SUMMER 2026: Connecticut Summer State of Mind | We Love Corn! | European Adventures | Summer Arts Preview

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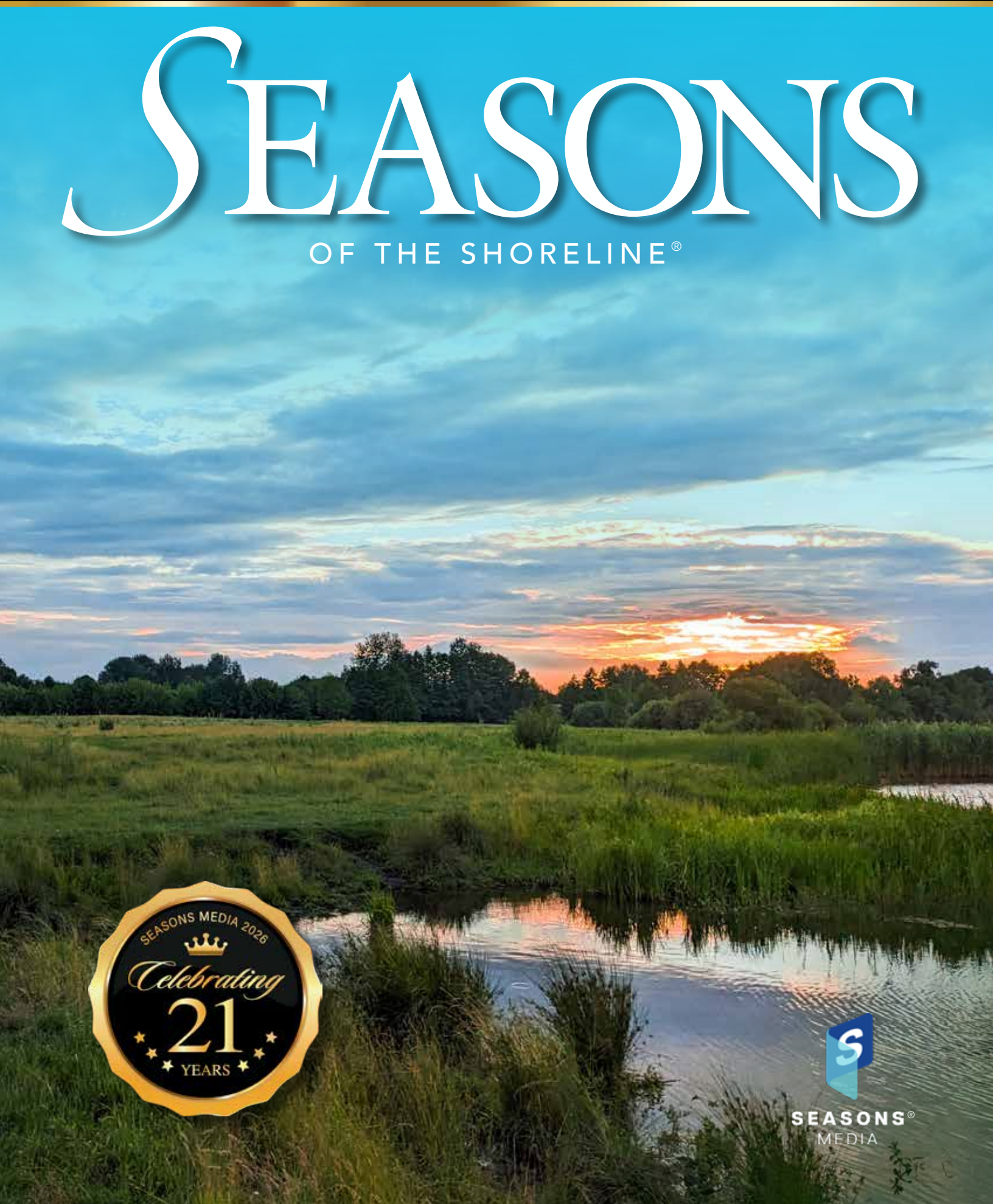

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Seasons' Greetings

Ariana Rawls Fine

Summer State of Mind

Yes, it's a cliché, but it is one for a good reason. There really is such a thing as a summer state of mind. One where we "allow" ourselves to sit on the beach and meditatively watch the summer sunsets. Where we meander the day away hiking to beautiful views and waterfalls, enjoy the water wherever we are, and travel locally and beyond. One where we relish (pun intended of course) time at BBQs with friends and family over hot dogs, hamburgers, salads and "fixins." Don't forget to check our Delicious recipes for summer corn as you plan picnics and get-togethers.

To get in the state of mind, Vanessa Wojtusiak tells the tale of summer meandering around Connecticut while Kim Lucey focuses on being healthy and connected. If you want to get out, Frank Rizzo spotlights some of the many arts and entertainment events in Connecticut. Set to travel this summer? Before going, read Kerri-Lee Mayland's At Home article on how to include smaller sentimental pieces of vacation remembrances in your home décor. Planning travel for the fall and/or winter? Anastasia Mills Healy reveals several less-crowded, locally vibrant European options: Montenegro for skiing, Riga with its big Christmas market and tourist attractions, Gibraltar with warm(er) weather and holiday traditions, and Scotland's Glenapp Castle with outdoor activities (fishing, clay pigeons, falconry and more).

Like so many of us, Dennis House reminisces about the summer jobs he held during his teenage and young adult years and how they affected and helped him. If you worked at a golf course, you might have insight into another of our articles from Randy Young about what's in the water hazards and where the errant golf balls go. And, last but definitely not least, Matthew Dicks made me literally laugh out loud (one might say guffaw) with his take on the intrusive ice cream truck in Final Thoughts.

Here's to a summer of great adventures, connections, sunsets and sunrises, outdoor fun, and watermelon aplenty.

Ariana

Ariana Rawls Fine
Editor
Seasons Magazines

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– JIM TULLY

SEASONS *Magazines*®

Summer 2026

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"LIVE IN THE SUNSHINE. SWIM IN THE SEA. DRINK IN THE WILD AIR."

–Ralph Waldo Emerson

Full Circle: How Dr. Jeffrey Brown Turned a Summer Mentorship into a Career of Service

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

For Jeffrey Brown, M.D., a career in medicine didn't begin in a classroom or a hospital. It started with a summer opportunity that would quietly shape the course of his life. Growing up in West Hartford and attending Conard High School, Dr. Brown was a very active kid. "I grew up playing sports for fun in my neighborhood," he says. "Soccer and tennis were my main interests, but we were always outside playing something. Sometimes that meant moving hockey goals so cars could get by or pick up football games. Other times, it meant golf on the nearby Rockledge Golf Club. I was so lucky to live near such a great public course." A high school biology teacher encouraged him to apply for a summer internship with the American Heart Association at Saint Francis Hospital. That decision would prove pivotal.

THE MENTOR WHO CHANGED EVERYTHING

That summer, Dr. Brown worked in the cardiology department at Saint Francis Hospital alongside Bernie Clark, M.D., who served as associate chief of cardiology and chair of the Department of Medicine. It was his first real exposure to medicine. It left a lasting impression. "He was so fun, positive and smart. He was the first physician mentor I ever had," explains Dr. Brown. "That's what really propelled my interest into medicine as a possibility."

More than anything, Dr. Brown remembers how Dr. Clark connected with patients. "I saw the enjoyment a physician can have getting to know their patients and interacting with them in a down-to-earth way," Dr. Brown says. That experience changed how he saw the profession. "His everyday interactions and reactions to people, how enjoyable and positive it can be, that really stuck with me. It showed me that medicine can be really fun and impactful."

THE PATH TO MEDICINE

After high school, Dr. Brown was accepted into an eight-year combined undergraduate and medical program at Brown University. That program encouraged students to explore undergraduate majors outside of traditional science tracks; he chose to study urban studies. He went on to complete his residency in family medicine at the University of Rochester, where he served as chief resident.

He later returned to Connecticut for a sports medicine fellowship at the University of Connecticut, based at the Family Medicine Center at Asylum Hill, a medical office that is part of Saint Francis. During fellowship training, he found himself once again working alongside Dr. Clark, testing patients for cardiovascular fitness and health.

"The way I see it, coming back to Saint Francis is full circle," Dr. Brown states. Today, he serves as director of primary care sports medicine for Trinity Health Of New England Orthopedics at Saint Francis, where his role is divided between clinical care, program leadership and teaching. About a third of his time is spent seeing patients with sports and musculoskeletal injuries. Another third is focused on running sports medicine programs. The rest is dedicated to his role as associate fellowship director.

"It's a wonderful mix of three things that are really fun to do. It's perfect for me personally and what I really like to do," he continues. That variety is what keeps Dr. Brown engaged. "It uses all parts of your brain. Creativity, policy work,

Dr Jeffrey R. Brown is director of primary care sports medicine for Trinity Health Of New England Orthopedics at Saint Francis.

teaching, helping medical students, residents and fellows, and then helping people in your own office is stimulating, fun and never boring."

CARRYING ON A LEGACY OF MENTORSHIP

Mentorship remains central to Dr. Brown's work, just as it was for Dr. Clark until his retirement three years ago. "He's the epitome of a mentor. He's always mentored people in medicine. It's part of his DNA," Dr. Brown adds.

Now, he is continuing that legacy. Since 2000, the sports medicine fellowship has worked with Hartford Public Schools to make sports medicine care accessible to student athletes. "We bring sports medicine to them. This is a population that often has difficulty getting access to sports medicine or really any medical appointment."

Dr. Brown manages a team of fellows who travel each week to up to five high schools in Hartford to serve as team physicians. The fellows evaluate injuries and help guide care, working alongside athletic trainers and school nurses. "Most athletes can be managed right there at the school," Dr. Brown states. "And for those who need more, we help connect them to care and arrange what they need."

The program has grown into a long-standing partnership and has expanded to include the Capitol Region Education Council (CREC) magnet schools. They didn't have an athletic trainer program until Dr. Brown began working with them five years ago. "This way we're able to bring new services to their athletes in a very fast way," continues Dr. Brown. "We've developed a concussion program, documentation procedures and work on key illness prevention, as well as emergency access planning for events. It's been a wonderful partnership to bring services to underserved schools and athletes, and also to provide really great experiences for our fellows."

HELPING ATHLETES GET BACK IN THE GAME

Dr. Brown's impact extends far beyond the hospital through his passion for sports medicine and helping people return to the activities they love. "I find it really fun to work with people who are motivated to get back to their normal level of activity," he says. In addition to his work with high school athletes, Dr. Brown is a team physician for Central Connecticut State University athletic department, and the lead team physician for the Hartford Athletic soccer team, which is part of the United Soccer League (USL).

"Many of the USL players are working to try to move up to Major League Soccer," adds Dr. Brown, "and others are former MLS players who are just trying to play the game they love for as long as they possibly can." When these players take to the pitch at Trinity Health Stadium, Trinity Health Of New England physicians are on the sidelines. "These athletes are motivated to perform at the highest level they can. And if they get hurt, they're very active in their treatment plan. You're guiding them to get back in the fastest and safest way." For Dr. Brown, that process is what makes the work so rewarding. "It's not stressful. It's enjoyable to do it," he says. "You're helping people do what they love."

Dr. Brown also leads the Hartford Marathon Foundation's League of Injured Runners. A team of sports medicine specialists and orthopedic surgeons from Trinity Health Of New England Orthopedics help get runners through the mental anguish and physical challenges of injury, offering best practices for injury prevention and recovery.

A CAREER ROOTED IN COMMUNITY

Now living in Glastonbury, Dr. Brown remains deeply connected to the Connecticut community that helped shape him. "I wanted my work to be impactful, to have meaning for people, to help them and to also be practical," he says. He works closely with fellows, residents and students, guiding them not only in clinical care but in how to connect with patients. "People can ask me anything and I'll know the basics to get them on the right path to help the situation."

Looking back, he traces everything to that first summer at Saint Francis and his first mentor. "Dr. Clark was a really personable physician. He engendered trust and treated people with confidence and skill in a really fun way, while getting work done at a very high level." And in many ways, Dr. Brown has become exactly what first inspired him. "Dr. Clark's position in cardiology was similar to what I do now in sports medicine," he concludes. "Mentoring and teaching is inspiring and fun."

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. Connect on Instagram @kimlucey.

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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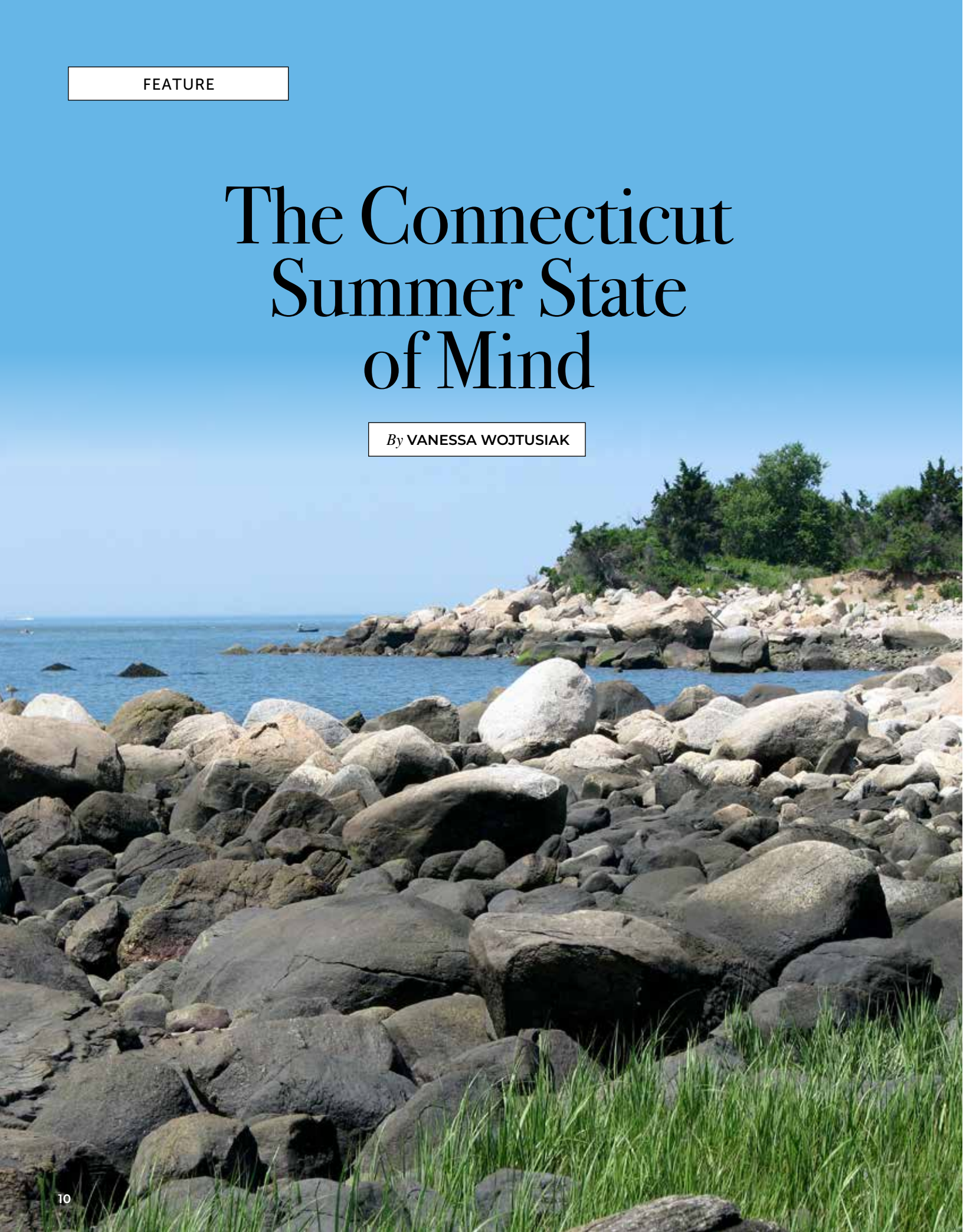
FEATURE

The Connecticut Summer State of Mind

By VANESSA WOJTUSIAK



There's a certain kind of New England summer that belongs entirely to Connecticut. A season shaped by a state with so much to offer, where the landscape, pace and feeling can shift entirely depending on which road you take — 84, 91, 95, 9, 8, 7, 2 — each one a different way into summer and a different way of experiencing the state itself.

