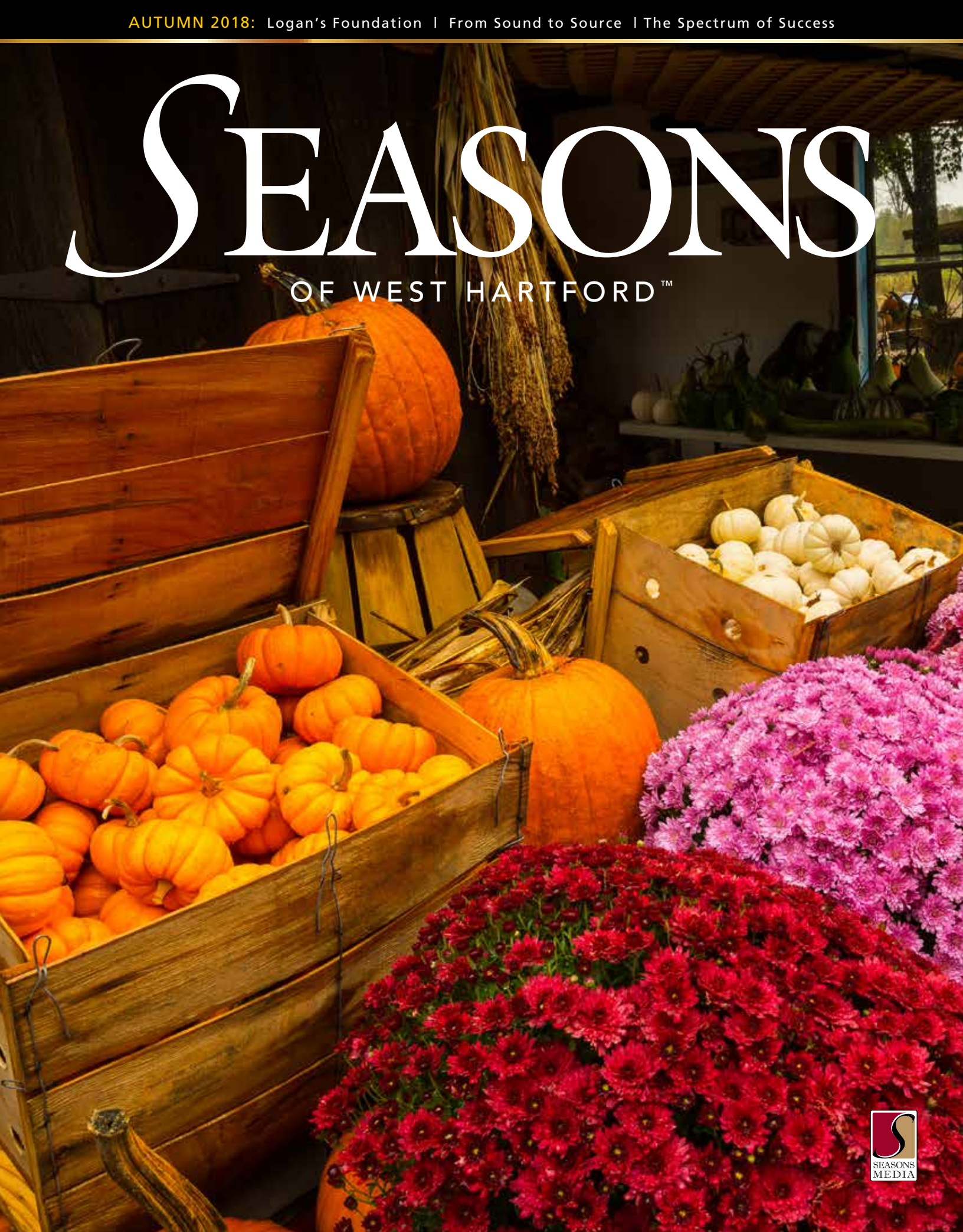


# SEASONS

OF WEST HARTFORD™





# A BUILDING FOR EVERY BUDGET



STORAGE BUILDINGS

BARNs

COOPs

GARAGES



OUTDOOR FURNITURE

GAZEBOS

PLAYSCAPES

**CAREFREE**  
*Since 1979*  
**SMALL BUILDINGS**  
*"Built To Last A Lifetime"*

Three convenient locations:

**Colchester** 860 267-7600 **Clinton** 860 664-1620 **Newington** 860 665-7577

[www.carefreebuildings.com](http://www.carefreebuildings.com) 1.800.326.SHED

We're also available at these fine dealers:

**Janice's Village**, Berlin 860-306-0147 **Diroma Home & Garden Center**, Griswold 860-591-1066

**Don't wait.** The Fed announced seven interest rate increases for 2018 and 2019.



## Consolidate Your Home Equity and Mortgage Payments and *Save.*

**Simsbury Bank's *Rising Rates Protection Program* is the answer.**

We're helping homeowners consolidate their mortgages, home equity loans and credit lines into one easy fixed-rate loan. So you're protected from the uncertainty and cost of rising rates.

***And now you can save even more with \$200 off the application fee.***

**[SimsburyBank.com/savenow](http://SimsburyBank.com/savenow)**



Bank this way.





# Relax and Unwind At Saybrook Point Inn

Take a break and escape to the shore. Enjoy luxurious accommodations, fine dining and relax at Sanno Spa, our full service spa. Whether you are looking for a quiet romantic getaway or a spa getaway with friends, Saybrook Point Inn is calling. Learn more at [Saybrook.com](http://Saybrook.com).



SAYBROOK  
POINT  
INN · MARINA · SPA

2 Bridge Street, Old Saybrook, CT 06475 | [Saybrook.com](http://Saybrook.com) | (860)395-2000





# *Make Plans To Stay Home.*

Are you comfortable living at home but starting to think about a long-term care plan?

Seabury At Home is Connecticut's first home-based Life Care program for adults 50 and over. Our Life Plan allows you to live independently at home, with the peace of mind that comes with knowing your future healthcare needs are covered.

Call 203-538-7720 for more information or e-mail [info@seaburylife.org](mailto:info@seaburylife.org).



50 Mitchell Drive, Suite 102, New Haven, CT 06511  
203-538-7720 | [seaburylife.org](http://seaburylife.org)





# Seasons' Greetings



As autumn arrives, there's so much to appreciate in our beautiful state – cooler days and nights, the gorgeous colors of turning leaves, and the bounty of fresh fruits and vegetables that can be picked or purchased at numerous family-run farms. From hot apple cider and pumpkin pie to corn mazes, hayrides and Halloween, there are plenty of things to savor.

In the spirit of the season, writer Amanda Call visited a well-known pastry chef to sample her fall-inspired desserts and snag a recipe for *Seasons* readers to try their hands at. You won't want to miss it.

Curling up to read a good book or magazine, indoors or out, is another autumn treat. Lori Kase takes you on a tour of Connecticut's literary landmarks – places that celebrate the wit and wisdom of our homegrown

authors, many of them recognized and celebrated around the world. We hope you'll visit a few of these inspiring locales and then happily read the books that were written there.

You'll also meet a woman who loves to travel this great country so much that she has launched a new business to allow her to do just that. Eileen Smith has clocked countless miles in her 34-foot RV, from Acadia National Park to Florida to Seattle, and numerous points in between. Now, she's operating a "traveling bed and breakfast," inviting clients to join her on the adventure.

Closer to home, Theresa Sullivan Barger shines a light on local efforts to help young people with Autism Spectrum Disorder succeed after high school. Today, one in 59 U.S. children has been identified with ASD, and the employment statistics for these young people are grim. Fortunately, work is underway to change that.

These are just some of the stories we're happy to share with you. Dig in and enjoy ... and as always, thank you for reading.

*Carol*

Carol Latter, Editorial Director



Visit us online at  
[www.seasonsmagazines.com](http://www.seasonsmagazines.com)

Follow us on Twitter  
@SeasonsMag

Like us on Facebook  
[Facebook.com/SeasonsMedia](https://www.facebook.com/SeasonsMedia)



*Seasons of West Hartford*™  
is published by *Seasons Magazines*  
James P. Tully, Owner/Publisher

Creative Director  
Stacy Wright Murray

Editorial Director  
Carol Latter

Cover Photograph  
Justin Coleman

For advertising information please  
contact James P. Tully at 860-413-2022  
Seasons Magazines  
6 Sharlin Drive, Simsbury, CT 06092

## Winter fun just a click away!

Ski Sundown is an awesome place to be introduced to skiing and snowboarding!

We offer lessons & programs for ages 3+. Our professional instructors are dedicated to making the experience memorable and successful.

Let's get you and your family started on a season of winter fun!



Winter made better!

Register for programs **NOW** at [skisundown.com](http://skisundown.com), or 860-379-7669 x 211

**OPEN 7 DAYS & 7 NIGHTS • 100% SNOWMAKING COVERAGE • GROOMED TWICE A DAY**

**New Hartford, CT / 860-379-7669 / [skisundown.com](http://skisundown.com)**





# Autumn

2018

“ Fall has always been my favorite season. The time when everything bursts with its last beauty, as if nature had been saving up all year for the grand finale.”

– Lauren DeStefano



page 6.  
*In the Spirit*  
 Logan's Foundation

page 12.  
*Health & Wellness*  
 Dr. Weishali Joshi  
 Saint Francis Hospital

page 16.  
*Arts & Culture*  
 Literary Landmarks

page 39.  
*Travel*  
 On the Road Again

page 34.  
*Delicious*  
 Fruitful Endeavors

page 46.  
*Feature*  
 From Sound to Source

page 54.  
*Business*  
 The Spectrum of  
 Success

page 63.  
*Final Thoughts*  
 Good Sports



# LOGAN'S LEGACY

**A foundation in memory of a young Patriots fan helps families battle the costs of childhood cancer.**

*by* MATTHEW BRODERICK

Logan Schoenhardt will be remembered by most Americans for two things – first, his courageous seven-year battle with brain cancer, distilled neatly into a moving 11-minute and 45-second profile on ESPN's E:60 about his love of the New England Patriots, and second, a devotion to Tom Brady so great that in advance of his sixth and final brain surgery at age 10, he requested that his surgeon carve the NFL player's uniform number (12) into his skull.

The ESPN segment propelled the family's story into the national spotlight, spreading virally on YouTube. It also provided Logan with an opportunity to meet Brady, his hero, in person in December 2016. But Matt and Jo Schoenhardt, who lost their son to cancer in 2017, wanted Logan's legacy to be greater than football or a number. "I needed to take his death [as a reason] to create something good," Matt says. "It was part of my grieving process."





**TRUE PATRIOTS:** Logan Schoenhardt, 10, met his hero, Tom Brady, in December 2016 ... two months before the young football fan passed away. Photo courtesy of the Schoenhardt family.





**BRIGHT LIGHT:** Logan had a sunny disposition and always thought of others before himself.

So last year, the Schoenhardts created Logan's Foundation for Childhood Cancer, a nonprofit charitable foundation, to raise money to help ease the financial burdens that can cripple families battling childhood cancer, and can be as life-altering as the cancer diagnosis itself. In fact, according a report by the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, hospital stays for pediatric cancer are, on average, eight days

longer than for other pediatric conditions and cost nearly \$40,000 per stay – more than five times the cost of other medical conditions. And those are simply the hospital costs.

"The diagnosis of [childhood] cancer has a psychological and social toll in itself," says Shannon Grad, senior director of Family Experience and Professional Practice at Connecticut Children's Medical Center, where Logan often received treatment. "We can't expect a family to be able to work or live the lives they previously did before the diagnosis and potential treatment ramifications. Their whole world comes to a standstill."

The Schoenhardts understand the sacrifices and hardships of cancer firsthand, including the stress on a family's budget. While they had a major medical policy that covered many of Logan's medical expenses – including countless rounds of radiation and chemotherapy – they still grappled with co-pays and the out-of-pocket expenses for certain cancer-related prescriptions since doctors first discovered a grapefruit-sized tumor on Logan's brain at the age of 3.

The family was fortunate to have an outpouring of volunteer and financial support from their church and Logan's school, The Master's School in Simsbury, along with a network of friends who provided gas cards, paid electric bills and bought food for the family. Such support helped the Schoenhardts survive on Matt's income and allowed Jo to stay with Logan during every step of his journey, including extended stays in Boston at times for advanced proton radiation treatments. It also became the model of support upon which the Schoenhardts created Logan's Foundation.

"We want to help ease the financial burdens for a family suffering with childhood cancer," Matt says. Some families, he says, can't afford to have one parent stay home with their child because they both have to work. "If our foundation

can help a family with its monthly budget and allow them to take time off from work to spend time with their child, that's the goal."

