

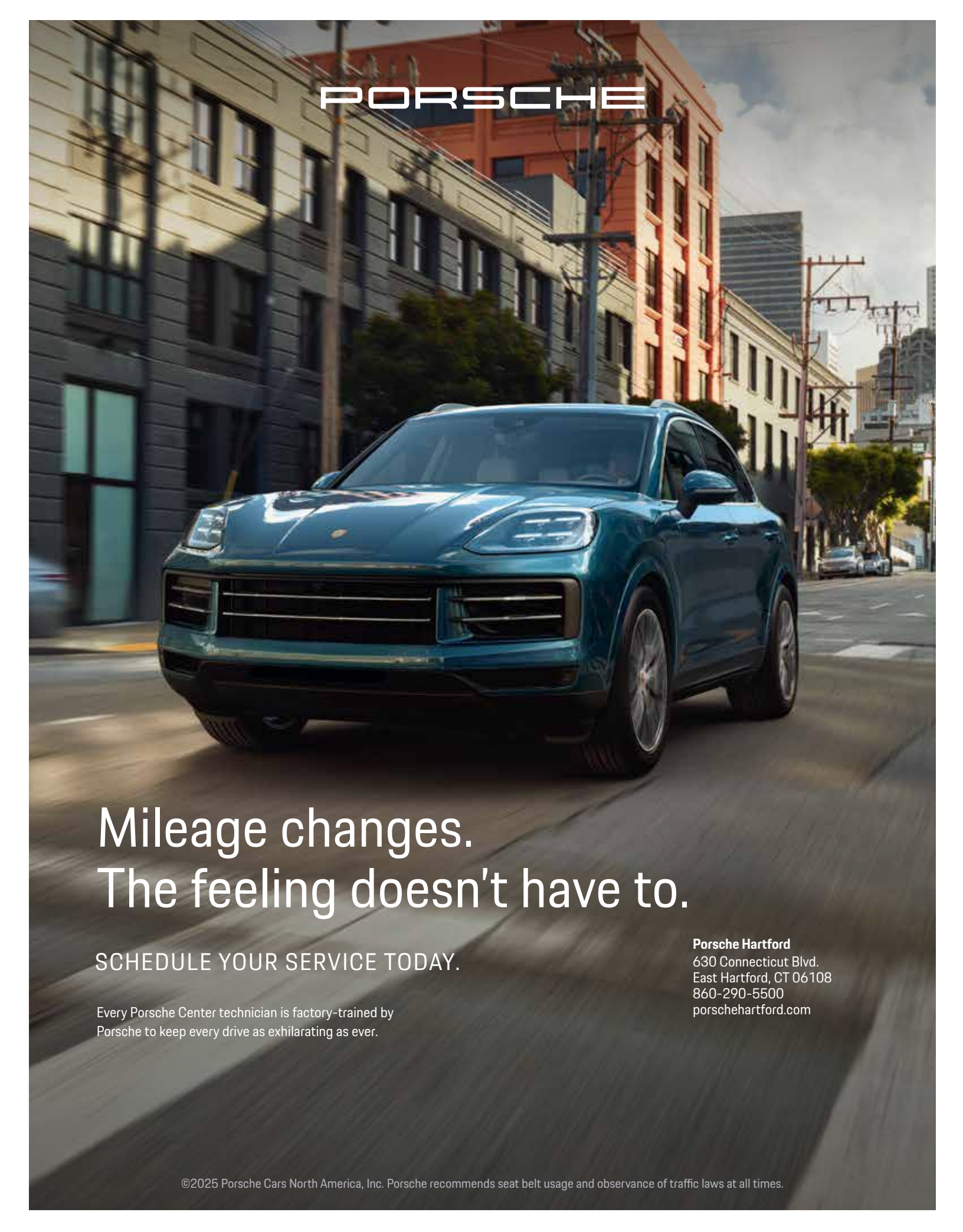
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James Tully

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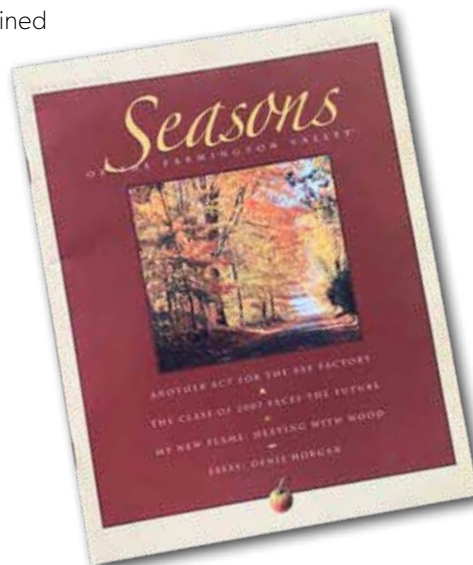
Thank you, from all of us at Seasons. Here's to 20 years and to all the seasons still to come.

Warmly,

Jim

James Tully

Owner/Publisher
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— JIM TULLY

Autumn 2025

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"LIFE STARTS ALL OVER
AGAIN WHEN IT GETS
CRISP IN THE FALL."

- F. Scott Fitzgerald



FEATURE

Moving Off To College

By DENNIS HOUSE



When Kara and I first became parents, everyone told us to enjoy it because kids grow up so quickly and the time will fly by. It is so true.

The rites of passage of childhood seem like yesterday: the loss of the first tooth, the dance recitals, the games, learning to ride a bike, drive a car, the teen dramas and so on. We are now the parents of a college student. This latest chapter of school drop off triggered all sorts of emotions.

That girl I read books to, chaperoned on field trips and coached in T-ball is now an adult and a college freshman. It is bittersweet for sure. I am so happy and proud but I miss those mornings sending her off to school.

The college process began a few years ago with SATs and college visits. She was a junior in high school and seemed so young as we toured campuses near and far. I went to college before the internet so we didn't know as much about schools as kids nowadays who follow Instagram and Tik Tok accounts of colleges and universities. They see everything from what kids wear to football games to frat parties to meals in the

dining hall. High school students in 2025 apply to colleges online and then learn of acceptances, rejections and waitlists in an online portal. In my day, we checked the mailbox every day for the letter that came via snail mail.

The preparation for moving to college is different than when I went away as well. My daughter and her future roommate chatted online and met in person early in the summer. Together they chose

and serve as the driver to the destination of my daughter's big adventure.

My son was at football camp so the offspring said their goodbyes a few days before our departure. Good thing because there was no room for him. Our Buick Enclave seats seven but we had so much stuff we barely had room for the three of us for the journey. Helena wanted to bring the dog for the trip, but the seating was sold out.

The move-in went super smoothly. I carried the bags and boxes to the second floor of the dormitory and moved beds and assembled a shelf while the House girls turned the room into something out of a college version of *Architectural Digest*. We had dinner in the dining hall and then hugged our first born and left her to begin to make her way in the world.

I teared up a few times during the week before the move, but Kara and I were stoic and didn't cry as we drove away. We knew she was happy and in a good place...and

parents' weekend is in the near future. A week later was our first test of our emotions.

"Dad, I have a medical emergency," Helena joked a bit when she called to tell us she had a ring stuck on her finger.



I teared up a few times during the week before the move, but Kara and I were stoic and didn't cry as we drove away. We knew she was happy and in a good place.

bedding and decor for their room, and Amazon shipped directly to school to coordinate with the move in date and time. Kara ordered the rest of the stuff delivered to our house. My primary job was to be a mule, load and pack the car,



She tried out some cheap ring on her index finger and could not get it off. Kara and I suggested soap, olive oil and even cold water to get her finger to contract but no luck. A few hours passed and she still couldn't loosen this stubborn jewelry; at 4 p.m., we suggested going to the college infirmary. Infirmary is an old fashioned word; the correct term today is the university health center. She and her roommate trekked across campus. After a few "college tries" from the staff there, they determined the ring had to be cut off with a tool they didn't have. So they sent her off to urgent care.

After checking in and registering and waiting, Helena was brought in where they used a ring cutter and a saw. After a few hours of chipping away at the bogus bling, they made some progress but not enough. The doctor called in the fire department. It was now 10 p.m. They tried unsuccessfully after they arrived so they told her to go by ambulance to the ER. Kara and I were now a little concerned.

Being five hours away, we thought about driving but figured we'd be in the Lincoln Tunnel when they would get the ring off. Helena was in good spirits accompanied by her loyal and wonderful roommate Tatum. When she was sent to the ER, we called a family friend who lives not far away from campus who, in a flash, went to the hospital for moral support.

They tried for a while and finally, at 12:15 a.m., a doctor with a pair of pliers managed to snap the ring. It flew into the air onto the hospital floor. Helena burst into tears out of relief. She was tired and hungry and now had one zany college story to tell.

For Kara and me, it was a test. We could have rushed there, but we trusted our girl was in good hands and made smart adult decisions (well, except for putting a \$10 ring on a finger that was too big).

Dennis House has been covering the news in Connecticut for over 30 years. He can be seen weeknights at 6 and 11 p.m. on WTNH and at 10 p.m. on WCTX. He also hosts This Week in Connecticut Sunday mornings at 10 a.m.



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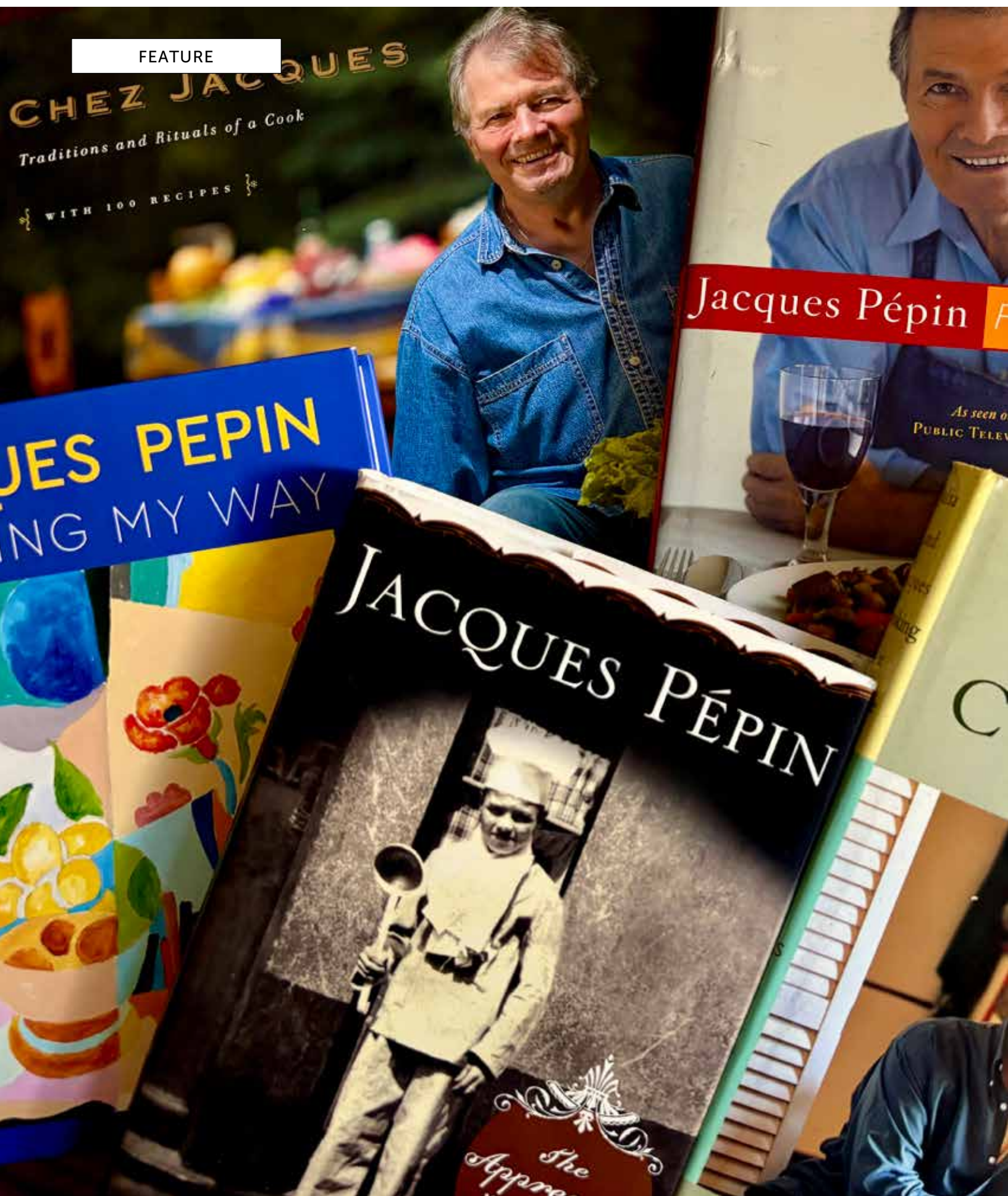
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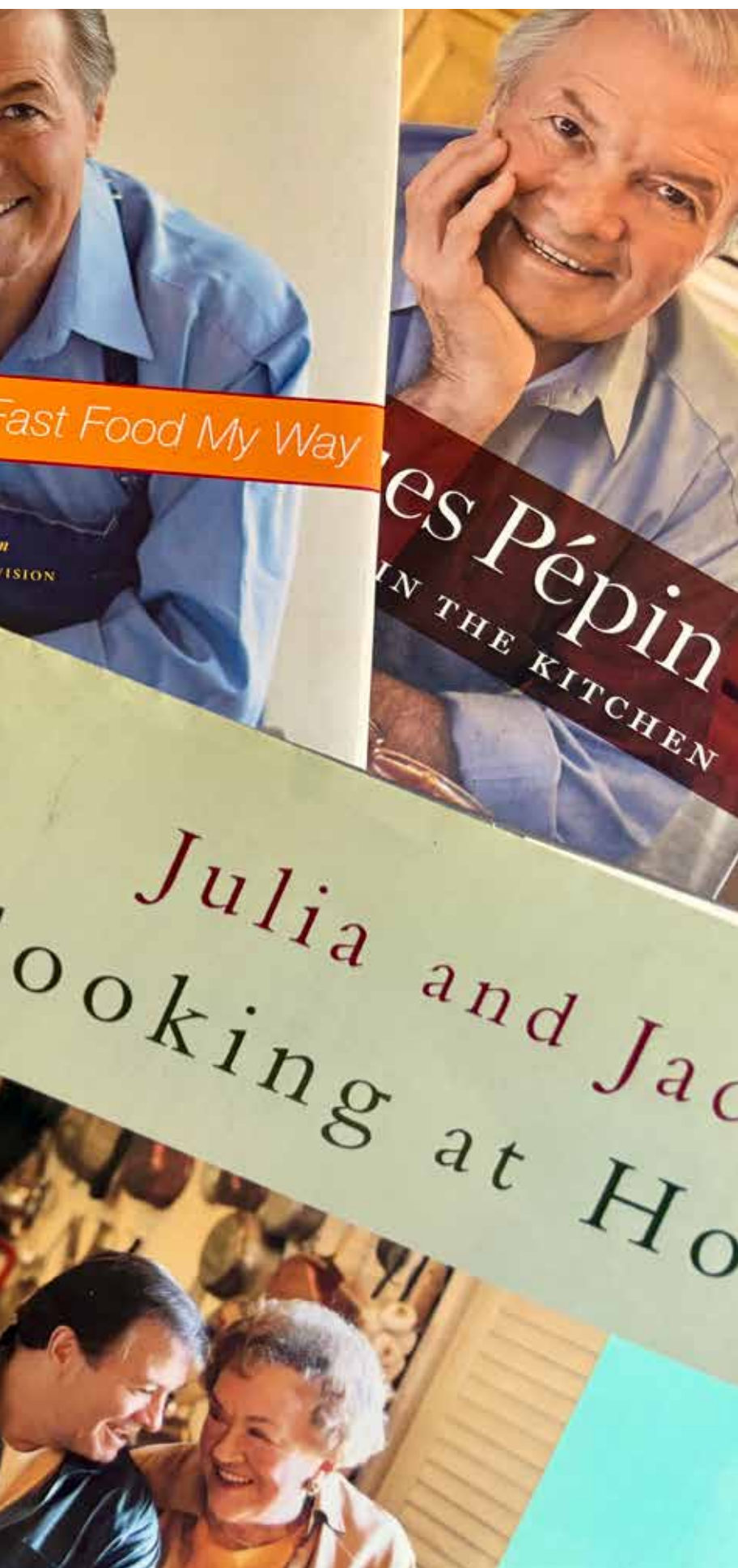
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FEATURE





