

Milford-Orange Times

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Orange Hosts New Year's Chili Run



Regional participants joined in the 25th annual Chilly Chili Run on Jan. 1 at High Plains Community Center in Orange. The event included a chili brunch and benefitted the Amity Teen Center. *Photo by Lexi Crocco.*

Winter Wonderland Race In Milford



Area residents ran the five-mile Winter Wonderland race sponsored by the Milford Road Runners on Jan. 29 at Platt Tech High School in Milford. Proceeds benefitted the Kids Track Series. *Photo by Robert Creigh.*

Orange Licensing Land To Private Farms Debated

By Brandon T. Bisceglia

Orange has for years been licensing tracts of town-owned lands to local farmers without much fanfare. But a dispute over the development of Fred Wolfe Park has opened debate over the practice.

That controversy came to a head at the Jan. 11 meeting of the Board of Selectmen, as members of the public and the selectmen discovered that they had little power to take back one of those tracts – at least for now.

The most disputed among plot – and the reason they have been thrust into the spotlight – is a section of land adjacent to Fred Wolfe Park under the care of Field View Farm. A two-year license agreement from 2021 allows Field View Farm to use a 14.4-acre portion of the northern section of the park to be used for growing hay or crops. Field View pays \$375 to use the land.

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Milford Schools, Amity Pitch Budget Increases

By Brandon T. Bisceglia

Milford and the Amity Regional School District have made their school budget requests for the 2023-2024 school year, and both include increases over the previous year.

In Milford, Superintendent Anna Cutaia made her budget presentation before the Board of Education at its Jan. 9 meeting, during which she made a \$106.5 million budget request. That would be a 4.39

percent increase over the prior year's \$102 million budget – an unusually large jump.

As in most districts, teacher salaries and benefits are the single biggest portion of the budget. Cutaia's proposal would add \$3.1 million to teacher salaries, for a total of \$75 million. Benefits would add another \$6.5 million to the total.

One reason for the increase is that the

Continued on page 4

Physical Therapist Opens In Milford



The Milford Regional Chamber of Commerce held a ribbon-cutting on Jan. 27 to celebrate the opening of YouTherapy Wellness and Physical Rehab, a new physical therapist in Milford. The company offers programs for people who have finished their prescribed therapy who want to continue to keep in shape in a safe environment with certified professionals. From left: Brynn Lafferty, Mayor Ben Blake, Joanne Abedilla, Anntoinette Abedilla, Naethaniel Abedilla, owner Rey Abedilla, MRCC Director of Membership and Marketing Simon McDonald, and state Sen. James Marony. *Photo by Robert Creigh.*

Milford Approves New Accessory Dwelling Rules

By Brandon T. Bisceglia

The Milford Planning & Zoning Board at its Jan. 17 meeting voted to approve a set of new rules that would loosen some restrictions on accessory dwelling units in the city.

Possibly the biggest change to Milford's ADU ordinances is that the units will no longer be restricted to family members of the property owner. The units can still be used for that purpose, but they can also be rented out to make money for the owner.

The question of how to govern ADUs, which are sometimes called "in-law apartments," was spurred by a law passed by the state legislature in 2022 that allows people to construct the dwellings – attached to a house or freestanding – as a matter of right. The state allowed municipalities to opt out, which Milford did in September, but officials simultaneously conceded that the

city's existing rules were likely outdated and began working on revisions.

Continued on page 4

New Columnists Page 12 & Page 15



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A photograph of the restaurant's interior, showing a dining area with tables set with white cloths and dark chairs. The walls are painted in vibrant blue and green, and there are large murals of tropical landscapes. The lighting is warm and ambient.

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A close-up photograph of a cocktail in a martini glass. The drink is a vibrant pinkish-red color and is garnished with a slice of lime. The background is dark and out of focus.

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A close-up photograph of a dish featuring a large, seared salmon fillet. The salmon is garnished with a slice of lemon, a tomato slice, and fresh herbs. It is served on a blue plate with a white sauce and garnishes.A photograph of a drink in a tall glass, garnished with a slice of lime and fresh fruit, including strawberries and raspberries. The drink is a vibrant red color.

ADUs (Continued From 1)

The state is increasingly pushing towns to increase their housing options, as Connecticut faces an acute shortage of housing of all types, and particularly affordable housing.

Although many members of the public who spoke over the course of two meetings were generally in favor of opening the regulations around ADUs, some thought that a few of the specific rules that were eventually adopted were too restrictive.

Resident Michael Blake, for instance, was one of several residents who thought the P&Z should allow ADUs to be detached from the main home. He called the requirement that the unit be attached to the home arbitrary.

“We have a detached garage. We also have an 81-year-old mother-in-law that we want to move in there, and it would be a lot easier for us if we could build a little mother-in-law apartment above our detached garage,” he said. “But right now, as the proposed regulations read, we can’t do that. It’s going to be a much more expensive situation to do something different.”

Resident Deborah Rowe agreed that it would make sense to allow for detached ADUs, and argued that the maximum size of the unit – 800 square feet – was a bit small.

“I can’t even get a baby grand piano into an 800 square-foot unit,” she quipped, noting that she works in real estate and contracting.

“You have some homes here that are over 3,000-4,000 square feet that have a detached garage that has an apartment above it,” she said.

Resident Donna Dutko thought that rules around the units should be tied directly to Milford’s goal of increasing affordable housing, meaning that they would need to be deed-restricted. However, Jenna Montalbano, another resident, countered that deed

restrictions would make things harder, not easier, for property owners with ADUs.

“It would also be very difficult trying to sell a house with a deed restriction on it,” Montalbano pointed out.

After the public comment period, Board Chair Jim Quish said that he was personally in favor of allowing detached units but hadn’t seen enough support in the community or on the board for it to pass.

Board member Etan Hirsch reiterated a question that had cropped up at the previous meeting regarding whether there were minimum rental times. Milford has no regulations governing rental periods for any of its housing.

“It sounds like this is a tremendous money-making opportunity for people by the beach to have yearly Airbnbs,” he noted.

Another change that did not make it into the final rules was proposed language that would have required at least one parking space be provided for each ADU. Several residents had voiced concerns over parking in certain neighborhoods where parking spaces are already in short supply.

Only board member Marc Zahariades voted against the regulation change.

Farm Agreements (Continued From 1)

Plans have been underway for years to redevelop the park to add new playground facilities, rework the flow of traffic and improve safety. But some groups – especially the Orange Soccer Association – have argued that the licensed land would be better used to create adequate playing fields and alleviate traffic issues.

Most recently, a new ad hoc committee was formed to make recommendations for development of the park.

The wrinkle with the Field View Farm was

that the license agreement has a clause that gives the farm the option to renew the license once for two years without getting town approval. First Selectman Jim Zeoli noted that Field View had chosen to exercise that option.

Zeoli opened the discussion by reading into the record a letter from resident Jody Dietch, who could not attend the meeting in person.

“There is absolutely no rush to approve these leases, and if they are allowed to expire, there is no detriment to our community,” she wrote. “Allowing the leases to renew could impact future plans for the park and its development that would be detrimental to our children and community,” she wrote.

Board member Mitch Goldblatt said that he wasn’t comfortable with keeping that automatic renewal in the agreement, particularly given that some of the other agreements they were reviewing on that same evening did not have such an option.

“I don’t think we need that in there. I think it’s a situation we should remove,” he said.

Town Attorney Vince Marino, however, said the language in the agreement had been adopted in 1998 and carried forward since then. He said December was the first time the farm had exercised the option – and the board would have had to terminate the agreement 180 days prior its expiration.

“This has automatically renewed as a matter of contract for a two-year period,” he said. “In 2025, this will be back before this body, and you’ll at that point change the language or not renew it.”

Goldblatt expressed frustration over Marino’s explanation.

“Vinny, I hear you, but every two years for the last 20 years we’ve been voting on this,” he said. “And tonight, after 20 years, because it’s been brought up because people have been concerned, all of a sudden we realize that it’s automatically renewed.”

Zeoli noted during the meeting that the work

of the new ad hoc committee making plans for the park would likely take a large chunk of the two-year period to do its work anyway.

“There are many things that could happen there, but that is all still long to be determined,” he said.

The land used by Field View Farm near Fred Wolfe Park is not the only piece of licensed town property. The selectmen considered three other agreements: one with Joseph Moncheski, who uses land at the Wright’s Farm property; a second stretch of land managed by Field View Farm at Racebrook Tract; and Stephen Bspuda, who leases land at Ewen Farm. The agreements with Moncheski and Bspuda did not have an option to renew without town approval; the selectmen voted to renew them both.

School Budgets (Continued From 1)

district is in the process of moving school counselors who were being paid through a grant obtained from the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund into the general budget. Four counselors and a supervisor are being shifted into the budget this year; there are four more who are slated to be moved over next year.

The district also faced increases in special education, transportation and fuel costs and new state mandates that require the schools to evaluate their HVAC systems and install dispensers of menstrual cycle products in all schools.

According to Cutaia, after accounting for unavoidable increases, only 0.18 percent of the budget increase will go toward system improvements.

Amity’s budget, which Superintendent Jennifer Byars presented to the district’s Finance Committee on Jan. 9, would be

Continued on page 6

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For Nature’s Sake

Lyme Disease And Disrupted Ecosystems

The way we shape our landscapes has come back to bite us – literally.

Lyme disease cases in the US have tripled in the past 20 years, which makes it the “most common infection in North America transmitted from animals to people,” according to the January 2022 issue of Science Magazine. Research has confirmed that, as our climate has warmed, more disease carrying ticks are becoming active in the winter months and more species of ticks, with new diseases, are migrating to the Northeast.

That means right now, in February, ticks are already outside and ready to find a mammal to feed on in Orange and Milford. Dr. Goudarz Molaei, chief scientist at the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station, has said while the state lab used to get at most 50 ticks submitted for testing between December and March, they now see close 800 ticks in the same period.

Climate change worsens the risk of tick-borne illness, but Lyme disease didn’t start with the climate crisis. Nor was it invented in a laboratory. In fact, researchers at Yale School of Public Health found that the bacterium which causes Lyme disease has existed in North America for at least 60,000 years. While Lyme disease has existed in animals for millennia, the crossover to humans seems to have become most notable in the past 50 years or so, with the moniker “Lyme disease” prompted by a cluster of cases in children and adults in the mid-1970s in Lyme, Connecticut.

Why then did Lyme disease shift from animals to humans in significant numbers when it did and where it did, bursting into public health consciousness in the last quarter of the 20th century?

The answer is summarized on the Con-

necticut Department of Public Health’s website: “The emergence of Lyme disease in Connecticut is attributed in large part to changes in land use... [that] favor expansion of habitat that supports ticks and wildlife and therefore transmission of tick-borne diseases from animals to people.”

Our sprawling style of growth, with commercial strips and leafy neighborhoods interspersed with fragments of forest, enables certain types of wildlife to survive and even thrive while other species disappear. In those distorted ecosystems, some of the species that thrive also foster an increase and spread of ticks and disease.

We are living, then, in an era when diseases that have lived in nature a long time, including Lyme disease and COVID-19, have jumped to human populations. As we combat those diseases and seek to prevent new ones, it can help to explore basic information on some of the animals and plants that play a role in the environmental settings where Lyme disease is rising.

For instance, the white footed mouse, the most common small mammal in much of the Northeast, is a key “reservoir” of disease and a favorite feeding station for ticks; a mouse may carry as many as 100 ticks without being harmed itself. The mice, however, tend to carry several diseases in their blood, including the bacterium that causes Lyme disease, and, as it turns out, they are highly successful at transmitting those diseases to ticks.

Deer cannot transmit Lyme disease to ticks. Rather, their importance is that they feed a lot of ticks at one time and help the



PATRICIA HOUSER

population grow. A single deer can support hundreds of ticks while also transporting them between forests and lawns.

Still another feature in our landscapes that can worsen tick-borne disease risk is the invasive plant called the Japanese barberry. Wildlife biologist Dr. Scott Williams of the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station explained in an interview that the barberry shrub provides a uniquely hospitable setting for ticks. The shrub creates a reliably shaded space with a high relative humidity for moisture-loving ticks. Williams and his colleagues have found that eliminating Japanese barberry from forested areas can reduce the number of Lyme disease-infected ticks in those areas by as much as 80 percent.

For a few further basics consider the quiz and answers below:

- 1. Which of the following tick species is, by far, the most common in Connecticut?
 - a) The black-legged tick (also called the deer tick)
 - b) The lone star tick
 - c) The American dog tick
 - d) The Asian longhorned tick
- 2. Which of the following disease organisms has been found in ticks tested by the New York Upstate Medical University testing lab at Syracuse in the past several years?
 - a) Anaplasmosis
 - b) Babesiosis
 - c) Bartonella
 - d) Lyme disease
 - e) All of the above
- 3. According to the Centers for Disease Control, in which life stage are ticks most

likely to transmit Lyme disease to humans?

- a) Larval stage
- b) Nymph stage
- c) Adults
- 4. True/False: In 2021 an investigative news report showed that a popular flea and tick collar was responsible for nearly 1,700 pet deaths.

- Answers:
- 1. a) The black-legged tick. Out of more than 5,000 ticks sent by Connecticut residents to the state laboratory for testing in 2021, roughly 77 percent were black-legged, 19.2 percent were dog ticks, 3.7 percent were lone star ticks, and 0.2 percent were Asian longhorned ticks.
 - 2. e) All of the above.
 - 3. b) Nymph stage. Northeastern University has reported that nymphs are responsible for 85 percent of all tick-borne diseases. Black-legged ticks in the nymph stage are roughly the size of a poppy seed, which makes them especially difficult to detect; they are most active between late May through August.
 - 4. True. A follow-up congressional investigation found that certain pesticides in flea and tick collars caused 2,500 pet deaths and roughly 100,000 illnesses. In October 2022, the EPA announced a ban on a type of flea and tick collar containing a chemical linked to neurological damage in children. A guide to safer alternatives can be found on the non-profit National Resources Defense Council webpage, “Flea and Tick Products Directory.”

Patricia Houser, PhD, AICP, shares her exploration of local and regional environmental issues in this column as a member of the nonpartisan Milford Environmental Concerns Coalition.

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Opinion & Editorial

Ponder This

Fraught Military Decisions Should Be Difficult

The historical experience of Germany as epicenter of World War II affects Germans' recollection of the war. Much has been written about the unique position that Germany holds regarding rearmament and its role as a NATO member in relation to Ukraine.

The recent discussion about the seeming reluctance of Germany to enter conflict reminded me of context. We were visiting Australia during the commemoration of World War I. Remembrance Day, an Australian national holiday, emphasized enduring, deep pride for soldiers. Australian New Zealand Army Corp Day is a national day of remembrance celebrating Australians and New Zealanders who served in all wars and peacekeeping missions.

We learned the origin of biscuit tins sent by long journey on ships prior to modern storage and preservatives. These tins managed to arrive at faraway front lines in Turkey and Gallipoli from mothers far away. A tin of cookies commemorating the ANZAC can still be purchased in Australia and New Zealand, especially on Remembrance Day.