It begins early, before the hazy heat settles in for the day. Before beach chairs dot the shoreline and before the first iced coffees are carried through sleepy downtowns. It begins in the quiet blue light of morning along the coast, when the tide is low, the gulls are loud and the state feels like quintessential New England nostalgia, yet entirely its own.

At Hammonasset Beach State Park, the morning arrives gently. Walkers and runners trace the shoreline while cyclists cruise past salt marshes still glowing with dew. The Long Island Sound stretches calm and glistens like glitter dances, interrupted only by paddleboards and fishing boats drifting offshore. A few towns east, Rocky Neck State Park moves to the same rhythm, where families claim beach blankets before noon and the scent of sunscreen mingles with sea air and fried seafood from nearby shacks.

SUMMER ON CONNECTICUT'S SHORELINE IS NEVER RUSHED. THAT IS PART OF ITS CHARM.

In places like Madison, mornings are built around slow rituals: browsing local bookstores, sipping iced coffee on the green and lingering on breakfast patios a little longer than planned. Further east in Mystic, sailboats glide through the harbor as visitors wander past drawbridges, oyster bars and ice cream shops. The town carries the unmistakable allure of coastal New England cool: timeless, relaxed and quietly vibrant.

Phones come out almost instinctively throughout the day: sunrise photos beside the water, lobster rolls on shaded patios, windswept laughing selfies and golden-hour snapshots framed against boats in the harbor. Connecticut summers seem designed for memory-making, the kind people feel compelled to document and share before the moment slips away.

As midday arrives, the energy shifts toward New Haven, where summer unfolds with its own pulse. Visitors wander through educational hubs like the Yale Peabody Museum, galleries, bookstores and cafés tucked between ivy-covered architecture and historic streets before spilling onto restaurant patios surrounding the Green. By evening, the city shifts effortlessly into rooftop dinners, outdoor festivals and late-night pizza beneath glowing streetlights.

BUT CONNECTICUT SUMMER IS NOT JUST FOUND ALONG THE WATER.

Drive inland and the season changes tone but never loses momentum. Back roads wind through rolling hills and stretches of deep summer green. Farm stands appear around quiet bends. Hydrangeas spill over stone walls. The soundtrack shifts from crashing waves to birds chirping, rustling leaves as the gentle warm wind blows and the quiet hum of summer afternoons.

Long before the sun peaks, the Hartford Regional Market is already

alive with motion. Gardeners search for flowers and herbs while families fill canvas bags with strawberries, peaches and locally grown vegetables destined for backyard cookouts and kitchen counters. It is one of those simple Connecticut traditions that somehow feels timeless every summer.

By mid-afternoon, the heat sends people toward the cool currents of the Farmington River, where tubing has become a seasonal rite of passage. Sunlight flickers through the trees overhead while friends drift downstream with cold drinks tucked into floating coolers, carried slowly through the bends of the river.

ELSEWHERE INLAND, CONNECTICUT SLOWS DOWN BEAUTIFULLY.

Farmers markets spill across town greens while families stop for ice cream after long afternoons spent berry picking or wandering local farms. Along trails like the Farmington Canal Heritage Trail, cyclists pass rivers, old mills and quiet neighborhoods where summer seems to pause time altogether.

Kids race through splash pads at local parks while town pools buzz with laughter on humid afternoons. At lakes across the state, kayaks drift quietly across the water while teenagers leap from rickety wooden docks into the cool water below.

In Hartford, summer brings a noticeable new energy to the city. Fans fill the stands at Hartford Yard Goats games with cold drinks in hand as the skyline glows beyond center field. Nearby, crowds dressed in the signature Connecticut green and blue gather for Hartford Athletic soccer matches, where summer nights buzz with energy, unity and community.

Across town at The Xfinity Theatre, concertgoers tailgate before spreading blankets across the lawn, singing every word together beneath humid summer skies. There is something about live music on a Connecticut summer night that feels especially nostalgic, relaxed and communal all at once.

At Elizabeth Park, roses bloom in soft waves of color while couples wander beneath fading sunlight and friends gather for concerts on the grass. Nearby at Simsbury Meadows Performing Arts Center, lawn chairs and picnic blankets cover the field as live music drifts into the warm evening air. Families unpack picnic baskets, children dance barefoot and groups lean together for sunset photos beneath glowing skies.

As late afternoon fades toward dusk, Ragged Mountain offers panoramic

views stretching across Connecticut, where forests, church steeples and distant skylines meet beneath hazy summer light. It is the kind of view that reminds you how much variety exists within such a small state: coastline to countryside, city to forest, all within a single afternoon drive.

AS EVENING SETTLES IN, CONNECTICUT TRANSFORMS ONCE MORE.

Outdoor patios fill in West Hartford and Glastonbury with people lingering over cocktails and dinners beneath string lights. Conversations stretch late into the evening. There is an understated elegance to Connecticut nights.

And for those wanting a little more energy, the state delivers that too.

At Foxwoods Resort Casino, summer evenings mean dressing up, ordering colorful cocktails and turning dinner reservations into an unforgettable night out. Nearby, Mohegan Sun keeps the night going with arena concerts long after the sun goes down.

What makes Connecticut special in summer is not any single destination. It is the rhythm of the entire state.

It is the ability to begin the day barefoot beside the Long Island Sound, spend the afternoon wandering farm roads, floating down a river or cheering from stadium seats, then end the night beneath music or stars. Coastal and inland. Sophisticated and relaxed. Energetic and restorative all at once.

Connecticut summer unfolds confidently, beautifully and effortlessly. The photos shared across social media — beach sunsets, lobster rolls, concerts on the lawn, boats drifting through the harbor — may capture the moments themselves, but Connecticut is what creates the feeling behind them: nostalgic, easy and unmistakably summer.

Because somehow, in Connecticut, even the simplest summer moments end up feeling timeless.

Vanessa Wojtusiak is a freelance journalist with more than 20 years of experience in media and marketing. She lives in West Hartford. Connect on Instagram @vanessawojtusiak.

Why Relationship Banking Still Wins in a Digital World

By **ALEXIS KAHN, FVP, CASH MANAGEMENT SALES MANAGER AT CHELSEA GROTON BANK** | *Photos provided by Chelsea Groton Bank*

For many small and mid-sized businesses, a banking relationship starts and ends with transactions. Deposits go in and payments go out; as long as everything clears, it feels like the system is working. But in today's environment, where fraud is more sophisticated, margins are tighter and time is a scarce resource, viewing your bank as merely a utility can quietly expose your business to unnecessary risk and inefficiency.

The right banking partner does far more than hold funds. At its best, a bank becomes an extension of your operations team and even your business development team. The best banking partners help to protect your cash, streamline workflows and give you clearer insight into your financial position so you can focus on running and growing the business. Plus, they are connectors of people, helping to build a network and resources that will mutually benefit your business and other businesses around you. A good business banker and their support team should always be working for you and looking out for your big picture needs. It goes beyond just offering banking tools that work. It's about bringing more to the table to help you build your business and grow in the future.

FRAUD PREVENTION IS A BUSINESS CONTINUITY ISSUE

Fraud is no longer an abstract concern reserved for large corporations. Check fraud, ACH fraud and account takeovers increasingly target small- and medium-sized businesses because they often lack layered controls. Tools like Positive Pay and Automated Clearing House (ACH) Block and Filter are sometimes viewed as "nice to haves," but, in reality, they are core business continuity safeguards.

When a fraudulent payment goes out, the impact isn't limited to the amount of money that has left the account. Time is lost investigating, vendors may not be paid on schedule, payroll can be disrupted and internal trust in systems erodes. Proactive fraud controls help ensure that only authorized transactions are processed, reducing the likelihood of operational interruptions that can ripple across an organization.

Carlin Construction, a business customer that processes many checks each week, uses Positive Pay. Stefanie Picard, controller at Carlin Construction, is an advocate for the tool. "Positive Pay is critical to any busy company, providing peace of mind knowing that unauthorized transactions can't leave the account," she shares. "Having that digital bodyguard has been invaluable, and the daily exception review is quick and easy."

CASH VISIBILITY DRIVES BETTER DECISIONS

Another overlooked advantage of a strong banking partnership is improved cash visibility. Many small- and mid-sized businesses operate with fragmented information, where

balances may be in one system while receivables are in another. This lack of real-time clarity makes it harder to answer basic questions. How much cash is truly available? What obligations are coming due? Can we invest, hire or expand with confidence?

Picard has also benefited from having a clear snapshot of the company's funds. "Our investment sweep structure allows excess funds to be automatically put to work each day while keeping deposit balances fully accessible. With real-time visibility into our funds, we've gained stronger control over cash flow — without the need to manage manual transfers," states Picard.

Modern cash management tools consolidate information, providing a more accurate picture of liquidity. With better visibility, owners, CFOs and controllers like Picard can make faster, more informed decisions, reduce idle cash, and avoid surprises that strain working capital.

"Combining an investment sweep with Positive Pay essentially puts your cash on autopilot – protecting it on one end while growing it on the other," continues Picard.

THE HIDDEN COST OF MANUAL PROCESSES

Manual workarounds often feel familiar and "good enough," but they come with hidden costs. Re-keying payment data, reviewing paper reports or managing approvals via email all increase the risk of errors and consume valuable staff time. Over time, these inefficiencies add up, often slowing close cycles, increasing audit risk and pulling skilled employees away from higher-value work.

Automation within cash management doesn't eliminate control; it strengthens it. Delineated entitlements, dual approvals and automated sweeps reduce reliance on institutional knowledge and help ensure consistency, even when staff changes occur.

WHAT TO EXPECT FROM A PROACTIVE BANKING PARTNER

A proactive bank doesn't just offer products; it asks questions. How are you protecting payments? Where are processes breaking down? What information do you wish you had sooner? The goal is not to sell tools, but to align solutions with your business priorities in order to help save time, reduce risk and support growth.

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If you're in the process of evaluating the value your banking partner is bringing to your business, consider asking the following:

- What fraud controls should we have in place based on how we move money today?
- How can we gain better visibility into cash across accounts and entities?
- Where are manual processes creating risk or inefficiency?
- Who should we call when something doesn't look right, and how quickly will we get help?
- Who in the community should I connect with to strategically drive business?

Moreover, it can go a long way to have a strong relationship with your banking team that you know and trust; they will understand your business, know the players within your organization, and pick up the phone when you need help or advice. When your bank truly understands your business, it becomes far more than a place to park cash. It becomes a partner in protecting what you've built and frees you to focus on managing and growing your business.

Interested in learning about Chelsea Groton and all the ways the bank supports businesses? Visit chelseagroton.com. *Member FDIC. Equal Housing Lender. NMLS Institution ID 402928.*

FESTIVE ESCAPES BEYOND THE USUAL:

From Gibraltar Sunshine to Montenegro Ski Slopes

By ANASTASIA MILLS HEALY

Skywalk Straits view of the Rock of Gibraltar. Photo courtesy Gibraltar Tourist Board.

The Savin Kuk peak in Montenegro's Dumitor National Park. Credit: Nebojsa Atanackovic.

As we experience our summers now, we put forth some unexpected options for travelers craving a fall or winter European getaway without the predictable crowds. Imagine skiing affordable powder in Montenegro, sipping afternoon tea and doing tax-free holiday shopping among the palm trees of Gibraltar, wandering atmospheric Christmas markets in Riga without shoulder-to-shoulder crowds, or welcoming the new year in a turreted Scottish castle. These destinations combine seasonal traditions with distinctive local culture, offering everything from British-style Christmas celebrations in the Mediterranean to Balkan ski adventures and cozy Old World charm — often without the high price tags and stress of Europe's better-known holiday hotspots. >>

SKI FOR €25 A DAY IN MONTENEGRO

It's worth traveling to the Balkans in winter for stunning alpine scenery, guaranteed snow and €25 lift tickets (and for bragging rights). A small country on the Adriatic between Croatia and Albania and bordering three other countries inland, Montenegro was part of Yugoslavia and is best known as a hopping summer destination. It is vastly undertouristed in winter as skiers flock to the better known French, Swiss and Italian alps.

Only an hour from Podgorica Airport on the coast, the town of Kolašin is the largest ski area in the country. Set 3,000 feet above sea level on Bjelasica Mountain, Kolašin has two connected ski centers: Kolašin 1450 and Kolašin 1600, referring to their elevations (4,757 and 5,249 feet). They are surrounded by numerous smaller ski areas and development is ongoing, so now is your chance to go before the world discovers it.