At Home With Jacques Pépin

**TURNING 90, WITH
CELEBRATIONS
NATIONWIDE**

By **FRANK RIZZO**

Call Jacques Pépin the quintessential American chef—and, after 50 years living in Madison, a full-fledged “Connecticut Yankee.”

Sure, he began his career more than 70 years ago as a culinary savant at some of the finest kitchens in Paris, later becoming the personal chef to French prime minister Charles de Gaulle. Yes, when he arrived in the U.S. in the late ‘50s, he worked at the most famous French restaurant in America: Le Pavillon. And, of course, his soft lilting accent is clearly français, n’est-ce pas?

Although Pépin literally wrote the book of kitchen techniques and whose high culinary standards are top chef, he is no snob.

After all, in the ‘60s he turned down a position at John F. Kennedy’s White House to accept an offer from Howard Deering Johnson to elevate the food at his nationwide restaurants in the ‘60s. From the ‘70s on, Pépin became one of America’s most relatable cookbook authors, including ones whose titles reflect their home-cook accessibility: “Everyday Cooking,” “Quick and Simple Cooking” and “Fast Food My Way.” His many Emmy Award-winning television and on-line programs over the decades are also widely popular. (Two of his series included his daughter Claudine, now 57, and later his granddaughter Shorey, now 20.)

Pépin’s pals included such American culinary legends as James Beard, Craig Claiborne, Pierre Franey and Julia Child, who called him “the best chef in America.” In the late ‘90s, Child and Pépin partnered in writing “Julia and Jacques Cooking at Home,” and co-starred in its spin-off television series. Over his long career, Pépin earned 24 coveted James Beard Foundation Awards.



On a crisp summer day, I am at his Connecticut home primarily to talk about the master chef's upcoming 90th birthday and the extraordinary events surrounding the occasion.

When I arrive, Pépin is perched on a stool and casually leaning on a large kitchen island, looking fit and trim in his navy polo shirt and gray slacks. A pegboard filled with shining copper pots and pans makes a golden backdrop for the interview. His black miniature poodle Gaston suddenly begins barking at the strange visitor.

"Arrêt!" says Pépin, and Gaston slinks back to his corner.

Pépin shows off his latest cookbook—his 35th—sitting on the island. "The Art of Jacques Pépin: A Life in Recipes and Paintings (Timeless Recipes and Signature Artworks of the Celebrated Chef)" includes some of his all-time favorite recipes along with some of his charming artwork. He adds that in the spring there also will be a 50th anniversary, combined edition of Pépin's earlier two classic books of culinary techniques.

This fall marks the conclusion of the 90/90 celebrations: 90 fundraising dinners around the country in honor of his milestone birthday. The year-long salute ends on his actual birth date of December 18 at the Madison Beach Hotel. (There will also be special dinners on December 5 and 6 at the Ocean House in Watch Hill, R.I.)

Legendary American restaurants such as French Laundry and Restaurant Daniel were among those participating over the course of the year. In October, an eight-day event in Pépin's honor will be held in Napa Valley, Calif. Fans of the culinary guru can also create their own fundraising dinner at their own homes by connecting on celebratejacques.org. Proceeds go to the Jacques Pépin Foundation, which supports community kitchen programs, culinary education for adults with barriers to employment and educational videos.

ALWAYS LEARNING

It's been a long career and life and is still evolving—even after his 2017 profile when he was 82 in PBS's "Ameri-

can Master" series on food legends. (Julia Child, Alice Waters and James Beard had their own separate documentaries.)

Mirroring Pépin's recipe-filled memoir "The Apprentice; My Life in the Kitchen," the documentary followed the chef's life and culinary careers. He writes how, as a six-year-old son of a French Resistance fighter during World War II, he was sent for safety to the countryside to work on a farm in exchange for food.

After the war, young Pépin followed his mother into the kitchen where his family opened a restaurant, Le Pélican. There he found his calling and eventually moved to Paris at 16, working his way up the ladder in the feudal system of France's most famous restaurants.

When Pépin came to America at 23, it was to be for a short visit. "I had a good job in France and I had everything I needed," he says. "But you make a decision, and you think it's just for a while, and then you make another decision, and it projects you to the next thing. That's what life is all about. People

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would ask me, ‘Did you know you were going to be doing this or that?’ No.”

Pépin had a complex about not having a proper education. Living in New York City and working in restaurants, he also studied at Columbia University, thinking he might have a career in education. After he received his degree, he proposed a doctoral thesis on the history of French food in the context of French literature. It was rejected; he was told cuisine was “far too trivial for academic study.” Years later after establishing a culinary program at Boston University with Julia Child in 1989—Pépin received an honorary degree from Columbia in 2017. (B.U. gave him one in 2011.)

Pépin recalls with a wry smile his commencement speech to graduates, telling them, “Without an education, you’re likely to fall in the deadly danger of taking educated people seriously.”

ANOTHER KIND OF ARTIST

Pépin’s interest in painting has worked its way into his culinary life with his artwork enlivening his books. Over the decades, he’s also created hand-drawn, special occasion menus, bordered with his whimsical and colorful drawings, all of which are bound and shelved in his study for handy reference and sweet memories.

Going upstairs, he shows off his studio where he paints. It’s a bright, airy room with a view of his backyard, garden and a small cottage with a large kitchen where he films his cooking episodes. There is a lawn expanse where he still plays with his friends the French game of petanque, a variant of boules. “I’m pretty good some days,” he says, “and on other days pretty bad.”

His wife Gloria died in 2020, after 54 years of marriage. In February, his best friend of nearly 70 years, Jean-Claude Szurdak, died at the age of 87.

Painting satisfies him in many ways, he says. “I get lost in painting like I

get lost in cooking. Both are important things in my life.”

Pépin has a particular fondness for painting chickens. “It could be genetic,” he jokes. “I come from Bourg-en-Bresse, which has the greatest chickens in France: the best and the most expensive. And chicken was on the menu in six or seven ways, so it was already a big part of my cooking.”

Pépin raised chickens in his Madison backyard for a while, “but then the raccoons...,” he sighs with a shrug. (He



admitted that his least favorite culinary task when he began his apprenticeship in kitchens was killing and plucking chickens.)

PAINTING AND COOKING

How does his painting connect to his culinary skills?

“Often, I don’t really know exactly what I’m going to paint or where I am going with it,” he says. “Sometimes I would just want to do something abstract and, at some point, the painting takes a hold of me and I just react to that, putting a color here or a shape there.”

However, he points out, his culinary creations have to be standardized. Still, there are creative variables: “Because

it’s summer and it’s more humid, or the chicken breasts are thicker or thinner, or I’m cooking with copper or aluminum, or gas or electricity, or if I’m in good mood or bad, things can change. In order for it to be the same, it has to be different and, like painting, that’s where adjusting and readjusting for taste comes in, sometimes when you’re not even realizing it.”

If he hadn’t become a chef, would he have been an artist?

“Yes, I guess. I could have moved in that direction. It satisfies me. But life was different then. My father was a cabinet maker and my mother was a cook. I could have been either a cook or a cabinet maker so the choice was easy for me. I never thought to be a doctor or lawyer. It never entered my mind. Now, kids can be 100 different things. But then life was simpler.”

How has the nature of starting out in the professional kitchens changed over the decades?

“Your job is to say, ‘Yes, chef’ because you’re not there to teach [famous chef] Thomas Keller how to cook. He has his way. You are there to learn, not to change things. I tell

young chefs to find that job with that particular chef and just look at things through his eyes or her eyes and do it this way for a year or so, and then change and go with another chef. If you do that two, three or four times, you’ll have absorbed an enormous amount. Then you can filter it all through your own sense of taste.” ■

Frank Rizzo is a freelance journalist who writes for Variety, The New York Times, American Theatre, Connecticut Magazine, and other periodicals and outlets, including ShowRiz.com. He lives in New Haven and New York City. Follow Frank at ShowRiz@Twitter.



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FROM HALL HIGH TO THE HEART OF SAINT FRANCIS: **Dr. DeSimone Comes Home**

By **KIMBERLY LUCEY MILLEN** / *Photography by* **STAN GODLEWSKI**

Driving to his new position as chief of cardiac surgery at Saint Francis Hospital last year, Joseph DeSimone, M.D., passed the ice rink where he played goalie in high school. He drove by the Hill-Stead Museum, where he helped build the back gate one summer, and even his old preschool at the University of Saint Joseph. “It really was surreal,” he says. “The plan was always to return, but professionally my goal was to be the chief of a cardiac surgery program. Finding both at Saint Francis has been a dream come true.”

A FULL-CIRCLE HOMECOMING

After graduating from Hall High School in West Hartford, Dr. DeSimone went on to the University of Notre Dame and later returned to the Nutmeg state for medical school at the University of Connecticut. He trained at Dartmouth Hitchcock Medical Center and completed a cardiothoracic surgery fellowship at The Johns Hopkins Hospital. He spent the next 17 years back at Dartmouth Hitchcock as an attending cardiac surgeon and assistant professor of surgery at the Geisel School of Medicine.

“Cardiac surgery just fit my professional mindset,” he explains. “It’s physiologically concrete. You find a leaky valve, you fix it. You find a blocked artery, you bypass it. The

‘plumbing’ just made sense to me.” When the opportunity came to return home and lead the program at Saint Francis, he knew it was time. “Sometimes the path doesn’t seem like it’s making sense, but looking back, it all comes together. I ended up exactly where I needed to be.”

MAKING HEART SURGERY PERSONAL

Now as chief of cardiac surgery at Saint Francis, Dr. DeSimone is focused on continuing to raise the visibility and reputation of the program. “It’s about building volume, yes; but more importantly, it’s about building trust through consistency, safety and personalization. I want our patients to know they’re not just a chart or procedure; they are people with lives, families, fears and goals.”

A strong believer in personalized care, Dr. DeSimone makes it a point to be present and accessible. “I’ve been a patient myself, and I’ve seen the difference it makes when care feels personal. Not everyone gets the kind of attention a surgeon does when he’s a patient in the hospital, but I want our patients to feel seen, heard and cared for every step of the way.” He encourages his team to adopt the same philosophy. “I don’t want anyone routed through a phone tree or left wondering what’s next. We’re here for them.”



Joseph DeSimone, M.D., chief of cardiac surgery at Saint Francis Hospital.

“While not right for every case, it can be a game-changer for the right patient. Robotic surgery is already strong here in thoracic and OB/GYN. We want to bring that same excellence to cardiac.”

Dr. DeSimone sees this as part of a bigger mission: bringing the latest tools, best practices and a deeply personal touch to every patient encounter.