This travel experience was an introduction to a culture with particular national sentiments of pride and valor in war based on a shared collective experience. Proudly sending young soldiers on long, perilous journeys to foreign lands with uncertainty of safe return was made possible by an authentic sense of heroism and duty. Underneath this national pride in Australia lies a deep understanding of war as a bloody and valiant sacrifice for a noble cause.

I had a déjà vu experience upon viewing the photos of armored tanks being readied by Germany to aid Ukraine. In the fall of 2001, in the immediate aftermath of the 9/11 terrorist attack, we made a visit to lower Manhattan. My recollection of the timeline is blurry, but airport travel was still restricted, trains were not fully operational and the economy was still uncertain.

We did not go to the actual site soon to be

known as Ground Zero, but rather to the financial district. We parked our vehicle safely in downtown Brooklyn and walked across the Brooklyn Bridge with hundreds of other people. It was a somber occasion on a beautiful day in very early October. I have a vivid memory of the view of "The City," as we local New Yorkers from the various boroughs refer to Manhattan. I was accompanied by my brother and my spouse who was at that time an active firefighter/administrator in Connecticut.

During the few weeks leading up to this trip we were all transfixed by television images of rubble, debris, destroyed buildings, rescue workers who never gave up hope and, of course, of the firefighters who lost 343 of their own on that terrible day. It was a somber and poignant walk, but also one of unusual community. People greeted one another and walked in solidarity. We experienced an intimacy with strangers stirred by shared grief, of memories of family, friends and loved ones. An odd sense of respect emerged.

So many people directly experienced the unimaginable, whereas we were mere spectators of the more general tragedy. Our particular trio was unscathed by the immediacy of grief for a loved one, thankful yet oddly uncomfortable by this sense of gratitude. My own father retired from FDNY, but mercifully did not live to be a witness to 9/11.

As we walked the streets around City Hall and the financial district, people stopped along the way at candles, posters and signs placed by loved ones seeking the whereabouts of family members.

Our trip home was filled with the more joyful experience of remembering the many and varied characters of our youth. My brother and I could barely fathom that the apparatus from



ELLEN RUSSELL BEATTY

my father's beloved Engine 204, second due at 9/11, was destroyed by fallen debris at the scene of the twin towers. None of the firefighters from that company were injured.

In addition to the heroic sacrifices of individuals, including the New York City and Port Authority police, were the contribution of the US Army and Air National Guard. By the end of the day on 9/11, New York Army and National Guard soldiers were on duty in lower Manhattan assisting police officers with security and aiding firefighters so gallantly involved in rescue and recovery efforts. These units were welcomed and widely supported as they aided communication efforts, monitored air quality and had a day-to-day presence at the twin towers. Local residents reported that they felt safer with the military presence.

So what in the recent moment viewing a photo of the Leopold tank brought back memories of 20 years ago to the post-9/11 daytrip? I remember on that odd but special day the images of the military presence. Although they were welcomed and necessary, it was still peculiar to see soldiers with rifles in New York City. My brother and I later reminisced about roaming around the city freely in beautiful bank buildings with easy access and unrestricted elevators. One particular memory was of shopping for Easter outfits with our mother at Kline's on the Square, a department store on 14th Street. My brother and I travelled by bus, unescorted, to YMCA day camp.

These wonderful memories seem in stark contrast to images of soldiers necessary for security and protection. So I understand the skepticism of the German people. I appreciate and respect the difficulty of the decision to assist Ukraine. German Chancellor Olaf Scholz has

been criticized both for any tendency to avoid sending military support to Ukraine and also by the anti-war movement for the same decision. It is a dilemma.

In my humble opinion, the correct decision was made for Germany to provide additional military support to Ukraine. However, the complexities of this decision cannot be overstated. The meaningless suffering of civilians cannot be tolerated on European soil, yet great trepidation about armed conflict exists among the German people, who are aware of the devastation and lived experience of those who suffered during World War II.

Defending the US from terrorism was a top priority among Americans after 9/11. The American public widely supported military action against those responsible for the attack. In early October 2001, the US launched air strikes against Al-Qaeda and Taliban forces in Afghanistan. President George W. Bush had high levels of American approval; people seemed to set political differences aside in the immediate days after 9/11.

Yet my memory of the daytrip to the financial district also includes some images of freedom lost. Perhaps it is okay that the German people be fraught with concern around conflict on European soil.

Dr. Ellen Russell Beatty served seven years as Associate Vice President of Academic Affairs at Southern Connecticut State University, and also served as interim Academic Vice president, Dean of Health & Human Services and Director of Faculty Development. In addition to the broad perspective and a multitude of skills required of high-level administrators, her areas of special expertise lie in strategic planning, accreditation, assessment and planning and budgetary allocation.

Letters to the Editor:

Send us your letters to the editor with no more than 350 words to editor@theorangetimes.com. Include your name and full address; only your name and town will be published. Letters may be edited for space and clarity.

Thanks for Lunch

To the Editor:

On Jan. 20 the Orange Highway Department was served a wonderful, bountiful lunch courtesy of long-time Orange residents Pat and Carol Luddy. Pat said he and Carol wanted to provide lunch as a gesture of appreciation for all the work the Highway Department does around Orange that is mostly unrecognized.

Pat arrived on Friday in the rain. He made multiple trips from his car to our cafe with loads of food, beverages and serving utensils. The grand meal included two trays of sandwiches, sides, chips and even chocolate chip cookies.

Thank you to Pat and Carol. We appreciate their gesture and kind generosity. The DiBella's meal was delicious and abundant. And we thank

them for the nod of recognition.

Our crew strives to "leave the Town of Orange a better place than the way we found her, and to leave it as beautiful as the people who live here." We operate under the leadership of our crew chief, Don Foyer, who has served this town for over 45 years. The above quote is Foyer's, who has the sincerest desire to keep this town in the best possible shape. Under his direction, with funds provided, we do our very best and it warms the heart to know someone noticed.

Thanks again to Pat and Carol.

The Orange Highway Department Crew

Open Spaces Vandalized

To the Editor:

Over the past year there have been increased incidents of vandalism and misuse at various locations in Orange's open spaces.

At Turkey Hill Preserve, a wooden bridge installed and used for crossing wet areas was taken.

The bridge was 16 feet in length with an estimated weight of 600 pounds, so whoever removed it used the necessary equipment to take it.

An increasing number of unauthorized mountain bike trails have been created within Racebrook Tract, which has resulted in extensive erosion of the landscape and vegetation, as well as pollution of Race Brook. Use of such unauthorized trails presents safety issues as to ability to locate an injured user, and/or access by emergency apparatus.

At Racebrook Tract, numerous bicycling and trail signs have been repeatedly removed and discarded.

There is evidence of the damaging use of ATVs or other motorized vehicles at Ewen Preserve and Housatonic Overlook. Not only is such activity prohibited by town code, these vehicles cause great desecration to the trails, natural landscape and vegetation.

In April 2022 the plexiglass door panels of the

kiosk at St. John's entry to the Ewen Preserve were broken in several places and had to be replaced. This required the efforts of volunteers to remove the door, purchase replacement panels, cut to fit, then reinstall the doors for a cost of about \$200 per door.

Recently the wooden walkway in the Ewen Preserve has been damaged, as well as several healthy trees that had been hacked with an ax.

The residents of Orange are fortunate to have the use of over 1,000 acres of open space. It is a resource that should be protected and preserved for future generations, and it is our responsibility to document and report acts of vandalism or misuse.

If you observe unauthorized activity or vandalism in or around any of the town open spaces, please report it immediately to the Orange Police at 314 Lambert Rd. in Orange or by calling 203-891-2130.

Orange Conservation Commission

School Budgets
(Continued From 1)

about \$54.9 million – an increase of around 2.93 percent.

The Amity budget is split between Orange, Bethany and Woodbridge and gets divvied up each year in proportion to the percentage of student enrollment from each town.

Although Orange sends the most students overall to Amity, its enrollment actually dropped in the past year, from 1,091 students to 1,017.

Since Orange's lower enrollment translates to a lower fiscal commitment to the school system, even if the Amity budget was adopted with its proposed increases, the

town would only be on the hook for paying \$21,240 more than last year.

As in Milford, the largest contributors to Amity's budget are salaries and benefits. The budget contains an expected increase of \$980,494 for salaries and \$637,498 for benefits. These are partially offset by a drop in special education costs by \$596,597.

Neither proposed budget is the final word. The details will get hashed out in both municipalities over the course of the next few months before various boards. In Milford, the Board of Alderman will have the last say over what number gets adopted. In Orange, voters will go to the polls to make the ultimate decision on Amity's eventual budget.

Milford-Orange Times

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Carolina Amore, Personal Experiences
Ellen Russell Beatty, Ponder This
Cathy Bradley, Running
Kathy Charbonneau, Orange Chamber
Steve Cooper, Food
Rob Craft, Recovery
David Crow, Conversations
Theresa Rose DeGray, Bankruptcy
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Opinion & Editorial

The New Normal



STATE REP. (D-114)
MARY WELANDER

To start, I would like to sincerely thank everyone within the community for the overwhelming support that has been given to me and my family after the loss of my mom, Marti Barrett, followed by the additional loss of my friend and colleague Quentin Williams.

As I get back to work, I wanted to update you on how the session will be operating this year. For the first time since 2020, the Capitol will be fully open to the public. This is exciting news, for not only all of you, but for me as well as my first two sessions were held in a hybrid model.

I think it is important to share that there will still be virtual and hybrid access/options, which I believe is vital to public participation.

The bipartisan group of our legislative leaders has agreed on rules requiring committees to meet in person, but with the inclusion of virtual participation and hybrid public hearings. This means that community members will still have the option to testify remotely if they would prefer to do so instead of in person.

Over the last two sessions, virtual access to committee meetings and hearings drastically increased public participation, which was inspiring to witness. With this resource continuing this year, I hope you will continue to participate to have your voices and opinions heard.

As many of you know, the bill process is lengthy – as we work tirelessly to draft effective legislation that will continue to drive our state forward. Here is the timeline of a bill from now until June:

1. Proposed bill: Ideas for bills often come from lawmakers and constituents like you.
2. Bill numbering: Bill title, number and sponsors are printed in the House and Senate journals.
3. Sent to committee: The bill is sent to the appropriate committee(s).
4. Legislative Commissioners' Office: The Legislative Commissioners' Office checks the bill for constitutionality and consistency with other laws.
5. Office of Fiscal Analysis: This office adds an estimate of the bill's cost and fiscal impact on the community.
6. Calendar: The clerk assigns the bill a calendar number.
7. On the floor: Lawmakers debate and draft amendments.
8. To the governor: If both houses pass the bill, it is sent to the governor.

As your community mouthpiece in Hartford, it is my job to voice your concerns, so please remember that you can reach out to me at any time throughout the session to help give me better insight into what your needs are. Your advocacy helps me be an effective representative for you.

Follow important legislative and community updates by signing up for my weekly newsletter. You can also follow my official state representative Facebook account to catch up on what is going on both in Hartford and back home. And of course, if you ever need any assistance, or you would like to chat with me about something you would like to see addressed in Hartford, please email me directly at Mary.Welander@cga.ct.gov.

Helping Domestic Violence Victims



STATE REP. (R-119)
KATHY KENNEDY

One of the many challenges for legislators at the Capitol is to determine which proposed bills should be considered for debate in the House or Senate chambers. While I have already witnessed legislative committees move forward addressing select political issues more than others, I want you to know what I believe to be one of the most significant concerns: domestic violence.

Unfortunately, domestic violence is not foreign to our district residents, especially following the death of Julie Minogue of Milford last December. My heart broke for Minogue's family as she was a dedicated mother, hardworking medical assistant and valued member of her community who tragically was a victim of domestic violence.

Outside of our district, the heartbreaking statistics speak for themselves. The Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence reports that annually on average 14 individuals in our state have their lives taken by an intimate partner, with the majority of victims being women (87 percent). We must acknowledge domestic violence as a real and increasingly present crime in our nation, our state and sadly, even our own hometown.

That is why I am joining a bipartisan coalition of lawmakers to propose new legislation which seeks to protect victim rights and increase penalties for those who commit acts of domestic violence. The first bill, HB 6431, introduced by 28 House and Senate members on both sides of the aisle, will establish domestic and intimate partner violence murder as a Class A felony.

This bill will serve to not only define domestic violence murder as the significant and deadly crime it truly is, but will also open the doors for stronger enforcement of stricter penalties for criminals and more legislative support for victims. My other proposed bill, HB 6454, will expand the use of global positioning monitoring devices to incidents of domestic abuse.

Currently, this GPS is used in a few scenarios such as property theft, probation cases and others. However, these devices could potentially be used to track domestic violence offenders. This pilot program will directly monitor those subjected to a restraining order, sending signals to local law enforcement so that members of our community can once again have the security they deserve for themselves and their families.

Domestic violence can happen to anyone at any time. Even as we approach Super Bowl Sunday, a day that is statistically proven to prompt domestic abuse incidents, it is crucial to promote life-changing legislation that can provide the necessary protections, penalties and enforcement tactics for this devastating crime.

I will actively update you on the future of these and any other proposed bills as we move forward with the legislative process. As always, please contact me should you have any questions about this issue or concerns on any other topics relating to state government at Kathy.Kennedy@housegop.ct.gov or at 800-842-1423.

Keeping Lights On And Costs Down



STATE REP. (R-117)
CHARLES FERRARO

A new legislative session poses challenges each year as lawmakers take the interests and concerns of their constituents up to the State Capitol in Hartford in search of solutions that will improve the quality of life in Connecticut.

Top of mind for residents and businesses is the rising cost of energy and utilities in our state, which has more than doubled from this time one year ago, with Connecticut's energy costs ranking highest in the continental US. Monthly utility bills begin to mount up, and many are searching for relief from soaring costs.

My House Republican colleagues and I heard these calls and made it a priority to unveil A Better Way to Energy Affordability – a comprehensive plan to reduce energy costs, bring oversight to utility companies and maintain our state's goals for energy responsibility.

Policy decisions in Hartford have resulted in phantom charges on your utility bills that increase your monthly payments more than necessary. Our proposal will move these charges, incurred by policy decisions, into the state budget. This will reduce the total of your utility bill and bake the charges into your regular state taxes.

Our state's heavy reliance on natural gas for electricity has contributed to the increases in costs for consumers. We are always in search of more sustainable and reliable energy sources. While many are setting their sights on controversial wind power and seeking a total phaseout of fossil fuels, we are committed to developing more local, sustainable solutions. By adding nuclear power and all sources of hydro power to our state's renewable portfolio standard program, we can honor our sustainability and reliability goals without sacrificing affordability or public safety.