Both ski areas have a range of runs with varying levels of difficulty as well as "freeride zones," where the more advanced and adventurous can ski off-trail in virgin snow. Snowshoeing, Nordic skiing, snowmobiling, helicopter tours and more are also possible.

From the end of December to the end of January, a Christmas bazaar in Kolašin's Soldiers' Square tempts shoppers with artisanal jewelry, crafts and clothing. Live music and traditional food and drink like *priganice* (deep-fried dough balls) and mulled brandy add to the fun.

More information at kolasin.com and montenegro.travel/en.

BRITISH HOLIDAY TRADITIONS WITH SUNSHINE IN GIBRALTAR

At the southernmost point of Europe, where the Mediterranean meets the Atlantic, Gibraltar is an unexpected holiday escape. As a British Overseas Territory, English is the official language and English holiday traditions are observed. The winter weather is mild, with daytime averages in the low 60s, and shopping is tax-free.

Visitors can hike the famous Rock of Gibraltar, dine outdoors along waterfront promenades and enjoy seasonal celebrations. Kicking off the festive season in November, the Christmas Festival of Lights centers on flipping the switch on the thousands of lights that illuminate Main Street and Casemates Square. Throughout December and into January, John Mackintosh Square is a family-friendly hub with rides, entertainment and traditional fried pastries called *buñuelos*. Gibraltar is largely Catholic and marks Three Kings Day in January with a parade with floats and marching bands.

Gibraltar's population of around 30,000 is a unique cultural mix of British settlers and people with Spanish, Moroccan, Maltese, Jewish and Indian heritage, among other backgrounds. At Christmas time, British traditions such as Christmas carols and Christmas crackers can be found along with varied culinary influences and customs from the diaspora, and day trips to the Costa del Sol and Tangiers, Morocco, are possible.

In addition to experiencing Christmas with palm trees and European customs, winter is a great time to visit Gibraltar's top attractions like the WWII tunnels and Skywalk without summer cruise ship crowds.

More information at visitgibraltar.gi.

Ski lift at Kolasin 1600 ski center in Montenegro. Photo courtesy of the National Tourism Organisation of Montenegro.

Main Street in Gibraltar. Photo courtesy Gibraltar Tourist Board.

Holiday festivities in Gibraltar. Photo courtesy Gibraltar Tourist Board.

Falconry at Glenapp Castle. Photo courtesy of Glenapp Castle.

CHRISTMAS MARKETS WITHOUT THE CROWDS IN RIGA

Vienna, Strasbourg and Cologne draw crowds from all over the world for their Christmas markets, which can result in lines five deep to peruse the stalls and 10-minute waits for *glühwein* (mulled wine). An alternative is Riga, the capital of Latvia, which is a member of both the European Union and NATO. Another plus is that the euro's buying power here is strong, with prices that can be a third of other European destinations.

The city's main Christmas market will be open from November 27, 2026, to January 3, 2027, in Dome Square. Wander among the wooden stalls stocked with locally handcrafted items like gloves and candles, try Latvian food such as duck sausages and dumplings, and visit with Santa as well as hear music from choirs, folk groups and DJs. There's also a good possibility of snow, adding to the festive atmosphere.

With a population of 615,000, Riga is the largest city in the Baltics and about the geographical size of Dublin. Founded in 1201, Riga boomed during its Hanseatic League trade years. Today, visitors can follow the narrow, cobblestone alleys of its Old Town, a UNESCO World Heritage site, to see centuries-old gothic architecture and remnants of ancient fortifications. Riga is also one of the best places in the world to see Art Nouveau architecture, with 800 beautiful buildings in this style, mostly in the city center.

Riga also has a robust cultural scene with museums exhibiting traditional and contemporary art as well as unique sites like the former KGB headquarters, Museum of the Occupation and collections that focus on decorative arts, fashion, hats and vintage cars.

More information at liveriga.com.

Top photo: Art Nouveau architecture in Riga. Middle and bottom photo: Christmas market in Riga. Photos courtesy of Riga Investment and Tourism Agency.

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Glenapp Castle. Credit: The Kilted Photographer.

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Dressed in tweed and wellies, outstretch your gloved hand and brace for the landing of a sea eagle. Or, with a magnificent castle as a backdrop, aim your longbow at an archery target, learn how to curl or meet the resident Highland "coos" at Glenapp Castle, a 19th-century Scottish Baronial luxury hotel complete with turrets, towers and battlements.

A Relais & Châteaux Michelin key property, Glenapp succeeds in creating fairytale experiences whether you're an adventure seeker (kayaking, mountain biking), family with children (treasure hunts, wildlife encounters) or couple seeking a quiet romantic getaway (suites fit for royalty, crackling fireplaces). Only 17 of its 73 rooms are guest accommodations (culminating in the 4,500-square-foot Castle Penthouse Suite) so there's never a fight for a table at any of its restaurants.

Glenapp Castle sits near Scotland's southwest shore with access to its windswept western isles made easy with a boat at the ready. Nearby lochs reward anglers with trout and seeing that this is Scotland, golf courses and whisky distilleries are never far away. Tennis and yoga are offered on property and clay pigeon shooting and horseback riding on the beach at nearby Turnberry.

Glenapp Castle drawing room. Photo courtesy of Glenapp Castle.

The castle goes all out during the festive season with towering trees, special menus and traditional *ceilidh* (live music and dancing). New Year's revelers can sing "Auld Lang Syne" just minutes from the birthplace of its writer, Robert Burns.

Glasgow Airport is a 90-minute drive; Edinburgh Airport is two-and-a-half hours away.

More information at glenappcastle.com.

Anastasia Mills Healy is a Greenwich-based travel writer and author of "100 Things to Do in Connecticut Before You Die" and "Secret Connecticut: A Guide to the Weird, Wonderful, and Obscure." Connect on Facebook and Instagram @stashastravels.

SUMMER ARTS PREVIEW

Dylan, Sweeney, Wynton and an Idol or two play on Connecticut stages.

By **FRANK RIZZO**

Ah, summer, the season of beaches, picnics, backyard barbecues and all kinds of outdoor fun. But Connecticut also offers a rich abundance of arts and entertainment events to further heat and brighten the season.

We present a few — but quite a few — of performing arts temptations throughout the state.

One of the major events that kicks off the season in a grand way is New Haven's **International Festival of Arts & Ideas** that continues in June at various locations, neighborhoods and venues across the city. A festival highlight will be on **June 18** at the Shubert Theatre with a performance by the modern dance company **Pilobolus**. The Connecticut-based group will present "**Other Worlds**," a collaboration with other theatre, music and dance artists, including award-winning playwright and director Aaron Posner, multi-instrumentalist and composer Stuart Bogie.

What do you do when you've just turned 90? If you're **Buddy Guy,** the rock and blues legend, Rock & Roll Hall of Fame inductee and nine-time Grammy winner, you go on tour. The pioneer of Chicago's explosive West Side sound plays **Waterbury's Palace Theatre** on **August 7**. Oh yes, he's also received a Lifetime Achievement Grammy, 38 Blues Music Awards, Billboard Century Award, Presidential National Medal of Arts and Kennedy Center Honor.

Brace yourself for the mid-term elections in the fall, then buckle your seatbelt and head to Hartford's **The Bushnell** where comedian **Jon Stewart** is sure to have a few pointed remarks, comic zingers and smart commentary on the state of the nation on **June 19**. *(Interesting note: This event will be a phone-free experience. Use of phones, smart watches and accessories will not be permitted in the performance space.)*

Speaking of funny men, now that he is wrapping up his popular podcast "**WTF with Marc Maron**" after 16 years, the comedian is hitting the road and arrives at **Ridgefield Playhouse** on **June 20**. His confessional, introspective and acerbic brand of humor is also showcased in a string of HBO comedy specials: "Marc Maron: Panicked," "From Break to Dark," "End Times Fun," "Too Real" and "More Later."

The one-two punch of great comedians happens mid-July at **Foxwoods Resorts and Casino** with **Seth Meyers** performing **July 10** and **Jerry Seinfeld** on **July 18**. Meyers began his TV career in 2001 as an Emmy Award-winning writer and performer on "Saturday Night Live" before becoming host in 2014 of NBC's "Late Night with Seth Meyers." After his stand-up career took off in 1981, Seinfeld teamed up with Larry David to create one of the great comedy serious of all time: "Seinfeld." His latest Netflix projects include "Jerry Before Seinfeld" and "23 Hours to Kill" along with the highly acclaimed web series "Comedians in Cars Getting Coffee."

Megan Hilty was a smash in NBC's "Smash" as triple-threat Ivy Lynn, one of the greater Glindas in "Wicked" and a Tony Award nominee as glamorous Madeline Ashton in the hit "Death Becomes Her" musical. Broadway fans in search of a new generation of diva goddesses can catch her in concert at New Haven's **Shubert Theatre** on **June 12**.

But Hilton isn't the only Broadway star in concert this summer. Tony Award winner **Beth Leavel** ("The Drowsy Chaperone" and a hoot in "The Prom") will perform at Branford's intimate Legacy Theatre on **August 16**. In a Broadway career that spans back to 1975 — including celebrated revivals of "My Fair Lady,"

The always-incredible Megan Hilty at the Shubert June 12

CREDIT: Leah Portis and Laura Matula.

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"Oklahoma!" and "On Your Toes" — **Christine Andres** will be performing at Norwalk's **Music Theatre of Connecticut** on **July 18**.

Want to take a backstage look at one of the iconic rock bands on the '80s? If you can't call The Police, you can at least go to **The Kate** (aka The Katharine Hepburn Cultural Arts Center in Old Saybrook) on **July 6** and **7** where **Stewart Copeland**, founder and drummer of that multi-Grammy winner and a Rock and Roll Hall of Famer will share his take on the band, its music and the industry. This is the first American spoken-word tour by Copeland, who is also a filmmaker and composer of film scores, video games and operas.

Even at 70, **Billy Idol** still has that rebel yell. The famously spiky-haired rocker will be in concert **August 8** at **Mohegan Sun**. Idol began as front man for the British punk band Generation X before he launched his successful solo career in the new wave '80s. He became a staple of the then-new television channel MTV with the wildly popular music videos for his singles "Dancing with Myself," White Wedding," "Hot in the City" and, of course, "Rebel Yell."

Wu Tang Clan, the groundbreaking American rap collective known for its sharp lyricism, old-school rap influence and gritty production will shake things up at **Meadows Music Theatre** in Hartford on **August 29**.

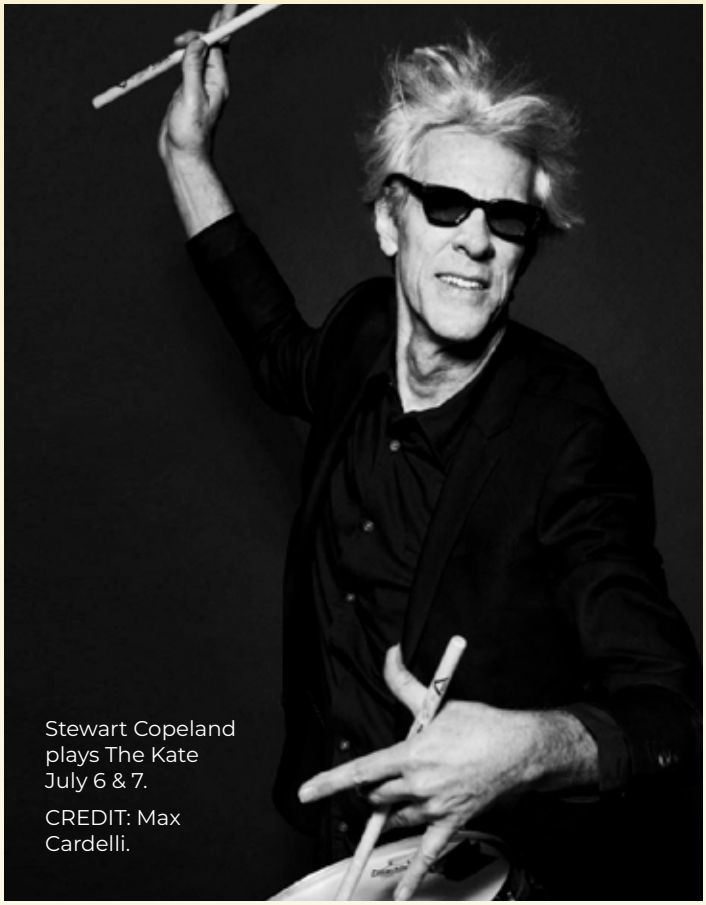
It would be hard to choose just one concert to highlight at **Hartford HealthCare Amphitheater** in Bridgeport from a summer line-up that includes **James Taylor** on **June 22**, **Sarah McLachlin** on **July 8** and **Rod Stewart** on **August 7**, just to name a few. But then there's the mic drop: **Bob Dylan** with **Jimmie Vaughan and The Tilt-A-Whirl Band** on **July 19**.

There's yet another gathering of greats — and the crowd will no doubt be celebrating all night long — when **Lionel Richie** and **Earth, Wind and Fire** perform at **PeoplesBank Arena** in Hartford on **July 10**.

Jon Batise will be the highlight of the summer series at **Westville Music Bowl** in New Haven. The Oscar- and Grammy-winning musician, composer, singer and television personality will perform his joyous and eclectic style of genre-bending fusion of jazz, soul, gospel, blues and classical on **August 13**.

Now the lineup hadn't been announced at press time but circle the dates **July 17**, **18** and **19** on your calendar for **Greater Hartford Festival of Jazz,** now in its 35th year. And free admission, too, at Bushnell Park.

Another jazz highlight is certainly **Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra with Wynton Marsalis** performing at **Garde Arts Center** in New London on **June 27**. The



Stewart Copeland plays The Kate July 6 & 7.

CREDIT: Max Cardelli.

event is part of the lead-up to Wynton Marsalis' final season as artistic director of Jazz at Lincoln Center and music director of the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra.

Lead vocalists and songwriters Jess Wolfe and Holly Laessig of the acclaimed indie band **Lucius** — best known for their sinuous harmonies and highly-original, pop-noir musical artistry — will play **June 20** at **Levitt Pavilion for the Performing Arts** in Westport.

The most exciting theater event of the summer is a joint production by **Hartford Stage** and **Theater-Works Hartford** of the Stephen Sondheim's "**Sweeney Todd**." The show — the first time the theaters have collaborated on a project of this size — will play **June 5 to July 5** as an intimate chamber production at Hartford Stage.