CONSISTENCY AND CONFIDENCE

Dr. DeSimone also brings a distinct surgical philosophy to his work. “I do every cardiac procedure short of transplants,” he says. “But what’s just as important to me is how we do it. Minimally invasive, small-incision approaches, when safe and appropriate, are what I prioritize. Patients feel better, recover faster and carry less of a visible reminder of what they went through. And when it’s done the same way every time, with precision, it builds confidence for the patient and the surgeon. You want your pilot to land the airplane the same way every time, and I’m going to do my heart surgery the same way every time.” That confidence is something he hears echoed from patients. “People don’t want to have surgery, they want to feel better. So, when you can say, ‘yes, I can do this safely, with a smaller incision, and get you back to your life,’ that’s powerful. It doesn’t eliminate the risks, but it helps ease the fear. And that’s everything.”

A ROBOTIC REVIVAL

Dr. DeSimone also has his sights set on advancing the program through innovation, specifically by reintroducing robotic-assisted cardiac surgery to Saint Francis. “It’s something I’ve always believed in,” he explains. “While not right for every case, it can be a game-changer for the right patient. Robotic surgery is already strong here in thoracic and OB/GYN. We want to bring that same excellence to cardiac.”

He sees this as part of a bigger mission: bringing the latest tools, best practices and a deeply personal touch to every patient encounter. “Working at Dartmouth for so many years really instilled in me the importance of that personal touch,” says Dr.

DeSimone. “It was a small town, and you were often operating on your neighbor’s mother or your colleague’s spouse. That changes how you care. You look people in the eye. You check in with them. You remember that every patient is someone’s whole world.”

A LEGACY REIMAGINED

Dr. DeSimone’s long-term goal is to continue growing the program, building a strong and cohesive team, and raising public awareness of what’s possible in cardiac care right here in Hartford. “We’re building something special,” he says. “With the legacy of the Hoffman Heart and Vascular Institute, the strength of the Trinity Health Of New England network, and a renewed commitment to personalized, high-quality care, we’re putting Saint Francis back on the map for cardiac excellence.”

As Dr. DeSimone continues building the future of cardiac surgery at Saint Francis, one thing is clear: for him, it’s personal because this community is home. “This isn’t just a job,” he concludes. “It’s the second half of my career, and I want to make it count. I’ve got the energy, the experience, and now the hometown stage to make a real, lasting impact.” ■

Kimberly Lucey Millen is a freelance journalist with more than two decades of experience in both print and broadcast media. She lives in New England with her husband and son, exploring all that each of the four seasons has to offer.

Stan Godlewski is an editorial, corporate and healthcare photographer based in Connecticut and working primarily between Boston and New York City.

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The Declining Art of Listening

By RANDY B. YOUNG

Parents, teachers and communicators are fond of quoting Greek philosopher Epictetus: “We have two ears and one mouth so that we can listen twice as much as we speak.” We still have one mouth some 2,000 years later, but our eyes and ears are barraged with messaging strategically tailored to titillate us.

“At a time when we are more technologically linked than ever, our conversations have never been more fractured and disconnected, because most don’t know how to truly listen,” says Oscar Trimboli, author of “Deep Listening.”

If you’ve perceived a decline in listening skills societally, you’re not imagining things. The first step to a solution is admitting there’s a problem. A number of reputable psychologists in Connecticut are sounding the alarm and developing action steps to improve our listening.

YEARS IN THE MAKING

We have not come to this place overnight. It’s too easy to blame the demise of discourse on youths. (“Hmph, the kids today!”) Adults, parents and teachers have also been complicit in the decline.

“We toss out epithets like ‘narcissistic’ and ‘self-involved,’ but this is how many have been taught to interact,” says Tim Stevens, a therapist, writer for Connecticut College’s Office of Marketing and Communications, and adjunct professor for Connecticut College’s Department of Psychology.

Social scientists name the healthy practice of purposeful engagement as “active listening.” They identify that one of the factors most damaging to active listening is the prominence of social media.

Author of the best-selling “The Anxious Generation” book, Jonathan Haidt notes that, “Gen Z became the first generation in history to go through puberty

with a portal in their pockets that called them...into an alternative universe that was exciting, addictive, unstable, and...unsuitable for children and adolescents.”

“It’s FOMO, or fear of missing out,” states Chris Abildgaard, a psychology professor at University of Hartford and director of the Social Learning Center in Cheshire. “I have parents of six-year-olds in my clinic; their parents say they can’t get their child off the Discord social media app. My question is, ‘Why does your six-year-old have access to Discord?’ Parents will say, ‘I give [my kids] the technology so that they aren’t bored anymore because when they’re bored...they bother me.’”

ZOOM-ZOOM

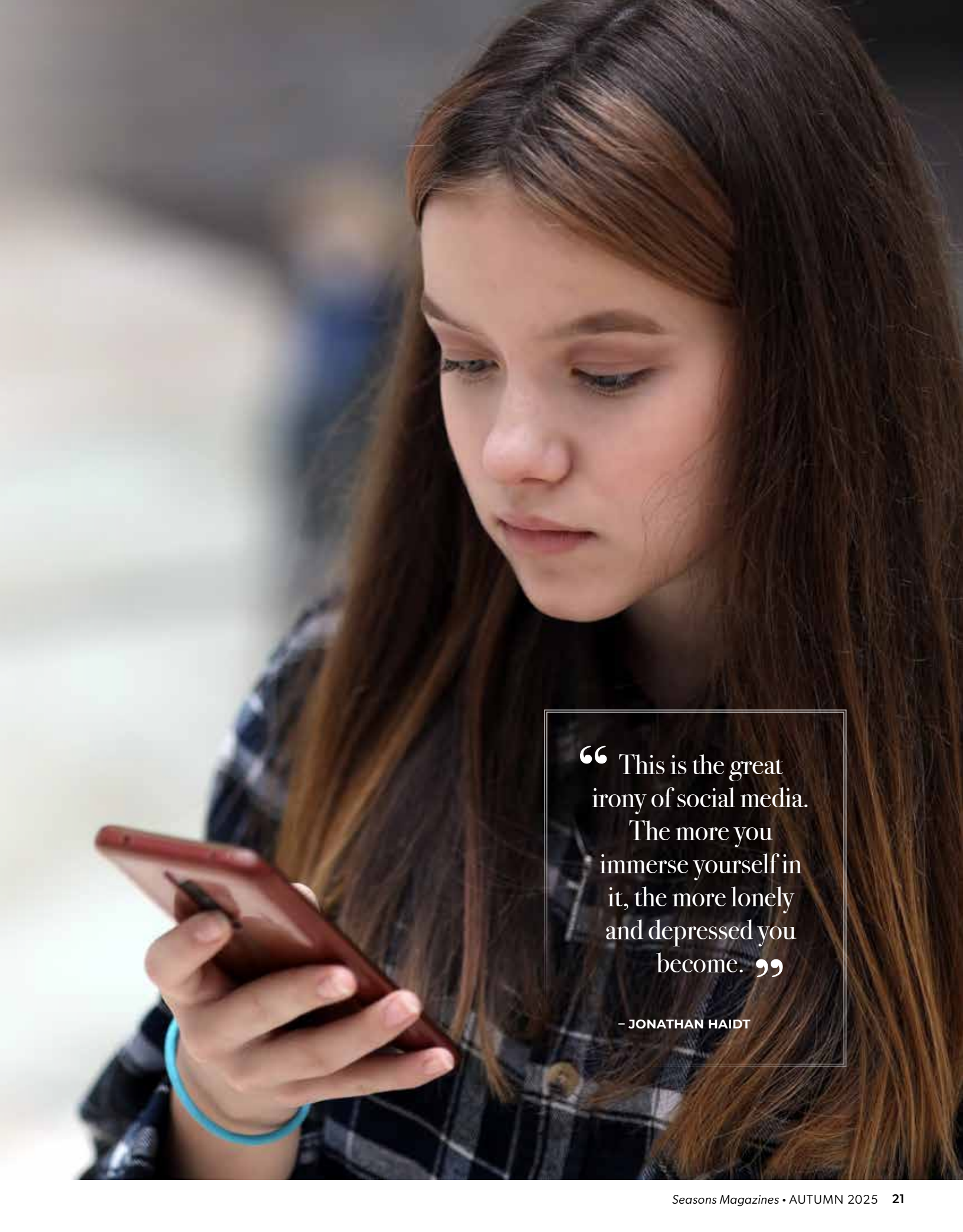
“Matters got even more challenging during COVID when most students attended virtual classrooms, but Zoom interaction was a poor stand-in for in-person communication,” adds Marc Brackett, Ph.D., a professor at the Yale Child Study Center, director of the Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence and author of “Dealing with Feeling.”

“You can’t pick up on nuance,” he says. “You’re more tempted to be distracted and double-dip or triple-dip, always checking email or doing something other than being present.”

Since the emergence of smartphone technology, a lack of communication skills has led to related problems, including depression. “This is the great irony of social media,” Haidt wrote. “The more you immerse yourself in it, the more lonely and depressed you become.”

CUT TO CURE

Unfettered online access, a year of virtual education and inconsistent modeling of conversational skills have contributed to poor listening habits over decades. The

A young woman with long, straight brown hair is looking down at a red smartphone she is holding in her right hand. She is wearing a dark plaid shirt and a light blue wristband. The background is blurred, suggesting an outdoor setting. A quote box is overlaid on the right side of the image.

“ This is the great irony of social media. The more you immerse yourself in it, the more lonely and depressed you become. ”

– JONATHAN HAIDT



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good news is that bad habits can be unlearned.

“Over time and with exposure, we’ll hopefully start to see a return of [active listening] behaviors...naturally as kids are now back in person in classrooms,” Stevens adds.

Most experts say active listening should include attention to total meaning, responding to feelings and being alert to nonverbal cues, such as facial expressions, body language and others.

Conversely, an example of poor listening is “hi-jacking,” such as interrupting a friend’s description of their vacation to Maine to describe our own trip.

“In my own research, people feel they can be their true selves with people who are non-judgmental, good listeners, and show empathy and compassion,” Brackett says. “I don’t think people are really taught how to do that as much as they should be.”

WE ARE THE VERY MODEL...

“I think good modeling, at least for parents, might be starting up a meal by asking a good question,” comments

Brackett about the onus also falling on adults.

“Family dinners are a great partial solution,” Abildgaard agrees. “The number of families out there today that actually have family dinners has declined in the past 20 years by an astronomical percentage.”

Brackett praises an emergent “positive empathy” initiative. “We’re used to thinking about empathy as...showing your concern for something that went wrong. But research actually shows that we have closer relationships with people who engage in positive empathy.” As such, Brackett suggests moving from asking how a person’s day was to, “Tell me about the best part of your day. What made it great?”

“All of a sudden, you’re embellishing a child’s pleasant experience,” he explains. “Research shows that, longitudinally speaking, when that kid is older and reflects back on their childhood, they’re going to feel more connected to the person who expressed positive empathy versus traditional empathy.”

RECONNECTING CONNECTICUT

With his new book “Permission to Feel” in hand, Brackett is currently a crusader for better communication and less social media in schools, a once-quixotic notion that is quickly gaining support.

“I’m on a mission to make Connecticut the first emotionally intelligent state,” Brackett states. “I’m having lunch with the head of the superintendent’s [office], the principals’ union, the teachers’ union. We’re talking about bringing these practices to all Connecticut schools. We’ve been training children from early on how to be distracted. We spend very little time helping people learn how to be still. If we want to have a society where people can actually be present and have healthy relationships, we need to help people literally train their minds to be still.”

Despite the magnitude of the problem, Brackett remains hopeful in our ability to retrain our brains. “The areas of our brain responsible for building these skills are with us until we die. We’re works in progress; we can all strive to be better versions of ourselves.”

A graduate of Dartmouth College, Randy B. Young worked in advertising in New England before relocating and working in communications for the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill. N.C. Recently retired, he is a freelance writer and photographer.



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Why Life Insurance Matters and the Importance of Policy Reviews

Life insurance is more than just a safety net; it's a crucial part of your financial well-being. According to the 2025 Insurance Barometer Study, 51% of American adults have some form of life insurance coverage, yet 40% believe they need more*. This gap in coverage can have serious consequences for families, especially if the primary wage earner passes away unexpectedly. In fact, nearly half of adults say they would struggle to pay living expenses within six months of losing their primary income*.

Why Life Insurance is Essential

Life insurance provides financial security for loved ones in the event of an untimely death. It ensures families can maintain their standard of living, pay off debts and cover essential expenses. Men are more likely than women to have life insurance, with 54% of men reporting coverage compared to 48% of women*. However, the coverage gap for all Americans is significant.

"Life insurance is a critical component of any financial plan. When we meet with clients to establish or review holistic financial

plans, we discuss the importance of annual reviews. Often times, clients will experience a change in marital status or a serious illness or disability, and forget to share it with their financial advisor," explains Mitchell LaFlam, vice president of Chelsea Groton Financial Services and a financial advisor for Osaic Institutions, Inc. "Life events can have a major impact on insurance coverage and one's overall financial plans, so it's critical an advisor is informed when things change. Think about this: when a group is planning a vacation, you'd rarely just do the exact same thing each year with zero adjustments. Instead,

the plans might be adjusted, even slightly, based on the budget, needs and interests of the group trying to get away. Life insurance coverage needs to be treated similarly; each year, we want to reevaluate them to ensure plans still provide proper coverage at the right cost as part of an overall financial plan.”

The Role of Policy Reviews

Purchasing a life insurance policy shouldn’t be a “set it and forget it” transaction. Just like other assets in your financial portfolio, life insurance needs to be periodically reviewed to ensure it still meets your needs and goals. The following are some key reasons why policy reviews are so important.

- **Meeting Financial Goals:** A policy review helps verify that your life insurance is aligned with your current financial objectives.
- **Adequate Coverage:** It ensures that you have enough coverage to protect your loved ones.
- **Performance Check:** It’s an opportunity to make sure your policy is performing as expected.
- **Proper Structure:** It validates that ownership and beneficiary designations are correctly structured.
- **Cost-Effectiveness:** A review helps ensure that your insurance goals are being met in a cost-effective manner.