In Connecticut, the Public Utilities Regulatory Authority is under the umbrella of the state's Department of Energy and Environmental Protection. This structure hampers PURA's ability to be an effective regulator. Ratepayers are hurting because of it. Our proposal would separate PURA from DEEP, increasing their independence as an agency. This proposal would also strengthen PURA's ability to protect ratepayers without a conflict of interest or clouded view. By removing this bureaucratic hurdle, we can start to see meaningful steps toward a free-flowing energy stream resulting in financial relief for you and your families.

As a member of the Energy & Technology Committee, it is my imperative to champion these proposals and be a strong advocate for ratepayers in the General Assembly. My commitment is to protecting residents from unnecessary rate increases, predatory practices and state bureaucracy which only make your monthly bill more expensive and less clear. I am confident that my colleagues share my concerns and will continue this fight until we have made energy in Connecticut more affordable, more sustainable and more reliable.

To read our full affordable energy proposals, visit cthousegop.com/energy/. Please continue to reach out to me at Charles.Ferraro@housegop.ct.gov with your questions and concerns regarding state issues.

Ways To Save On Energy



STATE SEN. (D-14)
JAMES MARONEY

Did you know that the state of Connecticut offers a number of programs that can help you reduce your energy consumption and lower your electricity bills? These programs can help you to make your home or business more energy-efficient and save you money on your electricity bills. In addition, there are programs that will help you get caught up on past bills and make your payments, as well as the option to select potentially lower-cost electrical generators.

Connecticut is a deregulated state when it comes to energy supply, meaning customers can choose third-party electric suppliers instead of local utilities. The Office of Consumer Counsel recommends using Energize CT's rate board when considering the supplier market. The board will automatically show changes to a bill to help consumers know if they'll save money with a third-party provider. It is the most clear and concise way of comparing supplier rate offers. The enrollment process is easy and free. Visit powersetter.com to try it.

As of Nov. 23, there were 16 rates for each utility territory on the rate board lower than standard service expectations. This is likely due to long-term contracts locked in with lower energy prices in place and contracts formed in seasons when prices are less expensive. In September, 62 percent of supplier customers in United Illuminating's territory paid rates lower than utility standard service rates. They represent 11.7 percent of customers in UI territory.

Choosing a lower-cost electrical generator is one way to save money, but there are also several programs from the state to assist you with energy costs if you qualify. The first program is the low income bill credit. As part of this program, if you qualify you will receive a \$24 credit on your bill each month for January through June. For more information on how to qualify and apply, call 800-722-5584.

In addition, if you qualify for the Winter Protection Program (UI will not shut off your electricity between Nov. 1 and May 1), then you may qualify for the Matching Payment Program if you heat your home with electricity. Another program for low-income customers is the Bill Forgiveness Program. UI administers a home energy solutions-income eligible program that provides weatherization of homes. You can learn more about these programs at UInet.com/helpwithmybill.

Another program to help you reduce your energy costs regardless of income is the Energize CT program. This program offers energy assessments and rebates and incentives on increasing your energy efficiency. You can learn more at EnergizeCT.com.

With energy costs expected to rise sharply in the winter, the third-party market can be beneficial in providing savings to some customers. Being fully informed of the market's operations – and potential pitfalls to be avoided – is the best way to approach a potential switch.

I am here to help. I want to be informative to my community and let you know of other resources you can take advantage of. If you have further questions, please contact the Office of Consumer Counsel at 860-827-2900. Everyone deserves to stay warm this winter.

Getting To Know You

Just last week I ran into something I haven't seen in many, many moons: an automobile with crank windows. It was so unexpected that it made me laugh out loud. Even though it was January, I rolled the driver's side window down, turned up the radio and struck a classic Detroit lean for my kids. They were fatally embarrassed, which made exposure to the chilly January air completely worthwhile.

This experience brought to mind my very first automobile, an old forest green Chevrolet Chevelle circa 1971. I bought it off my dad for \$400 the day after my 16th birthday.

For those of you who have only recently attained the age of 16, I must tell you that I, like your parents, had my license, without any restrictions, the day after I turned 16. The only reason I didn't get it on my birthday was that my birthday was on a Sunday that year.

After I handed over the money, my dad gave me the keys (yes, automobiles had actual keys back then) and, after negotiating the price of a battery (dad taught me to always inspect my purchase to make sure I got what I paid for with that little trick), I jumped in and fired her up.

The old girl liked a little extra gas for breakfast – I always had to pump the gas pedal once or twice to get her to turn over in the morning.

I'll never forget the sound that V8 with a four-barrel carburetor made when it roared to life. She sounded like an airplane. The sound from her exhaust pipes could rattle the neighborhood windows from half a mile away. My new ride was wonderfully appointed with crank windows and other amenities that are no longer found in automobiles.

For example, she had an ashtray in the dashboard with a pop-out cigarette lighter. Kids, go ask your parents what a car cigarette lighter is and they're most likely to show you a scar on the end of one of their fingers where they were burned by one of these items. You didn't grow up in the 1970s and 80s unless you burned a finger in a cigarette lighter.

My new ride probably had seatbelts, although I never used them or really ever saw them. They were just lap belts and were wedged down between the seats, where they were forgotten over the years.

The headlight dimmer switch was a button on the floorboard that had to be stomped on to dim the headlights at night. She also had a state-of-the-art (for circa 1970) AM radio. On



DAVID CROW

a clear summer day, I could tune in to every clear channel station on the East Coast all the way to Baltimore. The sound quality was a bit on the scratchy side, but it was better than silence.

She did have an air conditioner, but at this point in her life, the system wouldn't hold a freon charge. Also, the little lever that controlled the fan speed had broken off at some point. As a result, she had what my father referred to as a two-60 air conditioner. That meant if I wanted to cool the interior, I had to roll down two windows and drive 60 miles an hour. It also had vents down in the foot wells in the front seat that I could open and close to let in air from the outside. The idea behind the vents was to open them and cool the interior of the car with air from outside. However, on a summer day the air off the hot, sticky asphalt that passed under that racing V8 engine blasted through those vents like a blow torch. It was better to leave those closed.

Add to this manual door locks, a bumper jack in the trunk next to an actual spare tire (which was as bald as I am but was good for a

few more miles in a pinch), and a "between the knees" cup holder. Actually, there were no cup holders, which is why I held my particular drink of choice between my knees while I drove.

I rode in style. She even got a whopping 12 miles per gallon off of regular leaded gasoline. Today you'd have an easier time finding a black and white television than you would trying to find a gallon of leaded gasoline.

It seems strange, but of all the cars I've owned, that old green Chevy was my all-time favorite automobile. Sure, it was hard to do a cool Detroit lean to AM radio, but that wasn't really a problem. That is because of what that very first set of wheels represented: freedom. For the price of a tank full of gas, for the first time in my life I was mobile and on my own. No other car can ever give me that feeling. The Detroit lean never felt so good.

Until next time, ya'll come out!

David Crow lives in Orange with his wife and three children. He practices law and he asks everyone to call him "Dave." Only his mother and his wife call him "David," and only when they're mad at him. You can contact Dave at Sit.a.Spell.and.Visit@gmail.com. He'll always find a half hour for a good chat.

Wine Talk

Temperature An Important Component Of Wine Storage

Europeans claim we Americans drink our white wines too cold and our red wines too warm. I am slowly starting to agree with them.

In restaurants, when I order white wines I shun the waiter with his carafe full of ice and let the wine sit for a while. Even more important is how the wine is stored and at what temperature. Storing the wine properly is crucial to maximum enjoyment. However, with so many wines out there it becomes difficult to know what to do and how to do it.

Wines should always be stored in a cool, dark place without much temperature variation and with the humidity around 60 percent. The area should be free of vibration. If you drink your wines quickly, this is much easier to do. However, if you are starting to collect some wines and pull them out when you make your favorite dish or when a good friend comes by for dinner, this becomes more important.

The optimum storage temperature differs for each kind of wine. There are consequences for improper storage of wine. The wine

will turn bad over time. More bitter tannins can develop, as well as a reduction of the potency and the possibility of the growth of bacteria.

Big red wines like Cabernet Sauvignon, Malbec and Burgundy can be kept at relatively high temperatures – about 63 degrees. Bigger reds can be kept at a couple degrees higher. This would include Bordeaux, Shiraz and Petite Syrah. This is considered cool room temperature in Europe. Fortified wines like Madeira and Ports can be stored a degree or two higher. Lighter red wines such as Merlot and Pinot Noir can be stored between 55 and 60 degrees.

Note that there is not much difference. The more full-bodied the wine, the higher the temperature. The lighter the wine, the lower.

Rose wines are middle-of-the-road wines. The same basic principle applies. The darker Roses should be kept around 55 degrees. The lighter Roses should be closer to 50 degrees.



RAYMOND SPAZIANI

White wines are similar in nature. The dryer white wines can handle 50-53 degrees. Chardonnay and Sauvignon Blanc are examples of such wines. Their fruitier counterparts need to be even cooler, around 47 degrees. These would include Sauvignon Blanc and Pinot Gris.

Sparkling wines need to be stored cold. Most of the varieties should be stored between 40 and 45 degrees. These wines have become very popular over the last few years. Prosecco and Muscato have especially grown in popularity. These wines can be kept at around 42 degrees. Champagnes can be stored at about 44 degrees.

Proper storage of wines will ensure they remain enjoyable and keep their flavors for many years. If you are getting into several different types of wine, you may look into a wine fridge. You can set different wines at different temperatures and store them for long periods.

They stay wonderfully and retain their fantastic characteristics for a long time.

When I think of older wines I always think of a wonderful speech that Virginia Madsen made. She was playing the part of Maya in the 2004 movie Sideways. She said when she tried an older wine, she thought of the people who carefully picked the grapes, what the weather was like then, what life was like then and how they worked so hard to capture a little sunlight that has been gone for so many years. However, there was just a little left in her glass. Store your wines carefully and enjoy some of that captured sunlight.

Ray Spaziani is the chapter director of the New Haven Chapter of the American Wine Society. He is on the wine tasting panel of Amenti del Vino and Wine Maker Magazine. He is an award-winning home wine maker and a certified wine educator. His fall classes were sold out but have been canceled due the coronavirus. He hopes to return to them in the spring. Email Ray with wine questions and anything wine at realestatepro1000@gmail.com.

Homelessness

Connecticut Should Look To California On Homelessness

The country often looks to California for examples on how not to address homelessness. California is home to over 115,000 people experiencing homelessness – more than 30 percent of the homeless population in the US. This crisis is further aggravated as over 50 percent of those experiencing homelessness are unsheltered, leading to encampments that align with our visions of refugee camps in conflict zones.

These unfortunate circumstances did not happen overnight. Rather, decades of failed economic policy and the lack of leadership to develop enough affordable housing have led to what UN officials called in 2018, "cruel and inhuman treatment...a violation of multiple human rights, including rights to life, housing, health, water and sanitation."

Over decades, government officials in California have preferred short-term strategies over permanent solutions. Most popular among these has been the criminalization of homelessness, including bans on camping, loitering and frequent clearing of encampments. With nowhere to go (California is also thousands of shelter beds short from meeting the need), the vulnerable take their chances on setting up in a new location until the next raid

hits.

This dark history has met current leaders who are prioritizing long-term solutions to homelessness. The recent California Homelessness Needs Assessment called for \$8.1 billion every year to address the service need and affordable housing development necessary to stop and relieve the crisis. Gov. Gavin Newsom, in a \$22.5 billion deficit year, committed \$3.4 billion in his proposed budget. Many are applauding this investment, though homeless advocates worry that it is still too little, too late.

Homelessness is not just a California problem. Though 3,000 miles away, there is minimal difference between California's and Connecticut's homeless response over the last several decades. A study completed by the US Government Accountability Office estimated that a \$100 increase in median rent was associated in a 9 percent increase in the estimated homelessness rate. On average, Connecticut rents have increased by 12 percent in 2022 and rents have increased by 24 percent since 2017.



JENNIFER PARADIS

Like California, Connecticut has not invested properly in the homeless response system and affordable housing. There is a shortage of at least 86,000 rental homes, affordable and available for extremely low-income renters. With Connecticut having the lowest vacancy rate in the country at 2 percent, many of our neighbors find that locating to another housing option is often prohibitively timely and expensive.

Moreover, there are not enough emergency shelter beds for everyone who needs one. More than 114,000 renter households spend more than half of their income on housing costs. Overall, this has led to an increase in homelessness in our state – up 39 percent this year, putting added pressure on an already overstressed service system.

Why compare our state's deficits to those Californian nightmares? It is to remind us all that housing systems, regardless of the state, are by design. If left unattended, Connecticut's homeless and housing response system will continue to fracture under the weight of growing needs. If addressed, like the great commitments California is making today, the

benefits are extraordinary.

Immediately, addressing homelessness is a saving to the state. Homelessness costs the state more than \$100 million a year as those in need seek expensive systems (like emergency rooms) for assistance. The savings continue with affordable housing development; it is twice as expensive for an individual to be homeless than housed, and five times more expensive for a family. Further addressing and ending homelessness is great economic policy. Housing stability influences employment stability and improves overall well-being, especially for children who are traumatized emotionally, socially and academically when living with housing insecurity or being homeless.

We all contribute to the design of our desired system. Without action, our destiny is known, mirroring the crises of example cities like San Diego, San Francisco and Los Angeles. With the engagement of us all, we can chose to be solution-focused. In this way, we will all benefit.

Jennifer Paradis is the executive director of the Beth-El Center in Milford.

On Our Land

Connecticut Is Littered With Dams

Connecticut has more than 4,000 dams, with nearly all its rivers impounded to some level. They serve multiple purposes, from simple impoundments for aesthetic purposes or recreation to major structures for water supply, hydroelectric power and flood control.

Stevenson Dam in Monroe is the largest nearby dam. Route 34 crosses the Housatonic River on top of this large concrete dam, which impounds Lake Zoar, mitigates downstream flooding, and provides hydroelectric power. This is one of the stations used by the US Weather Service to issue river flood warnings for our region, and the dam’s spillway on the north bank dramatically discharges when the Housatonic is at flood stage.

Dams that impound water for water supply and/or hydropower are usually kept nearly full and thus have limited flood storage capacity in storms. Flood control dams, by contrast, are built to host reservoirs that are empty most of the time and fill up only during major flood events. One that is important for this region is the Thomaston Dam across the Naugatuck River about 30 miles north of Orange.

Thomaston Dam was constructed after Hurricane Diane in 1955 drenched northern Connecticut and southwestern Massachusetts, with some locales receiving nearly 20 inches of rain in a 24-hour period. That hurricane caused major shoreline damage in

Milford (near what became Silver Sands State Park), but downstream flooding devastated communities all along the Naugatuck to Long Island Sound. This was the most damaging flood in Connecticut history; over 75 people died across the state. Thomaston Dam is a massive earthen dam designed to retain floodwaters for future comparable events.