In need of an old-fashioned, first-class musical that will tap your troubles away? **Goodspeed Musicals** is presenting "**Crazy for You**," the Tony Award-winning show that is well overdue for a major Broadway revival. The show is loaded with Gershwin classics ("I Got Rhythm," "Embraceable You," "Someone To Watch Over Me" and many more) and will play **June 19 to August 9** at Goodspeed Opera House in East Haddam.

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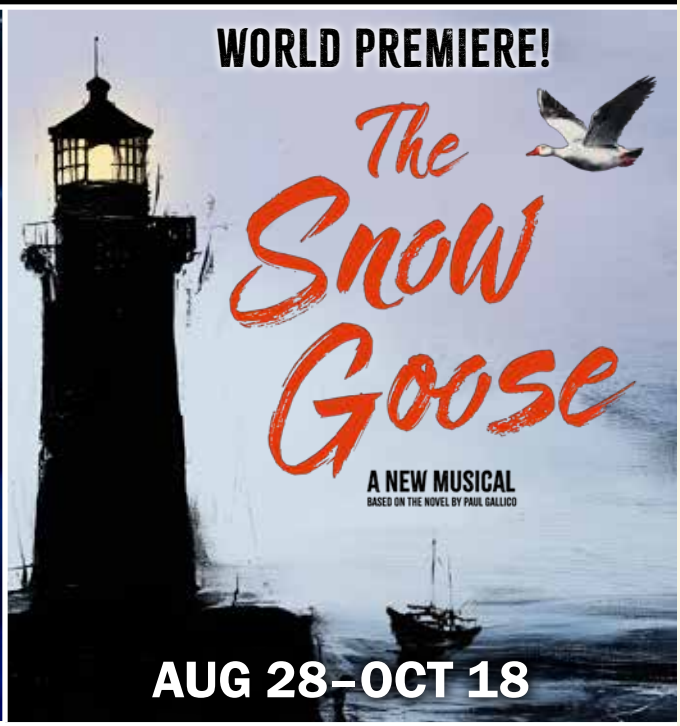

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What better way to celebrate USA's semiquincentennial than with a musical reminding us of our democratic heritage. "**1776**" plays **Ivoryton Playhouse** in Essex **June 25 to July 28**.

There's "**The Wild Party**" — the musical based on the epic poem by Joseph Moncure March — that played Broadway with music by Michael John LaChiusa. And then there's the off-Broadway version with music by Andrew Lippa, both depicting the roaring 1920s, "where jazz, lust and danger collide." While the former is swell, the latter is sensational. That version will be presented at West Hartford's **Playhouse on Park** from **July 8 to August 9**.

There will be much ado about two outdoor summer productions of Shakespeare's romantic comedy "**Much Ado About Nothing**." First up is a production from **Shakespeare on the Sound** at Pinkney Park from **June 10 to 28**. Then comes the annual free Shakespearean production by **New Haven's Elm City Shakespeare** at Edgerton Park that attracts thousands every season. That company's version, set in 1945, will be presented **August 20 to September 6**.

If indoor theater is more to your taste, then **Westport Country Playhouse** will be presenting "**Agatha Christie's The Murder of Roger Ackroyd**." The suspenseful mystery drama which artistic director Mark Shanahan has adapted for the stage runs **July 14 to August 1**.

Warner Theater in Torrington will present **Toto Kisaku**'s one-man "**Requiem for an Electric Chair**" play. It tells the harrowing true story of his persecution, imprisonment and near execution in the Democratic Republic of Congo, where his musical comedies exposing child exploitation and government complicity put him on death row. The show will be presented on **June 20**.

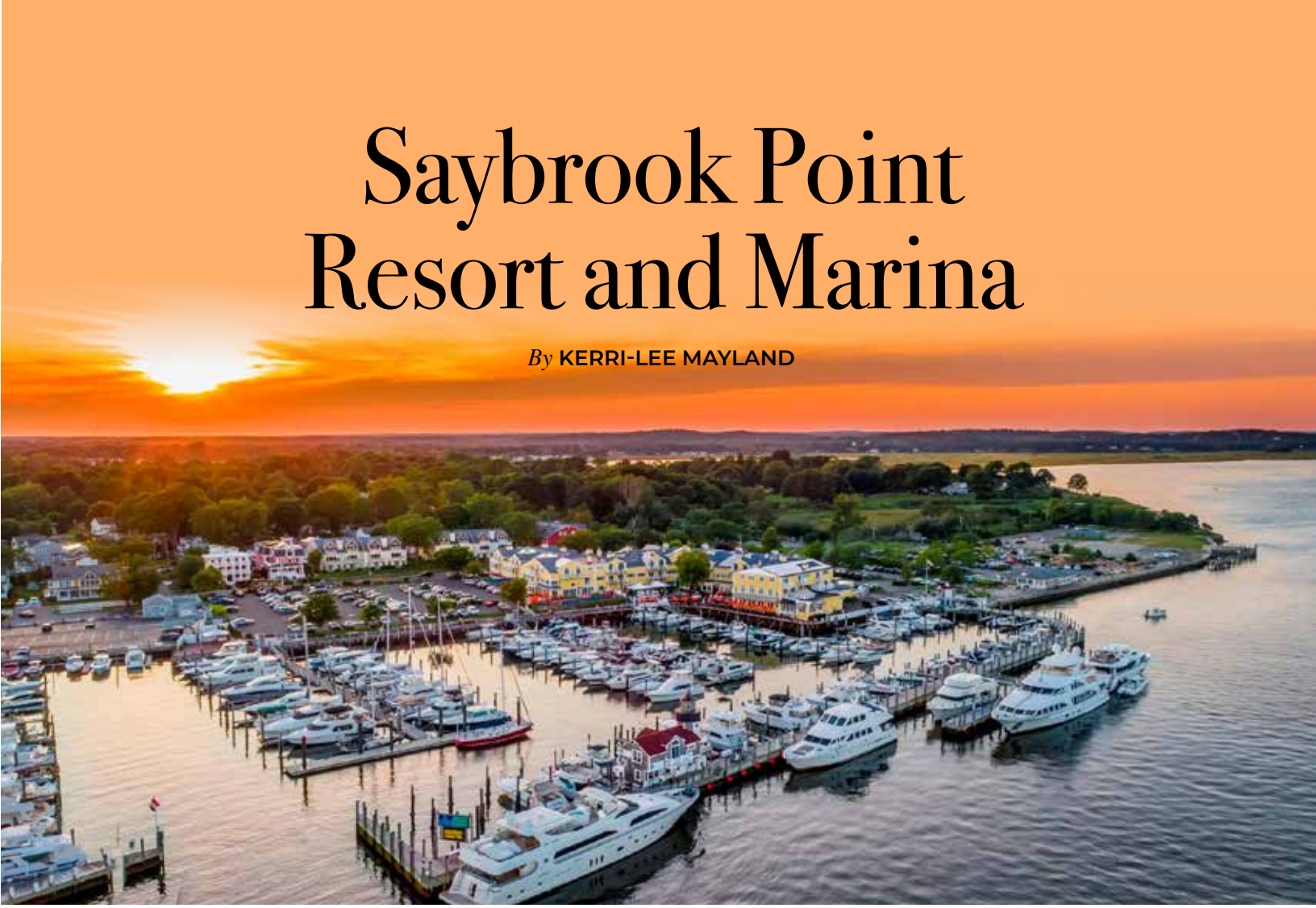
A generation of theater fans have embraced the teen-centric story in the "**Dear Evan Hansen**" musical. Ridgefield's **A.C.T. of CT** (A Contemporary Theater of Connecticut) ends its season with the show, which will complete its run **June 21**.

Finally, a cornerstone of American theater development, **Eugene O'Neill Theater Center** in Waterford hosts its National Puppetry Conference (**June 6 to 14**), Playwrights Conference (**June 15 to July 5**), Music Theater Conference (**July 6 to 18**), and Cabaret and Performance Conference (**July 22 to August 1**). While many events are developmental, select readings and performances are open to the public and often feature future Broadway-bound works.

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.

Saybrook Point Resort and Marina

By **KERRI-LEE MAYLAND**



At Saybrook Point Resort & Marina, the line between land and water seems to disappear. Sailboats drift across the marina, osprey circle overhead and golden light reflects off the water at sunset. There is a calming feel to the expansive waterfront property as if life naturally slows its pace here.

But what truly sets Saybrook Point apart is not simply its breathtaking setting. It is the way the resort embodies the shoreline itself: thoughtful, enduring and deeply connected to coastal Connecticut.

Now, following a sweeping multimillion-dollar renovation, the resort is entering a new era rooted in sustainability, elevated hospitality and an intentional celebration of Old Saybrook itself. This was not a surface-level refresh. The rooms were taken down to the studs and thoughtfully redesigned to create a luxury experience that still feels unmistakably tied to the Connecticut coast.

"Our goal was to create something that feels deeply connected to this place, rooted in Connecticut, its history and its makers," says Kelsey Verillo, senior interior designer at Jeffrey Beers International. "By collaborating with local artisans and drawing from the surrounding landscape, we were able to design an experience that feels personal, enduring and distinctly Saybrook Point."

Touches of osprey — symbols of environmental resilience along the shoreline — appear throughout the redesigned rooms, alongside soft blues, sandy neutrals and driftwood-inspired finishes. Original artwork produced by the grandson of the founders, Joseph Tagliatela, hangs in each room depicting local landmarks and shoreline scenes that reinforce the feeling that the resort belongs where it stands.

Luxury here also reveals itself through a myriad of thoughtful details. The resort partnered with Mattress Concierge in Hartford to create customizable sleep experiences featuring plush and firm mattress options tailored to guest preference before arrival. Under-bed sensor lighting softly illuminates the floor at night, while movable reading lights add individualized comfort.

Guests staying in select luxury suites across the street can also access dedicated butler service designed to curate personalized stays, from spa scheduling and dinner reservations to local excursions and celebration planning.

Situated between Boston and New York City, the resort naturally attracts travelers from both metropolitan hubs, along with Connecticut staycationers, boaters, wellness travelers and multigenerational families returning year after year. Younger generations are discovering the resort too, drawn to its understated luxury, wellness culture and elevated coastal aesthetic.

Yet despite its growing national appeal, the resort still feels deeply local.

"From the moment guests step into the newly redesigned accommodations at Saybrook Point Resort & Marina, they are immersed in a sense of refined coastal luxury," says General Manager Chris Bird. "While the exquisite details and elevated design create an immediate impression, it is our associates who truly bring the experience to life through genuine hospitality, thoughtful service and a commitment to making every stay exceptional."

That authenticity extends into every part of the property, particularly at Fresh Salt, the resort's award-winning waterfront restaurant. The dining program embraces a sea-to-table and farm-to-fork philosophy centered around regional sourcing and seasonal New England flavors.

On the afternoon of my visit, the team at Fresh Salt sent me home with their hot buttered New England-style lobster roll — warm, overflowing and unforgettable. Rich without being heavy, simple without being simplistic, it tasted like the Connecticut shoreline distilled into a single perfect meal. Fresh Salt also offers a classic Maine-style cold lobster roll, which I already know will be my order next time because there will be a next time.

The resort's spa has also become one of the shoreline's most beloved wellness destinations, offering treatments ranging from deep tissue massage and customized facials to red light therapy and advanced skincare services tailored to individual needs. "You are not just a number," Michelle Salahi explains during my visit. "Our therapists genuinely care and will provide the very best experience."

Underlying all of it is a longstanding commitment to environmental stewardship that has become central to the resort's identity. Long before sustainability became a hospitality buzzword, Saybrook Point had already established itself as Connecticut's first Green Lodging-certified hotel and the state's first certified Clean Marina. The property continues to prioritize energy-efficient systems, water conservation and environmentally conscious operational practices designed to protect the fragile coastal ecosystem surrounding it.

That commitment also extends into the future of travel itself. The resort has six level 2 EV charging stations and is now one of 200 properties nationwide to offer the Tesla driving experience, where you can explore on your own schedule.

"For our family, sustainability has always been rooted in stewardship and responsibility," states Stephen Tagliatela. "This transformation was never simply about updating rooms, but about thoughtfully evolving the resort in a way that honors the water, land, our history and the natural beauty surrounding us."

In a world increasingly filled with interchangeable luxury destinations, Saybrook Point remains unmistakably connected to where it stands — to the water, the wildlife and the community surrounding it.

No matter what occasion brings you here, and long after your stay has ended, what remains is not simply the memory of a beautiful room, a luxurious spa or even an exceptionally executed celebration. What stays with you is the feeling of having briefly belonged to this small, windswept corner of the Connecticut shoreline, where land, water and hospitality still feel beautifully intertwined.

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AT HOME

with KERRI-LEE

Bring Vacation Home With You

Written and Photographed By Kerri-Lee Mayland

There's a reason certain places stay with us long after the suitcase is unpacked. Sometimes it's the salt air in Nantucket, a tucked-away café in Barcelona or a village market in the South of France. Or maybe it is the memory of a summer road trip out west with mornings in the high desert near Santa Fe, camp coffee by a lake, and canvas tents and lantern light under the stars. Travel sharpens the eye. We notice color, texture, rituals and ways of living. And often, we return wanting to bring some of that spirit home.

I've long believed some of the best decorating ideas are gathered, not bought.

For years, my family has met dear friends — whose son became friends with mine in preschool — in a tiny town along the Tour de France route overlooking Cannes and not far from Saint-Tropez. There is glamour nearby, but it is the little market I wait for. I always stop for simple wooden kitchen utensils and French dish towels woven in faded stripes. They tuck easily into a suitcase.

Nothing extravagant, nothing precious. Yet every time I pull one from the drawer, I feel a small lift of happiness. That may be the best kind of souvenir — something beautiful, useful and threaded into daily life.

Travel inspiration rarely comes home in grand gestures. More often it arrives quietly. In a linen napkin. A basket. A ceramic bowl. A color palette you can't forget.

A New England escape may send you home craving weathered woods, ticking stripes and the easy elegance of coastal simplicity. Fold that into summer with blue-and-white pillows, woven trays, hurricane lanterns, or a bowl of collected shells. Let hydrangeas tumble from a pitcher. Let the house feel breezier.

European travel offers another kind of lesson. In France, kitchens hold crocks of wooden spoons and humble linens used every day. In Spain, I think of sun-washed plaster walls, hand-painted tiles, olive jars, and the effortless way indoor and outdoor living blur together. A

The South of France at Tanneron, overlooking St. Tropez and Cannes.

striped cloth on the table, terracotta pots planted with herbs and ceramic pitchers filled with branches — sometimes it takes very little to recall that Mediterranean warmth.