Mitchell LaFlam, vice president of Chelsea Groton Financial Services and a financial advisor for Osaic Institutions, Inc.

- **Confidence in Strategy:** It provides confidence in your chosen insurance planning strategy or identifies a better solution.

Potential Problems with Unmonitored Policies

Without regular reviews, life insurance policies can encounter several issues.

- **Underperformance:** The policy may not be performing as well as expected.
- **Financial Strain:** Loans against the policy could be causing financial strain.
- **Carrier Ratings:** The financial ratings of the insurance carrier may have changed.
- **Lapsing Coverage:** Term coverage may be about to lapse.

- **Increasing Premiums:** Premiums may be increasing over time.
- **Lowered Crediting Rates:** Crediting rates may have lowered, making the policy less stable.
- **Increased Charges:** Policy charges may have increased since the original purchase.

How to Review Your Policy

Reviewing your life insurance policy is a straightforward process. Simply obtain a copy of your most recent policy statement and provide it to your financial advisor. At Chelsea Groton Financial Services, upon receiving the policy statement, your advisor will check in to understand if any life event or financial changes have occurred since your last review. Then the team will schedule time to go over any recommended changes or considerations, so a client has confidence that their life insurance solution is working optimally.

Life insurance is a vital part of a financial plan; regular policy reviews are essential to ensure it continues to meet your needs and provide proper coverage. Don’t wait until it’s too late. Schedule a policy review today to protect your loved ones and secure your financial future.

*According to the 2025 Insurance Barometer Study, conducted jointly by LIMRA and Life Happens



Are you interested in scheduling an initial conversation or a policy review with the Chelsea Groton Financial Services team? Call 860-570-4040.

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**BLAST FROM
THE PAST**

ESSAY

*From Seasons Magazines
Autumn 2010 Issue*

How to Improve Autumn

An essay by Colin McEnroe

It is my intention to write about how to improve autumn, but I would like to say, beforehand, that autumn actually needs very little improvement.

People are brainwashed into loving summer, a blazing morass of unpleasant bugs, sweltering days, and nights in which sleep is impossible without mechanical assistance. You spend most of your summer in search of ways to get your body to its natural autumn temperature. The romance of summer is the quest to be anything other than miserably hot.

But it's as if summer hired a powerful PR firm. There are innumerable songs singing its praises, and hardly any about the delights of fall.

This brings us to the first improvement. Branding. Autumn is the only season for which there are two more or less interchangeable names. "Autumn" sounds a little snobby and European but has the advantage of clarity. If, however, you say, "Ralph will probably not sober up until the fall," there may be some confusion about what you mean. Of course, if you say, "Ralph is moody because of Autumnn," there's a slight possibility you could be talking about a stripper.

"Fall" is part of our basic parlance. We "go back to school in the fall," not "in autumnn." This may in itself constitute a good reason to do away (see below) with "fall." One of the reasons people stay angry, late into life, with fall is that it's the time they went back to school.

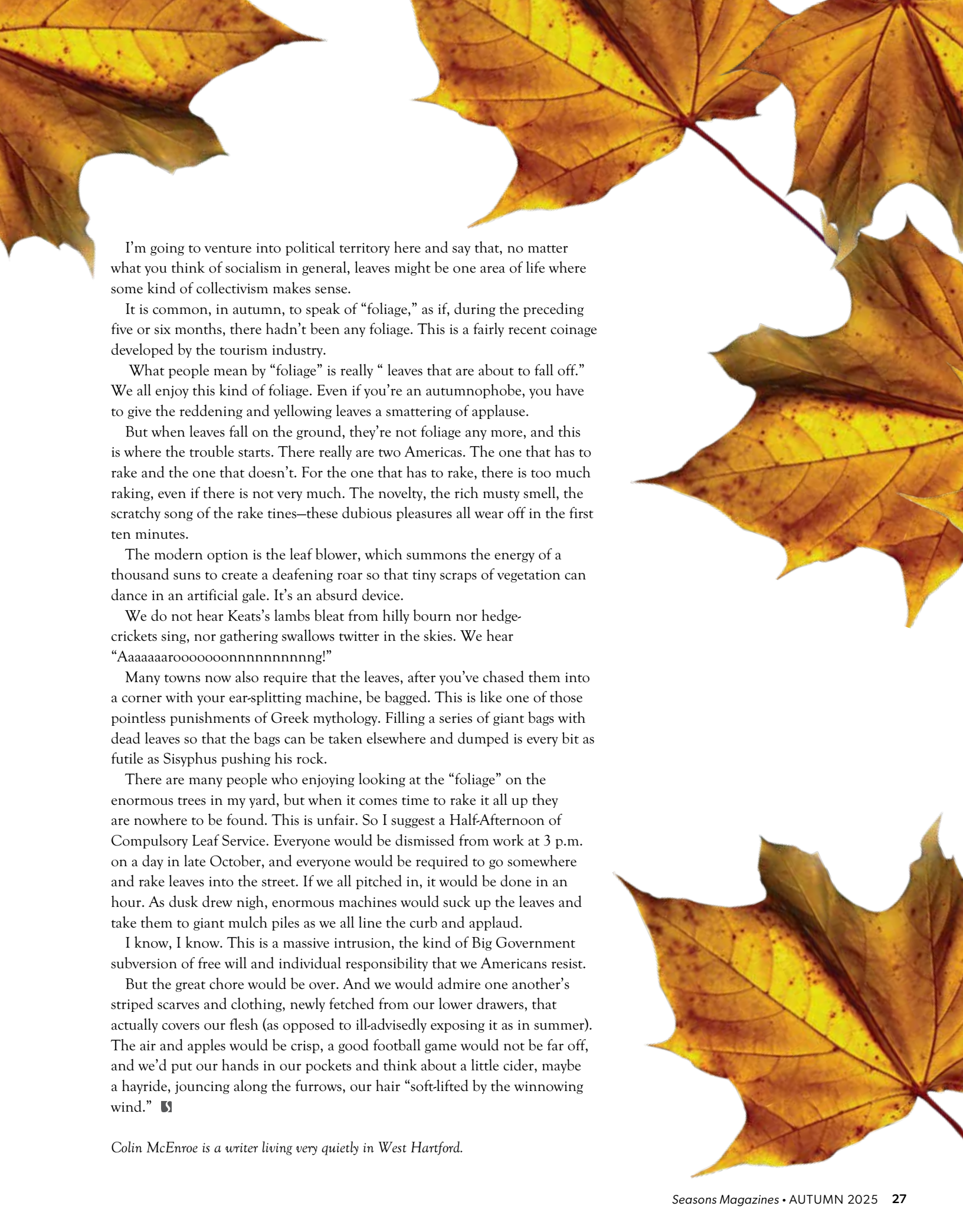
In *Don Quixote*, Cervantes speaks of fall as if it were a separate season, squeezed in between summer and autumn, but there is no way to revert to a five-season system without causing disruptions for Frankie Valli, Vivaldi, and one big hotel chain.

No, the wiser course is to do away with "fall," to launch a National Autumn Initiative with the visible support of all living former U.S. presidents and anchorpersons. Teach your children to say autumn. Would English poet John Keats have written "To Fall?" I don't think so.

He called it the "Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness." Let's talk about that. Who decided gourds were a good idea? Many delicious things continue to grow in the fields in early October, but our grade school teachers were obsessed with showing us gourds and Indian corn and bittersweet, as if autumn were some vast Festival of Inedibility. Tomatoes and lettuce and grapes and pears all grow into October, if the gods are gentle.

I call for a gourdatorium. Put the gourds away for a while, and see if we don't cheer up.

Now, leaves.



I'm going to venture into political territory here and say that, no matter what you think of socialism in general, leaves might be one area of life where some kind of collectivism makes sense.

It is common, in autumn, to speak of "foliage," as if, during the preceding five or six months, there hadn't been any foliage. This is a fairly recent coinage developed by the tourism industry.

What people mean by "foliage" is really "leaves that are about to fall off." We all enjoy this kind of foliage. Even if you're an autumnphobe, you have to give the reddening and yellowing leaves a smattering of applause.

But when leaves fall on the ground, they're not foliage any more, and this is where the trouble starts. There really are two Americas. The one that has to rake and the one that doesn't. For the one that has to rake, there is too much raking, even if there is not very much. The novelty, the rich musty smell, the scratchy song of the rake tines—these dubious pleasures all wear off in the first ten minutes.

The modern option is the leaf blower, which summons the energy of a thousand suns to create a deafening roar so that tiny scraps of vegetation can dance in an artificial gale. It's an absurd device.

We do not hear Keats's lambs bleat from hilly bourn nor hedge-crickets sing, nor gathering swallows twitter in the skies. We hear "Aaaaaaarooooooooonnnnnnnnnng!"

Many towns now also require that the leaves, after you've chased them into a corner with your ear-splitting machine, be bagged. This is like one of those pointless punishments of Greek mythology. Filling a series of giant bags with dead leaves so that the bags can be taken elsewhere and dumped is every bit as futile as Sisyphus pushing his rock.

There are many people who enjoy looking at the "foliage" on the enormous trees in my yard, but when it comes time to rake it all up they are nowhere to be found. This is unfair. So I suggest a Half-Afternoon of Compulsory Leaf Service. Everyone would be dismissed from work at 3 p.m. on a day in late October, and everyone would be required to go somewhere and rake leaves into the street. If we all pitched in, it would be done in an hour. As dusk drew nigh, enormous machines would suck up the leaves and take them to giant mulch piles as we all line the curb and applaud.

I know, I know. This is a massive intrusion, the kind of Big Government subversion of free will and individual responsibility that we Americans resist.

But the great chore would be over. And we would admire one another's striped scarves and clothing, newly fetched from our lower drawers, that actually covers our flesh (as opposed to ill-advisedly exposing it as in summer). The air and apples would be crisp, a good football game would not be far off, and we'd put our hands in our pockets and think about a little cider, maybe a hayride, jouncing along the furrows, our hair "soft-lifted by the winnowing wind." 🍁

Colin McEnroe is a writer living very quietly in West Hartford.

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200
— YEARS —



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Celebrating Liberty Bank's 200th Anniversary by Giving Back to Their Communities

By **ARIANA RAWLS FINE**, *Photos courtesy of Liberty Bank*

Liberty Bank has undergone two centuries of Connecticut's changes, challenges and history; it continues to serve its customers from its humble origins in 1825 when it started out in a 17th Century wooden cupboard in Samuel Southmayd's drugstore on Middletown's Main Street. Today, it stands as the fifth oldest bank in the country. It has more than 50 retail banking branches and loan production offices in 47 towns in Connecticut and Massachusetts and over 800 employees. Liberty Bank continues to center its mission around improving the lives of their customers, teammates and communities for generations to come.

Liberty Bank is celebrating its 200th anniversary with the community by giving back through special events and donations throughout the year.

"The bank had been around for a long time and is well-positioned as a community bank. When I came here in 2019, there was an opportunity for new strategies and technologies," states David W. Glidden, president and CEO of Liberty Bank and president of the Liberty Bank Foundation. "It has organically grown to over \$8 billion in assets, large enough to compete against the national banks but still be nimble locally. Our ownership structure allows us to run the company with a long-range strategy. We are not a publicly traded company but rather our stakeholders are our customers. It enables us to invest more in our community and employees—or teammates as we like to call ourselves."

That commitment to their teammates has earned the bank "Top Workplace" awards every year from the Hartford Courant since 2012 as well as multiple other "best" awards

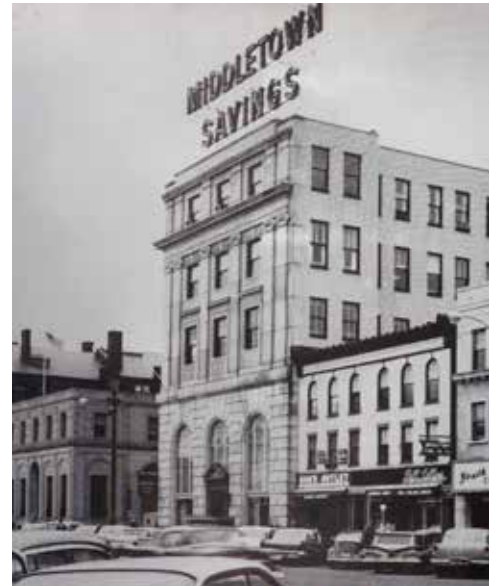
from Forbes Magazine as a Best-in-State Bank in Connecticut and most recently a J.D. Power Award as the #1 Bank for Customer Satisfaction in the N.Y. Tri-State Region.

"We also make it a place for teammates to successfully grow their careers; it is the next level of obligation to give back to them as well with professional development, internship programs and more," says Glidden. "If a company has no culture, it has no soul. Yes, we have given record monetary donations and our teammates volunteered for 15,000 hours in the community last year, but we also have fun. It makes me love the company and the job I have even more because there is a real culture of giving, family feel, and great comradery and team building."

The 200th anniversary was recognized by Gov. Ned Lamont, Lieutenant Gov. Susan Bysiewicz and Middletown Mayor Ben Florsheim, who issued official proclamations recognizing the milestone anniversary on May 4. In honor of the founding year and the 200th anniversary, the bank introduced their "1825" initiative earlier this year when they donated \$1,825 to nonprofits (totaling more than \$90,000), provided 300 "birthday" boxes to local food pantries and partnered with Hands on Hartford to assemble 1,000 snack kits for local students in grades K-8. In the spring, Liberty Bank also granted \$200,000 to Make-a-Wish CT and \$50,000 to Make-a-Wish MA.

And the community celebrations continue in the fall with "Socktober" donations for this much-needed clothing item in the winter; hosting an all-teammate event where they will build 200 bikes for the Boys & Girls Club of Hartford; and partnering with Max Restaurant Group to donate 200 Thanksgiving dinner boxes to families in need.