Closer to home, the Wepawaug River is dammed at more than 10 locations from its headwaters in Woodbridge to its outfall into Long Island Sound in Milford. Two of its larger dams form reservoirs that are noticeable when driving through Orange – Lake Wepawaug west of Grassy Hill Road and the Wepawaug Reservoir north of Route 34. Part of Prudden Lane between Grassy Hill and Derby-Milford roads is an earthen causeway that retains the water for Lake Wepawaug. The spillway for this lake is barely noticeable when driving across the bridge on Prudden Lane – except in flood events that overtop the road.

The concrete spillway for the Wepawaug Reservoir is visible on the north side of Route 34 and was recently rebuilt. That construction project highlights one of the challenges for all dams: they are engineered structures that have to be maintained and ultimately torn down and/or rebuilt. For mu-



DAN MAY

nicipal or state-operated dams this ends up as a tax burden. But many small dams are privately owned and maintained, and private dams incur both liability and maintenance costs to owners.

One set of private dams are those maintained by the Regional Water Authority for drinking water supply. Closest to us are their dams and reservoirs on the West River in Bethany and Woodbridge, which provide water to RWA’s Woodbridge drinking water plant and then customers in nearby towns.

A good place to get an up-close look at a dam is the one that impounds Lake Bethany. This structure has been modified several times since it was first constructed in the 1890s. It has earthen, masonry and concrete components. Hatfield Hill Road crosses in front of the dam on top of an earthen substructure, with a masonry superstructure towering above, placing the reservoir well overhead. In a cold winter, many icicles emerge on the dam’s face from weep holes that are spaced through the masonry. All dams leak, and those leaks are one of the factors that age a dam. In major floods, aged dams can catastrophically collapse.

One of the oldest dams in the region is the RWA dam that impounds the Mill River to create Lake Whitney in Hamden. The spill-

way on the east bank of the dam is an attractive feature at the Eli Whitney Museum. The dam was built by Eli Whitney’s son in 1862 and is nearing the end of its safe operating life. Dam failure here could potentially devastate the neighborhoods of East Rock and Fair Haven in New Haven.

RWA is working on plans to rebuild the dam, as Lake Whitney is an important supply for drinking water. But the project has engineering and sociopolitical challenges. With regard to engineering, a temporary cofferdam must be constructed upstream so the reservoir can be drained and the dam rebuilt. A drained reservoir will generate nuisance odors and possible environmental hazards from sediment that has built up in the reservoir over 160 years. The existing dam is of historical significance as well.

Meeting the needs of all stakeholders is a challenge for this project, and ultimately for thousands of aging dams in the state. Balancing flood control with water supply needs over dam lifetimes that will encounter changing climatic conditions adds more uncertainty both to engineering design and the community discussions about this essential infrastructure.

Dan May is a geologist and professor of environmental science at the University of New Haven. He can be contacted at dmay@newhaven.edu.

Orange ‘Shredding Day’ On The Horizon

In celebration of Earth Day on April 22, the Orange Recycling Committee will host their twice-yearly recycling and shredding event at High Plains Community Center from 9 a.m. to noon. Known as “Shredding Day,” the event offers residents free secure

document shredding as well as collection of household hazardous waste, mattresses and box springs, clothing and household goods.

Confidential personal documents such as tax papers, bank and credit card statements, medical records and other sensitive papers

will be shredded on site by Affordable Solutions of Orange. Mattresses and box springs will again be collected by the Mattress Recycling Council’s “Bye Bye Mattress” team. Hazardous household chemicals will be collected by the Regional

Water Authority’s HazWaste Central mobile unit. The Orange Community Women will collect clothing and household goods.

For more information, visit orangerecycles.com or follow facebook.com/ORCinCT.

PEACE OF MIND



“It was my wife’s need for care that led us to Maplewood but it is the vibrant lifestyle that has kept me here after her passing. From the caring staff and friendly neighbors to the abundance of programs that have kept me busy, living at Maplewood has helped me cope with the loss of my wife and continue to find joy and fulfillment in my days. I am never lonely here. At mealtime I’m always sitting with different people and I have gotten to know so many interesting people that I otherwise would never have met. I stay busy and fit by going to exercise class, water walking, pool aerobics in addition to the various programming that is offered and love that I am able to continue one of my favorite pastimes, gardening. Although living in a senior community was never something I thought I would like, I can’t imagine the loneliness I would feel living on my own. I am so happy I have found a home here.”

— *Chuck*, Maplewood Senior Living Resident

With a renowned reputation and unrivaled services and amenities, Maplewood Senior Living communities offer residents an exceptional lifestyle. No matter what our residents need, we provide the right level of support and the added peace of mind families are looking for.

Our Vistas™ program was designed specifically for those looking for some extra support in their daily lives. Expert caregivers are available to lend a hand with personal care, or with more comprehensive support, such as medication oversight. We also offer a variety of health and wellness activities, a full schedule of social and cultural programs, fine dining experiences, scheduled transportation, and more. We take care of everything so our residents are free to explore their interests and pursue their passions.

MAPLEWOOD
Senior Living

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245 Indian River Road
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The Rotary Club of Orange

Rotary Lobsterfest To Morph Into Summerfest

As many local residents know, for the past 20-plus years Rotary Club of Orange has organized the annual Lobsterfest, a summer celebration that attracts hundreds of lobster lovers from Orange and surrounding towns.

It is a major undertaking requiring substantial organization and planning as well as many skilled people to prepare and set up the site and cook many hundreds of lobsters, steaks and all the trimmings for our hungry guests. It has been an event that became a tradition in Orange and one that many repeat customers anxiously await every year. We estimated that over the 20 years that we have held the Lobsterfest, we have earned between \$250,000 and \$300,000 to fund the numerous philanthropic causes that we support.

In evaluating the success of the event over time, club leaders noted that attendance has steadily waned in recent years, suggesting

that it may have run its course. Attendance and revenue from the event was not meeting our goals and, with prices for lobsters rising, it was hard to bring in enough sales to justify the amount of effort that goes into executing such a major project.

So because it was a major fundraiser for our club we decided it might be time to rethink the format of our midsummer event. In a brainstorming session we held in the fall, we resolved to take a different approach. Instead of focusing on eating lobster, we would shift the focus to an event offering a suite of activities and entertainment that would be enjoyable for the whole family, young and older alike.



ROGER TAUSIG

The event is tentatively scheduled for July 22 and will be renamed Summerfest. Our plan is to create a setting that will include something for the whole family to enjoy rather than simply eating crustaceans. Our goal is to offer a wide variety of activities that can be enjoyed by children and adults in order to attract families.

We plan to have live music, numerous games for children, contests in backyard sports such as cornhole and relay races, making it a truly family-oriented day. And of course, no event of this type would make sense if we didn't feed our guests. There will be various scrumptious treats, such as hamburgers, hot dogs and other traditional summer fare. We won't completely abandon our lobster theme; we plan to offer lobster rolls as well.

This food will be easier to prepare for our volunteers, taking some of the stress out of the event.

We are looking forward to redesigning our summer event. We have added quite a few members to our club this year and will be counting on all our members to pitch in to make this fun(d)raiser a success.

Having said that, we can never have too many Rotarians to work on this and our other projects. If working on community service projects while enjoying the camaraderie of fellow club members appeals to you, I encourage you to consider joining Rotary Club of Orange. We offer a great opportunity to do personally rewarding work, make new friends and be a part of something special. Visit our website at rotarycluboforange.org to fill out an application, or just reach out to me at 203-605-5151.

Your Health

Ending The Public Health Emergency For COVID-19

The US government plans to end public health emergency on May 11 for the COVID-19 pandemic. This will likely have huge implications, as federal COVID policies mandating free tests, treatments and vaccines will end.

Ending the emergency will also result in various regional and national policy changes. For example, COVID tests and treatments that are currently free to the public will be dependent on private insurance coverage, Medicare coverage, Medicaid coverage or no health insurance.

COVID-19 vaccines will continue to be covered for people with private insurance or Medicare or Medicaid coverage. However, they will likely have to pay out of pocket for

COVID treatments, such as Paxlovid (an antiviral drug).

A recent study by researchers at the University of Oxford's Department of Computer Science investigated US mortality data from the Centers for Disease Control database and published their findings in the journal JAMA Network. The authors found:

- COVID-19 was the underlying cause of death for more than 940,000 people in the US, including over 1,300 deaths among children and young people 0-19 years old.
- Between August 2021 and July 2022, COVID-19 was a leading cause of death in



DR. AMIR MOHAMMAD

children and young people in the US, ranking eighth overall.

- Deaths in children from COVID-19 were highest in the US during the delta and omicron waves.

Recently, the US Food and Drug Administration announced that the agency is recommending a single annual COVID-19 vaccine, just like the annual flu shot. The idea is to make it simple for the general public instead of breaking things out into various age groups and risk factors. However, the formulation of this vaccine will be selected in June targeting the most threatening COVID-19 strains.

The Orange Health Department will continue its partnership with the state Department of Public Health in providing access to these vaccines for our residents. We will post our clinic timings and locations on our webpage.

While we continue to monitor COVID-19 and other illnesses in our town and provide obligatory public health services, one of our goals this year is to improve our outreach to the public. This will include surveying our residents and providing age-specific guidance and recommendations. I encourage our residents to reach out and share ideas in improving our living conditions.

Dr. Amir Mohammad is the Director of Public Health for the town of Orange.



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Travel Matters

Buenos Aires In 36 Hours

While on our recent trip to South America, I was reminded of the travel articles I used to read in the New York Times. “36 Hours in Paris,” or London, or Copenhagen.

At the end of our Patagonia cruise, we had a whirlwind tour of this cosmopolitan capital of Argentina, and it was exactly 36 hours – including an overnight stay at a beautiful accommodation, the Alvear Art Hotel – just a couple of blocks from the famous shopping on Florida Street.

What made it unique was how much of the city, people and culture of this destination we got to see in just 36 hours. Starting around noon on Saturday, we set off on foot to discover a number of landmarks and boutiques, and were impressed by the green spaces in the city, including the nearby park in Plaza San Martin located in the Retiro neighborhood of Buenos Aires.

Here we also scored our shopping finds in

terms of leather goods and rhodochrosite jewelry – the rare pink gemstone found in Argentina, Peru, South Africa and Montana.

That evening, we enjoyed a local tango show and dinner at El Aljibe – a traditional “tangueria” located in the heart of the San Telmo neighborhood. The intimate atmosphere of this restored convent really helps communicate the essence of tango. Aljibe tango refers to the beginnings of the city of Buenos Aires and its traditions that forged the popular culture. The dancers were beyond talented, and the Argentinian steak and wines exceeded our expectations for a dinner show.

The following day, we jumped in with a private “Buenos Aires Like a Local” tour that started with a panoramic tour of the neigh-



KAREN QUINN-PANZER

borhoods, including the upscale mansions of Palermo, before we arrived at the Recoleta Cemetery where we visited the (possible) final resting place of Eva Duarte Peron. There are conversations anew about moving her to RIP alongside her husband in Europe. This unique cemetery is a highlight of a trip here and should not be missed.

We stopped at the Pink State Building, where Eva Peron waved goodbye to her public, and saw the obelisk at the Plaza de Mayo where 5 million people congregated to celebrate the World Cup win from a few weeks ago (just before our arrival, thankfully). We visited the cathedral where Pope Francis preached before he became pope, and stopped to walk around the colorful houses and neighbor-

hood of Boca, where many of us purchased some prints from the local artists.

We couldn’t miss the local markets of San Telmo, which stretched for at least 20 blocks, and then hiked over for an afternoon tour of Teatro Colon – one of the top three opera houses in the world along with La Scala of Milan, and Palais Garnier of Paris. In addition to the beauty of the opera house, the acoustics are what designates the top three opera houses.

I highly recommend a visit to Buenos Aires, and if you have time, a much longer stay. But it’s good to know, if you are starting or ending a cruise there, you can see quite a lot in just 36 hours.

Karen Quinn-Panzer is the owner of Dream Vacations Quinn Panzer Travel. She can be reached at kpanzer@dreamvacations.com or 203-647-3107.

Real Talk: You Ask, A Pro Answers

Are You Ready To Sell?

We live in comfort, with things around us that are us – they represent the personal part of our lives. So what if you found a place to buy that you fell in love with? Would you be ready to market your home? Is it “turnkey,” as they say?

I don’t mean that you need to dump your books, magazines, dolls and figurines, nor your funny bed pillows and photos. “Ready” refers to acceptable paint on the walls, clean carpeting, organized closets and basements. You would be surprised at the number of clients who rush to throw out everything when they could have sold items or enjoyed some of the stuff they found will sorting through years of collections while in a hurry.

I know that there are many homeowners in Milford and Orange who would love to move, buying larger or smaller homes in our same area. For the most part, this market is ready for the average contingencies, such as needing to sell to buy. However, it also

means that the minute you get an accepted contract to purchase, moving forward, you must be ready to put your home on multiple listing services immediately. Now think about it. You are in the midst of maybe securing a bridge loan, an equity line or just a home inspection, and now you have to run around and complete a to-do list from your agent. How stressful is that?

I have written about estate sales, and now, instead, for those taking most of everything with them to the new house, I suggest you make sure you aren’t moving items that you have not used in years. This subject is always the obvious one. Donating and giving away gives a person a lot of satisfaction. We are fortunate to have so much. Let’s take this wintertime to declutter and then relax. Be ready for that home; make sure you are



BARBARA LEHRER

on an automatic internet list that securely sends you all your purchasing possibilities.

If you can, get the loan process ready, get a preapproval to buy and an idea of what your profits will be on your sale. Then your head is in the game. Shop around; rates can be tricky, but there are great plans out there.

Downsizing also needs a clear-cut plan. You will need to find out how much you can spend, what the closing costs are to purchase, how much it will cost to empty the larger home and all the different opportunities to purchase – as well as which home is right for you. Your down payment and plan to orchestrate the buy and the sell part at the same time also needs to be in place. Would you have an opportunity for temporary quarters if you did not have occupancy on the same day as selling?

It boils down to preparation and opportunity. There are currently plenty of conversations among all potential clients regarding affordability concerns. Thankfully, the pace has shifted a bit and the complete process can give everyone a chance to set up a move that encompasses careful thought and consideration. The real estate industry is devoted to prepping the cycle to keep moving. In this manner, more listings go on the market so that everyone has a chance to plan a purchase with the national network of agency peers, the realtors who have the highest of standards. They have your back.

Take the time to sit with a realtor and educate yourself on the options and the process.

If you need more information on these issues, email Barbara.Lehrer@cbmoves.com.



ALEXANDRA JOY

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Bankruptcy

Marked With A Scarlet “B”

So much has changed in the 18 years since 2005, when I used to write articles for a similar publication to this one in a small town not unlike Orange while in law school. One major life event that took place in May 2009, for example, shaped my life and my career in ways that I would never have imagined. Let me tell you about it now as a way of introducing myself.

I think it is vitally important that my readers, clients and colleagues know who I am and what I have been through on my own financial journey.