Then there is the calm restraint of Scandinavia. In Denmark and Sweden, beauty often comes through simplicity: pale woods, natural textures, candlelight and edited rooms that somehow still feel deeply warm. It's a wonderful reminder that bringing vacation home sometimes means subtracting, not adding. That's a design lesson worth packing.

I love using travel finds not as display pieces, but as working parts of the house. A French market basket becomes magazine storage. A Spanish ceramic bowl holds fruit. A Scandinavian cutting board leans by the stove. They carry memories because they are touched.

Even American travel can inspire. The earthy tones of Santa Fe, the layered rusticity of a Montana lodge, even the practical charm of RV life — with enamelware, lanterns and clever storage — can shape how home feels. Inspiration doesn't have to come from overseas.

One of my favorite summer rituals is what I think of as the souvenir edit. Instead of tucking travel treasures away, gather them. A shell from a beach walk, flea market candlesticks, pottery from a trip abroad, framed postcards. A collection begins telling a story.

Summer is also the perfect season to let travel influence the lighter side of decorating. Swap heavier accessories for linen and woven textures. Bring in striped napkins, rattan trays, lighter bedding. Set the table as though friends might drop by.

And perhaps borrow not just the objects, but the atmosphere.

The best places we visit often share a certain ease. Doors open to breezes. Meals stretch longer. Candles are lit on ordinary nights. Rooms feel collected, not overdone. Bring that home.

If I have one caution, it's to not over-theme. A home should never feel like a souvenir shop. Better to borrow a material, a habit, a palette or a feeling. Sometimes it is as simple as a French dish towel waiting in a drawer.

And every time you reach for it, summer returns.

Kerri-Lee
xx

Scuba Divers Are Sinking to New Lows for Golf Balls

Written by **RANDY B. YOUNG** / *Illustration by* **SARAH GROVE**

"There's gold in them thar ponds…"

Comments on the futility of the golf are myriad. Mark Twain dismissed the sport as, "a good walk ruined." One variant penned in 1892, however, is particularly bleak: "Golf is a game the object of which is to put a very small and elusive ball into a tiny, obscure hole with tools ill-suited to the task."

Any golfer who knows pleasures of golf is very familiar with the game's hazards: sand traps and bunkers, bad lies, and forests. And then there are the water hazards; ponds, lakes and seas swallow up errant golf balls without practical hope of recovery. A shot into "the drink" can leave pros looking like amateurs and amateurs (who typically lose 5-6 balls a round) looking to the sky cursing.

As CNN Sports' Don Riddle told YouTube's "Great Big Story," one golfer's misery is another man's gold. While it takes some skill (and scuba diving experience) to turn a profit, ponds can effectively be a gold mine for golf ball hunters from the Carolinas to Connecticut and from Ocala to Ann Arbor.

Golf Digest editor Scott Smith estimates on Scubadiving.com that about a billion new golf balls are produced yearly, of which 100 million eventually get scooped up and re-sold.

But the profit doesn't come without peril. Divers scouring muddy ponds regularly face dangers like low visibility, entanglement, broken glass (or broken clubs) and territorial wildlife.

FROM 'SPLASH' TO CASH

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) has estimated that divers retrieve thousands of lost balls from U.S. golf course water hazards, often making a comfortable living. Indeed, Scuba.com estimates that golf ball retrieval in the U.S. is a $200 million industry.

"Although they got there accidentally, their location is no secret," BLS' Dennis Vilorio writes, "but to cash in, someone… needs to get them out. Divers typically meet with a course manager to negotiate whether a fee will be paid to the course in cash, in recovered golf balls or a combination."

Having worked at the TPC Sawgrass course in Ponte Vedra Beach, Fla., and its infamous 17th hole island green, diver Gordon Davis tells the Great Big Story channel on YouTube that some courses even want to refashion the recovered balls. "Courses who want the balls go through and pick out some [for resale]," Davis says, "but then you even see some in repurposed as keepsake watches and bottle openers."

BLS estimates that in the U.S., while some divers report six-figure earnings, most commonly earn between $25,000 to $60,000 each year.

One celebrated diver is Manny Silvia, who runs T-S Golf Ball Salvage, Inc., based in Taunton, Mass., who rescues around 1.2 million balls a year.

"I've dealt with so many [courses] across the country, they call me the godfather of the business," Silvia says. "We work in Long Island, New York, New England…We worked at one Connecticut club last year that had nine ponds on the course."

While legendary Florida golf ball diver Mike Gerstner doesn't divulge his income,

Michael Starr, owner of Michigan's Golf Ball Divers (center), and fellow divers show the bounty of a diving day well spent. Photo courtesy of Michael Starr and golfballdivers.com.

the Tampa Bay Times reports that it has paid for his Ferrari.

MULLIGAN STEW

As golf balls aren't packaged with an expiration date, they are essentially "evergreen." "Golf balls are waterproof, so they don't get damaged underwater," Vilorio writes.

Jim Starr, who runs the GolfBallDivers.com business from Michigan, notes that the assertion was backed by science. "A university here in Michigan bought new golf balls which they put in the bottom of a campus pond for a year," Starr states. "When they tested them, and the balls had lost only one to three yards over the entire year."

Still, because few people want to buy muck-covered golf balls, the recovered balls are typically sorted, cleaned at either onsite or remote dedicated facilities.

Year-round golf in the South helped Florida's Gerstner reap impressive numbers: "I've personally, with my own hands, recovered over 12 million balls."

"We don't buy golf balls from [divers], but there are courses in Connecticut that do," explains Ron Scheyd, golf manager for TPC River Highlands in Cromwell, Conn. (home of the Travelers Championship, formerly the Greater Hartford Open), "but it's pretty common for courses to enlist divers to come out once a year and sweep water hazards."

(UN)CLEAR AND PRESENT DANGER

While profitable, diving into even the shallower ponds on golf courses is not for the faint of heart. Divers must be certified for unrestricted commercial scuba diving, Vilorio says. Factor in that divers are often sharing ponds with more than golf balls.

"Water hazards are usually murky, muddy, and weed or chemical-filled," Scuba.com writes. "Alligators, snakes and snapping turtles are a frequent job hazard."

"I have a picture of one of the divers that now works for me," Silvia continues, "and he's coming out of a [water hazard] in Florida where there's a 14-foot [alligator] right behind him. But what we have near here [in New England] are snapping turtles, and they can get pretty big."

"A turtle head feels just like a golf ball," Gerstner tells the Tampa Bay Times, "but a turtle will take your finger off."

But while wild animals pose a threat, another danger may be inanimate objects in ponds. Ponds are notoriously murky and are often littered with sharp glass and man-made pollution. These factors have taken the lives of several in the industry.

"Most ponds have pitch black water," Gerstner tells Mabe, "so our hands are our eyes."

"Even a fishing line could trap and drown divers," Vilorio writes for the U.S. BLS.

In fact, so numerous are the dangers

of golf ball diving, many consider alternatives, such as a roller.

"The roller…consists of [a drum] of metal discs on wheels," Vilorio wrote, "which grasps balls as it's dragged along a pond's bottom. Using a roller is faster, but it's less thorough than using divers."

HAVING A BALL

Ask any diver, and he'll tell you about the perils of diving in the same breath as the priceless finds.

"I've been doing it a long time," Silvia tells. "I started when I was 8-years old on Long Island, where I found '#44 Reggie Jackson' ball. I get all kinds, and I save those balls. I've pulled whole bags of clubs out of ponds — even golf carts. We did see an upside-down mannequin, and I thought somebody drowned. We haven't found any bodies though, so that's good."

Diver Brett Parker told Scubadivingpartner.com that he has found the golf balls of Nick Price, Mark Calcavecchia and Fred Couples in Texas. Fellow diver Norm Spahn found a ball from (late) President Bush. Parker has also found two BMWs, two Cadillacs, more guns than he can count and so many golf clubs that he's completed four sets of Pings.

Michigan's Jim Starr said he witnessed one golfer succumb to the futility of the sport.

"I [was diving] when this guy got mad and threw his whole set of golf clubs into the pond," Starr says, laughing. "I popped up from the water, and he asked 'Hey, can you grab my set of golf clubs?' After I dove for it, he grabbed his car keys and his wallet from the golf bag, handed me $100, but then threw the bag and clubs back into the pond. He was like, 'I'm done with this game!"

HOW DRY I AM

"The biggest challenge in golf is hitting it straight," Gerstner says. "Very few people can hit it straight consistently, but that's what keeps us in business."

As golf balls continue to disappear into water hazards like so much rain, golf ball diving will surely thrive on players' woes. For those looking to keep their golf balls dry, however, Davis has a suggestion: "Take up another sport."

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. Connect on Facebook and Instagram @randybyoungwriter.

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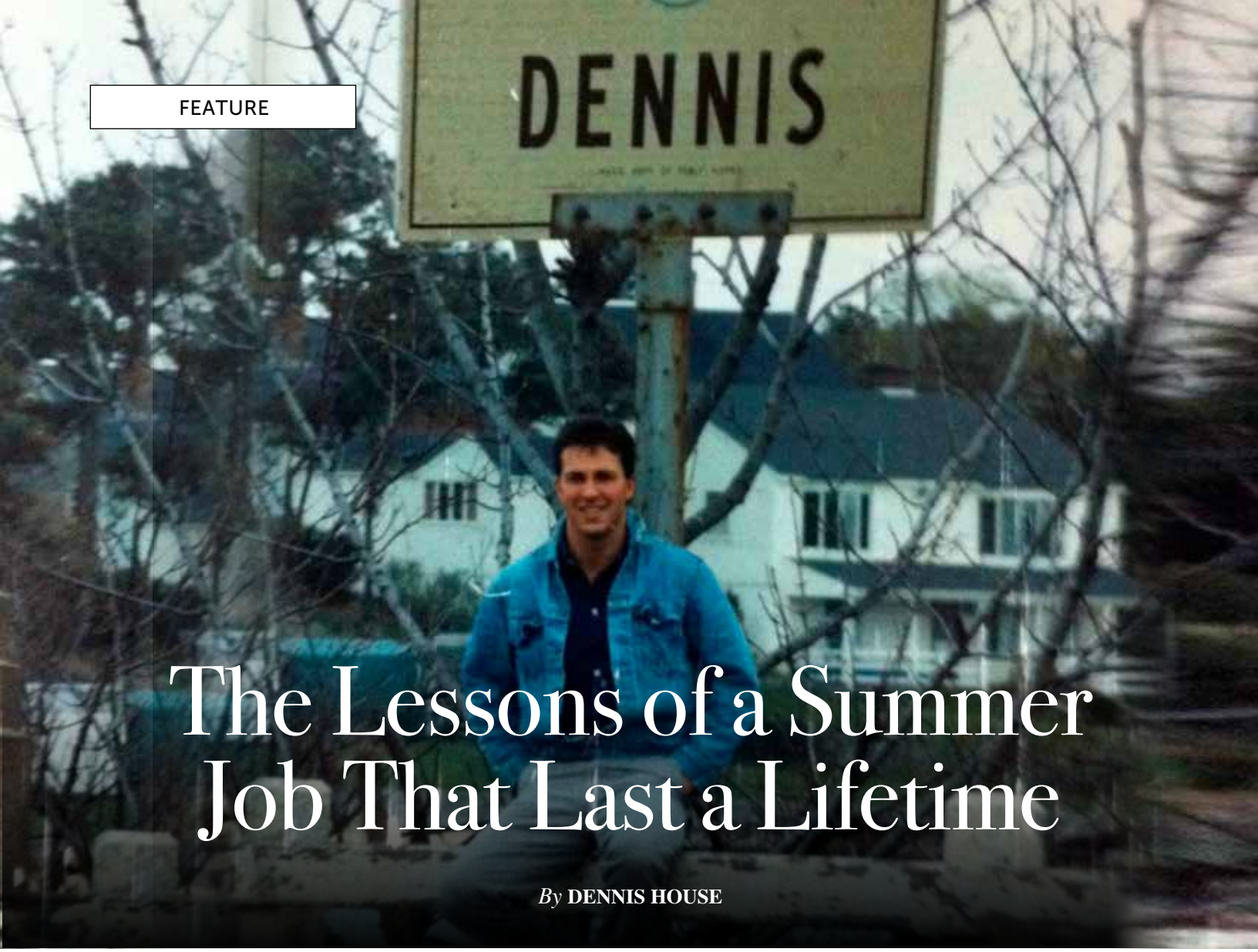


The Lessons of a Summer Job That Last a Lifetime

By **DENNIS HOUSE**

This summer, the waitress bringing your lobster roll to your table at Abbott's Lobster In the Rough in Noank, the lifeguard at the West Hartford town pool blowing his whistle and the teenager filling up the popcorn containers at the Southington Drive-in are seasonal workers toiling away at summer jobs. There are hundreds of these jobs across Connecticut filled by high school and college students; some are people who are in Connecticut for the summer after working the winter in Florida and other places. These are future doctors, police officers, businesspeople and, who knows, maybe a news anchor!

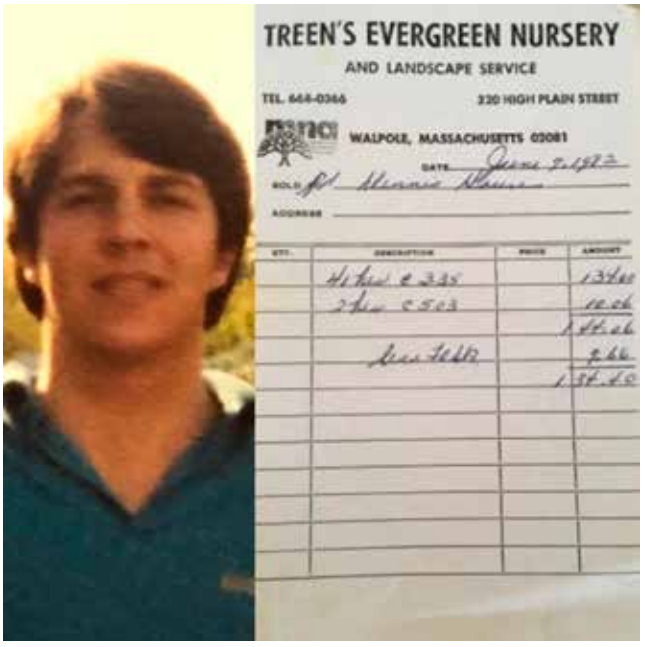
As my kids prepare for their summer jobs, I can't help but remember the many jobs I had as soon as school got out for summer. Dishwasher, bus boy, waiter, concierge, office assistant, landscaper, salesclerk, cashier and security guard were among the professions I became an expert at during my favorite season.