And it's not just the necessities like heating and electric bills that are important, Jo says. She points to some of the "adventures" she and Logan took to the Connecticut Science Center, Mystic Aquarium and Boston's Museum of Science. "I would often take Logan, who loved dinosaurs and animals and had a natural curiosity, to these places." The gas, parking and admission fees cost money that they could scarcely afford, "but those are the types of activities and fun, when the days are so hard, that make life bearable."

To raise the funds to help other families, the Schoenhardts held their foundation's inaugural Reindeer Ball in Simsbury last December. It was an upbeat celebration incorporating many of the things in life that Logan loved – Christmas, Star Wars, toys, fun. "It's a black-tie event but everyone was given either a Santa hat or reindeer antlers to wear," Matt says. "It needed to have an element of silliness that Logan would have liked."

Several local businesses provided sponsorships and in-kind contributions, including Necker's Toyland in Simsbury, where Jo used to take Logan to cheer him up after treatments. Necker's provided a gift bag of small toys that Logan would have liked, for event guests to enjoy.

The event helped raise \$70,000 for the foundation, which is now in the process of selecting a family of a child being treated for cancer at Connecticut Children's Medical Center. "Families may apply and, to start, we will select one family to help," Matt says. The monthly financial support through Logan's Foundation will remain a constant for the chosen family until their child's cancer is in remission for a set period of time.

The Schoenhardts hope to eclipse last year's fundraising total at this year's ball, scheduled for Saturday, December 8 at The Riverview in Simsbury. The event, featuring a cocktail hour, dinner and dancing, is focused on fun. "It's not a somber event at all, but we hope people are inspired to make a monthly contribution, which is how we will be able to make our support to a family sustainable," Matt says, noting that the goal is to eventually help additional families. The oncology center at Connecticut Children's provides care to more than 100 newly diagnosed cancer patients each year.

One of last year's Reindeer Ball attendees was Dr. Jon Martin, the neurosurgeon who etched Brady's number 12 onto Logan's skull. Dr. Martin, chief of neurosurgery at Connecticut Children's, hopes Logan's Foundation will help people appreciate the daily grind that childhood cancer families endure.

"What people focus on in Logan's story is the number 12, a single event during his care," he says. "But the story of Logan means a lot more to me than just the number 12."

While the E:60 profile did mention Logan's multiple surgeries, radiation and bouts of chemotherapy, Dr. Martin says, most people can't relate to the stress of the daily responsibilities and care required. "I treat patients whose parents are working two jobs for survival and can't be at the hospital [as often as they'd like]. To have to make that kind

of choice is horrific, but it's often the reality."

Childhood cancer survival rates have risen dramatically over the past 40 years, from nearly 58 percent in the mid-1970s to more than 80 percent today (accounting for all types of cancer), according to the American Cancer Society. Achieving that improved outcome often requires children to be subjected to more treatments, so opportunities to boost a patient's morale are important, Dr. Martin says.

He's happy that his now-famous #12 craftsmanship, in part, set in motion Logan's opportunity to meet the famed Patriots quarterback. "I was initially caught off guard with the request, but it was in line with who Logan was," Dr. Martin recalls. "I feel good that it helped create some fun experiences for him and was a great story for a lot of people."

The Schoenhardts are eternally grateful for the experiences that the New England Patriots – and their star quarterback – afforded their son. In addition to Logan being honorary team captain for the team's December 4, 2016 game vs. the Rams, he and his family got to meet the Patriots' first Super Bowl team (which was honored at halftime), hold the Patriots' Super Bowl trophies and spend time in the office of team owner Robert Kraft.

"Logan was beyond overjoyed," Jo recalls. "The Patriots are a wonderful organization, and when you meet Robert Kraft, you are [treated like] family." And then, of course, was number 1 on Logan's bucket list – meeting number 12 himself.

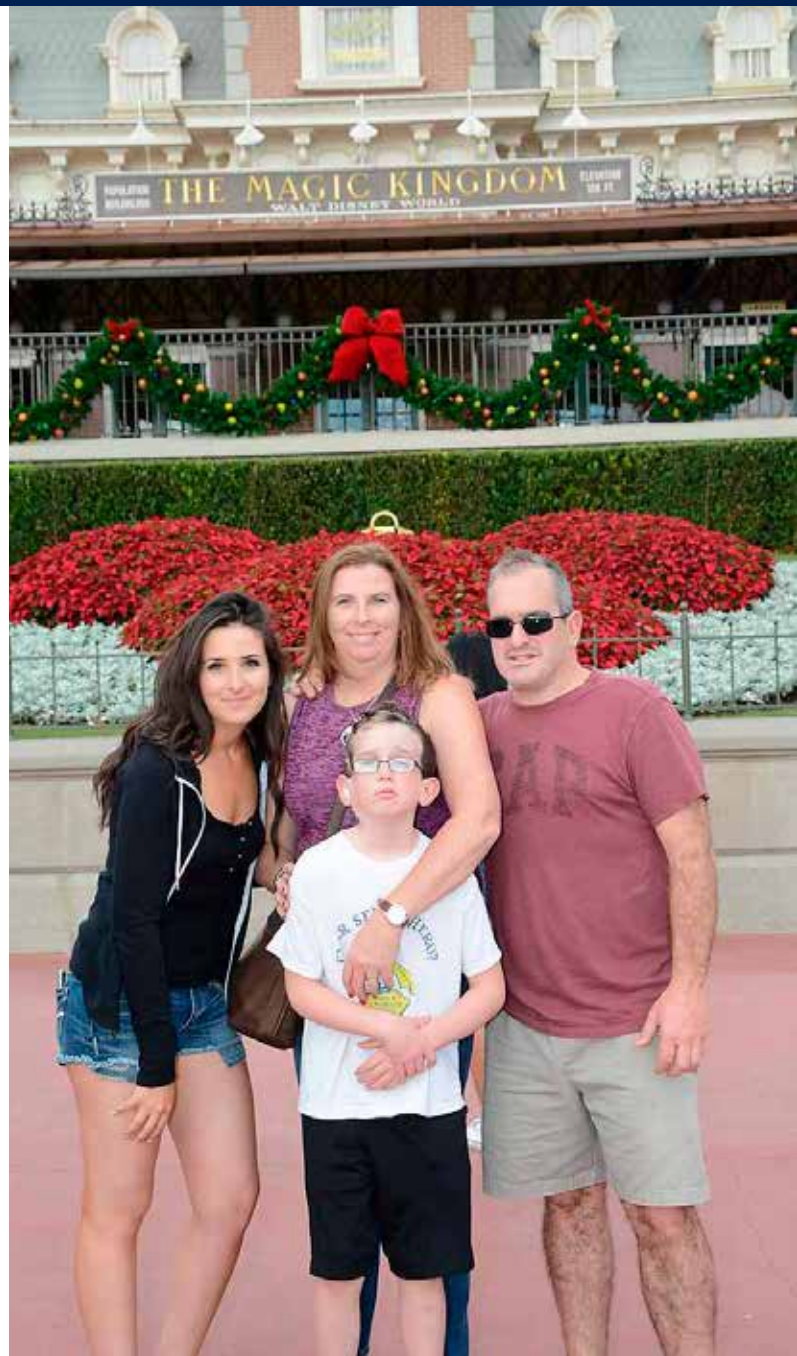
"Tom was amazing and spent a lot of time with Logan," Matt says. Brady posed for photos and signed a football, which Logan – always thinking of others, his parents explain – gave to his best friend, Andrew.

On February 5, 2017, trailing 28-3 late in the third quarter of Super Bowl LI, the Patriots – facing a less than one-percent statistical likelihood of winning their fifth Lombardi trophy – mounted the greatest comeback in Super Bowl history, cementing Tom Brady's legacy as arguably the greatest of all time. It was the last Patriots game Logan ever saw; he passed away one week later – on February 13, 2017.

But with a foundation created in memory of their son, who spent most of his life facing a much tougher opponent than an NFL superstar, the Schoenhardts want Logan's own legacy to be about giving back. "With the money we're raising, we're going to help families in a sustainable way for years to come," Matt says. "Logan would be happy to know we're doing that."

To view ESPN's E60 video about Logan, support the 2018 Reindeer Ball, or make a monthly contribution to support the financial needs of a Connecticut family fighting childhood cancer, please visit [logansfoundationforchildhoodcancer.org](http://logansfoundationforchildhoodcancer.org).

*Matt Broderick lives in Simsbury and regrets that he never got to meet Logan in person. He's sure, given their mutual love of the Patriots, Tom Brady and Stars Wars, that they would have been fast friends.*



**FAMILY FUN:** Logan with sister Keara and parents Jo and Matt at Disney World.



To view ESPN's E60 video about Logan, support the **2018 REINDEER BALL**,

or to make a monthly contribution to support the financial needs of a Connecticut family fighting childhood cancer, please visit [www.logansfoundationforchildhoodcancer.org](http://www.logansfoundationforchildhoodcancer.org).



# RIZZO POOLS

*Celebrating 62 Years of Quality  
Service, Construction, & Renovation*



CALL US NOW FOR A FREE IN-HOME CONSULTATION

**(860) 666-1531**

or visit [www.RizzoPools.com](http://www.RizzoPools.com)



Building the  
world's finest pools

Rizzo Pools, LLC • CT Reg # HIC-0630439 • SPB Lisc # 000001 • SP-1 Lisc # PLM0280399-SP1

**BEST OF  
Hartford  
MAGAZINE  
2014  
WINNER  
10 YEARS  
IN A ROW!**



YOU'RE INVITED TO OUR...



ShopRite®

# Flavor Showcase!



## Sample New Tastes & Exciting Flavors.



**Welcome to our brand new, weekly, product sampling event.**

Our Flavor Showcase Presenters invite you to taste a wide range of unique, interesting and surprising new food items. We'll provide education on product features such as; flavor profiles, health benefits, food preparation, and more. Step right up and taste all the flavors! *See store for dates & times.*

Owned and Operated by Joseph Family Markets

LOCATION: THE SHOPPES OF FARMINGTON VALLEY, 110 ALBANY TURNPIKE, CANTON, CT



# Dr. Weishali Joshi

**S**aint Francis Hospital and Medical Center rheumatologist Dr. Weishali Joshi always wanted to be a doctor. She excelled in her studies and started medical school at Grant Medical College in Mumbai when she was just 16 years old.

Little did she know at the time that her medical career would take her halfway around the world.

While completing her medical school and residency training in internal medicine in western India, she imagined she would eventually practice in her home country. But when her soon-to-be husband, also a physician, decided to pursue a career in endocrinology – and set his sights on training and research opportunities at the University of Connecticut – that expectation changed.

“We were married, he came to Connecticut for his residency, and I followed,” says Dr. Joshi.

## **RHEUMATOLOGY: “A CALLING FROM ABOVE”**

Arriving in the U.S. when she was 25 years old, she took her licensing exams and did a second internal medicine residency, this time at UConn’s School of Medicine. She joined the staff at Saint Francis in 1999 as an attending in the hospital’s ambulatory care center, where she worked for 11 years.

“I never thought I would do a fellowship,” says Dr. Joshi. In fact, she recalls that when the residents working in the clinic would ask her for career advice, she would counsel them to do a fellowship immediately after residency, “or the opportunity to do a fellowship significantly decreases.”

But one day, while chatting with her clinical director, she mentioned in passing that if she could do any fellowship, she would choose rheumatology.

“That same day, we found out in a meeting that Saint Francis would be sponsoring a rheumatology fellow, and my boss said, ‘This is a calling from above; you should pursue this.’ ”

Despite some reservations – she was already 41 years old and a mother of two young children at the time – Dr. Joshi applied for and was awarded the fellowship position at UConn.

Upon completing her rheumatology training, she took

another position at Saint Francis as a rheumatologist.

“It was literally a no-brainer. I didn’t look anywhere else,” says Dr. Joshi. “Saint Francis is home.”

What drew Dr. Joshi to rheumatology was the complexity of the specialty and its multidisciplinary nature – rheumatologic conditions can involve all the different systems in the body.

“We used to see a lot of rheumatologic problems in the clinic, like joint pain and musculoskeletal issues,” Dr. Joshi recalls. “We would diagnose them and send them to rheumatology and patients would be put on all these cool medicines and then feel better. So I was very intrigued.”