During my college and law school years I was affected by medical issues and did not have insurance. I took student loans to pay for school and private loans to pay for living expenses. I also lived on credit cards and maxed them out on food, books and gas for my car. It was a long, hard road and no one

helped me.

After I graduated and passed the bar exam, I was left with massive loans, exorbitant medical expenses and excessive credit card debt, which my first few jobs did not support. Because I knew I wanted to one day get married, own a home and a business, I had to sit down and really think out a plan to get myself back on track.

I started researching my options. I tried negotiating my debts. I lived at home with my parents to save money and most of my paychecks were eaten up by debt. I needed a fresh start.

Enter bankruptcy.

At first it was quite a scary thought. I was a minor in English in college and thought for sure I would be publically shamed and



Theresa Rose DeGray

marked with a scarlet “B.”

A million things ran through my head: why is this happening to me, why can’t I pay my bills, am I doing something wrong. I was scared, confused and in a hole I couldn’t get out of. So I went to see a lawyer for a free consultation – just to talk, get some questions answered and learn more. When I left his office, I had one thing I was lacking before I got there: hope. After months of thinking, contemplating and some tears, I decided bankruptcy was the best option for me.

Ultimately, I went back to that lawyer and went through the bankruptcy process, which was much less painful than I ever imagined. When you have a compassionate and competent lawyer figuratively holding your

hand, you are confident and capable of going through such an emotional legal process.

Today, I am married, we own a home here in Orange and I practice on the Post Road at my very own law firm.

I have turned obstacles into opportunities and dedicated my career – actually, my life – to stamping out the stigma of bankruptcy.

I hope you will return to this space to hear more stories from me about my bankruptcy, foreclosure defense and divorce practice as I take you through the procedures and emotions of such processes. I also hope to share with you anecdotes from my life and updates on the law and in the legal community.

Theresa Rose DeGray is the owner of Consumer Legal Services, LLC in Milford. She can be reached at trd@consumerlegalservicesllc.com.

Just Floored

Lots Of Options For Patterned Tiles

Patterned tiles have become the craze in homes. They are being promoted all over social media in laundry rooms, bathrooms, foyers and some kitchens. I am sure you have seen multiple images on sites like Instagram and Pinterest.

There are many designs and formats of patterned tile, from stars to stripes to geometric shapes to colors. These patterns are bold, so make sure you are happy with your selection. I always tell my clients to order a box and place it on the floor where you would like the application to be done. Look at it day and night to make sure you can handle the pattern in your home before you make your decision.

I highly suggest when looking for patterned

tiles that you do your research. There are many companies that offer unique designs that will stay relevant in the forever-changing flooring designs and will not turn into a trendy product.

My favorite companies are Soho Tile and Garden State Tile. The patterns they make are unique and not the same black and white patterns you see everywhere.

It is important to understand how the tile was made. If it was pressed, that means your tiles were made one at a time and set into their shape, kind of like baking a cake. This typically will cause the edges of



Annamarie Amore

the tile to flare out slightly and in turn require a slightly larger grout line than a rectified tile. The great thing about a pressed tile is that you can usually put it in just about any pattern you wish, like brick or staggered.

When it comes to a rectified tile, the pattern is so important because they are made by laser cutting each tile out of a much larger piece. A rectified tile is made a little like making cookies and cutting your shapes out of a much larger piece of dough. It has practically perfect edges, which will allow it to be set with much tighter grout lines

than a pressed tile would. The tile will usually have a slightly thicker center compared to its edges. If it was placed in a brick pattern, you would be putting the two thinnest edges of the tiles against the thick center of the one above.

With any tile you are looking to purchase, it is important to ask where it should be used and how it should be laid. Most designers and trades will be well aware of this information as it’s our job to provide our clients with the best options available for their projects. But it doesn’t hurt to ask.

Annamarie Amore is founder/owner of A.A.I. Flooring Specialist. She can be reached at amoreinteriorsllc@gmail.com.

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The Garden Spot

Spring Is Coming

I'm so excited to see the days getting longer, and hopefully warmer, since it means it's time to start getting serious about my vegetable garden. The seed catalogs that I've looked at all winter have plenty of pages marked, so the first question is: what do I want to plant and where?

If you're like me and have had some tree trimming done, your garden may now have a lot more sun than it did last year. This means I have more flexibility regarding what I plant and how much of it, since vegetables need between six and eight hours of full sun.

Most vegetable gardeners start out with tomatoes, peppers, lettuces, cucumbers – your basic salad components. In general, if you want to start plants indoors from seeds they should be those that grow above ground. Vegetables like carrots, beets and

radishes that grow underground should be sown directly into the garden. If you are purchasing seeds from a brick-and-mortar store, check the expiration date on the package so that you are sure you are purchasing “fresh” seeds.

The seed package will provide you with a lot of good information regarding where to plant (how much sun) and when to plant outdoors. The package may have dates explaining when to sow indoors, but if not it's generally four to eight weeks before the last frost date. We are in USDA plant hardiness zone 7a, so the last date for expected frost is April 15. Working backwards from April 15, I can start the seeds indoors



PAT DRAY

in late February or early March and transplant them in early May when the soil has reached around 60 degrees.

You can start your seeds in any container that is at least two inches deep. Even Solo cups with holes in the bottom work. I use small fiber pots and fill them with seed starting medium. These growing media are “fluffy” and allow for excellent drainage, are formulated to encourage root growth and free of weed seeds and disease. Follow the seed package directions for planting depth. Keep the starters moist but not wet, and keep them in a warm area to germinate, covered loosely with plastic wrap.

Once the seeds have germinated, the seed-

lings require strong light. If you don't have a south-facing window, you will need to use a grow light. Otherwise your plants will stretch and lean to the light too much and will have weak stems. Water them when the planting medium is nearly dry on top. Again, keep it moist, not wet.

As your seedlings start to grow, you can “pinch back” after the seedling has at least two sets of leaves. Gently pinch or clip off a piece of the new growth at the end of a stem as close to the leaves as possible. This encourages the new growth and branching of the seedling. Don't plant them outside too early.

Pat Dray is a past president of the Orange Garden Club and a master gardener.

Here's To Your Health

Here's To Your Heart Health

In many stores I'm seeing displays of Valentine's Day gifts: balloons, stuffed animals and hearts filled with candy. But what about your actual heart? I would say love people 365 days a year and invest in living a healthier life for your heart's sake.

February is National Heart Health Month. The National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute as well as the Centers for Disease Control report heart disease as the number one killer of both men and women who live in the US. That makes me very sad, because we can do things to prevent heart disease. I am reminded of the saying that an ounce of prevention is a worth pound of cure. In my industry, I fully believe that.

Knowing your risk factors is incredibly important. Risk factors include high blood pressure, being overweight or obese, having high cholesterol, smoking, poor nutrition, sedentary lifestyle, prediabetes/diabetes, family history, being 45 and older for men and 55 and older for women.

There still is hope. Eating foods high in nutrients rather than empty calories with added sugars and fats is one thing you can do for your heart. Leafy greens like spinach, kale,

carrots, cabbage or spring mix are very high in nutrients. It's helpful to know there is no portion control on veggies, so eat as much as you'd like. You'd be surprised how full you can get when eating them.

Fruits like blueberries, apples, prunes and bananas are also high in nutrients. However, they are also high in sugar, so should be eaten in somewhat limited amounts. Seeds and nuts are a fabulous healthy snack. There is such a thing as healthy fats, and seeds and nuts fall into that category. Your body needs healthy fats to get rid of “bad” fats. They do, however, need to be eaten in moderation – a handful of seeds and nuts verses a bag of seeds and nuts.

I would add avocado to the healthy fat list as well. Fish is excellent for heart health. However, they should be wild caught and not farm raised. You can easily find healthy recipes online or websites like Eating Well or Forks over Knives for more plant-based meals.



MICHELE TENNEY

Daily activity, especially for those who sit all day, is critical to improving heart health. Two hundred and fifty steps every hour will get you to 10,000 steps at the end of the day. I use a Fitbit to buzz me and remind me to get those steps in every hour. It's as simple as walking. You don't have to take kickboxing classes, bootcamps or start running races. You just need to move and move often. Bad weather? Hit the mall. Find a buddy to help hold yourself accountable and have some fun while you're at it. Walking is one of the best forms of exercise and most everyone can do it.

Now let's talk about stress management and smoking. I was a smoker and understand fully how difficult it is to quit the habit. I changed the way I thought about myself by self-affirmations like “I am a non-smoker,” or “I am stronger than that.” I can also attest to living a highly stressful life. I was a single mother of two boys working hard at being “everything” and not taking care of myself. Guess what I would do when I was stressed? Smoke.

Sometimes it's only in hindsight when we aren't stressed anymore that we finally realize how stressed out we really were. I started getting up earlier, grabbing a cup of coffee and writing in my journal about my feelings. You can put a breathing/meditation app on your phone or take a yoga class. I would prioritize these two things above the food and exercise. The other two will follow once you're feeling better and more accomplished.

Remember, you are a spirit that has a soul that lives in a body and all three of those things need to be healthy for you to be living your best life. By now most New Year's resolutions have been thrown in the trash, so making a decision daily to live a healthier lifestyle is a choice you can make every day, every hour if need be. Small changes become habits and habits become lifestyles. Just don't quit. You are worth every bit of effort you put into yourself. You can do this. I believe in you.

Michele Tenney is a Certified Personal Trainer and Nutritionist & Wellness Coach. She is a member of the Orange Board of Health. She can be reached at 203-668-2969 or email at Hmgbrd3@gmail.com.

Foodie Foursome

Boathouse Restaurant Just Over Devon Bridge

If you have been searching for healthy comfort food that includes seafood, Tex-Mex and American fare, Joey C's Boathouse may be right for you. Chef Joey Catalano, a Culinary Institute of America graduate, and his wife Chef Ania Catalano, a cookbook author and former natural food store owner, collaborated to start their first restaurant in Milford a few decades ago. The “hole in the wall” location just off the Boston Post Road grew into the current roadhouse location and Joey C's Boathouse on the Housatonic River at Dockside Marina in Stratford just over the Devon Bridge. During the pandemic they merged to combine the menus into the larger boathouse location.

The atmosphere and design of the restaurant lends itself to casual family dining, relaxing with friends and enjoying weekend entertainment. There are multiple dining rooms, including a private party room and an expansive outdoor deck on the water. The bar area is huge and has multiple television screens. The walls and ceilings are adorned with vintage and nautical props that give the place a cool vibe.

I was joined by friends Mike, Kevin and Dan for a guy's night out. We order different apps and entrees and divide it four ways so we can all try everything and talk about it. I recommend this style of “tasting” for a fun night out.

We started with four different appetizers. We always like to encompass classics, with

a restaurant's own take, as well as signature dishes. The East-West tuna tartare covered both of those. It was an extraordinarily sizable portion of fresh cubed tuna, expertly seasoned for a gentle kick and served with their creamy guacamole, red cabbage slaw, a wasabi aioli and their homemade tortilla chips. This was a unanimous favorite.

We had to try Joey's famous beef chili. It did not disappoint. It was meaty and tasty with just the right spices. It was served with crunchy tortillas I decided to top with some fresh pico de gallo.

We went with the seafood lovers nachos. It was a huge serving of their fresh chips topped with an abundance of lobster, crab, scallops and scallions with a creamy garlic sauce. The freshness of the seafood balanced against the cheese-engulfed chips was a nice change of pace from a normal nacho platter.

We had to try their take on an American classic app - chicken wings. These were jumbo and juicy wings. We ordered them with a mild spice so we could try a couple different sauces. The herb garlic parmigiano was smooth and tasty, while the Asian fusion sauce had a beautiful balance of sweet and spice.

As a transition before the entrees we shared one salad. The lobster cobb salad is a meal all by itself, so sharing worked out to



STEVE COOPER

perfect servings. The romaine base was adorned by succulent chilled lobster, crispy bacon, avocado, tomatoes, red onion and blue cheese. I asked for the dressing on the side so we could try both their balsamic and Caesar. The balsamic was not acidic and beautifully emulsified while the Greek Mediterranean dressing was a great pairing for this salad.

Since we had been bouncing between seafood and Tex-Mex, this was the perfect night for “prime rib Thursday.” We chose an end cut because of the great seasoning and the fat cap that teases your taste buds. It was done to a medium temperature to savor the taste of the beef and maintain a tender texture. As the end is usually more well done, it is not always easy to achieve, but Joey pulled it off to perfection. The sides were both creamy, with a nicely crusted top. The mac and cheese was extra cheesy and easily trapped by the twisted pasta, which was cooked perfectly with great bite. The scalloped potatoes were layered perfectly and had a wonderful taste and texture.

Next up was a true classic seafood choice. The fisherman's platter was a combination of fresh wild cod, shrimp, clam strips and calamari in a tasty, light and crunchy beer batter crust. It was served with homemade slaw, tartar sauce and French fries. The fries had a

great crunch on the outside and were creamy inside. They were the perfect partner for the fried seafood.

We decided to follow that with some excellent barbeque. We decided on the roadhouse style barbeque baby back ribs. They ribs were meaty and fall-off-the-bone tender. Joey C's own proprietary seasoning and sauce had the perfect smokiness, tang and sweetness.

We finished with one of Joey C's heralded entrees, their boathouse lobster roll. The sweet lobster meat sautéed in butter, piled high on a toasted split-top brioche bun was done perfectly and served with some incredible seasoned fries. It was a great ending for our road trip to Joey C's.

The food used is natural and properly sourced from the region's top purveyors. The restaurant also features vegetarian and vegan friendly versions of some of their house favorites, so be sure to ask.

Joey C's Boathouse is located in the Dock Shopping Center behind BJ's on the water in Stratford. For reservations call 203-870-4838. They are open daily from 11 a.m. to 10 p.m. and later Thursday through Saturday.

Steve Cooper is a local, national and international award-winning photographer, culinary influencer and executive director of the Milford Performance Center. Contact him at 203-723-3672.

Orange Chamber of Commerce

Encouraging Networking In Town

“Networking that matters is helping people to achieve their goals.” – Seth Godin

One of the most valuable benefits of belonging to a chamber of commerce is the networking opportunities it provides. These networking opportunities not only connect businesses with other businesses but connect businesses with local nonprofits and residents. Facilitating these relationships helps strengthen the fabric of our community and is a priority for the chamber as a way to bring value to Orange.

Many of our activities over the next few months are designed to encourage networking within our town to help businesses, organizations and residents join together to achieve our common goals.

Senior Center Lunch Talks: The chamber is thrilled to be partnering with the Orange Senior Center to introduce seniors to some of our member businesses and nonprofits. This program will generate awareness of local products and services that can address challenges seniors may have, as well as provide helpful information and resources.

The series kicks off on Wednesday, March 15 at the Orange Senior Center with lunch

at 11:30 a.m. and the presentation at noon. Presentations will take place on the third Wednesday of each month. The first presenter will be Ed Knight, founder of Transference, LLC. Transference guides clients through major life-changing events, such as the death of a loved one. Newly appointed executors and surviving family members are often overwhelmed with complex administrative responsibilities and paperwork when a loved one passes. The primary goal of Transference is to alleviate all the administrative stress during the difficult times that we all experience at some point in our lives. Using Transference will also reduce administrative errors and in some cases save you money. If you would like to learn more about the services offered by Transference, contact Ed Knight at 203-623-6083.