The first summer job I had was a paper boy, a job that doesn't really exist in any large numbers today. I rode my bike around my neighborhood in Norwood at the crack of dawn delivering the Boston Globe and Boston Herald in Massachusetts. I'll confess, if it rained, my mom drove me in our Ford station wagon. It was cash business and I spent the money on things like baseball cards and at the ice cream truck. A few summers later, I would earn an allowance by washing the family cars. As I aged, my hard-earned money was spent on things like record albums, a new shirt at Chess King and the prom.

In high school, I worked as a dishwasher at a restaurant one summer, a cashier at a supermarket and as an office assistant for a company owned by friends of my parents. My primary responsibility was to go to the bank each morning and get quarters, and then I'd walk around and feed the meters of the employees… every two hours.

One of my most interesting jobs I had one college summer was at the now-defunct Zayre's, a chain

of department stores similar to a Target. I was an undercover detective. Yes, it was a great job. I could wear whatever I wanted and had to simply look like a customer. There were no security cameras, just big mirrors and a catwalk in the stockroom where we could peer through an opening to have a bird's eye view of shoppers. Shoplifting was a frequent occurrence. If I saw someone stealing, I would go to the head of security — an off-duty or retired police officer — and he would take care of approaching the thief. We saw some crazy stuff, like people who would walk out the store slowly and confidently with a big television as if they'd just paid for it. They hadn't. People would put on clothes in the dressing room, even new underwear and attempt to steal it. Zayre's vanished from the retail scene in the 1990s, but what an experience I had there. When Local Vyntage came out recently with a retro Zayre T-shirt, I had to get it!



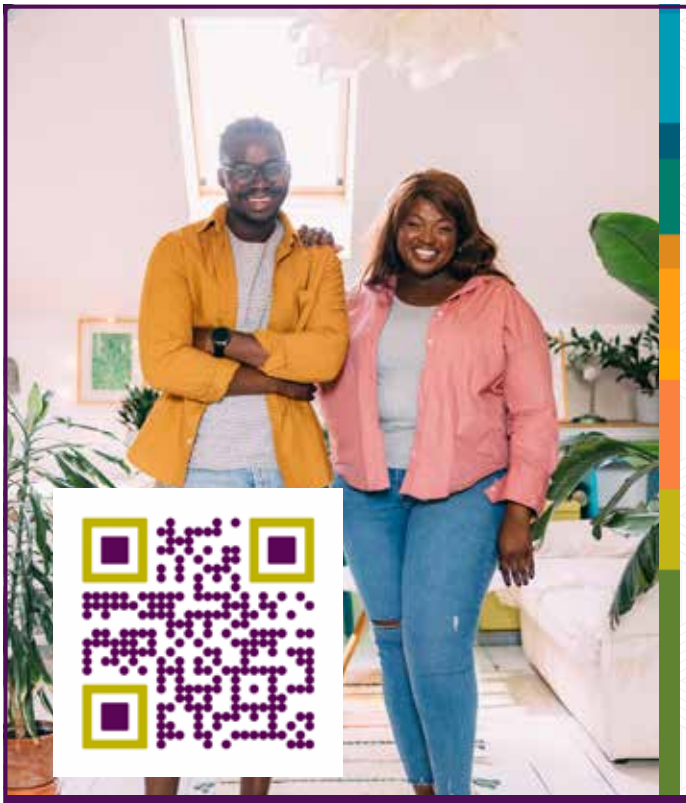
The job I liked the least was my summer as a landscaper at Treen's Evergreen Nursery. It was minimum wage ($3.35 an hour in 1982). Because I had no experience, I spent much of the day weeding and digging and doing hard labor, usually by myself, while others handled the creative fun part of transforming and beautifying yards. I got really proficient at sweating, sneezing and swatting away mosquitoes.

I had a few summer jobs on Cape Cod, beginning with being a waiter at the historic Lighthouse Inn in West Dennis, which is a beautiful place that holds a special place in my heart. Before I worked there, my grandmother took me there from time to time. Later, I brought Kara there to show her where I worked one summer. During our stay there, we bought a pregnancy test and found out we were having our first baby! We have returned with the kids for family vacation.

These summer jobs helped me in so many ways that still guide me today. Responsibility, interpersonal skills, patience and the list of things I learned goes on and on. Working in restaurants gave me a deeper understanding of people and a lasting appreciation of those who work in the demanding service industry. Knowing the back story of how restaurants operate is something everyone should learn. As for landscaping, I get it when the people I pay to mow my lawn might be a little grumpy. Landscaping can be grueling, but I learned some valuable skills I practice in my yard, though I concede it never looks as good as a professional job. My time working on a store security team was my first exposure to law enforcement and those who break the law; that has helped me tremendously in my work as a journalist.

If I had to do it over again, I think I'd get certified to be a lifeguard and get a job at a beach. Sure, it is a tremendous responsibility, but you're outside all day and seldom work at night. It is never too late, right? I wonder if News 8 would give me the summer off to sit in the big white chair at Hammonasset?

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. Connect on Facebook @dennishouse3 and Twitter & Instagram @dennishousetv.



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Whether you're roasting, grilling, steaming or simmering cobs into broths, however you cook it, summer corn brings color, texture and natural sweetness to the table.

The SWEETNESS OF SUMMER CORN

By **AMY S. WHITE**

There's a short, sun-kissed span of time each year when corn tastes like summer itself. During that time, the tables at farmers markets groan under the weight of stacked ears wrapped in green husks, their bright yellow kernels sweet and juicy and begging to be devoured. Summer corn is more than a garden vegetable or a farmers market find; it's a ritual from the messy shucking, to the steamy boiling, to the decadent slathering with butter and salt, and finally ending with the sharing — preferably outside with friends and family who linger lazily long after the sun has set and only bare cobs remain.

But simply eating corn on the cob is not where summer corn's magic should end. At its peak, corn's fresh, sweet kernels can be the foundation for an entire repertoire of recipes. We celebrate the versatility of summer corn with recipes from some of the state's best chefs. Chef Tom Kaldy has opened The Hidden Kitchen at the Hilliard Mills in Manchester, a chef-owned, chef-driven takeout café, with full-service catering and cooking classes, which in his own words, "focus on technique, mindset, and understanding the *how* and *why* behind what we create." He sent us his recipe for Fried Green Tomatoes with Charred Corn Salad, a summer-on-a-plate dish that could serve as an appetizer or entree. Chef Carlos Perez of Good News Restaurant in Woodbury gave us his Street Corn Risotto recipe, which he loves to pair with seafood, summer's second-favorite food. And corn's sweetness makes for a deliciously different ice cream flavor, according to Chef Ben Dubow of Hartford's Fire by Forge and his recipe for Sweet Corn and Olive Oil Ice Cream.

Whether you're roasting, grilling, steaming or simmering cobs into broths, however you cook it, summer corn brings color, texture and natural sweetness to the table. It is the perfect food to pair with the rest of summer's sensations: the droning of lawn mowers, the smell of cut grass, the glow of late sunsets and the easy pleasure of sharing a table.

Connect on Facebook @amysilverwhite and Instagram @amyswhitewrites.

FRIED GREEN TOMATOES WITH CHARRED CORN SALAD

Recipe courtesy of Chef Tom Kaldy, The Hidden Kitchen at Hilliard Mills, Manchester

For the Tomatoes:

Ingredients:

3–4 green tomatoes
1 cup corn flour or all-purpose flour
3 eggs
3 cups fine polenta or cornmeal (substitute breadcrumbs if desired)
Salt, pepper and fresh herbs as desired
1 cup cooking oil (canola or vegetable)

Directions:

Slice the green tomatoes into rounds about ¼-inch thick and season with salt and pepper. Create a breading lineup with the flour in one bowl, whisked eggs in another and cornmeal in the third. Season each slightly with salt and pepper. Dredge each slice of tomato in the flour, dusting off the extra, then dip and coat well in the egg mixture, and finally in the cornmeal and set aside.

For the Charred Corn Salad:

Ingredients:

6 whole ears of corn
1 pound green beans or pole bean of some sort
2 whole roasted red bell peppers, diced
1 bunch scallions, cut on the bias
2 tablespoons picked thyme leaves, chopped if desired
2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
2 tablespoons white balsamic vinegar
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
1 teaspoon espelette or other chile powder
1 cup Bulgarian or Greek feta cheese

Directions:

Char the vegetables: Heat the grill on high until it is quite hot. Place the whole ears of corn (do not remove husk yet) onto the grill and close the lid in order to grill and bake/steam the corn at the same time, checking often and turning as needed to avoid burning completely. Remove from heat and allow to cool slightly, then remove the husks from the corn. Cut all the kernels off the cob by standing them up onto a small bowl that is contained inside another vessel to catch the corn as it is cut. Char the green beans on the grill as well, moving often until tender and a slight char develops. Chop them and place them into the bowl with the corn kernels.

Make the corn salad: While the corn and beans are still warm, add the diced peppers, scallions, thyme leaves, olive oil, white balsamic, and season with salt and pepper to taste. Add the chile powder to the mixture a little at a time, to taste. Keep in mind you can always add more but can never remove! Set aside to allow the mixture to marinate.

Fry the tomatoes: In a large, shallow frying pan, over medium heat, bring 1 cup of cooking oil to 350°F. Fry the breaded green tomatoes until golden brown, remembering to season them with salt and pepper immediately as they are removed from the oil.

Serve: Place the fried green tomatoes onto a board or serving platter. Spoon a hefty amount of the warm corn salad over each fried green tomato and finish by adding the feta over the top of each.

A summer-on-a-plate dish that could serve as an appetizer or entree.

"Sweet corn risotto is the perfect marriage between fresh summer flavors and cozy fall cravings."

— PLAYS WELL WITH BUTTER

STREET CORN RISOTTO

Recipe courtesy of Chef Carlos Perez, Good News Restaurant, Woodbury

Ingredients:

4-5 ears fresh corn (about 3-4 cups of kernels), husked
5-6 cups low-sodium chicken stock
2 tablespoons olive oil
2-3 tablespoons butter, divided
1 small onion or 2 shallots, finely diced
3-4 garlic cloves, minced
1½ cups arborio or carnaroli rice
½ cup tequila or white wine
1 tablespoon chipotle peppers in adobo, finely chopped or 1 teaspoon chipotle powder
½ cup Mexican crema or sour cream
Zest and juice of 1-2 limes
1 cup crumbled cotija cheese, divided
½ teaspoon chili powder or tajin
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
Cilantro, chopped

Directions:

Grill the corn: Preheat the grill to medium-high. Brush corn with a little olive oil, and season lightly with salt. Grill, turning occasionally, until charred in spots and tender, 8-12 minutes. Let cool slightly, then cut the kernels off the cobs. Set aside about ¾ cup of the charred kernels for garnish; reserve the remaining for stirring into the risotto. Set aside the cobs for the stock.

Prep the stock: Warm the stock in a saucepan over low heat, then add the corn cobs. Keep stock simmering gently as you add it to the risotto.

Start the risotto: In a large heavy-bottomed pan or Dutch oven, heat 2 tablespoons of olive oil and 1 tablespoon of butter over medium heat. Add the diced onions OR shallots, and a pinch of salt. Sautee until soft and translucent, about 5 minutes. Add minced garlic and cook 1 minute more, taking care not to burn it.

Toast the rice: Stir in the rice. Cook, stirring frequently, until rice is lightly toasted and translucent at the edges, 2-3 minutes.

Deglaze and build the risotto: Pour in the tequila OR white wine and stir until mostly absorbed. Start adding the warm stock 1/2 -1 cup at a time, stirring often. Wait until each addition is mostly absorbed before adding more. Continue for about 20 minutes until rice is creamy and al dente (tender but with a slight bite).

Add the elote (street corn) flavors: When rice is nearly done, stir in the grilled corn kernels (saving some for garnish), chopped chipotle peppers OR powder, Mexican OR sour cream, lime zest and juice, most of the cotija cheese, and the remaining butter.

Finish, garnish, and serve: Remove from heat. The risotto should be creamy and loose; it will thicken as it sits. Divide into bowls and top with reserved charred corn kernels, extra crumbled cotija, a sprinkle of chili powder OR tajin, fresh cilantro, salt and pepper to taste, and a final squeeze of lime.

Corn's sweetness makes for a deliciously different ice cream flavor.

SWEET CORN AND OLIVE OIL ICE CREAM

Recipe courtesy of Chef Ben Dubow, Fire by Forge, Hartford

Ingredients:

2 cups fresh corn kernels (from 3-4 ears)
Corn cobs, broken into pieces
1 ½ cups whole milk
1 cup heavy cream
½ cup granulated sugar
2 tablespoons honey
½ teaspoon kosher salt
5 large egg yolks
Pinch of lemon zest
⅓ cup extra-virgin olive oil

Directions:

Steep the corn: Combine corn kernels, corn cob pieces, milk, cream, sugar, honey, and salt in a large saucepan. Heat over medium heat just until steam starts to form and tiny bubbles just begin to appear on the edge of the liquid. Turn off heat, cover, and steep for 25 minutes.

Blend and strain: Remove and discard the corn cobs. Blend the mixture until very smooth. Strain through a fine-mesh sieve into a clean saucepan, pressing firmly to get all the liquid.

Make the custard: Whisk egg yolks in a medium bowl. Warm the strained cream base over medium heat until it just begins to steam again. Temper by whisking in about a cup of the hot cream base into the yolks slowly, then pour back into the pot. Cook over medium-low, stirring constantly, until the mixture coats the back of the spoon and hits about 170-175F. Do not boil.

Emulsify: Remove the pan from the heat. Add the lemon zest. Use an immersion or countertop blender and slowly drizzle in the olive oil while blending until the mixture is glossy and fully emulsified.

Chill, churn, and set: Chill mixture completely, a minimum of 4 hours, overnight is best. Churn to a soft-serve consistency then freeze a minimum of 4 hours until firm.

Notes: Use peak-season corn and cut the kernels off close to the cob. Use a fruity, not bitter or peppery, olive oil.