Liberty Bank's brand promise is to "Be



A historic picture of Liberty's downtown Middletown branch before it changed names to Liberty Bank.

Community Kind." In addition to the bank's community endeavors, the nearly 30-year-old Liberty Bank Foundation has awarded over \$21 million in grants to organizations.

"There is a real stewardship feel to my position," Glidden adds. "With my CEO hat, I spend time on operations and making it successful now; when I put on my stewardship hat, it is making sure the company is set up to succeed for another 200 years. We are all mindful of that mission."

Learn more about Liberty Bank at liberty-bank.com.



Marzena Bukowski, Liberty Bank's branch manager in New Britain, presents a \$1,825 donation to New Britain Emergency Medical Services Inc.



Liberty Bank CEO David Glidden presents a \$200,000 check to Make-a-Wish Foundation CT at a Hartford Yard Goats game.



Liberty Bank's HR Team volunteers at CT Foodshare, one of many ways Liberty Bank is giving back in 2025.



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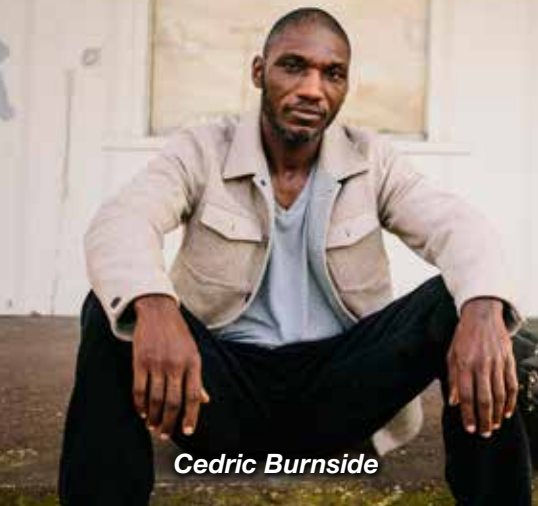


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*The Lenard Chamber Music Series is made possible through the Lenard Chamber Music Endowment. Thanks to the Lenard Endowment, UConn students, non-UConn students, and youth under 18 are invited to attend all chamber events for free.

Note: All artists, events, dates, programs and policies are subject to change.



AT HOME

with KERRI-LEE

BINGE-WORTHY DESIGN:

How Your Favorite Shows Can Inspire Your Décor This Fall

By Kerri-Lee Mayland

With the season's first PSL (aka pumpkin spice latte) behind us and the leaves well into their stunning autumnal display, we're starting to settle into our new fall routines. The candles are flickering. We are heading inside earlier. One thing is certain: we will be spending more time indoors. And while we may be watching shows to relax or escape, our favorite series and films are quietly doing something else too: feeding our interior design imagination.

From psychological thrillers to comedies and home makeover shows, on-screen spaces are full of style cues. I bet you didn't even realize it! No matter your aesthetic, whether it's New England cozy or sleek and modern, there's inspiration to borrow from the world of streaming.

Here's how to let your fall screen time cozy up and shape your space:

1. Nancy Meyers effect: Classic comfort, still trending

We'll always swoon over "Something's Gotta Give" and



"It's Complicated," but the timeless Meyers look also shows up in newer films like "Your Place or Mine" and "Home Again." Think clean kitchens, layered neutrals, oversized sofas and light-flooded interiors.

To bring it home: Add slipcovered seating, glass-front cabinets, warm lighting and coastal hues. It's a fresh-but-familiar feel filmmaker Nancy Meyers etched into design history.

2. Moody drama vibes: Rich, regal and reflective

Shows like "The Gilded Age" (filmed partly in Rhode Island), "Bridgerton" and "The Diplomat" bring a layered, moody style that feels perfect for fall. These sets blend old-world sophistication with modern relevance, much like the historic homes across New England.

To bring it home: Picture deep emeralds, navy blues, heavy

drapes, antique finishes, ornate touches and sculptural lighting.

3. Clean and contemporary: Polished but personal

If you're drawn to the sleek modernism of "The Morning Show," "Anatomy of a Scandal" or "Big Little Lies," it's a look that's soothing and elevated—great for open-concept homes or newly renovated spaces. One of its biggest strengths? The lighting always feels right and that is so key. While the settings may not be ours, they feel like they could be with a few personal touches.

To bring it home: Go for minimalist furniture, soft matte finishes, and a neutral palette with black or brass accents.

4. Cozy escapism: Cottagecore with a twist

"Sweet Magnolias," "Virgin River" and "Firefly Lane" offer something of a nostalgic softness that feels like a warm hug. Even one cozy nook can transform a space or change the way you feel about a corner you used to walk right past.

To bring it home: Layer floral prints, use distressed wood and stack books haphazardly on windowsills. Add touches like knitted throws, tea sets and, once again, mood lighting.

5. Bold and playful: Let the set design lead

Shows like "Only Murders in the Building," "Emily in Paris" and "Loot" lean into bright, personality-filled interiors. They aren't afraid of color, pattern or a little glam. Your home

doesn't have to match it and be perfect, just has to make you smile. Emily's apartment, for example, is a collected blend of French and bohemian touches, with rattan furniture, natural wood and floating shelves. So attainable, even for young fans of design this is a look they can pull off.

To bring it home: To capture that look yourself, try statement art, jewel-toned furniture, patterned wallpaper or go foraging for vintage finds.

Make your home the main character

This fall, justify your screen time in one more way and make it more than entertainment. Notice what catches your eye, such as the cozy glow of a Paris apartment in "Call My Agent," the tidy and glass-walled slick structure in "Severance," or the family-filled elegance of "The Summer I Turned Pretty."

Whatever speaks to you, trust it. It's making your heart go pitter patter for a reason! The best rooms, like the best shows, are layered with story, style and soul. Since you'll be inside more now, you have time to put that to work in your favorite spaces.

I can't wait to hear what you create! 📺

Kerri-Ann
KK



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SEASONS
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Photo by Lam Nguyen Photography

FALL
ARTS
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A CHORUS LINE



FALL ARTS PREVIEW:

**Emus, Foxes
and Eric Clapton, Too**

CONNECTICUT'S FALL LINE-UP SIZZLES WITH POP, ROCK, PLAYS AND MORE

By **FRANK RIZZO**

As summer winds down with the beach chairs stored away, the last of the ripe tomatoes devoured and the tans finally faded, we now turn to the fall and those extra special shows to get us excited—and to divert us from work, school and troubling world events. As always, Connecticut offers us a wealth of performing arts events, so get ready to mark these dates. Calendars ready?

Rob Ruggiero who has staged some of Goodspeed's best musicals, returns to direct a decidedly different kind of show for the jewel box of a theater on the river. "A Chorus Line" runs September 5 to October 26 at the **Goodspeed Opera House** (goodspeed.org) in East Haddam.



This show's got our favorite title of the fall "The Great Emu War." The musical gets a run October 3 to 26 at Goodspeed Musicals' **Norma Terris Theatre** in Chester. The plot? War is made against the large flightless birds which are feeding on the wheat of local Australian farmers. Enter the Army. Sounds like some feathers will be flying—and a lot of musical fun.

Playwright Ken Ludwig "Lend Me A Tenor, Crazy for You" pays tribute to the great English farces of the 1930s and 1940s with the golf-themed country club romp titled "The Fox On the Fairway." The comedy runs November 7 to 23 at the **Music Theatre of Connecticut** in Norwalk.

It's going to be quite the homecoming when **Justin Silva**, who was born and raised in New Haven, brings his comedy show to the **Shubert Theatre** (shubert.com) on October 3. For more traditional Broadway fare, our favorite is the popular Neil Diamond Broadway bio-musical "A Beautiful Noise" December 2 to 7. And over at the theater's new upstairs performing arts space, **Elm City's Cabaret**, we're intrigued by "Deconstructing The Beatles' 'Rubber Soul'" with Scott Freiman, who will walk Beatles fans through the creation the classic 1965 album.



Tamilla Woodard. Photo Credit: Edward Winter

Who doesn't like a thriller on stage? **Hartford Stage** (hartfordstage.org), has a crime tale that inspired Alfred Hitchcock's 1948 film "Rope" starring Jimmy Stewart. This is a Jeffrey Hatcher's fresh stage adaptation, based on the play "Rope's End" by Patrick Hamilton. It's not so much a whodunnit but will-the-killers-be-caught? My bet's on the detective. The world premiere runs October 10 to November 2.

Meet Spunk Banks, a strong, confident and charismatic man known for his disregard for social norms, including seducing another man's wife. For artistic director and dean James Bundy's final season at **New Haven's Yale Repertory Theatre** (yalerep.org), there's Zora Neale Hurston's rediscovered play "**Spunk**," which is based on her short story. It will run October 3 to 25. There will be new songs, arrangements, and music for this theatrical fable about the triumph of love set in Eatonville, Florida, the first incorporated all-Black town in America.

Talk about language barriers. Set in an English-learning classroom in Iran, Sanaz Toossi's Pulitzer Prize-winning play "**English**" has its Connecticut premiere at **TheaterWorks Hartford**, (twhartford.org) October 2 to November 2.

The Tony Award-nominated play is in partnership with New Haven's itinerant **Long Wharf Theatre**, which will present the play January 16 to February 1 at SCSU's Kendall Drama Lab. (For its fall show, Long Wharf Theatre will present in association with The Sol Project, Latinx Playwrights Circle and the WP Theater, Monet Hurst-Mendoza's play "**Torera**" at the **WP Theater** in New York City. It's about a Mexican woman who dreams of becoming a bullfighter. It will play September 20 to October 19 in New York City.)

With seven Tony Award nominations and two wins, Sutton Foster (last seen in the Broadway revival of "Once Upon a Mattress" returns to the **Ridgefield Playhouse** (ridgefieldplayhouse.org) for a concert on November 20.

What's love got to do with it? Apparently plenty if you're talking about the Broadway tour of the musical "**Tina**," which arrives at **The Palace Theatre** (palacetheaterct.org) in Waterbury November 1 and 2. If one Tina Turner isn't enough, there's a trio of Tinas in this bio-musical presenting the sizzling singer at three different stages of her career and tumultuous life.



To celebrate the 10th anniversary of "Hamilton," the landmark musical (and still one of the top tickets on Broadway) makes a return run at **The Bushnell** in Hartford November 4 to 16. And, speaking of dynamic political leaders, **Pete Buttigieg** will speak on democracy and the future of politics as part of The Connecticut Forum at The Bushnell in Hartford on November. 20.

One more event you won't want to miss at **The Bushnell**, (bushnell.org). On October 26, the Tony Award-nominated (twice) **Jeremy Jordan** will be in concert. (His vocals in Broadway's "Floyd Collins" were thrilling. Hartford theater fans might remember him from an early career gig at TheaterWorks in "And a Little Dog Laughed.")

"More than half of modern culture depends on what one shouldn't read," says a character in Oscar Wilde's epigram-packed comedy, "The Importance of Being Earnest," which will kick off **Playhouse on Park**, (playhouseonpark.org) in West Hartford's MainStage season running October 28 to November 15. This sparkling satire gleefully skewers love, marriage, and high society.

A Contemporary Theatre of Connecticut (actofct.org) in Ridgefield presents the Broadway musical "Almost Famous", based on the beloved Cameron Crowe film and with music

and lyrics by Tom Kitt. Set in 1973, it follows a teenage journalist who lands the assignment of a lifetime: touring with an up-and-coming rock band for Rolling Stone magazine. The show runs October 18 to November 23.

Acoustic guitarist **Leo Kottke**, now 80, plays **The Katharine Hepburn Cultural Center** (thekate.org), AKA “The Kate,” at Old Saybrook. Kottke, known for a fingerpicking style that draws on blues, jazz and folk music, made his major label in 1971 with “Mudlark,” and continued to demonstrate his instrumental skills with “Greenhouse,” “My Feet Are Smiling,” “Dreams and All That Stuff” and “Chewing Pine.”

Two rock giants come to the **Mohegan Sun Arena** (mohegansun.com) in Uncasville: **Eric Clapton** on September 20 and **Sting** on November 18. As member of the bands The Yardbirds, Blind Faith and Cream as well as a stunning solo career, Clapton is a guitar god. Sting is legendary, too, selling more than 100 million albums from his

combined work with The Police and as a solo artist.

Over at **Foxwoods Resort Casino** (foxwoods.com) in Mashantucket, the music legends continue to come to Connecticut with the still-fabulous **Diana Ross** on stage November 1, and **John Legend** on November 8 celebrates the 20th anniversary of his breakout album “Get Lifted.” For those with a swinging rockabilly bent, there are those cool cats, the **Stray Cats** with Brian Setzer on November 7.

Over at the **Peoples Bank Arena** (peoplebankarena.com) in Hartford, there’s another rock-pop legend: **Stevie Nicks** performing in concert on October 25, one of only eight dates she’ll be playing in the U.S. I’m feeling twirly already.

Fans of Monty Python, “**Fawlty Towers**” and the film “**A Fish Called Wanda**” (and many other comic gems), rejoice! Brit wit John Cleese will present “**Not Dead Yet: John Cleese and The**

Holy Grail at 50” at Stamford’s Center for the Arts at **The Palace Theatre** (palacestamford.org) on October 16. It will include a screening of the original film, a conversation with Cleese “where he’ll share behind-the-scenes stories, wit and wisdom—assuming he remembers any of it.” And keeping with our theme of touring rock and pop legends, Graham Russell and Russell Hitchcock of **Air Supply** (“Lost in Love,” “All Out of Love,” “Every Woman in the World,” “The One That You Love,” “Here I Am”) perform its 50th anniversary celebration at the theater, too.