In fact, these “cool medicines” – the so-called “biologics” – were increasingly used in the years leading up to Dr. Joshi’s certification in rheumatology and have revolutionized the treatment of rheumatologic conditions such as lupus and rheumatoid arthritis (RA). Unlike chemical-based drugs, biologics are cell-based, produced through biotechnology methods and other cutting-edge technologies.

“We do not want to see anybody with RA disabled or with deformities that impact their ability to function day to day,” says Dr. Joshi. “With the biologic therapies, people with rheumatologic conditions are now expected to have a normal quality of life, free from pain.”

## **DIAGNOSING: MEDICAL DETECTIVE WORK**

Rheumatologists treat illnesses involving the joints, muscles and soft tissues, including many autoimmune diseases – conditions in which the immune system goes awry and starts attacking healthy tissue, mistaking the body’s own cells for foreign invaders like bacteria or viruses. There are more than 100 different autoimmune diseases, but the most common ones that Dr. Joshi treats are lupus, RA, ankylosing spondylitis (AS), scleroderma, polymyositis (PM), and Sjögren’s syndrome.

“Usually, patients are referred to me because of joint pain, or because they have tested positive on certain diagnostic tests,” says Dr. Joshi. These might include the ANA (antinuclear antibodies) test, which indicates that there are antibodies in the blood, or others that detect the presence of inflammation in the body – like the CRP (C-reactive

A professional portrait of a woman with dark, shoulder-length hair, wearing black-rimmed glasses, a dark blazer, a white top, and a pearl necklace. She is smiling slightly. The background is a light grey wall with a pink flower on the left side.

Written by **Lori Miller Kase**  
Photography by **Seshu Photography**

**MEANT TO BE:** A serendipitous opportunity helped to guide Dr. Joshi's career direction.



protein) or sed rate (erythrocyte sedimentation rate) tests.

“I take the patient’s history, assess the pattern of their symptoms, and in some cases can make a bedside diagnosis,” she says. “What is their age? Is their pain associated with activities, or does it wake them from sleep at night?”

RA and osteoarthritis are more common later in life, she says, while lupus is more likely to strike women in their childbearing years. If a young patient comes in with back pain, Dr. Joshi says she is more likely to consider AS.

“Medicine is detective work,” she says, “You take the patient history and you go by experience as well. No two patients are alike. You need to use clinical judgment.”

The American College of Rheumatology also offers guidelines and specific diagnostic criteria that aid doctors in teasing out the cause of a patient’s symptoms. There are many different types of arthritis, for example. Someone with RA, Dr. Joshi says, typically has morning stiffness, and the small joints in the hands are likely to be affected. In osteoarthritis, there is less morning stiffness and more pain after they’ve used their hands a lot. In psoriatic arthritis, patients tend to have something called “sausage digits” due to inflammation in their fingers; and patients with arthritic pain who have a history of bug bites might have Lyme-induced arthritis.

Part of her job, says Dr. Joshi, is allaying her patients’ anxiety and reassuring them that whatever they’ve diagnosed themselves with after researching their symptoms on the Internet doesn’t necessarily apply.

“That’s half the battle right now,” says Dr. Joshi. “There’s such an overload of information out there, and so many myths.”

## THE EVOLUTION OF THE BIOLOGICS

Dr. Joshi remembers the first biologic – infliximab – appearing on the market around the time she finished her residency.

“At the time, there was a lot concern about the drug causing infection, reactivation of tuberculosis, and malignancies. There were many side effects,” she says. “I thought, ‘Who in their right mind would give these medicines to anyone?’”

Today, she says, the biologics, also known as monoclonal antibodies, have fewer side effects and have had a huge impact on the treatment of rheumatologic conditions.

Monoclonal antibodies are basically clones of antibody molecules that enlist the body’s immune system to help fight disease. In the case of the autoimmune disorders, these “fake” antibodies bind to the cells that cause inflammation, thus inhibiting their action.

“These drugs block the processes that cause tissue damage,” explains Dr. Joshi.

As the biologics have evolved, they have become more targeted. More and more research is going on to figure out what specific cells to target, she says. Cytokines are cell-

signaling molecules that call other immune cells to the site of inflammation.

“Scientists are learning which particular cytokines cause the most pathogenesis [origin and development] of a disease, and targeting the drugs to those cytokines,” says Dr. Joshi.

Disease modifying agents like methotrexate and biologics like etanercept (Enbrel) and adalimumab (Humira) are so successful at controlling patients’ symptoms, she says, that rheumatologists are now faced with the dilemma of whether, and when, to taper or discontinue them.

“These are all chronic diseases; they are not going away. These drugs keep these diseases under control, but don’t cure them. And they do still have some side effects. So you have a patient with RA who is stable. Now do you take the plunge and taper or discontinue therapy? Or is that going to cause worse damage? That is one of the questions I ask myself every day.”

Though the biologics are very expensive, the recent emergence of “biosimilar” drugs, which are basically the generic versions of biologics, should help alleviate the financial burden of treating these disorders, she says. Dr. Joshi supports patients trying complementary therapies like acupuncture, meditation, or turmeric, a natural anti-inflammatory that has been used as a medicinal in India for centuries.

## TEACHING AND TREATING: A REWARDING COMBINATION

Part of Dr. Joshi’s job is teaching UConn residents and Saint Francis fellows.

“I love teaching,” she says. “The focus on teaching and education at Saint Francis was a big part of me coming back to the institution after the fellowship.”

But her greatest satisfaction has been witnessing the huge difference that medicine can make in her patients’ lives.

“We see patients who cannot do anything – they’ve been out of work for two months, their hands are hurting, their bodies are hurting,” she says. “Just seeing them get back to work and their normal lives, seeing how stable they are and how well they can do on these medications, that has been the most rewarding thing for me.” ■

*Dr. Joshi lives in West Hartford with her husband. They have two daughters – one is a second-year medical student and the other is a college sophomore, pursuing a science, technology and international affairs major. When she is not working, Dr. Joshi enjoys playing tennis and practicing a classical form of Indian dance called Kathak.*

*Lori Miller Kase is a freelance writer living in Simsbury.*

*Photographer Seshu Badrinath of Avon specializes in intimate, natural portraits of families and children. For more information, visit [seshuphotography.com](http://seshuphotography.com)*



## What Inspires the Way We Care? All the Ways You Do

Sometimes you need more than a team, so we built a network. Introducing Trinity Health Of New England Medical Group—bringing together the over 1,000 trusted providers of Saint Francis, Johnson Memorial, Mount Sinai, Saint Mary's and Mercy Medical Center, in more than 100 convenient locations across western Massachusetts and Connecticut.

Because you're always there when needed—so are we. Learn more and find providers from Saint Francis, Mount Sinai and Johnson Memorial Hospital serving your community at [TrinityHealthOfNE.org/medicalgroup](http://TrinityHealthOfNE.org/medicalgroup).







# Literary Landmarks

For writers and readers in the Nutmeg State,  
inspiration is all around.

by LORI MILLER KASE

**B**ook-lovers in the region are likely aware that Samuel Clemens – a.k.a. Mark Twain – penned such classics as *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* and *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* on the top floor of a Victorian home which still stands at the corner of Farmington Avenue and Forest Street in Hartford. And that just a stone’s throw away, the former home of Harriet Beecher Stowe offers visitors a glimpse into the life of the renowned author of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*.

But they may not know that they can retrace the footsteps of American modernist poet Wallace Stevens, following the route he traveled daily between his home in Hartford’s West End and his executive job at The Hartford as he composed his verse. Or that the childhood home of author Madeleine L’Engle – as well as the real-life inspiration for the setting in her novel *A Wrinkle in Time* – can be found in the Litchfield Hills.

Before the colder weather strikes, Connecticut residents who tend to spend their winter leisure hours curled up inside with a book can indulge their bibliophilic tendencies by traveling along a book trail of sorts. Enjoy the fall foliage, while visiting the literary landmarks scattered across Litchfield and Hartford counties and peppering the shoreline. Ranging from famous authors’ homes to the settings of classic books, these literary destinations suggest that our state served as a muse for some of the country’s most beloved writers. Here, the top picks in our area:

## WHERE CONNECTICUT WRITERS WROTE

The homes of several of this country’s literary greats, preserved as historical landmarks and open to the public, offer guests an opportunity to peek into the lives of the creators of some of their favorite tomes:

- **The Mark Twain House & Museum:** After Mark Twain visited Hartford (then a publishing hub) in 1871 to meet with the publisher of his first book, *The Innocents*

*Abroad*, he commented in a letter to a San Francisco newspaper, “I think this is the best built and handsomest town I have ever seen.” A few years later, he built his dream house in the Nook Farm neighborhood bordering the Park River in Hartford – right next door to another literary powerhouse, Harriet Beecher Stowe. (Another notable neighbor, writer Charles Dudley Warner, would later collaborate with Twain to produce *The Gilded Age*.) Today, visitors can tour the restored 25-room Victorian Gothic home, including the billiard room/study where Twain sequestered himself at a desk in the corner to create the works that went on to become American literary classics. Ranked as one of the top 10 best historic homes in the world by National Geographic, the Mark Twain House & Museum gives Twain fans an intimate look into the scribe’s domestic life, and also offers an array of cultural programs, including book talks and writing workshops. The library, where Clemens once made up stories for his daughters, incorporating objects now replicated on the mantel and featuring the young girls portrayed in an oil painting that still hangs on the library wall, is periodically opened to aspiring authors for three uninterrupted hours of writing in this historic setting, imbued with the spirit of this literary genius.

*Mark Twain House & Museum, 351 Farmington Avenue, Hartford. (marktwainhouse.org)*

- **The Harriet Beecher Stowe House:** The 5,000-square-foot cottage-style home next door to the Mark Twain House celebrates the life and legacy of the author whose most famous work, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, exposed the inhumanity of slavery and strengthened the abolitionist movement in this country. Though the 1871 house is furnished with ornate Victorian-style furniture characteristic of the period, the homey interior gives visitors an impression of the writer’s artsy and down-to-earth sensibility. Several of her own paintings hang on the walls, and a sitting room off the bedroom contains a bureau, nightstand, and cane chair





**HARRIET'S HOME:** The Harriet Beecher Stowe House. Stowe, the internationally famous author of the bestselling antislavery novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, lived her final 23 years in the home until her death in 1896. The home is now a National Historic Landmark open year round for tours and programs. Photography courtesy of **Harriet Beecher Stowe Center**, Hartford, CT. [harrietbeecherstowe.org](http://harrietbeecherstowe.org)







**MAN OF MANY WORDS:** The childhood home of Noah Webster, creator of America’s first dictionary, is open to the public.

decorated by Stowe, herself. The house is surrounded by historic gardens featuring some of the author’s favorite flowers, as well as plants that were popular in Victorian-era gardens. The “Wildflower Garden” on the side of the house, for example, reflects the author’s love of wildflowers – she planted, picked and painted them – while the “Harriet Beecher Stowe Dogwood” in the backyard is thought to have been planted while Stowe lived at the Forest Street home. The Harriet Beecher Stowe Center offers many special events and programs designed to encourage civic engagement, including *Salons at Stowe*, community conversations on social justice issues. *Harriet Beecher Stowe Center, 77 Forest Street, Hartford. (stowehousecincy.org; harrietbeecherstowecenter.org)*

• **The Wallace Stevens Walk:** Although Stevens’ former home on 118 Westerly Terrace in Hartford is privately owned, admirers of his modernist poetry can see where he composed much of his verse – along the perambulatory commute he made from his home to his office at The Hartford. Visitors are guided along the 2.4-mile walk by 13 granite markers, each inscribed with a line from his most well known poem, “Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird.” According to Jim Finnegan, president of Friends & Enemies of Wallace Stevens (the organization that preserved Stevens’ legacy by commemorating his route), Stevens would make notes in his tiny handwriting on little slips of paper he carried in his pockets as he travelled to and from work, and would have his secretary type them up at the office. *Wallace Stevens Walk, begins at The Hartford, 690 Asylum Avenue, Hartford. (www.stevenspoetry.org)*

• **Noah Webster House:** Though West Hartford native Noah Webster was a prolific writer, he is best known for the dictionary that bears his name. The famous wordsmith spent his formative years in the small historic farmhouse that still stands at 227 S. Main Street, though the 90 acres that once comprised the property have been whittled down to one. Visitors to his childhood home can learn about how the staunch patriot created the once ubiquitous *Blue-Backed Speller* in 1783 (still in print today), because he believed that to be an independent country, America needed to teach its children to speak, write, and spell in American – not British – English. *An American Dictionary of the English Language*, which took the lexicographer 26 years to complete, contained more than 65,000 words and their definitions, and further helped to standardize American spelling. “He gave writers the tools to write their great works,” says Jennifer DiCola Matos, executive director of the Noah Webster House. In addition to celebrating Webster’s accomplishments, the Noah Webster House also celebrates the written word and the spoken word through poetry nights, book talks and author events. *Noah Webster House, 227 South Main Street, West Hartford. (noahwebsterhouse.org)*

• **Monte Cristo Cottage:** The boyhood summer home of playwright Eugene O’Neill, this New London cottage overlooking the Long Island Sound was named in honor of his father, actor James O’Neill, who played the lead role in both the stage and film adaptations of *The Count of Monte Cristo*. America’s only Nobel Prize-winning playwright, Eugene O’Neill set two of his most famous works – *Long Day’s Journey into Night* and *Ah, Wilderness!* at the cottage.