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LEAGUE OF THEIR OWN: CONNECTICUT WOMEN TACKLE FOOTBALL

Team huddle before the game against the New York Knockout team.

By **STAN GODLEWSKI**

Jessica LaSane was the only girl who played touch-football in the street with the boys in her Danbury neighborhood. Back then, the goal lines were, "from this telephone pole to the back of that Buick."

Today, at 37, she's been playing women's football for 14 years. Though she grew up loving two-hand touch, she says there's something about playing tackle ball that's just more satisfying.

"It's the hitting," LaSane states matter-of-factly. "A lot of the players seem like the nicest people," she continues, looking out at the field at Veterans Memorial Stadium in New Britain before the Connecticut Ambush took the field against the New York Knockout. "But when I put my pads on, it's a different story."

"I like blocking better. I like to protect my quarterback," says LaSane, who plays offense and defense like most team members, but she likes defense best. Protecting and supporting each other is a big part of what this Connecticut Ambush team is all about. And while it isn't unusual for a defensive player to flatten a running back on the other team, you might also see them help the player up, while asking if they are ok.

To a person, the Connecticut Ambush players enjoy the physicality, the running and the hitting of football. But they love the camaraderie.

Offensive guard and defensive end Karleigh Webb, 55, sums it up: “This is family. It's all about your mates. [On the field] you are one of 11… and you don't want to let your 10 sisters down. Out there…it’s about them, it’s about us.” Webb was raised in Nebraska where, “football is like oxygen.”

NOT JUST A MEN-ONLY SPORT

Women’s football may be new to some, but women have been playing the game practically since it was invented, according to an 1892 article in The Daily Times of New Brunswick, N.J. It reported that students at the Philadelphia School of Design for Women played, although with modified tackling rules.

A decade later, there were articles about students in at least two women's colleges — Wellesley in Massachusetts and Vassar in New York — playing football for fun. By the 1930s, there were a few short-lived women’s football leagues. In 1965, talent agent Sid Friedman founded the Women’s Professional Football League (WPFL) as more of a barnstorming entertainment idea. Friedman imagined the women playing in mini-skirts and tear-away jerseys for exhibition, charity and NFL halftime events.

By the early 1970s, the athletes had had enough of Friedman’s form of football. Many players and team owners left to establish the first legitimate, competitive professional women's league, National Women's Football League (NWFL), in 1974. It didn’t last, but it was followed by others.

Founded in 2000, the Independent Women's Football League (IWFL) was the first women's American football league created by women. It endured for nearly two decades with popular teams in smaller markets including Kansas City, Sacramento, El Paso and San Antonio, to name a few. At about the same time, there was the United States Women's Football League (USWFL) which had its first game in 2010 and lasted until about 2018. Today, the leagues include the Women’s Football Alliance, which describes itself on its website as, “the largest, longest running and most competitive women’s tackle football league in the world.”

And the American Women’s Football League (AWFL), which includes the Connecticut Ambush among its nearly three dozen teams, states on its website that, “this is more than a league. It’s a movement.”

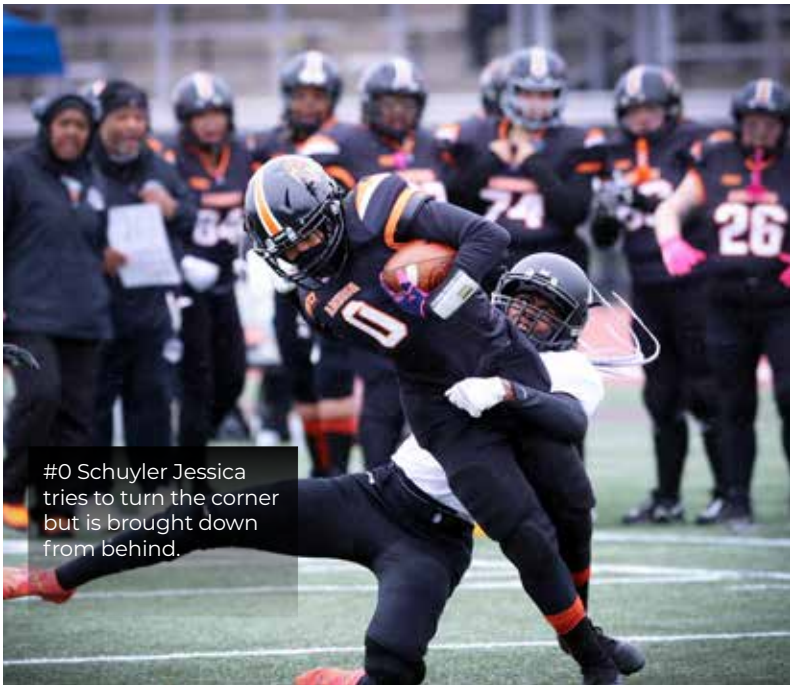
WOMEN’S FOOTBALL HERE TO STAY

Despite having jobs and families, the Connecticut Ambush players commit to each other for the season, which is six games, two practices a week and one night a week reviewing film from the latest game. Recruiting for the team begins in late summer.

The Ambush is one of 34 teams in the AWFL, founded

#55 Kayleigh Webb (right) talks with a teammate.

#84 Venessa Pack moves through traffic during a game against the New York Knockout team.



#0 Schuyler Jessica tries to turn the corner but is brought down from behind.

three years ago with six teams and growing fast. This year, the conference champions will vie for the league championship at the Emerald Bowl in the summer in San Antonio.

Quarterbacking the Ambush is Sam Valentino, who, when she's not making a handoff or looking for a receiver, is a math teacher at Danbury High School. She's also the team's kicker.

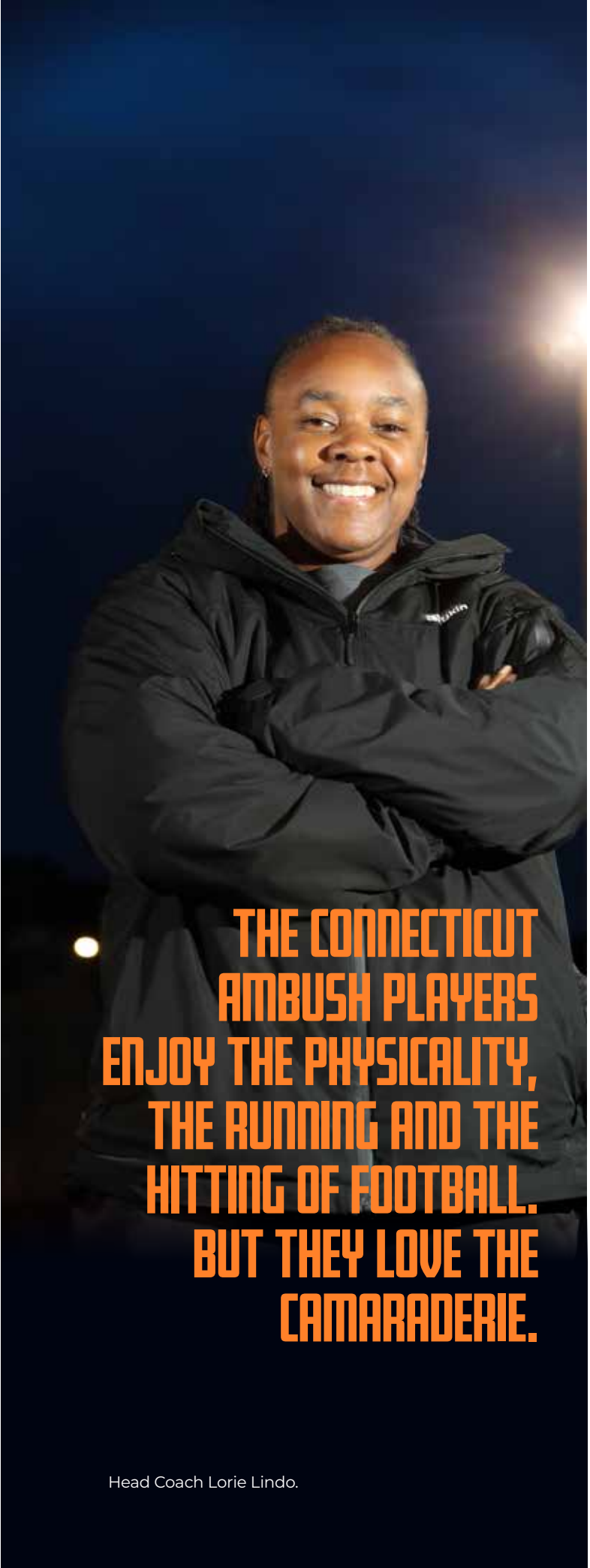
After playing soccer, basketball and softball in high school, she played soccer and basketball in college. For the past nine years, she's been playing women's football. "You always think that when you're a kid, the sports are gonna end, at some point," Valentino says, taking a break from warm-ups this spring. "And it's amazing that you get to continue to do this."

#21 Alisa Magowan

As quarterback, she knows all the plays, and there are a lot of them. "We've got run plays, we've got pass plays, we've got play action," Valentino explains, noting that the playbook is complicated and deep. During the game, she stays in touch with the sideline and gets the plays called through their offensive coordinator via headsets.

Valentino gets and calls the plays in the huddle, but Coleen Vacirca makes the calls off the field. Vacirca decided to tackle the job of owner and president of the Ambush team about three years ago after moving to Connecticut from Long Island. At the time, her daughter,

Quarterback #17 Sam Valentino gets congratulated after running for a touchdown.



THE CONNECTICUT AMBUSH PLAYERS ENJOY THE PHYSICALITY, THE RUNNING AND THE HITTING OF FOOTBALL. BUT THEY LOVE THE CAMARADERIE.

Head Coach Lorie Lindo.

Zoe Pilz, was playing for one of the three women's teams in Connecticut. For various reasons, those three teams were merging into one. Vacirca saw the opportunity to get more involved and keep her daughter on the field.

Pilz, 22, played football starting in the fourth grade on Long Island, the only girl on the boy's youth teams, and then in middle school, she says proudly.

"She was the one that has loved football her whole life," explains Vacirca about why they committed to keeping a team active in Connecticut. Her job isn't about running, throwing or tackling. It's primarily about keeping the team in the game by finding funding.

Head Coach Lorie Lindo talks strategy.

"We're a nonprofit," Vacirca says, noting that there are more expenses than are covered by the pay-to-play fees paid by each player. "It's hard to find the money."

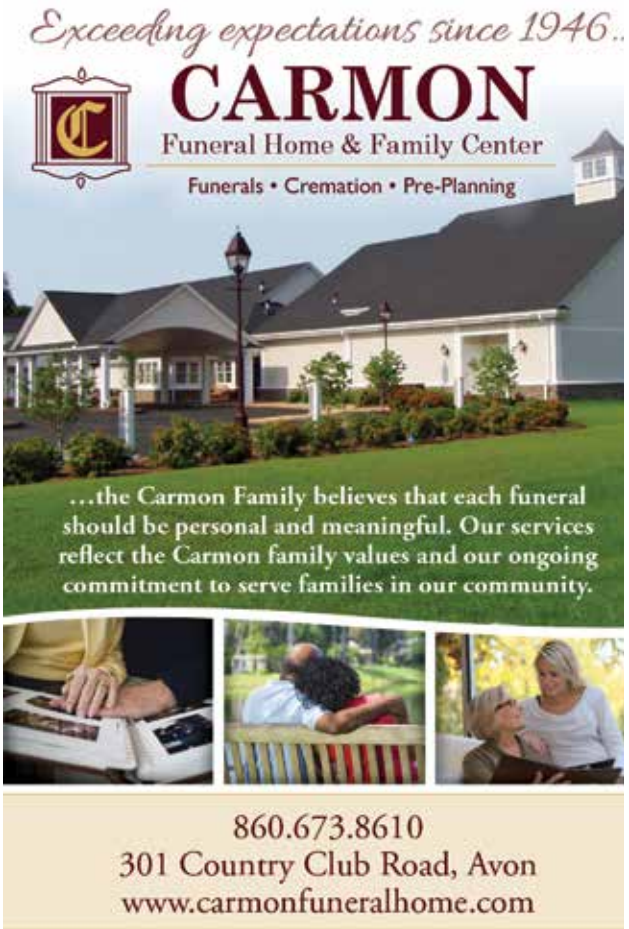
The AWFL has requirements. "We can't just go play on some random field somewhere," Vacirca explains. They need to have facilities and locker rooms.

This season, they played their home games at Veterans Memorial Stadium in New Britain, an impressive, but costly, venue. Then there are the away games; their last away game of the season was in Rochester, N.Y., against the Upstate Lady Predators, a round trip of about 700 miles.

"We wanted to rent a bus," says Vacirca. With the bus costing close to $6,000, everyone drove themselves. "And then we pay for hotels and we pay for our meals…we pay for everything. So, yeah, the fundraising piece of it is hard."

It's more difficult getting sponsors in a smaller market like Connecticut, Vacirca says. Teams in Boston or Houston (which has two teams, the Power and the Doom) have more resources.

On the flip side, in Connecticut, the Ambush get involved in the community. "We do a lot of pride fests and we do some community volunteer work. We try to help and be



active and…do things that get our name out there," Vacirca continues.

The strategy appears to be working as the team's fanbase is growing with people other than friends and family showing up in the stands and online followers now in the thousands.

Whatever it costs in money, time, pain and dedication, for the women, it's worth it. "This is the best team I've been a part of in my life," states Webb. "This takes me back to being a kid again. Because, hey, it's not about egos, it's all about us. It's all about your friends. These are my 30 big sisters out here."

Thirty sisters make for a big family that needs some strong parenting. That's part of the job of head coach Lorie Lindo leading the Ambush when she's not fulfilling her role as a sergeant with Connecticut State Police.

"I started playing football in 2011 with the New England Nightmare football team and fell in love with the game ever since," Lindo says.

After the 2020 season (cancelled due to COVID-19), Lindo moved into coaching, first with the Western Connecticut Hawks, and then with the Ambush since 2024. "Leadership has no gender. Being able to share my knowledge with these ladies, watch them grow over the years and help pave the path for the next generation is very rewarding."

She enjoys, "the opportunity to coach females in a predominant male sport and the opportunity to break barriers and be a trendsetter for the younger female generations that are getting involved in football."

Lindo notes how women are involved in every level of the game now, from Jen Welter coaching with the NFL's Arizona Cardinals in 2015 to Sarah Thomas officiating the Super Bowl in 2021. "It has taken females many years to break stereotype barriers and we are just beginning," she adds. "The opportunities for us are endless!"