10 Percent Off the Perfect Valentine’s Gift for that Special Someone: An Orange Chamber Bicentennial Brick is a heartfelt gift that is timeless, just like love. An en-



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graved brick in our new town treasure located in front of the gazebo at High Plains Fairgrounds is the perfect way to express your feelings for loved ones still with us or those that have passed. Bricks purchased now will be part of the phase two installation this spring. Get 10 percent off for a limited time by entering the discount code SLC10 when you place your order. Order your brick at bricksrus.com/donorsite/orangechamberbricks. Receive a customizable gift certificate upon email request to director@orangetchamber.com.

Welcome to New Chamber Members: The chamber is thrilled to welcome our newest members, including The Orange Players, a performing arts organization that has enriched our community since its inception in 1974. The Orange Players provides opportunities for all individuals to expand their talents, to learn new skills and challenge themselves. Go orangeplayers.net for more information. The chamber also welcomes the Orange Lions Club, a volunteer organization dedicated to community ser-

vice. Its motto, “We Serve,” captures the spirit of the Lions Club and all it does for our community. The chamber additionally welcomes the Autism Health & Fitness Center, which provides a safe, comfortable and structured environment for empowering individuals with autism spectrum disorder and other special needs to improve their level of physical fitness. Visit autismhealthandfitness.com for more information. Finally, the chamber welcomes Celzius Fitness Center, which specializes in one-on-one personal training, group/bootcamp style classes, athletic training, youth fitness and powerlifting training. They are currently running a 20 percent off special through Feb. 28. Check out the details at celziusfitness.com.

For more information about any of the topics in this column, email director@orangetchamber.com.

Kathy Converse Charbonneau is the executive director for the Orange Chamber of Commerce. Contact her at 203-795-3328 or director@orangetchamber.com.

Recycling Tip: Natural Versus Synthetic Fibers

By Loretta Smith

It’s winter and it’s pretty cold outside. So if we’re going out, even just to our mailboxes, we tend to throw on a coat.

Look at its label and see if it’s made from a natural fiber (wool, cotton) or from synthetic fibers (polyester, nylon, rayon). Wool and cotton fibers are made by linking together naturally occurring short strands of the material to make longer ones that can be woven together. They break down more

easily when they’re worn out and it’s time to dispose of them.

Synthetic fibers, on the other hand, won’t break down easily. They’re manufactured from long, strong strands. Sadly, bits of them end up in oceans and are eaten by creatures living there. Other pieces show up at town disposal centers and end up buried or burned. The buried ones will probably be there years and years from now. The burned ones may pollute the air you breathe, depending where you live.

An article in the Wall Street Journal on Nov. 15 said, “In the US, textile waste going to landfills has been rising since 1960 and reached 11.3 million tons in 2018, according to the latest figures from the US Environmental Protection Agency.” The same article noted that fashion companies “are planning to buy more recycled fibers as part of a wider trend of businesses using their spending power to foster innovative, low-carbon suppliers. The First Movers Coalition of 65 businesses, founded in 2021 at the

UN climate conference in Glasgow, promised to support lower-carbon suppliers in ‘hard-to-decarbonize areas, such as cement, steel and aviation.’” That’s good news.

Let’s make a point to purchase natural fibers when possible and thus contribute to a better world for everyone. And let’s recycle our good clothes by contributing them to church sales, Goodwill and other places that support people who really need them.

Get more info at orangerecycles.com or facebook.com/ORCinCT.

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Medical Debt Credit Report Is Changing

People who are struggling with medical debt will find some relief in that it will no longer be included on credit reports from Equifax, Experian and TransUnion – even if the outstanding debt has been on the report for many years.

Interpreting benefit statements and medical bills can be confusing. Some people will pay a bill for fear that it will impact their credit score. Often, they don't understand how the amount due was determined or if all the insurance credits have been applied. Medical debt has not been reported since July 1, and the credit bureaus are increasing the amount of time from six months to a year before medical debt in collections appears on a credit reports.

This is good news for those in the process of negotiating or paying a medical debt, as it gives the consumer more time to work out a payment arrangement. Beginning in January, the three consumer credit reporting agencies stopped including any medical debt under \$500 on credit reports.

Consumer debt is often the result of overspending and living beyond one's means. However, medical debt arises because of unforeseen and unavoidable circumstances. Medical debt should not be considered a true reflection of a person's willingness or ability to pay back a debt. According to the Kaiser Family Foundation, one in 10 adults (about 23 million Americans) owe at least \$250 in medical debt.

The challenge with handling medical debt is knowing what expenses you are actually responsible for after insurance has been applied. Medical insurance policies come in so many packages that it is hard to know whether the cost is subject to the deductible, copays or co-insurance (a percentage of the charge). The claims process can have a long timeline from point of sale (your appointment) to the insurance company, back to the provider which results in a bill



TRISH PEARSON

to the patient. With the advent of electronic medical records and reporting, the charges are reflected immediately and show as an amount due before the insurance credit is applied. Never pay from "My Chart" unless you have a paper bill that reflects the same balance.

Medical bills can be complicated because there are so many entities involved. Here are some tips on managing medical bills:

First, request an itemized bill. If you weren't expecting a bill for medical services or the total on your tab is higher than you anticipated, ask the billing department for more information including the billing codes for the care you received. If something doesn't match your experience or the explanation of benefits you received from your insurance company, ask the billing department how you can dispute the charge.

Second, ask for a cash discount. Once you're sure your bill is correct, ask the hospital if there is a cash discount for paying in cash, or if there's a payment plan available. Often providers and hospitals offer a low- or no-interest payment plan. Avoid using a credit card that carries higher interest rates.

Third, seek financial assistance. Many hospitals have financial aid programs and advocates who can help patients with financial difficulty.

Fourth, check bills that are in collection for added fees. Some debt collectors will add new fees to scare you into paying more quickly. This is not allowed and should be reported to the state attorney general.

Above all else, do not ignore medical bills. They will not disappear and can impact your ability to borrow money or get credit in the future.

Trish Pearson is a licensed independent insurance agent and certified long term care specialist. Contact her at 203-640-5969 or trishpearson281@gmail.com.

Book Reviews

How To Sell A Haunted House By Grady Hendrix

This is the third book I've read by Grady Hendrix, which has catapulted him onto my Mt. Rushmore of favorite authors. His books are somewhat gory, with violent themes. I ordinarily don't find these enjoyable reading. Surprisingly, however, I find when I start one of Hendrix's books I can't stop until the book is finished.

The novel begins with 34-year-old unmarried Louise struggling to find a way to tell her parents she's pregnant. Although they would have preferred she follow the traditional route of marriage first, baby second, her news is accepted with joy and great happiness.

Jumping ahead five years, Louise and her daughter Poppy are arguing over Poppy's borderline obsession with the classic children's book The Velveteen Rabbit. In the midst of their argument, Louise receives a call from her estranged brother, Mark, with the news of their parents' sudden deaths. Along with her grief and hesitancy in leav-

ing Poppy with her ex, Ian, Louise goes home to Charleston.

As Louise enters the home, she immediately senses something's not quite right. Her mother's dolls and puppets seem malevolent and creepy. Miscellaneous items are scattered throughout the living room. The TV automatically turns on to a Home Shopping Network selling dolls. That unnerves Louise to the point where she shuts off and unplugs the TV – only to have it turn on again.

Just as she begins to think things couldn't get worse, Mark shows up with their parents' death certificates, claiming not only to know what their parents wanted for a funeral service but with plans for cleaning out the house to ready it for sale.

Louise grudgingly admits that the funeral service is perfect. Guests include members of the Fellowship of Christian Puppeteers.



CARMELA DEVITO

After sharing stories of their mom, the service concludes with a somewhat unorthodox kazoo version of The Rainbow Connection.

The differences between Louise and Mark come to the surface as they meet with their cousin Mercy, a real estate agent, to put their childhood home on the market. Mercy immediately says the house is haunted and tells the siblings that in order to sell the home they will need to banish the evil spirits. Mark is immediately attracted to Mercy's belief. Louise is skeptical, believing instead that there is a perfectly rational, reasonable answer.

The relationship between Louise and Mark, fragile as it is, deteriorates even further when the wills are read. Due to a legal and medical technicality, the house, all its possessions and financial considerations all belong to Mark. This leads to the siblings

rehashing old feuds and resentments, including Mark's belief that Louise tried to kill him when they were children.

Louise denies this accusation. But slowly, Louise realizes that Mark's recollection is correct. And together they determine who the culprit behind Louise's behavior really was – their mother's favorite puppet, Pupkin. At an early age, Louise was under Pupkin's power and would do whatever he asked.

Louise's realization of this past is the point where the healing starts with her brother, and they can present a cohesive unit to fight the spirits haunting the house.

This is a multifaceted, thoroughly engaging story. The author cleverly designates each section by the five stages of grief and loss. He also sprinkles comedy, along with the horror, throughout the novel.

Carmela DeVito, a voracious reader, is a retired social worker and a member of the Friends of the Milford Library.

Amity Students Preserve Photos For Hurricane Victims



Amity High School photography students have been involved in community service photography project using state-of-the-art technology they learned in school to preserve photos from victims of Hurricane Ian, which hit Florida in 2022. The project was conceptualized and led by long-time photographer and teacher Lisa Toto, who has been a teacher for 27 years. She enlisted 30-35 students who have painstakingly restored 100 family photos for 10 weeks. Photos were severely damaged by water and sewage and close to being permanently destroyed. Toto is an award-winning photographer of 36 years who has been a teacher since 1995. Photo courtesy of Amity Regional School District No. 5.

Or Shalom Makes Meals For The Hungry



Members of Congregation Or Shalom's "Lunch Bag Brigade" display sandwiches they made on Dec. 22 for Milford's Beth El Shelter & Soup Kitchen. Members of the congregation are involved in helping newly-arrived refugees resettle as well as helping to alleviate hunger in the region. Photo by Rabbi Alvin Wainhaus.

Sports

The Amity Hit King

Throughout the historic 27-1 Amity baseball season of 2016, then-junior Andy Hague knew he was in the good old days before he actually left them and savored every moment.

Playing with his best friends, he finished the season with a state championship, team MVP and all-time Amity single season hits record during a season where the Spartans were ranked first overall in the entire Northeast. Not bad for a 5-foot 6-inch, 135-pound kid who had zero varsity plate appearances before the season.

“When I was an underclassman I saw Devin Belenski win some trophies and present them to the school,” Hague said. “I really wanted to be that guy who did that. I wanted to be a starter for a team that won a state title.”

Before upperclassmen leaders inspired Hague, he was driven to success after watching the first of the four straight state championships in 2013 at Palmer Field. Hague, only an eighth grader, watched Mike Concato strike out nine to lead Amity to a dominant 4-0 win over Southington.

“I framed the ticket from the first state championship because I knew the next time I went, I’d be able to go without a ticket,” Hague said. “I decided right there that I wanted to win a state championship.”

In the dream season, Hague was 44 for 99,

good for a .444 average. Batting leadoff in front of a lineup with seven other future Division 1 players, Hague was on base 47 percent of the time and scored a team-leading 33 runs. Hague’s plan of attack was simple. He sought out fastballs early in counts and hit lasers all over the field.

“I would absolutely ambush first pitch fastballs,” he said. “I was so aggressive. Unless the pitch was in the other batter’s box, I was swinging to send a message. This was not going to be easy. It would be a battle up and down the lineup.”

The year before, Amity first baseman Chris Winkel had set the all-time single season hits record with 42. Hague, who hadn’t yet even had a varsity at bat, had his sights set on that record.

“One of my goals for the season was that I wanted to break the record,” he said. “I wanted to be the sparkplug in a dominant lineup, and I knew I’d get a ton of at bats.”

Hague was also a very good defender at second base. However, it was Hague’s senior year where he went from a solid defensive second baseman to an elite shortstop.

“My defense developed a ton with Coach (Jeff) Rotteck,” Hague said. “I owe him ev-



NICK MIRTO

everything for the defender who I am. Whenever I was in a defensive slump in college, I’d try to meet up with him for him to take me through fielding drills.”

Hague lacked the traditional size and strength for the left side of the infield, so it was always an open question whether he would be able to play there. It was the doubters that fueled him to work even harder to make himself an elite shortstop.

“It is a common theme in my athletic career and life that I am doubted,” Hague said. “I take pride in being the underdog.”

Hague had 32 hits in 93 at bats his senior season, good for a .344 average. He got on base 41 percent of the time and scored 28 runs. While his offensive stats were down in 2017 compared to the year before, his elite glove at shortstop might have made him more valuable. He won a share of the team defense award.

Unfortunately, Amity lost in the state title game to Staples, ending a run of four straight state championships. Nonetheless, Hague had two dynamic seasons and cemented his legacy as an elite two-way talent.

“There was no part of my Amity career where I wished I was more present,” Hague

said. “I wouldn’t change a single thing about anything that happened at Amity.”

Hague is also well known for his intangibles. He is an extremely positive and uplifting person who other players gravitate toward. He has a calming influence. He also is a link between Amity players past and present. Former stars Devin Belenski and A.J. Capozziello mentored Hague when he was a freshman. Hague last year volunteered as a varsity assistant coach and offered advice and leadership lessons to current players.

“I’ll never be able to pay Sal back for what he did for my baseball career, but I can give this a go for a couple of years,” Hague said. “I’ll help a couple of days a week.”

Perhaps he will be in the dugout when a current Amity player approaches his hits record. He welcomes the challenge.

“It’ll be a tough record to beat,” Hague said. “If someone does beat it, I’ll be super happy. The record helped me on and off the field. I’d be happy if another young kid had the record for a while.”

Nick Mirto is a Milford resident involved with Orange baseball. He can be reached at 203-464-9971 or Nick.mirto@gmail.com.

Orange Democrats Seeking Candidates

The Orange Democratic Town Committee is inviting Democrats to run for office in town. The committee will begin interviewing potential candidates in February.

The ODTCC is currently working on its slate for the Nov. 7 local elections.

Candidates are being sought for paid and volunteer positions. The paid positions are first selectman (\$108,046), tax collector

(\$72,795) and town clerk (\$72,795). The volunteer positions are Board of Selectmen, Board of Finance, Town Planning & Zoning, Orange Board of Education, Amity Board of Education, and constables.

To get involved, contact Nominating Chair Joe Marulli at ODTCClection2023@gmail.com or ODTCC Chair Polly Demirjian at Polly.Orange2022@gmail.com.

Milford Church Tailgating For Charity

Mary Taylor Memorial United Methodist Church in Milford is participating in Tackle Hunger’s Souper Bowl of Caring on Saturday, Feb. 11 from 11:00 a.m. to 1 p.m. at 176 South Broad St. on the Milford Green.

