center
101 Marchant Road
newpondfarm.org
\$, R

Sunday, Apr. 22

RES PTA Science Fair
12:30 p.m. – 1:30 p.m.
Kindergarten – 4th Graders will present their science projects and inventions to kick off the S.T.E.A.M. Festival
Redding Elementary School
33 Lonetown Road
facebook.com/RESPTA
R

HOLIDAY

Friday, Mar. 31

Free Flashlight Egg Hunt (Grades 3 - 5)
8:00 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.
Arrive by 7:45 to check in
A twist on the traditional egg hunt by Ridgefield Parks & Recreation
Recreation Center Fields
195 Danbury Road
Ridgefield
ridgefieldparksandrec.org
R

Saturday, Apr. 1

Free Annual Egg Scramble
11:00 a.m. – 11:15 a.m.
Children will collect eggs, meet the Easter Bunny, and enjoy springtime in the park.
Co-sponsored by Ridgefield Parks & Recreation and the Ridgefield Rotary Club.
Ballard Park
485 Main Street
Ridgefield
ridgefieldparksandrec.org

Friday, Apr. 7

FairfieldMoms 3rd Annual Easter Egg Hunt
Egg Hunt 1: 10 a.m. (Ages 5 and under)
Egg Hunt 2: 10:45 a.m. (Ages 5 and under)
Egg Hunt 3: 11:30 a.m. (Ages 10 and under)
Egg Hunt 4: 12:15 p.m. (Ages 10 and under)
Silverman's Farm
451 Sport Hill Road, Easton
eventbrite.com/e/fairfieldmoms-easter-egg-hunt-2023-tickets-559567620817
\$, R

Saturday, Apr. 8

Eastern European Egg Decorating for Children (10+)
1:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.
Learn a traditional Ukrainian craft and create decorations and unique gifts.
New Pond Farm Education Center
101 Marchant Road
newpondfarm.org
\$, R

NATURE

Saturday, Apr. 1 – Sunday, Apr. 2

Silverman's Farm Opening Weekend
9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.
2023 farm season opening weekend – produce, farm market, live animals and more.
Silverman's Farm
451 Sport Hill Road
Easton
silvermansfarm.com

Tuesday, Apr. 4

Connecticut's Reptiles
7:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.
New Pond Farm Education Center
101 Marchant Road
newpondfarm.org
R

Tuesday, Apr. 4

Nick of Time: DDT and Raptors
7:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.
Zoom
Mark Twain Library
marktwinlibrary.org
R

Wednesday, Apr. 12

Spring Astronomy with the Treworgy Planetarium
7:30 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.
Recommended for ages 8 and up.
Grace Farms
365 Lukes Wood Road
New Canaan
gracefarms.org
\$, R

Friday, Apr. 14 or Friday, May 5

Spring Migration: Birding with Joe Bear
7:30 a.m. – 9:30 a.m.
New Pond Farm Education Center
101 Marchant Road
newpondfarm.org
R

Monday, Apr. 17

A Therapist's Garden
11:30 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.
Redding Garden Club presents guest speaker Erik Keller, Master Gardener and Horticultural Therapist at Ann's Place. Light lunch and meeting to follow.
Redding Community Center
37 Lonetown Road
reddinggardenclub.org
\$, R

Tuesday, Apr. 25

Wildflower Ramble & Brown Bag Lunch
11:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.
New Pond Farm Education Center
101 Marchant Road
newpondfarm.org
\$, R

Saturday, Apr. 29

Frothy Forage
Rain date: Sunday, Apr. 30
2-hour time slots beginning at 12:00 p.m.
A hiking and beer tasting experience with activities for the whole family.
Woodcock Nature Center
56 Deer Run Road
Wilton
woodcocknaturecenter.org
\$, R

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 / St. Patrick Parish
Palm Sunday / Saturday Vigil: 4:00 p.m. (Sacred Heart) and 5:30 p.m. (St. Patrick)
Palm Sunday: 8:00 a.m., 10:30

a.m. and 5:00 p.m. (St. Patrick); 9:00 a.m. and 10:30 a.m. (Sacred Heart)
Reconciliation Monday: 3:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m. at Our Lady of Fatima, Wilton and St. Mary Church, Ridgefield; Eucharistic Adoration at 7:00 p.m. (Sacred Heart)
Holy Thursday: 8:00 p.m. Mass (St. Patrick) to be followed by a procession of the Holy Eucharist to Mercy Hall for Eucharistic Adoration until midnight. Sacred Heart Catholic Church
30 Church Street
St. Patrick Catholic Church
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. 30

Amazing Tales - Podcasting About CT's History
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
marktwinlibrary.org
R

Sunday, Apr. 2

Redding Land Trust Annual Meeting
3:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.
Come learn about the Redding Land Trust and its efforts to preserve Redding's natural beauty.
Redding Community Center or Zoom
37 Lonetown Road
reddingctlandtrust.org

Monday, Apr. 3

Creating Cohesive Community: A Positive Way Forward for Families of Children with Special Needs
10:00 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.
New Canaan Library / Community Room
151 Main Street
New Canaan
newcanaanlibrary.org
R

Wednesday, Apr. 5

The Aftermath – Finding Hope & Empathy in a Caring Community
7:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.
Led by Muhoza Rwabukamba, Redding resident and survivor of the 1994 genocide in Rwanda.
In-person
Mark Twain Library
439 Redding Road
marktwinlibrary.org
R

Friday, Apr. 28

Alien Abduction: The Betty and Barney Hill Story
6:30 p.m.
Paranormal investigator Barry Pirro explores the most investigated case of alien abduction of all time.
Recommended for ages 18 and up.
Mark Twain Library
439 Redding Road
marktwinlibrary.org
R

MEETINGS

Monday, Apr. 3

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

Monday, Apr. 3

Park and Recreation Commission
7:00 p.m.
Redding Community Center
37 Lonetown Road
townofreddingct.org

Monday, Apr. 3

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

Monday, Apr. 3

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

Tuesday, Apr. 4

Economic Development Committee
8:30 a.m.
Town Hall / Conference Room
100 Hill Road
townofreddingct.org

Tuesday, Apr. 4

Redding Board of Education
7:00 p.m.
John Read Middle School
486 Redding Road
er9.org

Tuesday, Apr. 4

Conservation Commission
7:30 p.m.
Old Town House
23 Cross Highway
townofreddingct.org

Wednesday, Apr. 5

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

Wednesday, Apr. 5

Brown Bag Lunch with First Selectwoman
12:00 p.m.
Redding Community Center
37 Lonetown Road
townofreddingct.org

Monday, Apr. 10

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

Tuesday, Apr. 11

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

Tuesday, Apr. 11

Planning Commission
7:30 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

The Four of Us

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2:00 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.
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Ridgefield
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Redding Garden Club presents Erik Keller, Mater Gardener and Horticultural Therapist at Ann's Place.
Redding Community Center
37 Lonetown Road
reddinggardenclub.org

Want to feature an upcoming event?

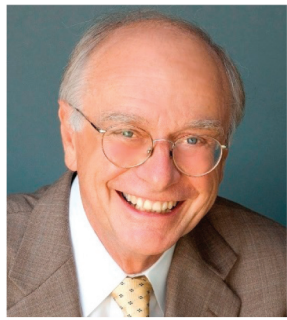
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VP of Mortgage Lending
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O: (203) 974-1733 Mary.Dent@grarate.com
230 Greenwood Ave, #1A, Bethel, CT 06801

Applicant subject to credit and underwriting approval (20221102-1745808)
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