Visitors to this national historic landmark, which is operated by the nearby Eugene O'Neill Theater Center in Waterford, can gain insight into the playwright's life and work. *Monte Cristo Cottage*, 325 Pequot Avenue, New London. ([theoneill.org/mcc](http://theoneill.org/mcc))

• **Gillette Castle:** Built from Connecticut stone atop one of a series of hills known as the Seven Sisters, this majestic, modern-day castle overlooking the Connecticut River in East Haddam was once home to William Gillette, the American actor, playwright and director who brought Sherlock Holmes to life on stage and screen. Another product of Nook Farm, Gillette was cast in his first speaking role by his neighbor Mark Twain, in a theatrical adaptation of *The Gilded Age*, but soared to stardom and made his fortune playing Holmes, first in the play he adapted from Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes stories, and later in the film, which he also wrote. Mystery lovers will especially admire this 24-room mansion, once referred to as "Gillette's Folly," which is filled with secret doors, puzzle locks, and hidden mirrors, and features many other eccentricities, including built-in couches, light switches carved from wood, a table that moves on tracks, and 47 distinctly-styled doors. Like the plays and screenplays Gillette penned, the castle exemplifies quality craftsmanship. *Gillette Castle State Park*, 67 River Road, East Haddam. ([stateparks.com/gillette\\_castle.html](http://stateparks.com/gillette_castle.html))



**HONORING DAD:** Eugene O'Neill named Monte Cristo Cottage after a famous role played by his father.

• **Crosswicks Cottage:** Award-winning children's book author Madeleine L'Engle, who received the Newbery Medal for her science fantasy novel *A Wrinkle in Time* in 1963, owned this colonial farmhouse on West Street in Goshen from 1952 until her death in 2007. It is here, according to her granddaughter Lena Roy, that L'Engle "disappeared to her 'ivory tower' above the garage to write – and it is this setting that inspired many of the fictional

**Fall Open House Events**  
**For Fall 2019 Enrollment**  
**October 4 and November 6, 2018**  
 Call **(860) 408-3060** to register.

**Westminster School**  
 Where Excellence Meets Opportunity

Co-ed | Boarding & Day | Grades 9-12  
 Simsbury, CT | [www.westminster-school.org](http://www.westminster-school.org)

*Westminster School does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religious creed, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, national origin, ancestry and/or disability.*

**Your buyer could be anywhere.**  
**You need an agent with connections everywhere.**

**Katie French**  
 860.977.3802  
[www.KatieFrench.com](http://www.KatieFrench.com)

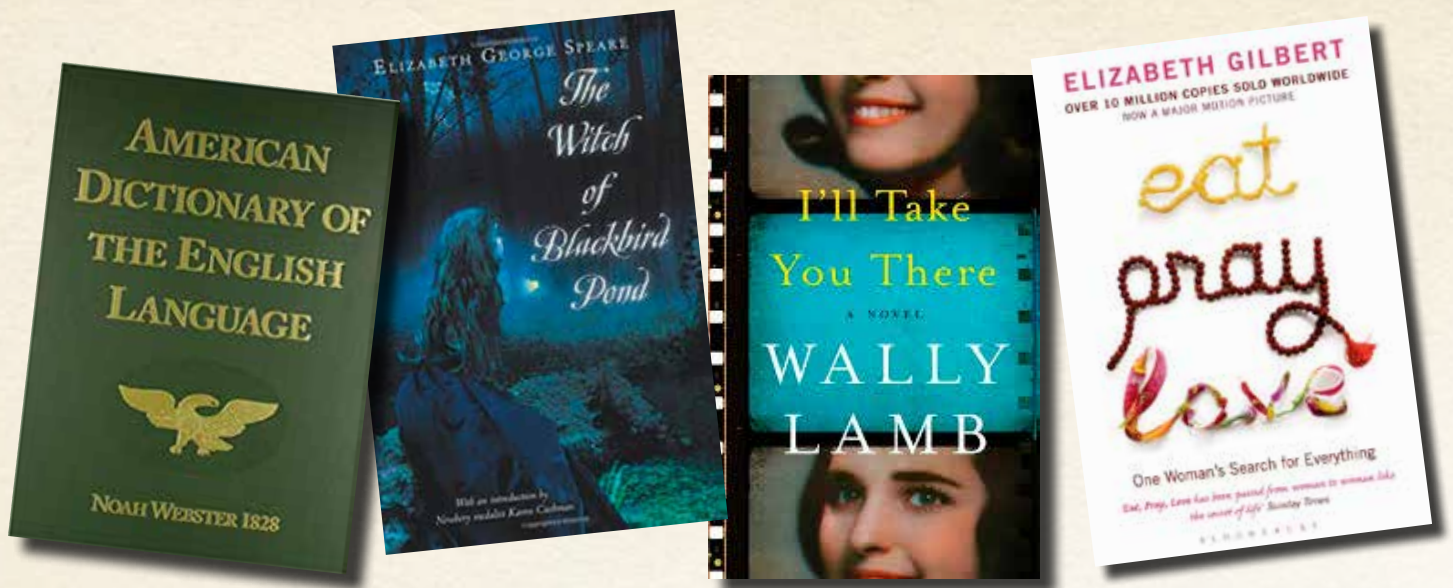
♦ **RECENTLY NAMED TO THE WALL STREET JOURNAL REAL TRENDS 1000 REPORT BEST REAL ESTATE AGENTS IN THE NATION!**

♦ **#1 in SIMSBURY & CANTON**

Simsbury Office | 700 Hopmeadow Street | Simsbury, CT 06070 | 860.658.2241

[ColdwellBankerHomes.com](http://ColdwellBankerHomes.com)





places in L'Engle's books. Like Crosswicks Cottage, the Murrays' house in *A Wrinkle in Time* is 200 years old. Both homes have a "star-watching rock" in the backyard, as does the Austins' farmhouse in L'Engle's *Austin Family Chronicles* (a series that includes the 1960 book *Meet the Austins*). "Hawk Mountain" near the Austins' house is a fictionalized version of Mohawk Mountain in Cornwall. The windows in L'Engle's bedroom at Crosswicks Cottage looks out onto the Litchfield Hills, the real-life version of the "worn-down mountains" that can be seen beyond the Murrays' property in *The Time Quintet* (of which *A Wrinkle in Time* is a part). *Crosswicks Cottage, 93 West Street, Goshen.* ([cwhf.org/educational-resources/historic-sites/madeleine-lengles-residence-crosswicks-cottage](http://cwhf.org/educational-resources/historic-sites/madeleine-lengles-residence-crosswicks-cottage))

### REAL-LIFE INSPIRATIONS FOR FAMOUS FICTIONAL SETTINGS

Madeline L'Engle is not the only author to find inspiration in Connecticut places. The fictional town of "Cranbury" in award-winning children's author Eleanor Estes' classic book *The Moffats* is based on her life in West Haven. Other literary destinations throughout the state suggest that many writers draw on their physical surroundings – or have actual locales in mind – when they create the fictional worlds that capture their readers:

- **The Witch of Blackbird Pond:** The historic Buttolph-Williams House on Broad Street in Wethersfield, with its romantic interiors and colonial – and somewhat medieval-looking – architecture, inspired the setting for local author Elizabeth George Speare's classic young adult novel, *The Witch of Blackbird Pond*. Not only does Kit, the book's protagonist, live in the fictionalized version of this Connecticut landmark, but other places in the novel can also be traced to real-life settings in Wethersfield. Wethersfield Cove is the real Blackbird Pond; Great Meadows, the only place Kit really feels at home in Wethersfield, is a stretch of land along the west side of the Connecticut River; and the Congregational Church in which Kit stood accused of witchcraft is based on the First Church of Christ on Main Street. *Buttolph-Williams House, 249 Broad Street,*

*Wethersfield.* ([webb-deane-stevens.org/historic-houses-barns/buttolph-williams-house/](http://webb-deane-stevens.org/historic-houses-barns/buttolph-williams-house/))

- **Arsenic and Old Lace:** The unremarkable brick house at 37 Prospect Street, a quiet suburban street in Windsor, was once referred to by the Hartford Courant as a "murder factory." Here, Amy Archer-Gilligan, who ran a home for the aged in the early 1900s, systematically poisoned more than two dozen residents over a period of 10 years to make room for other paying customers – and inspired playwright Joseph Kesselring to write the play *Arsenic and Old Lace*, a comic retelling of Gilligan's crime story.

*The Amy Archer-Gilligan House, 37 Prospect Street, Windsor.* ([tourwindsorct.org/historic/AmyArcherGilliganH](http://tourwindsorct.org/historic/AmyArcherGilliganH))

- **The Lilac Girls:** Fans of Martha Hall Kelly's *Lilac Girls* will be delighted to discover that the real life country home and gardens of one of the book's protagonists, New York socialite and philanthropist Caroline Ferriday, can be found in Bethlehem and is open to the public. This historic, federal-style home – and its beautiful gardens, replete with lilacs – makes an appearance toward the end of the novel. Ferriday has helped to bring Kasia, one of the so-called "rabbits" (who, like lab animals, were experimented on by the Nazis at Ravensbrück Concentration Camp) to America. The photo of the rabbits – a group of 74 Polish women for whom Ferriday raised money to help after World War II – sits on a desk in her bedroom at the Bellamy-Ferriday House, and inspired Kelly to write the historic novel. It is in these gardens that Ferriday tells Kasia that her father always liked the fact that lilacs only bloom after a harsh winter, conveying to Kasia that the horrors she and her sister have experienced are now behind them. *The Bellamy-Ferriday House and Garden, 9 Main Street North, Bethlehem.* ([ci.bethlehem.ct.us/bellamy\\_ferriday.htm](http://ci.bethlehem.ct.us/bellamy_ferriday.htm))

### FERTILE GROUND FOR WRITERS

Determined literary-minded sleuths can certainly find other traces of the countless writers who have called Connecticut home. When Arthur Miller moved to Roxbury with his then-wife Marilyn Monroe in the mid 1950s, for



**BLOOMING AFTER ADVERSITY:** This beautiful property was the setting for a book about women who survived being imprisoned in a concentration camp in World War II.

example, he built a small writing studio and seeded a pine forest behind his home. Today, that forest consists of about 6,000 trees, covering about 350 acres in Roxbury and Woodbury. The free-standing studio has recently been moved to storage, waiting to be transferred to a permanent home elsewhere in Roxbury, so visitors will someday be able to see where the Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright created many of his works. ([arthurmillerstudio.org](http://arthurmillerstudio.org))

Meanwhile, the James Melville House in Stonington, designated a national historical landmark in 2016, offers a glimpse into the life of author and poet James Melville, a significant force in 20th century American literature.

Connecticut remains fertile ground for literary talent. Among the many writers residing here today are Stephanie



Meyers of *Twilight* fame, *Eat Pray Love*'s Elizabeth Gilbert, and the prolific Wally Lamb, whose latest novel is *I'll Take You There*. Local authors can be seen (and heard) at readings and book talks in the few remaining independent bookstores scattered around our state, as well as at libraries and venues like the Storyteller's Cottage in Simsbury, adding to the abundant selection of our region's literary destinations. ■



**PERSONALIZED CARE –  
SHORT TERM REHABILITATION  
OR LONG TERM CARE**

Beginning with a compassionate welcome, we work with residents, families, area hospitals and physicians to achieve the highest levels of care possible. We create the best plan for wellness and recovery for people who can return home—and a warm, safe and comfortable home for long term residents.

Family owned and operated, our two affiliated locations provide the personalized care that makes all the difference.

Let us tell you more.