The tailgating party and food collection will include games and entertainment, as well as food like chili, hot dogs and soups. The cost of admission will be non-perishable food items or

a monetary donation to help feed the hungry in the community. Former NFL players from the Connecticut Chapter of the NFL Alumni will be joining.

All donations will be shared with the Beth El-Center in Milford and the Milford Food Bank.

For more information, visit mtm-umc.org/news/lets-tailgate-tackle-hunger-souperbowl-of-caring-2023.

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The Bridges At The End Of The Line

By Marilyn May

"Up a Lazy River" lyrics as sung in the 1930s by Hoagy Carmichael and others describe the Wepawaug River in the 1870s almost perfectly:

Well, up a lazy river, by the old mill run/
The lazy, hazy river, in the noon day sun/
Linger in the shade of a kind oak tree/
Throw away your troubles, dream a dream with me.

The river behind St. Peter's Episcopal Church was much wider in the 1870s, with space for rowboats, picnicking and simple relaxation, and young folk would sometimes ply the river in their Sunday best.

Today, this part of the river is narrower and not that visible. But in 1723 a cart bridge was built just south of St. Peter's Church to a ledge called Blue Rock on the other side. The bridge was built for people traveling between town and their homes on East Town Street (today's Prospect Street) and beyond. Clergy and mourners also used the simple bridge to take the deceased across the river and up to the Old Milford Cemetery. That bridge, however, crumbled away from neglect, because starting in 1802 the first Jefferson Bridge near Town Hall was built, and it carried all the foot traffic and wagons.

What is a blue rock ledge? Well, that story starts 465 million years ago.

Dan May, a geologist, professor of environmental science at the University of New Haven and Milford-Orange Times columnist, kindly took time to examine the ledges in the Prospect Street area.

"The rocks that make up the bluish gray ledges in the Wepawaug River bottom near Saint Peter's are metamorphosed volcanic rocks that were formed about 465 million years ago during a continental collision that expanded North America eastward," he said. "They formed at a depth of nearly 15 miles beneath earlier ancestral Appalachian Mountains and were slowly exhumed as that ancient mountain system eroded away. These and similar rocks underlie most of Connecticut."

The path people took to get to this Blue Rock bridge was between the Episcopal Church and where today's River Street railroad bridge is located. Look today and see how the road dips at that part of River Street. In the early days, this area was swamp land.

From Nathan Stowe's book, *Sixty Years' Recollections of Milford*, we learn that "From the railroad north to the old Town Hall, the land had not been fully reclaimed from its former state as 'Little Dreadful Swamp' (and) at times the roads were almost impassable."

He mentions the railroad, so that sets the

time around 1848 when Milford's first stretch of rails was completed.

From Stowe's book we also learn that north of St. Peter's Church there was a brook, "an open water course," that entered the Wepawaug and was a favorite place for watering horses.

What was the source of all this water?

Up on Ford Street (this side of the Boston Post Road), mostly underground water flowed down the gently sloping landscape of Swamp Lane, or Peck Street as we call it today. Water continued down the hill past the Colonel Stephen Ford house once on the corner of West Main Street and High Street. The water worked its way to the low areas on River Street, eventually draining into the Wepawaug River. No doubt there were many small streams seeking sea level in that same area.

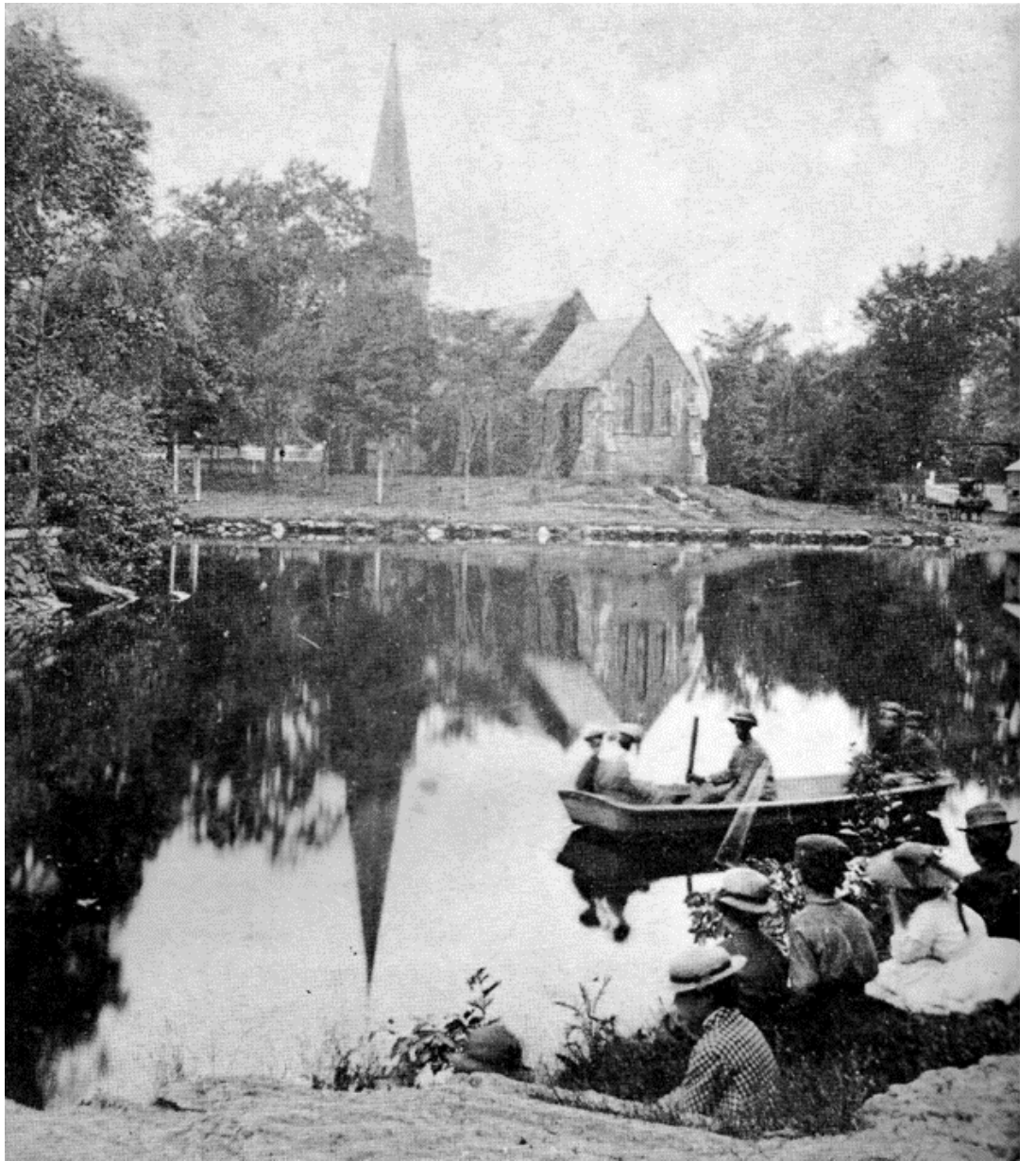
Downtown today there is still a large culvert on the riverbank, tucked close to the railroad bridge, to carry runoff directly into the river.

No story about the Wepawaug would be complete without mentioning the flood of June 1982. After three days of torrential rain, the river was raging, and it cascaded over its banks and into the City Hall basement where the oldest records were kept. Most records were rescued and freeze dried to restore them. River Street was flooded, and it actually became a street turned into a river. Many downtown businesses suffered water damage, and the current Milford Library lost an estimated 10,000 children's books. Besides all that, tax records had floated out of Town Hall and were stuck on the sides of buildings and on the metal fences of the Episcopal church. The problems of heavy rain and the overdevelopment of wetlands and flood plains farther north combined to make a costly flood.

The river, however, has many moods and most often it is placid. Next we go under the railroad bridge and arrive at a large pond.

This pond was dammed about 1640 to hold back the river so that there would always be a consistent supply of water to turn the mill wheel for the first Fowler grist mill. A gated sluice was built on the pond side, and by raising or lowering the gate, the flow of water could be regulated. The water flowed underground through a millrace long before New Haven Avenue existed.

There have been some relatively new additions along the river.



The calm waters of the Wepawaug behind St. Peter's Episcopal Church made it the perfect setting for a rowboat ride c.1874. Photo courtesy of the Daniel E. Moger photo collection.

In 2019, a fountain that shoots streams of water 22 feet in the air was installed in this pond as a memorial – or perhaps more of a celebration of life – for the late chef Thomas Brockert, who worked at the nearby Stonebridge Restaurant. The fountain is there thanks to Rich Conine, owner of the restaurant. In fair weather, the sprays of waters are highlighted by colored lights. A bonus is that the fountain circulates the water and helps aerate the pond.

The next bridge down the river is Memorial Bridge, which was discussed previously. The earlier wooden bridge there was called Fowler's Bridge. It was torn down in 1886 in preparation for the building of today's Memorial Bridge that was dedicated in 1889.

As the fresh water and salty water mix to form the brackish water at the head of the harbor, there is the last and newest bridge, the 1998 Hotchkiss walking bridge that links

the banks of the harbor. It was dedicated to Al Hotchkiss with "gratitude for a lifetime of dedication to Milford Harbor." He was a lifelong Milford resident and marine engineer. From the center of the Hotchkiss Bridge looking north, there is a beautiful view of the arch under the Memorial Bridge that frames the waterfall.

Near the west end of the Hotchkiss Bridge, on the Factory Lane side, there is a stone and plaque that marks the very spot where the English Puritan founders of Milford arrived in 1639 and spent their first night there – no doubt hearing the waters of the Wepawaug River coursing through the gorge.

Marilyn May is a lifelong resident of Milford and is on the board of the Milford Historical Society.

Scouts Host Rain Gutter Race



Cub Scout Pack 922 held its Raingutter Regatta this January at the Orange Firehouse. Scouts built their own customized boats and raced them down water-filled tracks. Scouts also got out in the community with a visit to the Milford Fire Department. Scouting is open to all children from kindergarten through fifth grade. For more information contact the Cubmaster at cubmaster@orangecubscouts.com, visit the Facebook page at facebook.com/CubScoutPack922 or go to the website at orangecubscouts.com/. Photo courtesy of Pack 922.

Milford Rotary Donates Lifesaving Equipment To The MAC



The Rotary Club of Milford donated an automated external defibrillator, also known as an AED, on Jan. 19 to the Milford Arts Council. Rotary raised the funds for the equipment and partnered with the In a Heartbeat Foundation, whose goal is to provide these lifesaving devices that can be used by lay people to treat cardiac arrest, to schools, churches and nonprofits. In a Heartbeat founder Mike Papale III joined Milford Rotarians to present the AED to MAC Executive Director Paige Miglio and Board President Jaqueline Munk. Papale is himself a survivor of sudden cardiac arrest at age 17 and was saved by prompt CPR and use of an AED. Photo courtesy of the Rotary Club of Milford.

Orange Board of Finance

BOF Update On 2022 Audit And 2023-24 Budget

This past week the Orange Board of Finance had the opportunity to review the recent audit report for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2022.

The audit report presented by Seward and Monde showed favorable results, with town revenues beating expectations and the budget by \$1.7 million, largely driven by increases in property tax collections (\$300,000) and intergovernmental revenues, including unbudgeted state grants of \$500,000 and investment income, which ended with \$200,000 in the black. Building permits and conveyance fees also came in higher year over year, and finally the Amity surplus accounted for \$724,709 (42 percent) of the total \$1.7 million surplus.

Expenditures were lower than budgeted by \$756,871, primarily due to underruns within salary accounts within Public Safety, Public Works and Parks & Recreation. The undesignated fund balance for the year came in at \$16,578,585, or 21.8 percent of total general fund expenditures of \$76,114,029.

The net grand list for Oct. 1, 2021 was \$2,133,286,440 – an increase of 5.44 percent compared to the 2020 grand list. Overall, residential property comprises approximately 62 percent of the grand list while commercial, industrial and business property account for 31 percent.

The current 2022-23 budget year had an increase of \$2,253,661, or 2.96 percent, and continues to run favorable on expenditures – although the expectation is for lower revenues this year based on lower conveyance and building permit fees, which are largely driven by downturns within the economy. We can expect to see much tighter results for the fiscal year ending June 30.

The BOF had the first budget presentation for the new fiscal budget beginning July 1, 2023 and ending June 30, 2024 from the Amity Regional School District. Amity is projecting a budget increase of \$1,565,101 or 2.93 percent, for the coming year based on the total proposed budget of \$54,914,906. Key drivers of the in-



KEVIN
MCNABOLA

crease are within contractual salaries \$980,494 of which \$650,830 is designated for contractual salary increases; \$329,664 for new staff, accounting for 3.4 new full-time positions. Benefits also are another key driver, with increases of \$637,498 within medical health insurance, which is expecting to see an 11.9 percent increase.

Although Amity also has increases within utilities and transportation of \$108,508, there are some offsetting decreases, as special education transportation and tuition are expected to decrease by \$596,597, as well as \$67,774 within Amity's debt service account.

Based on enrollment, Orange's share of the Amity budget will decrease for 2023-24, while Bethany and Woodbridge will see an increase. From October 2021 to October 2022, Orange's student population dropped from 1,091 to 1,017.

What does this mean for Orange? Essentially, it means that Orange will only see a \$21,240 budgetary impact – a mere 0.08 percent increase.


The BOF will be meeting with all departments over the coming weeks to finalize the town's operating budget and will have to factor in the current economy, fiscal realities and budgetary pressures that lie ahead in 2023 and 2024 with a possible recession on the horizon. The BOF will also have to factor in the loss of \$700,000 in tax revenue from Amity High School that had been budgeted in the previous year. On the expense side of the budget, we can expect to see increases within contractual salaries and increases within pension obligations due to 2022 losses across the board within public sector pension asset portfolios.

Kevin McNabola is the chief financial officer for the city of Meriden and a member of the Orange Board of Finance.

MOT Publisher Gets Lifetime Achievement Award



Milford-Orange Times publisher Steve Hechtman, left, was awarded the Kapusta Lifetime Heritage Award for over a decade of community involvement through the newspaper by the Milford Regional Chamber of Commerce on Jan. 19 during its annual meeting and Chamber Business Leadership Awards. To Hechtman's right is his wife, Carol. These awards celebrate the dynamic growth the Milford region has been experiencing in 2022 and the businesses that helped make that growth happen. The chamber also celebrated awards in the categories of manufacturing, new businesses in Milford and West Haven, inclusion, nonprofit and more. For the full list of awardees, go to milfordct.com. Photo by Steve Cooper.



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Mental Health

Addressing Mental Health In Seniors

I consider myself a fortunate person to still have a living grandparent. And while my grandmother now lives in a nursing facility because of Alzheimer's disease, I make it a point to visit her as often as I can. She knows who I am when I walk through the door, but over the years she has become more and more reclusive and disengaged. She's a shell of who she once was.