But for all the camaraderie, the enthusiasm and the devotion, there's a consistent goal for the team. "Vince Lombardi said it best," Webb concludes. "Winning isn't everything. It's the only thing."

Regardless of the score at the end of a game, every member of this team walks off a winner.

With their 75-0 win over the New England Rebellion on May 30, the Ambush secured a trip to the playoffs in San Antonio, Texas. They compete in the Wild Card Round on June 13 in Rochester against the Upstate Lady Predators.

If they win that then they move on to the playoffs and potentially the championship game, which is called the Emerald Bowl. It will take place in San Antonio, Texas on July 25.

Find out more news, schedules, team store and joining information about the Connecticut Ambush team at ctambushfootball.com.

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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Summer Well-Being Starts Outside

By **KIM LUCEY**

Working out on the fitness court in Plainfield. Credit: Plainfield Recreation Department.

Plainfield residents are embracing working out in a new way at the town's fitness court. "It's a nice and different way of approaching fitness instead of going to a gym or being indoors."

Longer days, miles of shoreline, outdoor concerts, backyard dinners and evening walks through the neighborhood all help define summer in Connecticut. They may also help explain why so many people feel healthier and happier this time of year. Experts say outdoor movement, time spent near water and stronger social connections during the summer months can have lasting benefits for both the mind and body.

Outdoor movement

In Plainfield, residents are embracing working out in a new way at the town's fitness court at Lions Park, located next to town hall. "It's a nice and different way of approaching fitness instead of going to a gym or being indoors," says Beth Anderson, director of recreation for the Town of Plainfield. "Some people feel claustrophobic in a gym, so this gives them another option."

The court features a variety of exercise equipment mounted on an outdoor pad, with QR codes that connect users to guided workouts through an app. The workouts range from beginner to advanced levels, allowing residents to build strength and confidence at their own pace. "That way anyone can get started and work their way up," Anderson says. The equipment is used by everyone from fitness instructors leading classes focused on core training, mobility and balance, to seniors looking to stay active and independent.

And the fitness court is far from the only way Nutmeggers are taking their workouts outside. From yoga classes in city parks and beach yoga along the shoreline to outdoor Zumba and tai chi sessions offered through state and local recreation departments, experts say people are increasingly looking for ways to combine movement, fresh air and social connection. Outdoor exercises can, "help with mobility, heart and lung health, and there's also the social atmosphere, the endorphins and the vitamin D," states Anderson.

Let the endorphins flow

Experts say the benefits of outdoor exercise go beyond physical fitness. Dr. Fatima Motiwala, medical director of the REACH Program at Bridgeport Hospital, says exercise is one of the most evidence-based interventions for mild to moderate depression. "Studies show aerobic and resistance training help support neuron growth in the hippocampus, which is reduced in depression," Dr. Motiwala explains. "Exercise also releases endorphins, and studies have shown even greater gains with outdoor exercise compared to indoor exercise."

She adds that where you exercise makes a difference, too. "Choosing your walk matters. People get more benefits from walking through nature as opposed to the city, and people living in greener neighborhoods tend to show lower levels of mental health distress."

Yoga on the beach at Hammonasset Beach State Park on Long Island Sound. Credit: Kim Lucey.

The "Blue Mind" effect

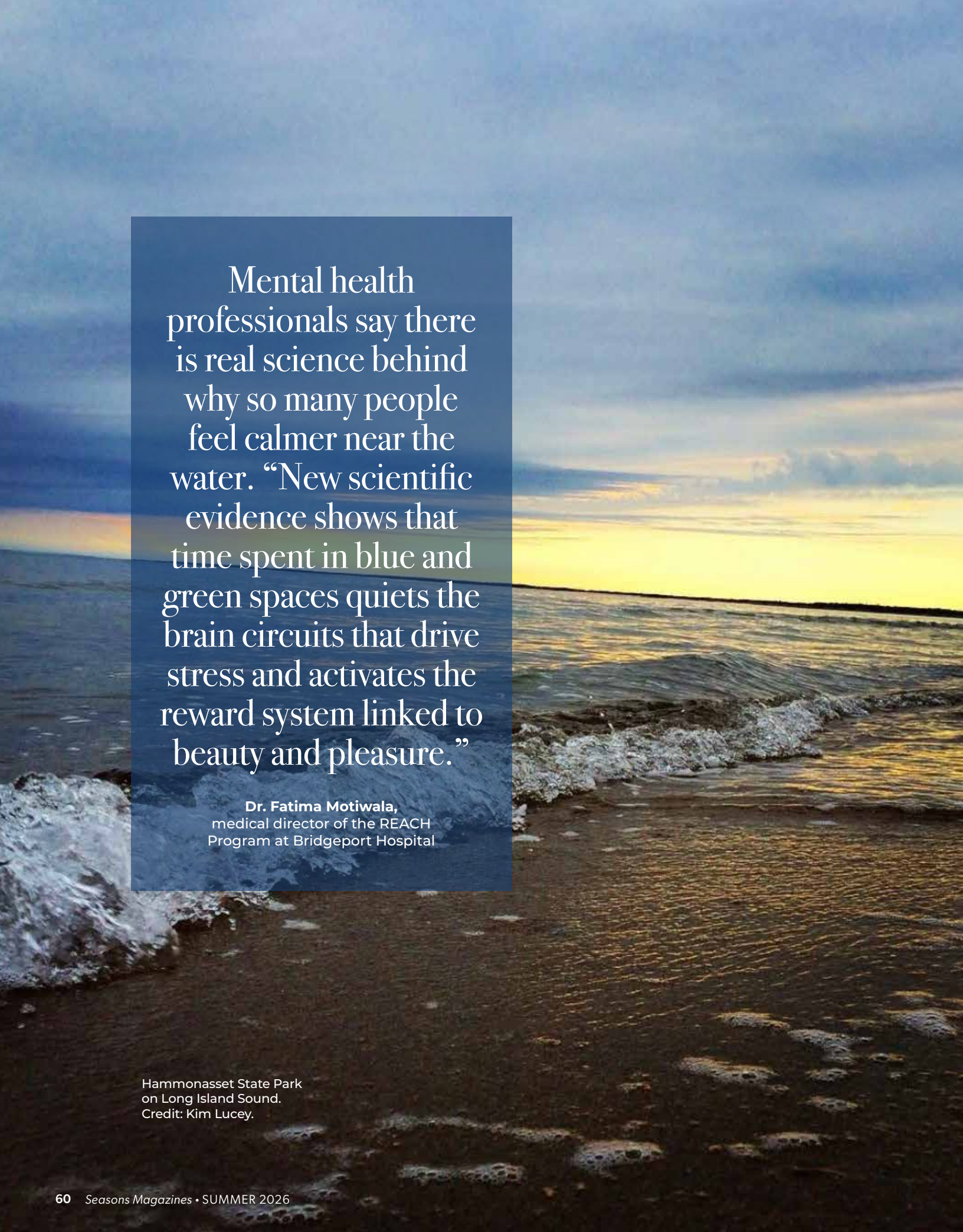
People living in Connecticut have ample access to take advantage of the "blue mind" effect with 332 miles of shoreline, plus more than 3,000 lakes, ponds and reservoirs and thousands of miles of rivers and streams. It's a term coined by a marine biologist to describe the mildly meditative state people experience when they are near oceans, lakes, pools or rivers.

Mental health professionals say there is real science behind why so many people feel calmer near the water. "New scientific evidence shows that time spent in blue and green spaces quiets the brain circuits that drive stress and activates the reward system linked to beauty and pleasure," Dr. Motiwala says. Research also suggests spending time near water has physical benefits, too, lowering heart rate, blood pressure and cortisol levels.

Water exercise and meditation

Water-based fitness programs make a splash year-round, but they can be especially appealing when the temperatures start to soar. More than 10 years ago, Joshua Sedgwick, senior program director for the Downtown Hartford YMCA, got into teaching aqua aerobics while recovering from a back injury.

"Water is the only reason I can now walk without pain," says Sedgwick. He says the classes are designed to help participants improve endurance, strength and mobility while reducing stress on the body. "The classes are truly for anybody looking to get moving. The best part is that they are low-impact exercises, meaning someone with joint issues will feel little pain, if any at all." He points out that water provides natural resistance while also reducing pressure on joints and tissues. "As the human body is less dense than water, the pressure on the joints is sig-



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Dr. Fatima Motiwala,
medical director of the REACH Program at Bridgeport Hospital

Hammonasset State Park on Long Island Sound. Credit: Kim Lucey.

nificantly reduced. That allows people to strengthen the tendons and tissues around the joints without the same pain they may feel on land."

In Plainfield, aquatic programming has expanded beyond exercising to include an increased focus on mental wellness. "Our pool meditation classes have been incredibly well-attended," says Anderson. "We dim the lights, use remote-controlled candles and everybody gets a float. A meditation instructor guides participants through verbal meditation or sound bowl music during a 45-minute session. It's become one of our most popular offerings," she states, attracting people of all ages. "Young, old, all the way around."

The social prescription

When the days grow long and the nights get warm, outdoor gatherings naturally follow. Whether it's a backyard BBQ, poolside brunch or beach day, there are plenty of opportunities for getting together with family and friends. Aside from strengthening bonds, these times together can also strengthen emotional well-being. "Socializing is very important for mental health," says Dr. Motiwala. "It triggers the release of oxytocin, dopamine, serotonin and endorphins, which help counteract stress responses."

Dr. Motiwala says loneliness has been strongly linked to depression, while regular social interaction can improve both mood and long-term brain health. "Studies have found loneliness is twice as likely to bring on depression," she describes. "Social engagement also builds cognitive reserve, lowering dementia risk by as much as 50%." With a season that naturally brings people together outdoors, Dr. Motiwala encourages people to prioritize connection whenever possible. "Treat invitations as a prescription for health, not a luxury."

Kim Lucey 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. Connect on and Instagram @kimlucey.

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Tyranny of the Ice Cream Truck

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

I'm standing on the 17th hole at Rockledge Golf Course in West Hartford, Conn. By some miracle, I'm one stroke better than my friend, Jeff, with one hole to go. I'm staring down a 12-foot putt that would give me a two-stroke lead going into the final hole. It might be enough to guarantee my victory.

I'm a good putter. I can't do much on a golf course, but I can putt. This is the kind of shot I can make. I need to read the green, find the break, make a plan, focus, concentrate and execute.

One problem…focus and concentration are impossible today.

The serene quiet of a golf course, interrupted only by the occasional chirp of a bird, is instead being violently disturbed today by something so monstrous as to make all rational thought impossible: the godforsaken ice cream truck.

Mr. Softee or The Screaming Freezer or Mister Sticky Fingers is somewhere nearby, with its incessant calliope music rolling across the fairway, over the greenside bunker, and into my ears and mind. All hope for focus and concentration is gone, thanks to this monstrous machine designed to bring children frozen bits of joy.

Except it doesn't. It's a false flag operation.

Allow me to explain. The ice cream truck is a fixture of the suburban summertime landscape, driving around town, pouring forth an endless stream of repetitive, nonsensical, painfully distracting music designed to attract the attention of otherwise inattentive human beings. It's an auditory nightmare.

I know what you're thinking: "But Matt! Children love the ice cream truck. Have you forgotten what it's like to be a child?"

No, I have not. I remember my childhood better than most, which is why I

understand the insidiousness of the ice cream truck. Yes, it's a vehicle filled with dairy and sugar delights. And yes, it brings these dairy and sugar delights to you. No need to drive to the store to buy a Klondike Bar, Drumstick or popsicle. These objects of tasty goodness are brought directly to your street, baseball field, park or wherever else you may be.

And yes, occasionally a mother or father or even baseball coach will spring for an icy treat, but for every time a child is given the cash reserves required to purchase one of these confessionary miracles, there are at least as many denials and rejections.

- "We had ice cream yesterday."
- "I don't want you to spoil your appetite."
- "You just ate dessert."
- "I don't have any money right now."

These and a thousand other excuses to deny a child a moment of creamy bliss, which makes the ice cream truck something truly insidious. A rolling casino of possibility and peril. A lottery of both destiny and defeat.

The ice cream truck essentially says: "Hey, I've brought ice cream directly to you. It's just a few feet away. An entire truck piled high with creamy, delicious, sugary ice cream magic."

But there's a catch. You must now convince your parent, who is well armed with ten million reasons to say no and a desire to constantly teach you lessons about nutrition and well-balanced diets — and, "Not always getting what you want!" — to fork over their hard-earned dollars so you can eat a Fudgy the Whale or a Super Duper Sno-Cone Blasteroony.

Your chances? 50/50 at best. It's a coin flip, kid. The music of this infernal machine signals happiness or disappointment; there's no telling which will befall you on any given day. Good luck!

The ice cream truck is a fixture of the suburban summertime landscape, driving around town, pouring forth an endless stream of repetitive, nonsensical, painfully distracting music designed to attract the attention of otherwise inattentive human beings. It's an auditory nightmare.

The ice cream truck is happiness in disguise. A wolf in sheep's clothing. A brightly colored punch in the face. At least some of the time. And for some children, most of the time.

And for a golfer, trying to sink a putt for a two-stroke lead, it's also a disturbance in the Force. An intrusion into an otherwise godly game. An offense to all that is holy and righteous about golf.

It's noise pollution. Auditory waste. An affront to all that is good and right.

So, as I line up my putt, I remove my phone from my pocket and send a text message: "Victor, can you turn that off for three minutes?" A moment later, the calliope music stops. The venomous sound waves have ceased. Victor, you see, is my former student, but he is also the ice cream truck driver in this neighborhood. He does me this favor whenever I ask.

I make my putt. I am now in possession of a two-stroke lead, which I am perfectly capable of losing on the final hole, except I also have one more card to play. I'll be asking Victor to crank up the volume while Jeff is lining up his putt, in hopes of disturbing his concentration because golf is a lot like the uncertainty of the ice cream truck. Some days, it's complete bliss. Other days, and for me, most days, it rips your heart out. I come back again and again, hoping for greatness, only to be disappointed. So much like the godforsaken ice cream truck.

I'm hoping for a little luck today. And maybe later, after I win and walk off this course with my head held high, a Blizzard Bonanza from Victor's truck, because for an adult whose children are sitting at home, and with money burning a hole in his pocket, the ice cream truck is always a joy to see. Especially when it is silent.

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." Connect on Facebook Instagram @matthewdicks.

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