**Avon Health Center**

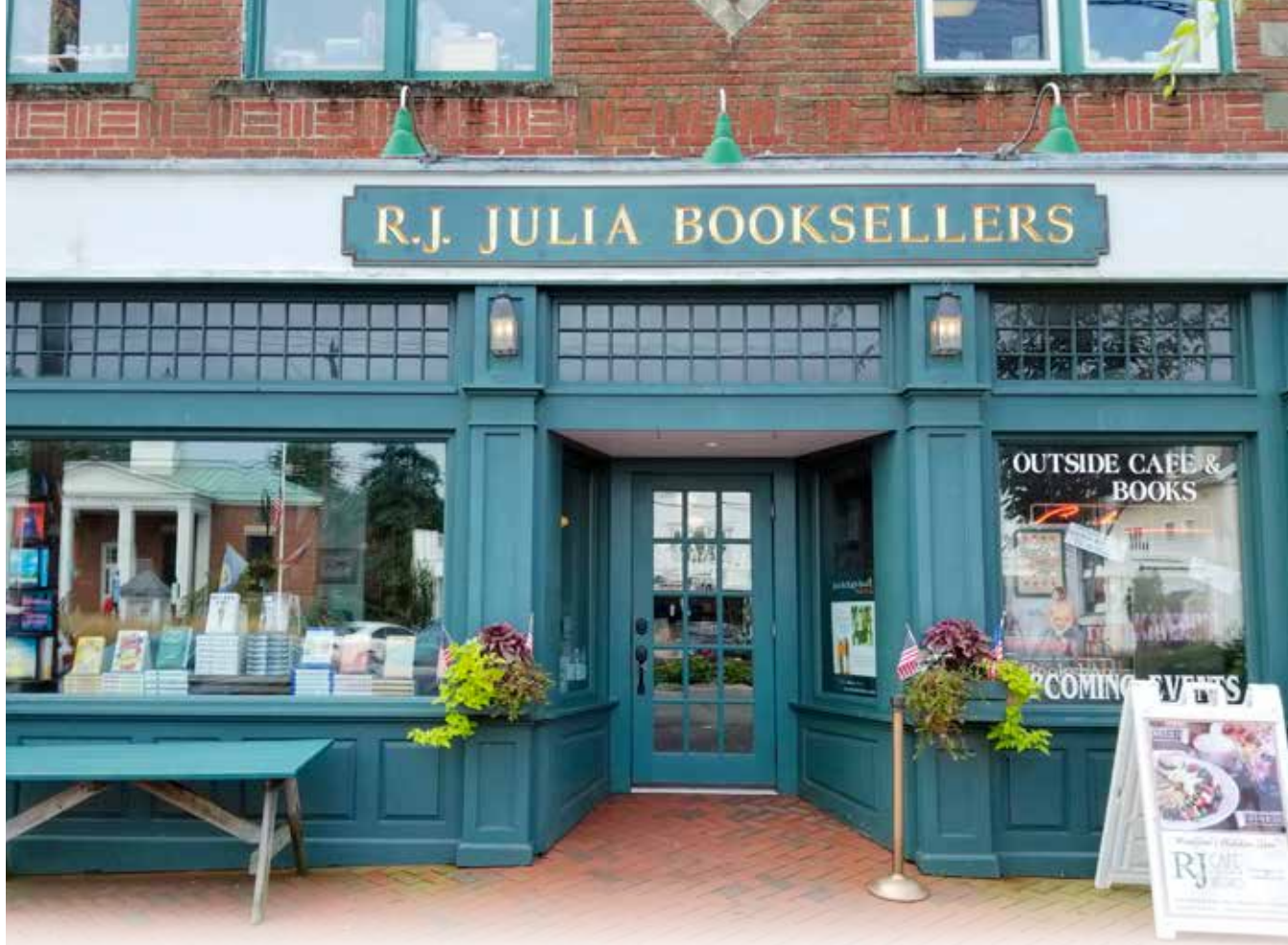
652 West Avon Road, Avon, CT 06001  
860-673-2521 avonhealthcenter.com



**West Hartford**  
Health & Rehabilitation Center

130 Loomis Drive, West Hartford, CT 06017  
860-521-8700 westhartfordhealth.com





## CONNECTICUT'S BEST INDIE BOOKSTORES

by LORI MILLER KASE

**B**rick and mortar bookstores are increasingly a relic of the past, yet Connecticut still boasts a number of independent sellers that attract die-hard devotees of the more traditional – and more intimate – book-browsing experience. Some readers’ favorites:

***Atticus Bookstore Café***, 1082 Chapel Street, New Haven. A New Haven institution for more than 40 years, this combination bookstore/café offers a curated selection of books along with a cozy café that not only makes its own bread, but sources its beer from Connecticut breweries, and much of its produce from local growers, including the nearby Yale Landscape Lab.

***Bank Square Books***, 53 West Main Street, Mystic. Operating in the heart of Mystic for 25 years, this locally owned bookstore offers an array of adult and children’s books, from bestsellers to indie titles.

***The Hickory Stick Bookshop***, 2 Green Hill Road, Washington Depot. Named “Best Country Bookstore” by *Yankee Magazine*, this 60+-year-old bookseller offers readers an extensive collection of books and gifts, for

both adults and children, along with local artisanal goods. Situated in the Litchfield Hills, which is rife with literary talent, the shop often hosts local authors for readings and signings – William Styron, Arthur Miller, Dani Shapiro and Candace Bushnell have all made appearances.

***House of Books***, 10 North Main Street, Kent. Located in an historic building and situated on the Appalachian Trail, this upscale bookstore sells cards gifts, music, stationery and, of course, books, many related to the trail. They are also a good source of maps, trail guides, and local lore.

***R.J. Julia Booksellers***, 768 Boston Post Rd., Madison. One of the perks of this book-lovers’ nirvana on the shoreline: the handwritten reviews tacked onto the bookshelves below staff-recommended books. The bookstore hosts more than 300 events each year, including appearances by literary luminaries from near and far. R.J. Julia recently partnered with Wesleyan University to open a branch on Main Street in Middletown; visitors to Wesleyan R.J. Julia can take a break from book browsing to taste the organic fare at Grown, its in-store café.

*The best seat in our house...*



*is waiting for you at McLean.*

Nestled on our 125-acre wooded campus, The Village at McLean offers a private setting to live a carefree lifestyle. Enjoy a beautifully appointed home, maintenance-free living, gourmet dining and a welcoming community of friends. Plus, take comfort in knowing future care is right up the path.

*It's all for you at McLean.*

VILLAS • APARTMENTS • COTTAGES

Call us to arrange  
a personal visit.

860-658-3786

*McLean is a not-for-profit senior living community in Simsbury, CT offering a continuum of services including independent living, assisted living, enhanced assisted living and memory care, an adult day program, short- and long-term skilled nursing, outpatient rehabilitation and wellness, post-acute care and home care and hospice.*







# Something Old, Something New

The Hartford Club offers networking, special events and philanthropic opportunities.

by TERESA M. PELHAM

When Chris VanDeHoef needs to meet with a client, he could have them come to his home office, which isn't ideal for a variety of reasons. Or, he could park himself at a table at Starbucks, if he can find two seats, but sometimes the music and the crowds are not conducive to business. The best meetings, he says, are the ones held at The Hartford Club. The young CEO of Penn Lincoln Strategies is always able to find a quiet spot to talk, and is able to share a good meal or a drink with someone who might not be familiar with the historic club.

Now marking its 145th anniversary, The Hartford Club is working on reinventing itself, infusing young professional blood into this private, downtown city club. It's a tall order, though: Part of the reason many remain

longtime members of this business and social club is its traditional vibe, but change can bring about new ideas and new opportunities.

Recent renovations meant saying goodbye to old-fashioned carpeting and stiff furniture in the once dark-hued members' lounge in favor of comfortable seating, brighter tones, and restored original hardwood flooring. A recent gathering of board members in the lounge brought out glowing recommendations



Standing, left to right: Chris VanDeHoef (board member, owner of Penn Lincoln), Ryan Keating (board member, vice president of Keating Agency Insurance), Eric George (board member, president of Insurance Association of Connecticut). Seated, left to right: Michele Perrault Czarasty (board member, retired), Melissa Biggs Esq. (partner, DePino, Nuñez, and Biggs, LLC.)

of the club, which became instant classic slogans.

“It’s formal yet familiar,” Michele Perrault Czarasty, a board member and retired professional, says of Hartford’s only city club.

“There was a lot of thoughtfulness to bring a more modern look while also retaining the feel of a traditional club,” says Eric George, an insurance executive who also serves on the club’s board of directors. “Even some of us stodgy folks have adjusted to the new look.”

The historic upstairs cigar lounge also received a facelift: The carpet was pulled away to reveal original hardwood floors and a much more airy space was created.

“I don’t think there’s another club or restaurant around here where you could have dinner and then relax afterwards with a cigar,” says Czarasty. “The staff goes above and beyond. Justin [the bartender] has the Maker’s Mark all set when my husband comes in. But it’s really the [members] that make the club.”

Like many private clubs, The Hartford Club generally does not allow members and guests to wear jeans while visiting. Just a few years ago, a survey was conducted to determine whether members would like to alter that rule. Overwhelmingly, it seems, members want to belong to a special place where folks are dressed a bit nicely. The no-jeans rule still applies.

“I just like it because everybody here calls me ‘Mr. Keating,’” quips Ryan Keating, board member and vice president of the Keating Agency.

Some 500 special events are held throughout the year, including “Finest Hours,” after-work social events that draw young professionals and raise funds for various charitable organizations. Other events include cigar dinners, wine and beer tastings, book club meetings, entrepreneur group meetings, bus trips, holiday dinners, and weddings.

While members pay an annual fee, it’s not necessary to be a member



The Hartford Club member lounge.  
Photo by Flynn Photography



The Hartford Club back patio.  
Photo by Flynn Photography



A happy couple at their Hartford Club wedding.  
Photo by Brian Ambrose Photography

in order to book a wedding or other event there.

The Hartford Club is looking to boost its membership rolls, and spread the word about the benefits and amenities it offers in the heart of the city. “The best advertising is when people come in and see all the things we’re doing,” says Keating. “It’s not necessarily what people think.”

The benefits of belonging to The Hartford Club extend far beyond the 50,000 square feet of 46 Prospect Street. Reciprocal access to more than 1,000 clubs of different varieties across the country and worldwide means being able to stay in or visit a welcoming place while traveling for work or pleasure. Locally, reciprocal clubs include Wampanoag Country Club, Tumble Brook Country Club, and Hop Meadow Country Club.

“It makes it much more attractive if you have to travel for work,” says George. “You know the food and the service are always going to be great.”

Along with changes to the facility itself, the membership and leadership of the club are continuously evolving. It’s hard to imagine that in the 1970s, a physical barrier – a threshold, if you will – kept women out of the main part of the club. Today, six members of the Board of Governors are women.

“We’re continuously working on expanding our diversity, and our membership has become more representative of our society,” says George.

*Teresa M. Pelham is a writer based in Farmington. She is the author of two children’s books benefiting dog rescue. Contact Teresa at [tpelham@comcast.net](mailto:tpelham@comcast.net) or visit her website: [www.roxysforeverhome.com](http://www.roxysforeverhome.com).*





**LISA  
FAGAN**  
REALTY GROUP

When you are ready  
to sell your home,  
CALL AN EXPERT. 860.810.2325

*Servicing all of Connecticut*

Residential  
Commercial  
Investment

FLUENT IN ENGLISH, SPANISH,  
ITALIAN, PORTUGUESE,  
FRENCH, ARMENIAN



LISA FAGAN REALTY GROUP  
Residential & Investment Real Estate

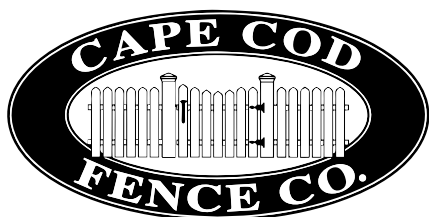
BERKSHIRE  
HATHAWAY  
HomeServices

New England  
Properties

[lisafagan@bhhsneproperties.com](mailto:lisafagan@bhhsneproperties.com)  
[lisafagan@bhhsne.com](mailto:lisafagan@bhhsne.com)



## QUALITY CUSTOM FENCES



Privacy Fences • Arbors • Sheds  
Outdoor Furniture • Woodplay Playsets  
Complete-Do-It-Yourself Center

**INSTALLATION AVAILABLE YEAR-ROUND**

[capecodfence.com](http://capecodfence.com)

860-673-3211

Call today or visit our showroom at  
30 Old Albany Turnpike, Canton, CT 06019

LIC. #626166

**PROVIDING QUALITY SERVICE SINCE 1956**

# Our Commercial Lending Team Has Grown!



**John Scarritt**

Vice President - Commercial Lending

**Eric Erdtmann**

Senior Vice President - Commercial Lending

**Michael Sweeney**

Commercial Loan Officer

**Now we're ready to help your business grow too!**

Call Torrington Savings Bank for your business loan needs. We offer great rates with exceptional service to our commercial customers.