I often wonder if there was more to her deterioration than just the Alzheimer's. When my grandfather died, she isolated herself more, and she increasingly lacked motivation. My grandfather passed away years before my grandmother started showing visible signs of cognitive impairment. And, of course, she was stubborn and resistant to seeing anyone for a thorough psychiatric and neurocognitive evaluation to address what we were seeing. She was treated with medication by her primary care doctor for some of her mental health symptoms, but over time she became noncompliant. Symptoms of her Alzheimer's

then set in.

Understanding mental health issues in seniors can be a challenge because of co-occurring conditions that can impact cognitive function. Medication interactions to treat other health problems can also affect mood, behavior and cognition. According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's 2020 National Survey on Drug Use and Health, 14.5 percent of adults in the US age 50 and older live with a mental health or emotional disorder. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, one in four adults 65 and older in the US have reported anxiety and depression based on research by the Kaiser Family Foundation.

Substance use is also a growing concern among older adults. A report from the National Center for Health Statistics published by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in November 2020 outlines the prevalence of drug related deaths among those 65 and older. The rate of synthetic opioid related deaths increased by 53 percent between 2019 and 2020, and the age adjusted rate of drug related deaths increased from 2.4 to 8.8 per 100,000 between 2000 and 2020.

Substance use in older adults is a complex issue because deaths and overdoses can be associated not only with the abuse of drugs but also the misuse of prescription drugs and other factors related to the natural process of aging. The use of substances among older adults is also a concern if a person is self-medicating to cope with loneliness, depression or anxiety.

When addressing mental health and substance use issues in older adults, it is important to approach them in a way that considers other contributing factors. This must involve



JENNIFER FIORILLO

Jennifer Fiorillo, MBA, MPH is the president and CEO of Bridges Healthcare in Milford, and may be reached at Jfiorillo@bridgesmilford.org.

The Arts Scene

Hallelujah And The Power Of Music

As we began Black History Month, the past weeks have been difficult ones for our country, for our people, for our souls. When we should be sharing stories of accomplishments, discovering hidden truths and understanding where we have been in order to move forward, instead we are grappling with another loss. A loss of a life. A loss of our collective sense of humanity. A loss of our responsibilities to one another.

I happened to stop home for lunch and caught the funeral services beginning for Tyre Nichols. I watched a community and congregation standing in unison, embracing and holding one another up, lifting hands and voices. They were joined by people who have become household names to many of us: Vice President Kamala Harris, the Rev. Al Sharpton, civil rights attorney Ben Crump and the mothers and family members of others who also died at the hands of police, such as George Floyd and Breanna Taylor

(members of a club no one wants to join). It is impossible not to be moved.

Yet for me it was the people on the stage – the choir and soloists – who held the community and our country's grief in their hands and brought forward strength, joy, life and love. It was through music this message was communicated.

Music and the Black church are entwined in history as the language of a people stripped of their own sense of history and rarely allowed to read or write. It was through song that they could communicate, celebrate, mourn and commiserate right under the noses of those who held them down. It's a mighty powerful thing, music and song. The love displayed in the music is more powerful than any hate or violent act of revenge, a celebration of life amidst grief.



PAIGE MIGLIO

Last night I watched the documentary, Leonard Cohen: A Journey, and a Song, which told the story of the song, "Hallelujah." It is a story of a song that took on a life of its own and was only reclaimed by the man who wrote it at the end of his life. This song's story was told by many and belongs to many. Its verses (as many as 80-180 have been recorded) have been rewritten, edited and redacted. But it remains a song about love and the struggle of man to find his way. Much like the music in that church rising above the hate and anger, finding love and a way forward out of the darkness.

Cohen was from a privileged Jewish family. He was a poet who started his craft at the age of 30 in the 1960s, who also thought he might be a songwriter, and struggled with his relationship between religion, passion and lust. The song Hallelujah was an epiphany for Cohen, yet took five years to write. It was a failure on a forgettable album released in 1984, and the record label thought the affirmed "genius" was perhaps just not very good. So Cohen continued on his journey, writing and releasing three more albums, and suggesting if nothing else he would like to be seen as an elder to musicians and writers.

In 1991, Hallelujah was recorded by Welsh singer John Cale. It became a cult favorite. The song was recorded by a young Jeff Buckley in 1993, who made it his own by using it to close out every performance until his untimely death by drowning in 1998. Since then, the song has been recorded by

hundreds of artists, used in singing contests and sung at karaoke nights.

It resonates. Its tone may change with each iteration and shift in verses, but according to singer k.d. lang it still speaks to the "little journey" of man, "struggling between having human desire and searching for spiritual wisdom; being caught between those places."

After losing everything and becoming broke at the age of 70, Cohen rallied to the stage on an immense world tour, breaking records only a couple of years later, lauded on the cover of Rolling Stone magazine, and becoming idolized by musicians young enough to be his grandchildren. Cohen finished his "little journey," becoming the elder to musicians, writers and singers.

Before and during the powerful tribute and service for Tyre Nichols, his mother, RowVaughn Wells – member of the club no one wants to join – celebrated her son while embraced by the music of a community, and became a warrior for peace and change, starting on her journey. May it be a powerful and impactful one.

Music is a powerful thing; in many ways it is the path to our journey in life.

Paige Miglio is the executive director of the Milford Arts Council, celebrating 50 years of service in 2022 supporting and presenting all genres of art to the greater Milford community. Visit milfordarts.org for information on the MAC, and send her your events in the arts (include dates and details) to executive-director@milfordarts.org.

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Orange Resident Serenaded By Quartet

A Coastal Mix Chorus quartet serenades Sarah Macci of Orange in preparation to travel through Fairfield and New Haven counties for Singing Valentines on Tuesday, Feb. 14 from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. The chorus used to be the Coastal Chordsmen before going coed. Singing from left: Tom Morrisson of Newtown, Michael and Andrea Rudolph, both Trumbull and Maribeth Johnson of Bridgeport. Recipients get a song, card, chocolate lollipop and rose for \$65 or a dozen roses for \$95. Photo courtesy of Bill McDonald.

Obituaries

Full obituaries and pictures (if provided) of the deceased are on our website at www.milford-orangetimes.com and are published at no cost to residents of Milford and Orange.

Shirlee K. Abrams, 98, of New Haven, devoted loving wife of 73 years to the late Edwin R. Abrams, died peacefully on January 11, 2023. (Robert E. Shure Funeral Home)



Mark Anthony Antonelli, age 76, beloved husband of Monique (LeCausé) Antonelli, entered peaceful rest on January 30, 2023. (Gregory F. Doyle Funeral Home)



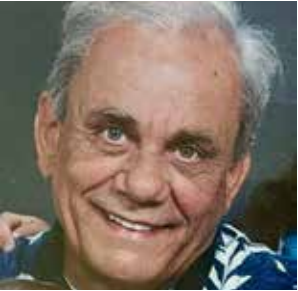
Edward G. Berberich, 95, of Milford passed away peacefully at home on Thursday, January 5, 2023. (Cody-White Funeral Home)



William "Bill" Bunker Brotherton, Jr., 79, of Milford, beloved husband of Kay (Brunzell) Brotherton, passed away on January 16, 2023. (Cody-White Funeral Home)



Richard "Dick" E. Cable, age 78, of Milford, beloved husband of Diana Myers Cable, died on Sunday January 8, 2023 surrounded by his family. (Gregory F. Doyle Funeral Home)



Gerald "Jerry" Carpinelli, age 77, of Milford, beloved husband of Sara Canzoneri Carpinelli, passed away peacefully on Monday Jan. 9, 2023 surrounded by his wife. (Gregory F. Doyle Funeral Home)



Sharon Cataldo, 76, of Milford, beloved wife of James Cataldo, passed away peacefully on January 13, 2023. (Cody-White Funeral Home)



John J. Cronin, "Big John" 89, of Milford, the undisputed King of Office Supplies, beloved husband of the late Catherine "Kay" Veronica Cronin, passed away on Jan. 28, 2023. (Cody-White Funeral Home)



Ardienne Waldron Damicis died January 25, 2023. She was the beloved wife of the late Daniel Damicis. (Gregory F. Doyle Funeral Home)



John Keenan Doheny Sr., 91, a lifelong resident of Orange, passed away peacefully on January 13, 2023 while surrounded by family and comforted by his faith. (Cody-White Funeral Home)



Anna Christine Ferchau, 90, of Maple Grove, MN and formerly of Milford, CT, beloved wife of Daniel Ferchau, passed away on January 12, 2023. (Cody-White Funeral Home)



Daniel Scott Ford, 59, of Milford, passed away on January 8, 2023. (Cody-White Funeral Home)



Walter "Jim" J. Glifort Jr., 73, of Milford, passed away on January 28, 2023. (Cody-White Funeral Home)



Evelyn Catherine Pompo Lasse, age 91, of Milford, beloved wife of the late Russell J. Lasse, passed away on Tuesday, January 10th surrounded by her loving family. (Cody-White Funeral Home)



Jeanne Lepore, 94, of Milford, CT., beloved wife of the late Benjamin Lepore, passed away peacefully in her home on January 25, 2023. (Cody-White Funeral Home)



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Obituaries


Elizabeth “Betty” B. Lopez, 83, of Milford, beloved wife of the late Nestor F. Lopez, passed away on January 24, 2023. (Cody-White Funeral Home)




Lawrence Martin Meehan, age 100 years, of Stratford, CT passed away on February 1, 2023 in Shelton, CT, just shy of his 101st birthday. (Cody-White Funeral Home)



Allen W. Morrison, age 88, of Milford, CT passed away on January 19, 2023. He was the beloved husband of Irene Morrison. (Cody-White Funeral Home)




Frederick William Quinn, of Milford CT, died peacefully in Bridgeport Hospital on December 30, 2022. He was 93.



Judith Shannon Lynch, 81, of Milford, passed away on Jan. 17, 2023 at Yale New Haven Hospital after a short illness with her family and friends at her side. (Cody-White Funeral Home)




Madeline Ann Mattera, 77, of Milford, beloved wife of the late Michael Mattera, passed away on January 11, 2023. (Cody-White Funeral Home)




Kyra Marie Murray, 23, passed away on Saturday January 14, 2023. Born on August 3, 1999 in Milford, she was the beloved daughter of David and Aileen Murray. (Cody-White Funeral Home)




Keith Rawlins, 51, of Bridgeport, beloved husband of Tracy Garrison, passed away unexpectedly on January 30, 2023. (Cody-White Funeral Home)




Niles Eugene Mackenze, age 71, of Milford, passed away on Jan. 17, 2023, doing what he loved best; watching Dinners, Drive-Ins, and Dives while figuring out the recipes. (Gregory F. Doyle Funeral Home)



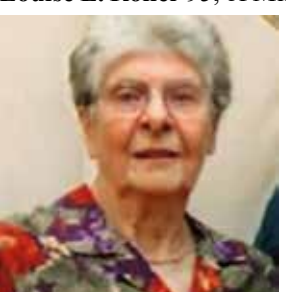
George C. Micklus Jr., 69, of Shelton, passed away peacefully on Friday, January 13, 2023 after a long and courageous battle with Parkinson's disease. (Cody-White Funeral Home)




Mari Louise Paquette, 69, of West Haven, passed away peacefully on January 30, 2023. (Cody-White Funeral Home)




Louise E. Roller 95, of Milford, wife of the late Ferdinand Roller, passed away on January 9, 2023. (Cody-White Funeral Home)




Robert W. McNabb, Jr., 90, of Milford, beloved husband of the late Lorraine (Morico) McNabb, passed away on January 23, 2023. (Cody-White Funeral Home)




John F. Morgan, age 95, of Newtown, beloved husband of the late Madeline Wahlert Morgan, died on Sunday, January 29, 2023. (Gregory F. Doyle Funeral Home)



June Laverne Pritchard, age 96, of Milford, beloved wife of the late Charles Pritchard, entered peaceful rest on January 11, 2023.. (Cody-White Funeral Home)



Sadly, Lorraine Caruso Salerno, 87, of Milford, passed away on December 20, 2022. She was the beloved wife of the late Noble J. Salerno Sr. For 51 years. (Celenzano Funeral Home)



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Obituaries

Herbert Schmidtke, 85, of Milford, beloved husband of Maria Schmidtke, passed away peacefully on Jan. 14, 2023 at his home. (Cody-White Funeral Home)



Linda (White) St. John, 74, of Milford, wife of the late Clifford St. John, passed away on January 28, 2023. (Cody-White Funeral Home)



Greta J. Stanford age 90 of Hamden, formally of Milford passed away peacefully on January 11, 2023. (Cody-White Funeral Home)



Sylvia Rae Tarifi a long-time resident of Orange, CT passed away surrounded by family on Jan 31st, 2023, at the age of 77. (Gregory F. Doyle Funeral Home)

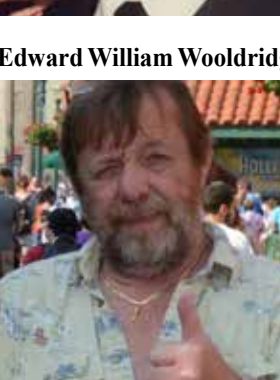
Joseph Patrick Tobin Jr., 73, of Belcamp, Maryland, passed away unexpectedly on Tuesday, January 17th, 2023.



Louis J. Vlasic Jr., 79, of Milford, beloved husband of Claire Cooper Vlasic, passed away on January 14, 2023. (Cody-White Funeral Home)



Donald H. "Burns" Washburn, aged 71, of Milford, passed away on Saturday, January 21, 2023, at West River Healthcare Center of Milford. (Gregory F. Doyle Funeral Home)



Edward William Wooldridge, age 74, of Milford, beloved husband of the late Deborah Ann (Perrelli) Wooldridge, entered peaceful rest on January 19, 2023. (Gregory F. Doyle Funeral Home)

Orange Seeking Korea, Vietnam Veterans

The Town of Orange is working to put a list together of living Korean-era veterans who served in the US Military between 1950-1955 and Vietnam veterans who served in the US Military between 1961-1975. If you are a resident of Orange who served during these times, contact Ann Denny in the First Selectman's Office with your information at 203-891-4737, email it to adenny@orange-ct.gov or mail the information to: Town of Orange, 617 Orange Center Road Orange, CT 06477 Attn: Ann Denny.

Town of Orange Legal Notice

Pursuant to C.G.S. Sec 7-394, there is on file for public inspection in the Office of the Town Clerk, the Auditors report for the Amity Regional School District #5 Fiscal Year ending June 30, 2022.

Dated at Orange, Connecticut, this the 20th day of January 2023.

Mary Shaw
Orange Town Clerk

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Saturday March 4th, 6:00 PM

Orange Center Fire House, 625 Orange Center Road, Orange CT

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OVFD Auxiliary C/O Victoria Arms, 400 Old Tavern Rd, Orange CT 06477
Any questions please email OVFDAuxiliary@hotmail.com
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