Dubbed “the colorful Mozart of Gen Z” by The New York Times, **Jacob Collier’s** radically joyous and genre-bridging music earned him seven Grammy wins (and 15 nominations). He plays UConn’s **Jorgensen Center for the Performing Arts** (jorgensen.uconn.edu) in Storrs on October 18. Then for something equally cool, there’s **Compagnie Herve Koubi** performing in “Sol Invictus.”

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The company of *A Beautiful Noise*. Photo credit: Jeremy Daniel



Sutton Foster.
Photo credit: Emilio Madrid



Jeremy Jordan

The movement collective of 17 male and female dancers combines contemporary and urban dance movements, capoeira, ballet and martial arts with powerful imagery and inspired choreography.

Just when you think there's not any more variations you can do with that holiday perennial "**A Christmas Carol**," along comes "**A Sherlock Carol**." No mystery why **Westport Country Playhouse**, (westportplayhouse.org) turned to this doubling of literary icons in a playful retelling by Mark Shanahan, based on characters created by Charles Dickens and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. It runs December 13 to 21.

There is yet one more variation of the Dickens classic at the **Legacy Theater** in Branford December 3 to 14. "**Scrooge and Marley**" is musical prequel, following how young Marley and Scrooge crossed paths, became business partners and "how one man's ultimate sacrifice is another man's redemption". It's based on the award-winning book "Jacob T. Marley" by R. William Bennett.

Legacy Theater also winds up its popular Sunday Broadway Concert Series, a great chance to see terrific Broadway performers in an intimate setting, with stage, concert and cabaret star **Karen Mason** (pictured right) "**Mamma Mia!**", "**Hairspray**, **Wonderland**" on October 26.

This is offbeat and intriguing—and I'm there at the **College Street Music Hall** (collegestreetmusichall.com) in New Haven: Accomplished woodworkers **Nick Offerman** (from "**Parks and Recreation**"—he's known as an actor, too)



and **Lee Buchanan** present "an evening of conversation and tomfoolery" with "**Little Woodchucks**," their illustrated woodworking guide, "chock-full of projects to engage the whole family and teach young craftsmen the satisfaction of a job well done." The book tour event on October 17 has a mixture of conversation, hands-on woodworking demonstrations, singing, laughs, and, hopefully, no slivers. On October 25, there's another blast from the past with **Bachman-Turner Overdrive**, famous for the hits "Let it Ride," "Roll on Down the Highway," "Takin' Care of Business," "Looking Out for #1," and "You Ain't Seen Nothin' Yet."

There's always something entertaining from a global perspective at **Wesleyan University's Center for the Arts** (wesleyan.edu) in Middletown. The menu is international this fall but a standout is Ukraine Lives! by the **Ukrainian Bandurist Chorus of North America** in its first Connecticut concert since 2007. Formed in Kyiv in 1918, the show will celebrate Ukraine's cultural heritage through music—and its survival against waves of tyranny—and will feature the traditional 60-stringed instrument, the bandura.

Remember the great 1999 documentary "**Buena Vista Social Club**?" How about the terrific Broadway musical from last season of the same name? Did you miss it? Well, on September 28 at the **Garde Arts Center** (gardearts.org) in New London there's **The Buena Vista Orchestra**, under the direction of Jesus "Aguaje" Ramos, the original orchestra leader, composer and trombonist of The Buena Vista Social Club—and featuring key players from throughout the legendary Cuban group's history.

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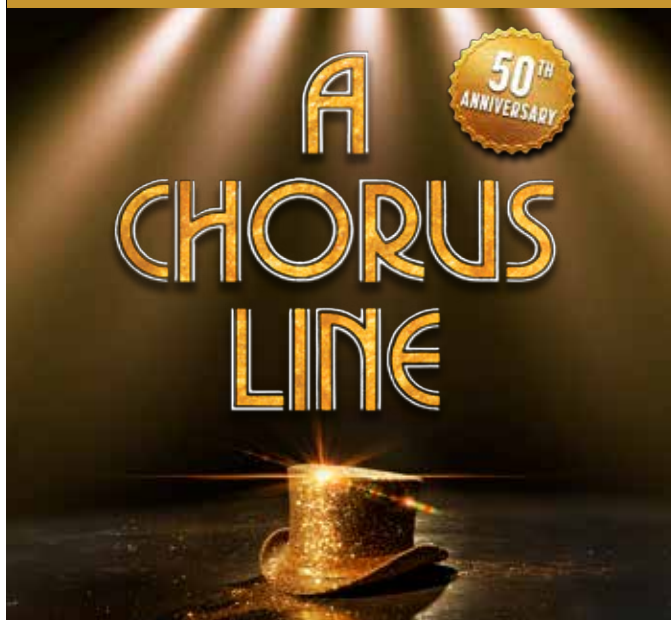
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Speaking of dance, there's "**Illuminate**" on September 27 at the **Warner Theater** (warnertheatre.org), in Torrington. Named "Best New Act in America" by TV show "America's Got Talent" in 2011, the multi-sensory show is a fantastic fusion of cutting edge technology and dance with performers outfitted with customized LED suits synced to the choreography.

On September 27, the **Yale Schwarzman Center** in New Haven will present playwright and solo performer **Priyanka Shetty** with her one-woman show "**The Elephant in the Room.**" The play is described as "a witty, dark comedy about an Indian metalhead and software-engineer-turned-actor who must navigate life as an immigrant arriving in Trump's America."

For dance fans on October 25, there's "**Visionary Steps: Balanchine & Beyond**" with dancers from the New York City Ballet in a special event created by principal dancer **Adrian Danchig-Waring**.

As a huge fan of MacArthur genius grant

recipient **Taylor Mac**, I look most forward to his annual holiday extravaganza, "**Holiday Sauce**" on December 13, which blends music, burlesque, "and random acts of fabulousness in the most subversive and cathartic event of the season."

We all know that King Lear is losing his mind. Dan Colley and Company take it a step further—make that two steps—in the stage production of "**Lost Lear**" on October 21 at the **Quick Center for the Arts at Fairfield University**, (quickcenter.fairfield.edu). This moving and darkly comic interpretation of Shakespeare's play is told from the point of view of Joy, an elderly person with dementia, recalling when she was in her 30s when she played the title role in an *avant garde* production. On a lighter note, be sure to catch one of my favorite musicians at the center, the sublime **John Pizzarelli and The Swing 7** on October 3.

Catholic guilt, neighborhood gossip, and family secrets: What's not to like? And you can find them all in the '70s-set comedy "Incident of Our Lady of Perpetual Help"



Sanazz Toossi, author of *English*

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(ivorytonplayhouse.org) plays October 2 to 28 at **Ivoryton Playhouse** in Essex.

If only walls could talk. But for the **Madison Lyric Stage** (madisonlyricstage.org) they sing. The company presents "Four Murders in Forty Years," an evening featuring operatic excerpts and one-act operas arranged to follow a central concept: people in a tenement apartment over four decades and the events within those walls. The production features "**La Voix Humaine**" ("The Human Voice") by Francis Poulenc and Jean Cocteau, presented in "English," followed by "**The Medium**" by Gian Carlo Menotti. The show runs September 19 to 21.

Boo! **Hartford Symphony Orchestra's** (hartfordsymphony.org) **Pop Series** will feature "Tim Burton's The Nightmare Before Christmas," a fabulously wild PG film accompanied by the full lush sound of a symphony orchestra. The music/film event will play October 25 at The Bushnell's



Mortensen Hall. For more traditional classical music, there's "Beethoven and Sibelius" at the Bushnell's Belding Theater, on October 17 to 19. Under the direction of Viswa Subbaraman, the orchestra performs a program highlighted by Beethoven's Piano Concerto No. 3, a masterful balance of stormy intensity and lyrical beauty performed by guest artist pianist **Drew Petersen**.

Something stirring will emerge no doubt from "**Montgomery Variations**,"

a November 2 concert by the **New Haven Symphony Orchestra** (newhavensymphony.org) at Woolsey Hall under the baton of conductor and music director Perry So. It promises to be a powerful program with themes of resilience and remembrance through Margaret Bonds' "Montgomery Variations," community singing, and "Sanctum" by NHO Composer-in-Residence Courtney Bryan. Also featured will be pianist Courtney Bryan. 🎹



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Your Fall Prep Guide with Quinoco

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outdoor tanks about 10. Even if your tank isn't leaking, signs of wear or age could mean it's time for an upgrade. Quinoco's expert team can inspect, remove and replace aging tanks—plus, they're offering special savings on new Roth Oil Tanks through the end of October. Visit quinoco.com/oil-tank to learn more.

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DELICIOUS

Fabulous Frittatas

By AMY S. WHITE



With the leaves changing, the days getting shorter, and attention shifting indoors, it's also a time to change up the menu.

But with busy lives, you want something simple and versatile, while at the same time being hearty and satisfying. If that's what you're looking for (and we highly recommend it), a frittata may just be an ideal go-to.

So, what exactly is a frittata? This Italian, egg-based dish is a staple in kitchens around the world...for good reason. At the core, it is a thick, open-faced omelet that's cooked slowly over low heat on the stovetop and then given a quick finish in the oven. It is like a quiche, but without the hassle of making a crust. Unlike a regular omelet, it can feed more than one or two people. You don't stir or flip a frittata while cooking, so they set into a sliceable consistency. Frittatas are quick and easy to make; endlessly adaptable; and delicious hot, cold or at room temperature. Best of all, they can be made with nearly anything in the fridge: vegetables, cheeses, meats and even leftovers!

Best of all, they're perfect for a brunch, packing a picnic, or prepping lunches for the week. Paired with a garden salad, a side of roasted potatoes, or even just a slice of crusty bread, they make a simple yet satisfying meal.

Read on to discover the frittata basics, along with some creative, seasonal flavor combinations. 🍴

The Frittata Formula

Ingredients:

1 tablespoon butter or olive oil
1½ cups of mix-ins. (Whatever strikes your fancy: cooked vegetables, cooked or smoked meat or fish, cooked pasta, cheese, herbs)
6 large eggs
¼ cup half and half
Kosher salt, to taste

Steps of Frittata Making:

Preheat the oven to 400°F.

Melt the butter (or heat the olive oil) in a large, oven-safe skillet over medium heat.

If the mix-ins are not already cooked, cook them in the skillet (i.e., sauté vegetables, sear meats, etc.) or roast them in the oven. If you are using things that have already been cooked, place them in the skillet. Note: Using uncooked mix-ins, especially vegetables, releases too much moisture into the mix.

In a large bowl, whisk together the eggs, half and half, salt, pepper, and cheese or herbs, if using.

Pour the egg mixture into the skillet with the mix-ins.

Cook over medium heat for a few minutes until the egg mixture begins to set around the edges.

Transfer the pan into the pre-heated oven and bake for about 10 minutes, until the middle is set. To test, shake the pan gently to see if the middle jiggles. If it does, continue to cook.

Allow the frittata to cool and rest slightly (5-7 minutes), then carefully remove it from the pan, slice and serve.

Ten Fall Flavor Combinations:

Mushrooms, caramelized onions, gruyere, thyme
Butternut squash, kale, sausage, goat cheese
Potato, leeks, fontina, rosemary
Sweet potato, spinach, gruyere, sage
Pumpkin, gouda, cinnamon
Zucchini, goat cheese, dill
Bacon, apple, cheddar, nutmeg
Spinach, artichokes, feta, chives
Smoked salmon, capers, cherry tomatoes, red onion, dill
Leftover spaghetti, pancetta, parmesan
Bonus idea: Leftover pizza (chopped into bite-sized pieces), diced pepperoni, mozzarella.



MOVING UP:

Florida to Connecticut for Seasons, Schools and Safety

By ELLIE DOYLE / Illustrated by SHANNON SEITZ

I always knew I was close to Connecticut as a kid when I'd press my hand to the car window and feel the glass turn cold. That chill was the most exciting feeling in the world. Every year, we would leave Florida to venture up to Cheshire in Connecticut for Christmas—and those trips hold my happiest childhood memories.

Let's be honest: Christmas doesn't really feel like Christmas when

it's 90 degrees out. Even as a kid, I knew that one day, when I had a family of my own, I wanted them to grow up with that same magic: four seasons, snowy Christmases, and a real Halloween where you trick-or-treat through your neighborhoods under the changing fall leaves.

Thankfully, I married a man from Buffalo, N.Y., who not only shared my love for pizza but loved the cold and craved the same things for our family. So, we packed our bags,

traded hurricane days for snow days and started on our biggest adventure yet.

Coming from a family of educators, schools have always been important to me. With the constant changes in Florida's system and massive budget cuts, we knew we wanted New England schools, and specifically Connecticut.

In October 2024, my husband and I took a kid-free trip to scope out neighborhoods. That's when



we fell in love with West Hartford and all its quintessential New England charm: white picket fences, Victorian houses, kids running from yard to yard, people walking their dogs, live music downtown, farmers markets, and mom-and-pop shops on every corner.

And the diversity? It surprised me in the best way. Within a few miles, you can find a European market, an Indian market and the biggest Asian supermarket I'd ever seen. Don't even get me started on the food. Forget the freshman 15! I was gearing up for the "Connecticut 15." Every cuisine you can think of, with pizza that makes NYC jealous.

The schools sealed the deal. West Hartford has two free magnet schools with resources that blew us away: fully stocked libraries, science and art labs, music programs, and so much more.

Touring one of them made me want to re-enroll myself just for fun. With our eldest starting kindergarten, we knew we had to make the move that summer.

We found an 1892 house we loved—our kids call it the "UP house"—loaded up three kids and two dogs, and road-tripped north. Connecticut summers hit us with a calendar full of more events than we could possibly attend—five to ten every weekend, most of them free. And while yes, the taxes are higher, you can actually see where the money goes: free concerts in the park, massive library festivals, museums with Van Goghs and dinosaur fossils, and the list goes on. More than half of what we've done here hasn't cost us a dime.