**Torrington  
Savings Bank**

(860) 496-2152 [TorringtonSavings.com](http://TorringtonSavings.com)

TORRINGTON | TORRINGFORD | BURLINGTON | FALLSVILLAGE | GOSHEN | NEWHARTFORD





# Fast-track Back to Health

UConn Health's breast team combines training, trust and technology to treat its breast cancer patients quickly and effectively

by JAMES BATTAGLIO / photography by AMBER JONES

**A**sk any woman who's had a breast cancer scare to describe the terror she goes through waiting for the outcome of a suspicious mammogram or a discovered breast lump, and she'll tell you that a huge percentage of that nightmare is waiting for results, which can take days or even more than a week.

Not so at UConn Health, where the Breast Program team at its Carole and Ray Neag Comprehensive Cancer Center has taken the diagnosis and treatment modality wait to a tornado-like level; it often takes as little as one day for women to get results and be placed in a care plan that rapidly places them on the road to recovery. "Recovery" is the operative word among members of this breast health team, according to legions of patients with remarkable survivor outcomes. You might say this team has made a science out of expediency.

"Molly Tsipouras and Dr. Christina Stevenson are really the doors into the program," explains Dr. Susan Tannenbaum, Chief of the Division of Hematology-Oncology at UConn Health. Molly is Margaret Tsipouras, R.N., B.S.N., O.C.N., CPBN-IC, who carries the title of breast oncology nurse navigator. Dr. Stevenson is both a breast surgeon and Director of the Breast Program, a title she earned 18 months ago.

"Molly has created an incredible relationship with our primary care providers – OB/GYN and internal medicine physicians. She's made it extremely easy to take the ball and run with issues when physicians call and express concern over patient problems," Dr. Tannenbaum says.

In her 20/20 hour week, Tsipouras devotes half of her time to working with Dr. Aleksey (Alex) Merkulov – "the best breast imager that I know," says Dr. Tannenbaum – and the other half with Dr. Stevenson, making sure that women are moved efficiently through the system and that the team has addressed patients' psychological and financial concerns.

Tsipouras was the first of UConn Health's four-member nurse navigator team, initiating the navigation process six years ago. The goal was to take the red tape out of the cancer recovery process by enabling physicians to get their patients' biopsies, imaging, and other tests done quickly. To do so, Dr. Stevenson and Tsipouras made a conscious effort to visit OB/GYN and primary care physicians, explaining the role of the nurse navigator. "We told them that if they had a patient that needed to be seen, we ask that they please call, please

call, please call," says Tsipouras.

"With our newly launched electronic medical record HealthONE, we're now able to assure that all patients have an expedient way of getting into the system and that all tests are ordered. Today, physicians don't hesitate to reach out via phone, email or texts."

As an example of how an expeditious system can work, Dr. Tannenbaum references patient Lynn Killingbeck (see related story).

"First, Lynn's primary care physician found a mass in her left breast, after which she contacted our breast health team. Then Molly got Lynn in to see Dr. Stevenson, who then ordered more imaging via Dr. Merkulov. That was followed by a biopsy, which led to lumpectomy surgery. The entire process only took days, rather than weeks," says Dr. Tannenbaum.

Another essential component of the Breast Program includes appropriate patients going through UConn Health's Genetics Program, where they see certified genetic counselors to discuss possible familial or genetic predisposition for developing breast cancer.

## ACCURACY IS KEY

While expediency is an integral part of relieving women – and in one percent of breast cancer cases, men – from the stress and angst associated with awaiting test results, the accurate assessment of test results is equally essential.

This is where Dr. Merkulov continues to play a key role in the Breast Program. He's responsible for bringing tomosynthesis technology, commonly referred to as 3-D mammography, to UConn Health.

Dr. Tannenbaum shared, "When Alex came to us, he said, 'We have to bring this technology (tomosynthesis) into UConn,' and six years ago, we became the first in the Hartford region to get it."

Praising the virtues of tomosynthesis, Dr. Merkulov says this technology helps eliminate errors. "If you see some things that aren't factual – possibly not real – you can use 3-D mammography to make sure it's really not real. We can give women a definitive answer, thereby reducing the number of women who get scared with bad news."

Comparing today's breast cancer technology to as recently as six years ago, it's "the difference between night and day," he says. With tomosynthesis technology, "the specificity is higher, meaning that the accuracy of the test



**ALL FOR ONE:** From left, Dr. Susan Tannenbaum, Molly Tsipouras RN, Dr. Alex Merkulov and Dr. Christina Stevenson with patient Lynn Killingbeck (seated).

**Before one reduces UConn Health's success to speed and technology, Dr. Tannenbaum is quick to point out that "it comes down to the people. You have the machines and the technology, but it comes down to professionals such as Dr. Merkulov and Dr. Stevenson who have the skill set. They're pretty remarkable."**

is higher. We also have high-end ultrasound equipment; if we're not sure of something, the quality of the ultrasound is important."

Today, about 10 percent of women are called back for these additional tests following a mammogram, a number that has not changed over the years. The cancer team explains that everything plays a factor in recall – including age and a woman's time of the month.

The belief that, as women age, they are more prone to recall is a fallacy. "Quite the opposite is true," says Dr. Merkulov. "It's easier to see tumors in older women than in younger ones. That's why younger women are usually the ones who benefit from newer technology."

The diagnosis pathway used is that ultrasound follows mammogram, if needed, "especially if one has very, very dense breasts. So women in Connecticut [as part of state

law] are allowed to have ultrasound as an adjunct test in the setting of dense breasts," Dr. Merkulov explains.

Additionally, UConn Health's 3-D test is a diagnostic part of an annual mammogram, which made the healthcare center unique for a number of years before other institutions started introducing 3-D technology, according to Dr. Tannenbaum.

"We try to use 3-D technology appropriately. You don't want to under- or over-use it, because sometimes, as with any technology, it can cause confusion. It's like a skill; you have to know precisely how to use it," Dr. Merkulov says.



The team also employs an implantable device called a BioZorb – “a new, absorbable device that acts as a scaffold for tissue regrowth, intended to improve the precision of radiation treatments,” says Dr. Stevenson.

A BioZorb is a small, three-dimensional marker used in women with early-stage breast cancer. It provides a target for aiming radiation therapy at the tumor site, which helps minimize damage to healthy tissue among the 120,000 women in the United States diagnosed with early-stage breast cancer annually, and who undergo a lumpectomy – also called breast-conserving surgery – with radiation.

## AN INCREDIBLE TEAM

Before one reduces UConn Health’s success to speed and technology, Dr. Tannenbaum is quick to point out that “it comes down to the people. You have the machines and the technology, but it comes down to professionals such as Dr. Merkulov and Dr. Stevenson who have the skill set. They’re pretty remarkable.”

Supporting this position are UConn Health’s post-surgical results, which have become significantly improved, thanks to Dr. Stevenson’s work. Patients have been extremely pleased with their results.

“She (Dr. Stevenson) could have been a plastic surgeon. There’s hardly any scar following my surgery!” Killingbeck says.

Dr. Tannenbaum points out that, “As important as Dr. Stevenson’s reputation is for leaving small scars, her judgment and the way she performs surgery is just as important.”

Dr. Stevenson is specially trained in what’s known as oncoplastic surgery outcomes. Her technique includes trying to “maintain the shape and size of the breast as best we can.”

As a surgical oncologist, Dr. Stevenson sees 70-100 cancer patients a year and four times that amount of benign breast conditions. Her extensive training includes oncoplastic surgery, which combines the latest plastic surgery techniques with breast surgical oncology. Oncoplastic techniques apply when a large lumpectomy is required that will leave the breast distorted; the remaining tissue is sculpted to realign the nipple and areola and restore a natural appearance to the breast shape.

“It used to be that following a lumpectomy, the patient would have a big divot where tissue was removed,” Dr. Tannenbaum explains. “Now, we [use] special techniques to manipulate some of the tissue below the surface to prevent that divot so there is no defect, post-op. You can’t see where the lump has been removed.”

“Dr. Stevenson has very few complications following her surgeries,” adds Dr. Merkulov, “and that’s an important thing to remember. Sometimes a surgeon gets into a procedure and 20 times the problems can arise, but her skill set has minimized these complications.”

What goes into great judgment when it comes to breast surgery?

“Dr. Stevenson knows when there are procedures that do and don’t need to be done. She’s outstanding in sampling sentinel nodes and knowing when she needs to move forward with a further lymph node dissection,” says Dr.

## UConn has a support group for young women who have been diagnosed with breast cancer. They also have a patient navigator who works with the American Cancer Society in providing wig fittings.

Tannenbaum. She explains that many patients will require systemic therapy – chemotherapy, biologic therapy, and/or hormonal therapy – before or after surgery, which the team decides together. Tannenbaum, as the medical oncologist, delivers these treatments.

Radiation is also crucial for controlling the disease so there are no recurrences, and Dr. Robert Dowsett, Chief of UConn’s Division of Radiation Oncology, is the expert in that field. He has brought in new technology to reduce the radiation delivered to the heart as well as to shorten times needed for radiation.

“Again, it’s all about the terrific team we have, which includes a multidisciplinary approach comprised of genetic counselors, dieticians, APRNs, a supportive service team, plastic surgeons, pathologists, and others. Together, they improve outcomes and reduce side effects, and try to make a difficult, life-changing event more tolerable.”

Doctors Stevenson and Merkulov are quick to spread the credit for their approach to treatment.

“Trust is the biggest part of our team. You know you’re putting your trust and that of your patients in the right hands and that’s a privilege,” Dr. Merkulov says, getting nods of agreement from Dr. Stevenson.

And this team approach doesn’t end with the treatment modality. It can go on for years, as Tsipouras explains.

“I have a lot of interaction with patients post-operatively,” she says. “We do a survivorship care plan at the end of their journey, which is put together by our team – usually within a year (or 18 months, depending on the type of breast cancer diagnosed), summarizing their treatment plan. UConn has a support group for young women who have been diagnosed with breast cancer. They also have a patient navigator who works with the American Cancer Society in providing wig fittings.”

While this UConn Health team has practically honed its breast health approach to an art form from an expediency and quality standpoint, there must be something difficult that the care providers face.

A silence prevails as the team contemplates the question.

“It’s the emotional attachment we develop with our patients,” explains Dr. Merkulov. “That’s the hardest thing we face. You always want things to go perfectly.”

And then, as though orchestrated, each team member turns to Killingbeck and smiles. 📖

# A Timely Diagnosis

Team's extreme commitment to excellent patient care  
may have saved this patient's life

by JAMES BATTAGLIO / photography by AMBER JONES

**H**uman nature being what it is, Lynn Killingbeck wanted desperately to resist her physician's recommendation that she be seen by a surgeon after a suspicious breast exam.

Killingbeck, a Hartford native and 60-year South Windsor resident, had just undergone a mammogram a week earlier at a radiology center when she received a call asking her to return for a more intensive mammogram and an ultrasound due to the center's initial suspicious findings.

"I went back for the ultrasound and was told the results were negative ... that I had no cancer, and to return in one year," she says.

"Coincidentally, 10 days after that, I was scheduled for an annual physical with my long-time primary care physician, Dr. Elizabeth Appel from UConn Health. I told her about my recent experience and she asked for permission to perform another breast exam, during which she discovered a lump in my left breast."

Based on the findings from that exam, Dr. Appel recommended she see a surgeon. It was then that human nature kicked in, tempting Killingbeck to resist the possibility of any bad news.

"I pushed back and questioned her recommendation. Why, after being told initially that I was fine and could wait another year for my next exam, should I go for further testing?" asked the 17-year UnitedHealthcare National Markets professional.

But she realized that time was wasting and urgency was increasing when she got home from her physical to hear a message from Nurse Navigator Molly Tsipouras, asking her to see Dr. Christina Stevenson, a UConn breast surgeon, within three days. Killingbeck did so and underwent a 3-D mammogram and yet another ultrasound, which revealed a solid mass in the left breast, requiring a biopsy.

"I had the biopsy three days later and within 48 hours I learned I had invasive ductal carcinoma. I was overwhelmed," says the mother of two married daughters. "I thought for sure everyone was overreacting and that I didn't have cancer. Fatty breast tissue, maybe, but certainly not cancer."