We were also drawn to the safety. In Florida, owning a gun felt like a rite of passage. Here, it feels

more like the exception than the rule. There's more diversity and acceptance. There is a sense that people are free to live, love and dress however they want without fear. I'm excited to raise my kids in a place that not only accepts differences, but celebrates them. And that feeling as a kid I got to experience once a year driving north? My kids get that every single day. And that's all I ever wanted. ■

Ellie Doyle is a Florida transplant turned Connecticut blogger, showcasing her journey and the best parts of Connecticut through her growing Reheated Coffee Club community.

Shannon Seitz was raised in Ohio before moving to Florida and loved growing up with the seasons in the north.

IN THE SPIRIT

AUTISM FAMILIES CONNECTICUT
STEPS UP FOR THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

Building a Nonprofit From the Ground Up

By MORGAN SHAYE

Young adult friends Dimitri and Max enjoy a paint party with Autism Families CONNECTicut's Young Adult Hangout in 2024. The program is held the first Friday of the month.



WFSB television host Renee DiNino, Jackie Procyk and longtime board member Catherine Bailey.

The opportunity to be part of a team and community, build friendships, and have a chance to live a full and happy life is what Autism Families CONNECTicut (AFC) strives to provide to those aged 5-35 with autism, says co-founder Jackie Procyk.

When Procyk's son, Jack, was diagnosed with autism in 2006, she and her mother, Leah Moon, jumped at every opportunity to learn more about autism. "My husband and I started attending conferences and medical programs and learning everything we could about autism. And then that led me to find some autism organizations that were running programs for children with autism."

"One day Jackie called me in tears," Moon recalls about a turning point. "They had brought Jack to a local program and saw just how much he needed it. Jackie had also been talking with other parents who felt the same way." It quickly became clear to both Moon and Procyk that there were few recreational programs available for children with autism in Connecticut.

Following this realization, the mother-daughter duo put their heads together, combining Procyk's social work background and Moon's corporate community affairs and nonprofit background to figure out what they could do.

"We started with a very small fundraiser and just two programs in October



Supporters including Lynn Ricci, Marjorie Sussman (past AFC board president) and Steven Sussman bidding at A Sparkling Celebration Gala, held at the Simsbury Inn in 2019.



Program Manager Terri Larson and a college volunteer engage two children at Playing on the Spectrum.



Tommy and Xander create towers of Duplo in a session of Leisure Explorers in 2024. Programs are held at Prism Academy in Berlin.

and November of 2010, and then grew from there,” says Moon. What started as programming that served ages 5-12 quickly transformed into programming that now serves up to age 35.

INCLUSIVE PROGRAMMING

The youngest age group AFC serves is ages 3-11 with their Playing on the Spectrum program on Sundays in the fall and winter months. This program encourages kids to foster skills such as sports and music.

Additionally, monthly programs meet on Fridays for teens (ages 13-18) and young adults (ages 19-35). Young adults take part in outings such as a bowling night or a meetup at a restaurant. The teens stay in-house at their home base at the Prism Academy in Berlin, Conn., where they will do activities such as board games, paint nights and cooking.

It’s important to Procyk and Moon that these programs are high quality and that those in the program have an input into the activities that they do. “The clinicians have a group meeting at the beginning of the year with the teens and young adults. They ask the participants, ‘What do you want to do? This is your program.’ And then they plan it out for the year. I think that’s important because we try to give our participants a voice in their programming,” adds Procyk.

Terri Larson, AFC’s program manager, says that they are always looking to expand programs to serve a wider range of age groups. “In the past couple of years, we added an additional group on Sunday mornings. We have groups for 4-7-year-olds, 8-11-year-olds and then 12-16-year-olds. We also have another program that’s called Leisure Explorers for ages 12 to 18, where they can check things out and figure out what they like, and then be able to do those things in the community.”

AFC sees the strong friendships and connections built throughout their current programming that serves up to age 35. They are exploring the opportunity to expand their programming to help continue nurturing these connections. “One thing that we’re exploring is trying to figure out how to add an additional young adult program that serves the 35 and above age group. We are also possibly putting together a program that serves older teens and young adults, like a drop-in once a month.”

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Billy Matthews: Manager (left), Christopher O'Flaherty, Owner (right)

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Moon reiterates the importance of providing the kids with the best clinicians who aim to build one-on-one relationships. “Our trained clinicians are experienced in the field of autism and therapeutic recreation and can support their child’s individual needs.”

Even during the hardships presented during the COVID pandemic, Moon says AFC was committed to supporting their kids to the fullest. “During COVID, our clinicians were so amazing that they took the programs virtual; kids were able to sit home and pull out an electronic device. The interaction was amazing. We are truly devoted to serving individuals on the autism spectrum and taking care of them as best we can.”

No matter which programs these kids are in, Procyk restates how their values have always been the same. “Our mission has remained the same from the beginning: providing recreational programming. Our core values focus on belonging, increasing confidence, personal growth, creativity and playfulness; we have never strayed from that mission.”

“Our programs give those with autism the opportunity to establish friendships and relationships like other teens and young adults do on a Friday evening. That’s really one of the goals that we have for the program so that people can make those connections and have lifelong friendships because of their connections at our programs,” adds Larson.

BUILDING COMMUNITY AMONGST PARENTS

While the focus is on supporting individuals on the spectrum, the organization also aims to create a space for families to connect. “It was always our goal that when the children were in the gym with their program, parents were meeting with their peers, with other parents, sharing information,” says Moon.

Procyk adds that one of the things



Autism Families CT co-founders Leah Moon and Jackie Procyk at the opening of their first program and office space in 2015 in Newington.

that was comforting to her after her son Jack’s diagnosis with autism was having that community support from people who understand what you are going through. “You just feel this level of comfort—like I’ve known these people for 15 years and we’ve been through it all together,” she says about the community of parents at AFC.

THE VALUE OF COMMUNITY SUPPORT

Additionally, Autism Families CONNECTict is thankful for the support of the nearby community, including volunteers and donors. Procyk says that this time in our country brings a lot of uncertainty that directly affects nonprofits. “Families are very stressed right now, not understanding the financial implications of the plan for national and state funding, which is threatening the health and wellness of autistic individuals. Families rely on this funding for caregiver support or healthcare.”

AFC primarily relies on fundraising and grants to help support their programming so that they can ensure it continues to be low cost and high quality. “The money goes to the programs, to the people who plan

and run the programs, and then to make sure that we can have as many programs as possible,” explains Moon.

In the summer of 2025, the organization raised money and awareness at its annual golf tournament, which took place on June 30 at the Hartford Golf Club. In addition to an auction, they had a variety of speakers, including those who are on the spectrum, and NBC Connecticut’s Bob Maxon as the emcee for the night.

AFC is especially excited to celebrate their next event, which is the upcoming 15th Anniversary Gala. The gala, called A Night of Friendsgiving, will be held November 6 at the Pond House in West Hartford, Conn.

The community is encouraged to step up and volunteer at AFC’s events, including the 2026 Annual Golf Tournament and the upcoming gala. “It’s important for the community to be involved and engaged. We need volunteers for our programs to be successful. We are looking for volunteers who are passionate and want to learn about autism and the different challenges that the diagnosis presents,” Larson concludes.

Connect to volunteer or donate at autismfamiliesct.org. 



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The Cottage Feels Like Home: Assisted Living and Memory Care Community Cultivates Quiet Country Living

By Steven Blackburn

Families and their loved ones living at The Cottage at Litchfield Hills feel at home and welcome. It's not just because The Cottage is now independently family-owned or because the assisted living and memory care community sits nestled up against the majestic trees of Topsmead State Forest in Northwest Connecticut. Executive Director Monica Morgan, who came to The Cottage after decades in the hospitality industry, makes it her mission to offer a family environment and "quiet country comfort."

Morgan encourages families to contact her at any time, even sending texts at night. This form of open communication goes both ways. "If I'm walking around the community and I see somebody's mom who I know doesn't participate much but I see them having fun, I'm going to send a picture to that family member," she says. "I want to give them peace of mind."

Speaking of the family atmosphere, Morgan talks about other fun activities they do. "It's currently National Assisted Living Week, so we're doing a slideshow of baby pictures of the directors and our residents, where we



have to guess which baby picture is whose. Another day we are having 'Are You Smarter Than a Director?'; we'll have residents and directors compete answering trivia questions."

QUIET COUNTRY LIVING

Another part of what makes The Cottage unique is its setting and atmosphere. The community itself feels like an old New England home, a quality reflected in its exterior charm and the warmth inside. One of the first spaces families see when they enter is the living room, often filled with residents gathered around the fireplace, chatting with visitors or joining in on group activities.

What sets this space apart is also the way it's treated; the living room belongs to the residents. Newspapers are welcome on the coffee table, fresh



flowers from a loved one can be left for everyone to enjoy and residents are encouraged to linger as long as they like. "We look at it as we are guests in their home," Morgan says. "We don't want it to feel like a hotel or a nursing home—we want it to feel like home."

FAMILY OWNED, BOUTIQUE STRUCTURE

In addition to Morgan's leadership and a focus on comfort, The Cottage sustains its welcoming atmosphere with a boutique approach to how The Cottage is run and independent, family-run management after years of corporate ownership.

The smaller leadership team encourages more collaboration among directors and interaction with the residents. The Cottage also does not



rely on agency employees to fill open shifts. “We have aides that have worked here since The Cottage opened, some for over 20 years,” Morgan explains. “When you work here, you see the same residents every day. You know their quirks, you know what they like for dinner, which outfit is their favorite, even their favorite show on TV.”

That continuity with staff and even per diem employees is intentional. It creates a higher level of trust for families and a more personalized environment for residents. “Families want to know the person caring for their mom or dad actually knows them. They want to see the same faces.”

FACILITATING INDEPENDENCE—WHILE PROVIDING HELP AND CARE WHEN NEEDED

The Cottage pairs its home-like setting with the best in modern amenities and care. Residents enjoy a full activity schedule, fine dining, 24/7 access to caregivers through an on-call system and medication management overseen by licensed nurses.

At The Cottage, assisted living is built on the idea of balance: providing

help with daily life while encouraging residents to remain as independent as possible. They can focus on socializing, enjoying activities and living life with the right level of care always available when they need it. This includes weekly light housekeeping, laundry services and access to equipment like a Hoyer lift. For those transitioning to hospice care, families can bring in additional medical equipment so residents can remain in their home at The Cottage.

“We’re here to help residents with daily living—whether that’s choosing an outfit, brushing their teeth or joining a trivia game—but we’re not here to take over,” says Morgan. “We want them to feel like they’re still living their life, just with the help they need.”

For those who require more

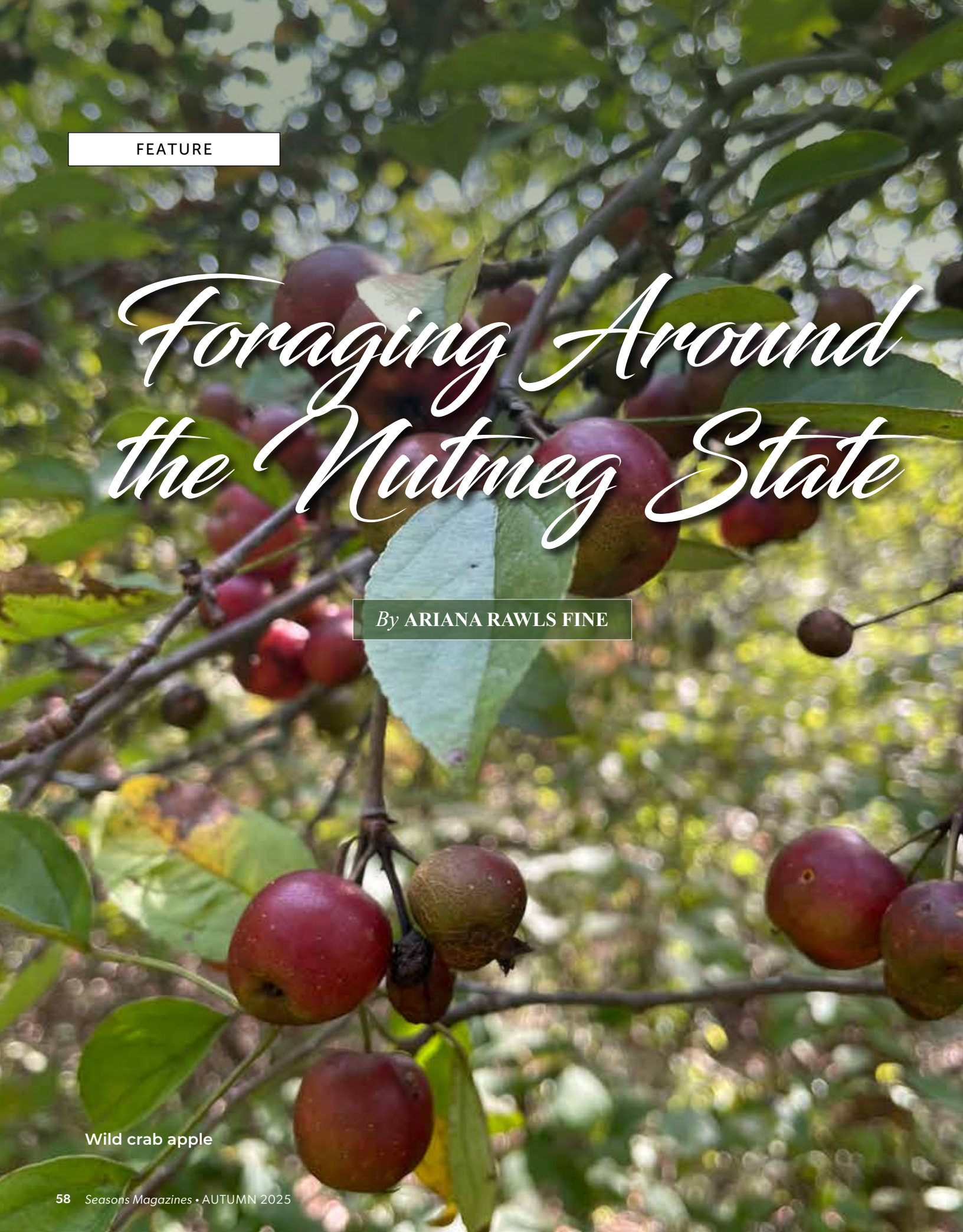
specialized support, The Cottage’s Memory Care neighborhood provides added safeguards and tailored programs but retains the assisted living community’s warm environment.