Understandably, the hours and days following her diagnosis were anxiety-filled and confusing, says the grandmother of three boys and one girl. "I had always sought my healthcare at another hospital so everything was

going through my mind ... cancer, surgery, and now, a new healthcare environment."

Following a reassuring call from Dr. Appel – "my angel" – that she'd be well taken care of by the UConn Health specialists, Killingbeck placed her trust in the cancer team and the hospital, and she's not regretted it since. "It was like a tornado; everything happened fast and they got me everywhere quickly, for which I'm so grateful."

An MRI prior to a lumpectomy on Feb. 19 confirmed the suspected size of her tumor. ONCOTYPE DX, a form

of genomic testing done by Genomic Health, later proved that she fell into the high intermediate range of having cancer reoccur elsewhere in her body in the future, thereby necessitating four rounds of chemotherapy every three weeks, followed by radiation treatments that concluded on July 26. She will also be on a preventive hormonal medication for the next five years.

"Events that started December 30 were over by July," Killingbeck excitedly points out. "I keep thinking that if I had pushed back harder and not followed Dr. Appel's advice, a year from now, this may have been a different story."

In addition to her "incredible UConn cancer team," she credits her successful outcome to the strong support of her husband, Ed, a Hartford Steam Boiler retiree, her daughters, two sisters, family, friends, and UnitedHealthcare's flexibility by allowing her to work from home, when needed, throughout her ordeal.

"Our mother had colon cancer so we felt we knew what to expect, but unless you go through it yourself, you really don't understand it," says Killingbeck. "I'm back to work after only missing the days I had chemo. I'm back to enjoying Zumba, crafts, and furniture refinishing. I never really stopped my routines."

Killingbeck says a bond has developed between her and the UConn Health medical team, bringing with it the affirmation that UConn is the only place she will ever go for diagnostics in the future.

"What I've learned is that you never know how strong you are, until being strong is your only choice," she says.



Lynn Killingbeck



**BRILLIANT**

**MINDS.**

**CARING.**

**CURING.**

In academic medicine, we know that there are far too many possibilities for just one mind to explore. And so, at UConn Health, we search together. Brilliant minds, skilled hands, accomplished nurses, collaborating to discover the answers that will bring you the best care today, and cures for tomorrow.

Welcome to possible.

[health.uconn.edu](http://health.uconn.edu)

**UCONN  
HEALTH**

**THE POWER OF POSSIBLE.**

**Live at The Bushnell**

# **THE CONNECTICUT FORUM'S 2018-2019 SEASON**

Sept. 20, 2018

## **WOMEN RISING**

Redefining Power in 2018  
Hosted by United Technologies

Nov. 16, 2018

## **BIG TECH**

What Is the Future  
We're Building?  
Hosted by Comcast

March 9, 2019

## **AMERICA AND THE WORLD**

Diplomacy and  
Leadership in an Age  
of Disruption

May 11, 2019

## **PHOTO WONDERS**

The Life and Work of  
Extraordinary Photographers

Subscribe now to a season of unscripted, unforgettable conversations.

**CALL 860.509.0909 OR VISIT [CTFORUM.ORG](http://CTFORUM.ORG)**

LIFETIME PATRONS: Aetna | Connecticut Public Television and Radio  
The Hartford Financial Services Group | Lincoln Financial Foundation  
The Rosalyn Group | Stanley Black & Decker | Travelers  
United Technologies Corporation | Voya Financial

**ALL FORUMS  
LIVE AT  
THE BUSHNELL  
AT 7:30 PM**





DELICIOUS

# *Fruitful & Endeavors*

**SWEET SURPRISE:** Autumn offers up a delicious mix of fruits that add fresh flavors to desserts.



## Autumn brings a bounty of sweet flavors

written by **AMANDA CALL** / photography by **NICK CAITO**

There is something genuinely magical about the fall in New England. The combination of the leaves changing color, the woodburning smell in the air, and those sun-filled perfect temperature days are exactly what I need to get me through the coming winter months.

My favorite part of it all, though, might be the seasonal fruits that become ripe for the picking: berries, peaches, plums, apples, cranberries and more. They make the season a little sweeter. It's also a nice coincidence that the ending of summer means the end of bathing suit season and the beginning of dessert season.

Kristin Eddy is the uber-talented pastry chef behind all the sweet creations at Millwright's Restaurant (Simsbury), The Cook & The Bear (West Hartford), and Porrón & Piña (Hartford). If you haven't yet had the opportunity to try one of her delicious desserts, I recommend you put this down right now and go immediately. If you've decided to finish this article anyway, you are in luck because Kristin was kind enough to share a recipe for you to try at home, and she also shared a few of her favorite farms to source ingredients from, which I personally can't wait to check out.

Kristin describes this recipe as being "the perfect way to feature a variety of fruits during different seasons." It's perfect for mixed berries during summer, apples, quince, or cranberries in the fall or winter, peaches and plums during late summer into early fall, and rhubarb in the spring.

Items can all be found locally at different farms around Connecticut, depending on what is seasonally available: Brown's Harvest in Windsor, Bushy Hill Orchard in Granby, Rose's Berry Farm in Glastonbury, Belltown Hill Orchards in South Glastonbury, Gresczyk Farms in New Hartford, and Barberry Hill Farm in Madison, to name just a few. 🍷

*Amanda Call is a social media and digital marketing strategist and a restaurant industry veteran with a passion for food and hospitality. For more information, visit [allofthethingsct.com](http://allofthethingsct.com).*



**FRUIT OF HER LABORS:** Pastry chef Kristin Eddy serves up a slice of plum cake.





**PICK YOUR PASSION:** You can switch up the fruit used in this cake recipe, depending on your favorites and the availability of seasonal produce.



## PLUM CAKE RECIPE

- 1 ½ cups all-purpose flour
- 1 ½ tsp baking powder
- 1 tsp cinnamon
- ¼ tsp nutmeg
- ⅛ tsp ground cardamom
- ⅛ tsp black pepper
- ½ tsp salt
- 1 stick unsalted butter, softened
- ¾ cup brown sugar
- ½ cup honey
- 1 large egg
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- ½ cup milk
- 2 Tbsp sugar in the raw
- 3 ripe, but still firm plums of any variety

Pre-heat the oven to 350 degrees.

Line a 10-inch cake pan with parchment, grease well.

Combine the flour, baking powder, cinnamon, nutmeg, ground cardamom, black pepper and salt; set aside.

In a stand mixer with the paddle attachment, cream together the softened butter and sugar.

Add the egg, honey and vanilla; mix until the egg is fully incorporated.

Alternate adding the dry mixture and milk into the butter, sugar and egg.

Pour the batter into the lined 10-inch pan, spread evenly and arrange two of the sliced plums on top. Sprinkle the top of the cake with sugar in the raw. Bake for 30 minutes, until the cake springs back at the touch. Let the cake cool completely. Serve at room temperature with freshly whipped cream and additional sliced plums for garnish.



# PERFECT PAIRINGS

by SCOTT CLARK

## BOURBONS BY THE PAIR

A little over a year ago, Liquor Depot was in the process of creating our own signature blend of bourbon. Our tasting panel visited Maker's Mark in Loretto, Kentucky to select a single barrel from their new Private Select "Exclusive Oak Stave Selection" program, and we were astounded by the myriad of flavors that the different components released. (For a complete rundown on the tasting, visit our website, [liquordepotinc.com](http://liquordepotinc.com).) The tasting got us to thinking about how to use these different flavors to pair the bourbon with food.

A few simple suggestions will help you enjoy the experience of pairing a course, or even a meal, with bourbon and different bourbon cocktails.

### 1. GOOD GOES WITH GOOD

Before you even think about sophisticated bourbon-food pairings, know that you can never go wrong with pairing a really excellent bourbon with a really excellent dish. A great way to start is to choose a dish you already love to eat, pair it with a bourbon cocktail, then progress to bourbon on the rocks. Eventually, try enjoying the dish with the bourbon served neat.

### 2. GO WITH BOLD FLAVORS

If you're doing a whole dinner with bourbon pairings, the food should progress in intensity. Over several courses, the issue of bourbon numbing taste buds can become a concern. In order to avoid this issue, simply increase the flavor of the food with each successive course. It's perfectly acceptable if either the food or beverage is the star of any particular course; no need to worry about the two being in perfect flavor harmony. Let a bright acidic cocktail take center stage when served with heavy dish with gravy or a cream sauce, or let your BBQ ribs shine while sipping a lighter bourbon and lemonade.

### 3. DON'T FORGET PAIRS WITH DESSERT

When pairing desserts with bourbon, we are lucky enough to have a rainbow of bourbon options to choose from. Older aged bourbons can draw tannins from the increased time in oak barrels; these tannins pair excellently with cake, chocolate and pecan pie (which has bourbon in it). For an easy digestif, start with a glass of the Maker's Mark Private Select and add a dash of Amaro (an Italian bitter spirit), then dive into that dessert.

Liquor Depot offers a selection of more than 25 single barrel bourbons, whiskeys, rums and tequilas. Each single barrel carries unique nuances not found in the ordinary bottlings of the spirit. Stop in and let us help you select the perfect choice for you to start your tasting adventure.

*Scott Clark is the general manager of Liquor Depot Inc.*



**LIQUOR DEPOT is your ultimate destination for convenient shopping, superior selection & professional customer service.**

Ask us about the perfect wine to pair with your favorite seafood dinner!



For a schedule of our Tasting Events, Specials and more, visit [LIQUORDEPOTINC.COM](http://LIQUORDEPOTINC.COM)

**NEW BRITAIN** 687 West Main St • 860-223-7140  
**WEST SIMSBURY** 17 Albany Tpke • 860-651-1710



Happy  
Hour

Sunset  
Dining

Breakfast • Lunch • Dinner • Sunday Brunch

Classic New England dishes  
with a modern flair

279 Avon Mountain Road • Avon  
Reservations Recommended: 860.269.0240  
[Facebook.com/AOFHRestaurant](https://www.facebook.com/AOFHRestaurant)  
[SeasonsRestaurantAvon.com](http://SeasonsRestaurantAvon.com)

# On the Road Again

Retiree's bed and breakfast on wheels offers customized adventures.

by CAROL LATTER / *photography courtesy of Eileen Smith*

**"Traveling BnB is the best bed and breakfast opportunity of all time. It allows people to plan a weekend getaway or even a two-month vacation to visit those places they haven't yet explored."**

**ROCK SOLID:** A 10-week "Westward Ho!" trip in 2016 included exploration of both the north and south rims of the Grand Canyon.





**MOVING RIGHT ALONG:** Eileen Smith's RV serves as a bed and breakfast on wheels, with stunning views of ... well, just about anywhere.

As “The Great American Eclipse” turned daylight into dark on August 21 of last year, Eileen Smith was standing in the parking lot of a Cracker Barrel Restaurant in Santee, S.C., taking it all in with her first business client – an 84-year-old Connecticut resident whose goal had been to witness this extremely rare celestial event.

This was the first time that a solar eclipse had been visible across the entire contiguous United States in nearly 100 years, and he didn’t want to miss it.

But travelling to the lower portion of South Carolina to catch it was going to be a bit of a challenge – until, that is, he heard about Traveling BnB, a fledgling business whose owner will drive up to six people anywhere in the United States or Canada on a customized RV vacation.

“He asked me if I would take him, and I said, ‘Certainly. Let’s go.’ So we spent three leisurely days getting there and getting set up. Cracker Barrel allows RV campers to overnight in their parking lot. It was right on the line of totality.”

By about 8 a.m. on the morning of the eclipse, the parking lot had filled up, Smith recalls, “and we were there with all the others. It was an amazing opportunity to see it happen. There were two or three other carloads from Connecticut, and a couple from the Bahamas who brought

champagne to celebrate their first wedding anniversary.”

By the time the sun was completely uncovered, “the parking lot was empty. I offered to take my client to see more of the local sights but he said, ‘No, let’s get on the road.’ He’d had his big experience,” she laughs.