For example, the Memory Care neighborhood features the same menus but with a more colorful Fiestaware to help residents visualize their options. A similar gas fireplace sits in the main living area for enhanced ambiance but the room was renovated to feel more open and not confined. The outdoor patios are more secure for added safety.

“These residents are like family, and I want their families to feel that same sense of comfort and belonging every time they walk through our doors,” concludes Morgan.



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FEATURE

Foraging Around the Nutmeg State

By ARIANA RAWLS FINE

Wild crab apple

Foraging is an endeavor as old as time for humans. Searching and collecting food sources in the wild is what sustained us alongside our hunting. Despite the plentiful “hunting” we now do in our local supermarket aisles and farmers’ markets, people have continued to forage for the enjoyment of nature, nutrition and flavors of wild food, and the excitement of the search. The purposeful time spent outdoors in nature with family and friends provides physical, mental and emotional advantages in addition to the obvious food benefits.

There is quite a variety to forage in Connecticut, especially in the fall. You can find and harvest nuts, berries, mushrooms, trees and more. Although it is hard to find a significant amount of food, the high-nutrient and low-calorie value of the foraged food can add interesting flavors to meals, says Joe Ross (aka “Joe Forager”). The 20-year foraging veteran is the creator of EatThePlanet.org, which delves into learning plant and mushroom identification skills in order to safely forage. You can potentially make a meal out of some items, such as chicken of the woods.

GOING NUTS

Harvested nuts are a treat that require harvesting, breaking open and cleaning—and sometimes cooking. Even if you gather a good stash, it will still be a small amount, Ross cautions. The biggest exception is acorns, but it takes a cold-water processing method to get the tannins out. The acorns need to be deshelled, rid of tannins and fully dried. Once tannins are removed, you do have a significant amount of it to make into flour by crushing the acorns and storing it well.

Ross is a fan of hickory nuts in prime season with

the taste of its nuts and bark leaning toward a maple syrup flavor. The nuts of the Shagbark hickory, which is native to the New England area, ripen in October and November.

There are other wild trees that you can forage in the woods. Butternut and black walnut are native to the area. Kousa dogwood’s berries ripen in August and have a pumpkin/mango taste but stay away from the native flowering dogwood.

With hazelnuts, there are a lot of lookalikes—alder, witch hazel and others based on leaf shape—so you need to know what you are looking. “Once you can identify hazelnut, you are good,” Ross explains. “Just smash the shell and eat! It is also a good one to plant in your backyard.”

Some private properties have large, old chestnut trees. “If you can find them on your property, chestnuts take minimal processing,” Ross states. “Make sure to get the spikes off the shells though. Also, you don’t want to mix up chestnuts with toxic horse chestnuts.”

FINDING THE FUNGI

In early October, it is peak mushroom time with local finds. Lion’s mane mushrooms, which resemble a lion’s mane, are quite large, white and shaggy. Maitake mushrooms are nicknamed “hen of the woods” because they look like a hen sitting down. An oyster mushroom also resembles its namesake and has

a slippery texture like oysters. As you can probably guess, chicken of the woods is described as having a similar taste and texture to chicken.

For mushroom identification, it can be more complicated. It is important to know what trees it is

growing next to; the time of year to harvest; its color and if it changes color; whether it has pores, gills or neither; and if it has a stem. At the end of all of that identification, there are three dozen common types of choice-edible mushroom species that are edible and taste good, says Amy Demers. She is the founder of Connecticut Foraging Club, which leads monthly foraging walks and classes throughout the state.

“There are around 10,000 known mushroom species



Chicken of the woods



Honey mushrooms



Maitake or hen of the woods

in the U.S.,” explains Demers. “The majority are inedible or not something you would want to eat. Not toxic but not tasty. The general breakdown is 4% are choice-edible ones, 20% are edible but tasteless, 20% are toxic with gastrointestinal upset, and 1% are deadly. Around 50% are inedible but not toxic. Chaga, reishi—bitter and tough but can make a tea— and turkey tail are examples of non-edible but medicinal mushrooms.”

FALL FORAGING



Garlic mustard

Some of Demers’ favorites to harvest in the fall are field garlic, which is an invasive onion with hollow leaves and a garlic smell, and garlic mustard greens. The latter can be found in dappled sunlight on forest edges or in less dense forests. “Wild grapes ripen in the fall with the most common being fox grape, which tastes like

concord grapes. It is so good for you. The skins are anti-inflammatory and anti-aging,” she says. “The fruit of the autumn olives has an astringent, tart taste. You can make fruit leathers from them or add to smoothies. The seeds are high in omega-3s.”

Fruits such as crabapples, blackberries and blueberries are easier to identify. Hawthorne berries, which grow on trees, have softer berries that can taste like apples, Demers states. It is harder to find persimmons, which usually ripen in early winter.

As for flowers, Demers says identifying flowers’ unique characteristics when they bloom is the easiest time to identify when you are harvesting the plant later in the year. You may not be able to identify it well in March, but you can in May. You can then return to the same place next year



Autumn olive



Giant puffball

to forage it. For instance, wild violet (purple flowers) and garlic mustard (white flowers) look similar and are both edible. In early spring, the foliage can be mistaken for each other. Once they produce flowers, they are unique.

Autumn is also a good time to harvest grapes/autumn olives. Late summer through early winter is a time to pick root vegetables, which produce one vegetable per plant, and tubers, a crop with multiple “children” per plant. Some tubers are better when cultivated rather than wild. Demers indicates that wild parsnips aren’t as good and wild sunchokes are smaller. You can forage for burdock roots but she points out that it is hard to dig up the wild roots.

BEST PRACTICES: SAFE AND SUSTAINABLE

There are a lot of great edibles and plants but there are toxic ones as well. Be 100% positive on identification by using three sources, such as an identification book, video and/or app. Know what the lookalikes look like. The most valuable option is taking an in-person class to scent, feel and see the smells, texture and growing habitat. One thing to definitely not eat are pokeberries as the entire plant is poisonous, Ross states. Although ingesting a couple berries is not likely to cause symptoms, according to the National Capital Poison Center, eating more may cause symptoms



such as gastrointestinal pain, nausea/vomiting, diarrhea, low blood pressure and more.

Demer offers words of caution. There are a lot of invasive plants that people learn about that they think would be a good idea to plant in their gardens. But they can become prolific quickly, such as mugwort, which can be found in basically any wooded area. Planting native plants is ideal for foraging on your own property, she recommends.

Another important aspect to be aware of, especially with rare and native plants, is sustainability, explains Demers. In most public places, it is not legal to pick native plants. Picking up an apple or identified berry is fine as you are picking the fruit, not the plant. However, if you are pulling up most or all of the plant, you can decimate the population. For novice foragers, don't get overzealous and pick everything. Leave some or most to continue coming back year after year, especially with native plants. It is also good to harvest where there is an abundance of that plant.

Happy foraging this fall! 🍄

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The Gloaming

By **MATTHEW DICKS** / Illustrated By **SEAN WANG**

I shouldn't be this excited, but I am. It's just a preseason game—a meaningless exhibition of third and fourth-string players trying to make the roster. Even though I'm required as a season ticket holder to purchase these trash tickets, I almost never attend these games.

I love the Patriots, and I love watching them play football. I love them almost as much as I love my wife and kids because even when they lose, they don't ask me to empty the dishwasher or drive them to their friend's house. But watching a game where the score doesn't matter is like playing poker for something other than money. What's the point?

But tonight is different, because tonight, I have my daughter, Clara, alongside me. Clara isn't much of a sports fan. She mostly reads and eats cheese, but this is different. This is

her first Patriots football game. One of what will most assuredly be many. I suspect that she'll never be equipped for a December game, when temperatures can drop below zero, the wind can exceed 198 miles per hour, and even I—a diehard fan who believes that attending a game live is the only way to go when possible—question my life choices.

The coldest game I ever attended was the Divisional Playoff game against the Tennessee Titans on January 10, 2004. The temperature at kickoff was 4° F (with the wind chill, it felt like -10°). It was so cold that the hot dogs would freeze from the time they left the grill to the time they were placed in the bun. When my friend spilled beer on the table, it froze instantly.

The Patriots won 17-14 that night, but I still haven't fully thawed out more than two decades later.

I also don't drink, which I know doesn't help. People with bellies full of beer seem immune to weather that could kill a moose.

But tonight, it's a warm August night. Perfect for Clara. And she won't be attending a regular-season game for some time. Even though September and October games are often delightful weather-wise, this is NFL football.

The violence on the field pales in comparison to the atrocities taking place in the stands: endless strings of foul-mouthed diatribes directed at opposing players, referees and anyone foolish enough to come to this hallowed ground wearing anything but a Patriots jersey. Some are worse than others, of course. Arizona fans, for example, are dumb for liking that team, so it's hard to hate them. Their team has barely left a mark on the NFL landscape. We feel pity more than anything else.

Other teams, like the Steelers and the Bills, are easier to despise. They have stood in the way of the Patriots' success on several occasions. Their fans tend to be respectful, but I still hate them.

Even sheep-like fans, like those of the Green Bay Packers, can be annoying when they arrive in their green and yellow jerseys. My seatmate, Shep, once berated two Packers fans under the age of ten for daring to attend a game in our stadium. It was me—not their parents—who had to tell him to stop. Their parents looked terrified of my friend, who doesn't look threatening in the least.

Then there are Jets and Ravens fans, who, in addition to rooting for awful teams, are also terrible people in their own right: loud, obnoxious, aggressive and moronic.

I wouldn't want Clara to see her father threatening violence upon any of those monsters. Add to all of this the intoxicated fans, the occasional fisticuffs and this isn't a place for a child.

Happily, pre-season games are free of all of this. Opposing fans rarely attend, and even when they do, the outcome of the game is meaningless.

As Clara and I ascend the ramps to our seats in section 333, I tell her about some of the adventures I've had in this stadium over the past 25 years I've been a season ticket holder. The time a man brought \$400 in brand new \$1 bills and made it rain money each time the Patriots scored a touchdown. The time I watched a small, young woman punch an enormous man in the face after he spilled beer on her head. (The man went down like a sack of potatoes.) The time three men hugged me simultaneously after the Patriots took the opening kickoff for a touchdown. (In the words of Shep, I "disappeared in a mass of humanity.") I nearly suffocated.

She smiles and nods. She seems

nervous. The closer we get to the top, the more nervous she looks. Excitement, I think. It's definitely excitement. When we finally reach the upper level, we walk below the stands, passing vendors shouting about pretzels, hot dogs and the names of cheap beer.

Then she'll emerge into the bowl of the stadium, and for the first time, she sees the glory of Gillette Field with its lighthouse, walkways, and championship banners. It never stops being breathtaking. Except when I look to Clara, I see panic. Something is wrong. I ignore it. She'll be fine. I ask her to sit.

"Look at Tom Brady," I say. "He's a superhero."

She's not crying but wants to. She's holding back tears. "Can we go?" she asks.

"Go?"

We just drove two hours to get here. We spent another 45 minutes making our way to our seats. The Patriots have run exactly one play. Tom Brady has completed one pass...and we're going to leave?

"It's scary," she says. "So high and so loud."

I want to tell my daughter to suck it up, buttercup. I want to tell her to love this game as much as I do. I can't understand why she doesn't. But tears are forming in the corners of her eyes, so I tell her to take a photo with me before we leave.

She nods vigorously. The word "leave" very much appeals to her.

It's the most shameful photo I've ever taken. Clara is smiling and crying simultaneously. Trying to satisfy her father's stupid request. Doing everything she can to leave.

I look at the photo on my phone. I see myself and her. I see what I've done to her and become a father again. Not an NFL idiot.

We leave.

I'll learn three years later that Clara has autism. In addition to a paralyzing fear of heights, she also

has difficulty with loud sounds. They all hit her at once, and she can't distinguish between them. An NFL stadium is one of the worst possible places for her.

As we exit the stadium and cross the empty road toward the parking lot, we enter the gloaming. The sun is on the horizon, and we watch the light transform from yellow to orange to green. Can you believe it? Green!

"Look, Clara," I say. "It's the gloaming."

Clara smiles. "I love the gloaming, Daddy."

I try to hold this moment. Try to forget the one before it. Hope Clara will.

It's her last Patriots game, probably of her life. My dreams are shattered. At least until Charlie, my son, is old enough to try again.

Clara will glance at the TV when the game is on, but she doesn't care. She doesn't like football. She doesn't get excited when large men collide.

But we look for the gloaming all the time. We even manage to catch it sometimes.

It's not nearly as magnificent as a Patriots victory. It's not even close. Just boring nature stuff. The Earth's atmosphere acting like a prism, bending and separating the sunlight into its different colors. Just some green and orange light. But it ain't half bad. ■

Matthew Dicks is an elementary school teacher, bestselling novelist and a record 55-time Moth Story SLAM champion. His latest books are Twenty-one Truths About Love and The Other Mother.

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