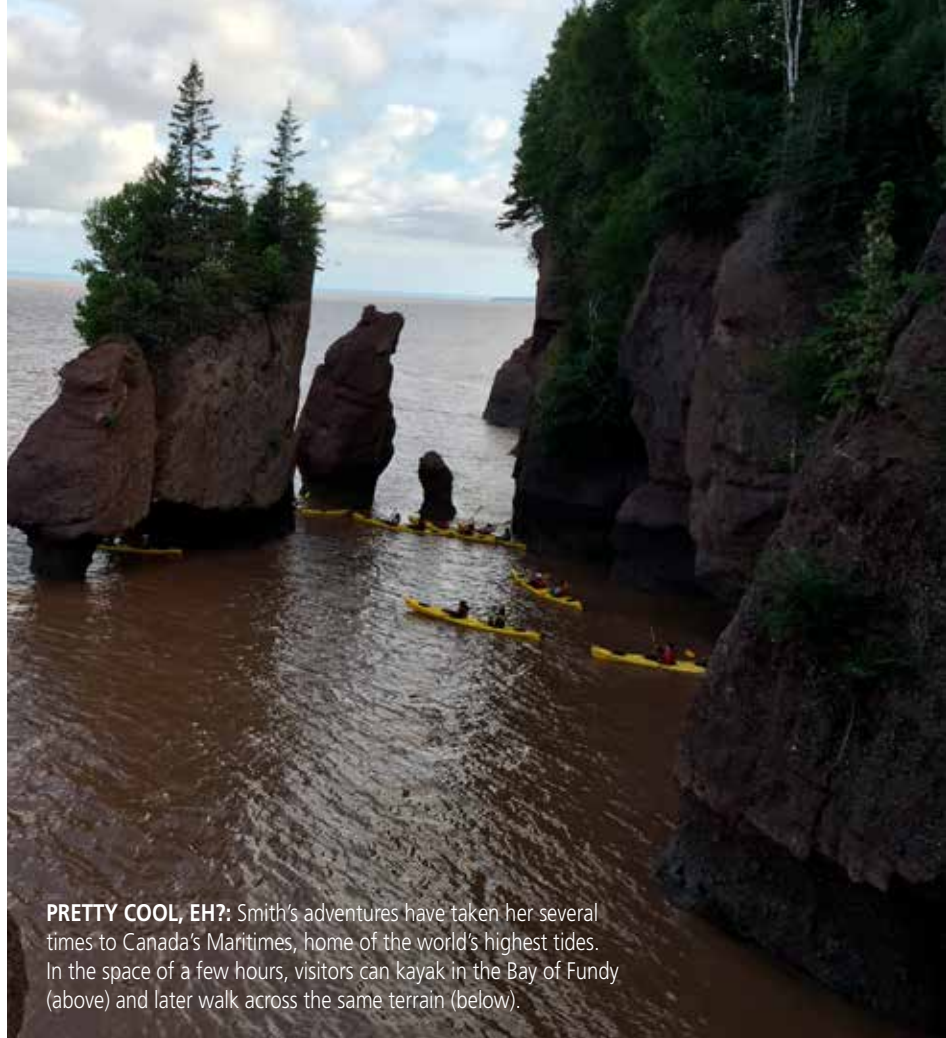
Last fall, she took a group of five women to Philadelphia.

“We went to the Franklin Institute and saw the Terracotta Warriors, then went over to the Liberty Bell. Three of the women had never been to Philly before. We had a great time,” says Smith. She parked the RV at an “urban campground” – a medical center parking lot offering electrical and water hookups, and a dump station where you could empty out the holding tanks. “You could catch an Uber, city buses or a taxi from there.”

Smith launched her business last year, after spending seven years traveling cross-country in her 34-foot RV with family and friends.

“An RV is the best way to see the U.S. and Canada. We’ve been to multiple state and national parks in addition to museums, fairs, concerts, ball games, and family and class reunions,” she says. For her clients, “Traveling BnB is the best bed and breakfast opportunity of all time. It allows them to plan a weekend getaway or even a two-month vacation to visit those places they haven’t yet explored.”





**PRETTY COOL, EH?:** Smith's adventures have taken her several times to Canada's Maritimes, home of the world's highest tides. In the space of a few hours, visitors can kayak in the Bay of Fundy (above) and later walk across the same terrain (below).

So how does it work? Instead of selecting a preplanned itinerary, clients choose wherever they want to go, reserve the dates, “and then the fun begins. I do detailed planning based on their destination, their food preferences, and their preferred activities – hiking, museum exploring, national park discoveries, beach combing, or just chilling out,” Smith explains.

“I provide breakfast, and they can prepare their own lunch and evening meals in the RV kitchen, or those too can be part of the package and my task. If we are going to a place like the Finger Lakes, for example, and you’ll be off hiking or cycling for the day, I can prepare a to-go lunch to take on a bus, into a museum, or hiking with you. You can also have a meal prepared when you get back to the RV. Although if we’re in some place like Bar Harbor, we might just choose to have lobster and blueberry pie in town.”

One of Smith’s friends is a trained chef, “and she will travel with us if clients have special dietary needs for lunch and dinner.”

As the driver, cook and planner, Smith







**ANCHORS AWEIGH:** Bodies of water prove no impediment to adventure. Smith and her travelers are more than willing to hop aboard a ferry when required.

stays in a small teardrop camper that's towed behind the RV, providing privacy for both her clients and herself, and allowing her to prepare breakfast for them without disturbing their space.

Dogs with a current rabies vaccine certificate are welcome to join, except for those breeds not permitted in campgrounds.

"It depends on the breed of dog but if they're travel friendly, I have no qualms about having a pet," she says. "We don't want to leave them home alone."

And the cost? For two adults, Smith charges \$400 per day plus gas. "I pay the tolls, the camping fees, and propane." Additional adults are \$50 each per day.

"For six people, that's \$600 ... \$100 a day for vacation [per person] is not so bad. Kids are less expensive, and kids under 5 are free."

Rose Majestic, a close friend for some 20 years, has traveled with her on many road adventures.

"Going on an RV trip with Eileen is absolutely not roughing it. Eileen is very thorough and does a lot of research about where you're going. She knows which are good campgrounds with great amenities, and close to reams of sights to see, other than the destination," Majestic says.

"Traveling with her has always been a great adventure. We've always eaten well and had great times and a lot of laughs, and seen a lot of interesting things and places that a lot of us wouldn't have seen otherwise."

Majestic says going on an RV trip is "so much more convenient than flying and having to find hotels and

restaurants along the way. You can stop where you want, and the refrigerator, bedroom, and bathroom are right there."

Bette Donahoe, another member of Smith's inner circle and fellow RV warrior, says Traveling BnB is "a great deal, especially for older people who don't want to drive far anymore but are still energetic and love to travel. Older people tend to love the open road and all the conveniences. I really hope it takes off for her."

## NEW HORIZONS

Smith hasn't always been able to enjoy such a freewheeling lifestyle. She worked at Yale University for more than 30 years, involved with biomedical research at Yale and Molecular NeuroImaging in New Haven.

Her mother lived in Florida for many years but moved in with her daughter in Hamden in 2006, after Smith's father died.

"We wanted to travel back and forth to Florida several times a year but it was difficult for me. I was working at Yale, and along the way, my mother adopted a Black Lab mix. It was hard to put a Black Labrador under the seat or in the overhead compartment of a plane," she says with a laugh.

In 2009, she retired to take care of her mom full-time. Wanting to make sure that her mother (and rescued pup) enjoyed their new life, Smith bought her first RV and began planning adventures for them.

"We started traveling with friends and family, and caravanning with cousins," she says.

Over the next eight years, they travelled to the West Coast twice – once to Seattle and once to San Francisco – and visited Prince Edward Island, where Smith’s daughter lives, eight or nine times. “We went whale watching in the Bay of Fundy, and drove the Cabot Trail around the perimeter of Cape Breton. We had some amazing opportunities in the RV.”

Other destinations they’ve traveled to include Long Island, Rhode Island, Quechee Gorge in Vermont, Mount Washington in New Hampshire, and Campobello Island, New Brunswick.

Says Majestic, “One place that was the most moving for me was when we went to Gettysburg for the 150th anniversary. I had not been there since I was a kid. None of us had been there for a really long time. It was just so moving.”

Smith agrees, saying, “I didn’t appreciate Gettysburg as a kid. To see it as an adult is quite amazing.”

Her favorite destination to date has been Yellowstone Park, where they spent three days on the very first trip, in 2010.

“It’s not enough time. There are a few thousand buffalo that own the place and they will walk anywhere they want to. They will stand there and look you in the face. There are elk and longhorn sheep and unbelievable fauna and flora that you don’t see anywhere else in the U.S. You’re

standing on a huge volcano,” says Smith. “It’s a wonderful experience – waterfalls, mud pots that are bubbling, the wolves are back. You can see a pack of wolves eating on a carcass. It just has so much to give to all of us.”

In January 2012, her cousin, Dale McClain, and his wife Kathy decided to visit Peru. Only one of the couple’s children decided to come, so the couple asked Smith if she wanted to tag along.

“When we came back, Kathy was diagnosed with Stage 4 uterine cancer. They gave her a 5 percent chance for a five-year survival. She had the surgery and chemotherapy, and felt fine after that, so they visited Australia and London.”

At two years post-diagnosis, Kathy announced that she wanted to see more of her own country. “I would set up the trips and they would follow me in their RV and I’d have Mom and the dog in my RV,” Smith explains.

In 2017, on the last big family trip, Smith and her mother, along with Kathy and Dale, were gone for 10 weeks with cousins from North Carolina. “They joined us in the Panhandle of Florida, and we went to New Orleans and Houston. They have family in Austin, Texas, and while they were visiting, I went to San Antonio with Mom so we could see that and give them some private family time,” she recalls.

Next up was Big Bend National Park in Texas. “It has



Smith and her trusty RV have taken clients, friends and family from coast to coast.

*Exceeding expectations since 1946...*



**CARMON**  
Funeral Home & Family Center  
Funerals • Cremation • Pre-Planning



...the Carmon Family believes that each funeral should be personal and meaningful. Our services reflect the Carmon family values and our ongoing commitment to serve families in our community.



860.673.8610  
301 Country Club Road, Avon  
[www.carmonfuneralhome.com](http://www.carmonfuneralhome.com)



three very distinct areas – river, desert, mountains,” says Smith. “I saw a wild pig called a javelina. It looks like a pig, smells like a skunk, and is as ugly as sin. After that, we went to Phoenix and Sedona in Arizona, and camped in Grand Canyon National Park.” Other stops included Vegas, Death Valley, Yosemite, San Francisco, and the Napa Valley.

### AN ABRUPT LEFT TURN

Last year brought a rapid-fire series of personal tragedies. “First my mom passed away, then my dog, and then my cousin’s wife Kathy. The chance of losing the three of them in such a short space of time seemed incredibly unlikely, but it happened. It was a challenge.”

Friends suggested that she do something that she loved, to take her mind off things.

“I have found that traveling alone isn’t much fun. I have this RV that wants to go places and see places – the national parks and all the other things we have in this amazing country. I love to cook, and a traveling BnB seemed to be a lot more interesting than having a bed and breakfast in your house,” she says, explaining her decision to become an entrepreneur on wheels.

“You want to go to Niagara Falls for the weekend? Let’s go. You want to go to Acadia National Park? Let’s do it. It just became, ‘Let’s enjoy an adventure and I’ll take you there, wherever you want to go.’ People would tell me, ‘My

RV is so big, I’m afraid of driving it.’ I’d say, ‘Well, I’m used to driving it.’”

“When she mentioned that she wanted to do this traveling BnB, we thought it was a great idea,” says Majestic, executive director of WHEAT (West Haven Assistance Task Force, a nonprofit). “She’s very easygoing and a great driver. She really likes people, she really likes to travel, she loves the whole RV experience, and she is thoroughly committed to making sure people have a good time, an interesting time. She just researches it and plans it down to a T,” Majestic says.

This summer, the Traveling BnB was rented by a Texas couple who are renovating a family home in Guilford, and parked it in their five-acre yard to live in while construction was underway. But Smith now has it back and plans to squeeze in a couple of more road trips before winter weather sets in.

She usually closes down the RV and winterizes it before Thanksgiving, keeping it under wraps until mid-March. In early April, she travels to Lakeland, Fla. to attend the annual SUN ‘n FUN Expo air show, which both of her parents helped organize for many years. Then Smith will be ready to hit the road with her BnB with clients once more.

“I’m looking forward to sharing this amazing experience with other people,” she says. “I’m quite thrilled to take them anywhere they have a hankering to go.” ■



**Sabrina** Since 1970  
POOLS & HOT TUBS

*Swimming toward our 50th year!*

**LARGEST IN-GROUND POOL INSTALLER IN THE STATE**  
CALL 1-800-4-MAX-FUN OR 860-742-7308  
FOR A **FREE** SITE SURVEY & **FREE** ESTIMATE

---

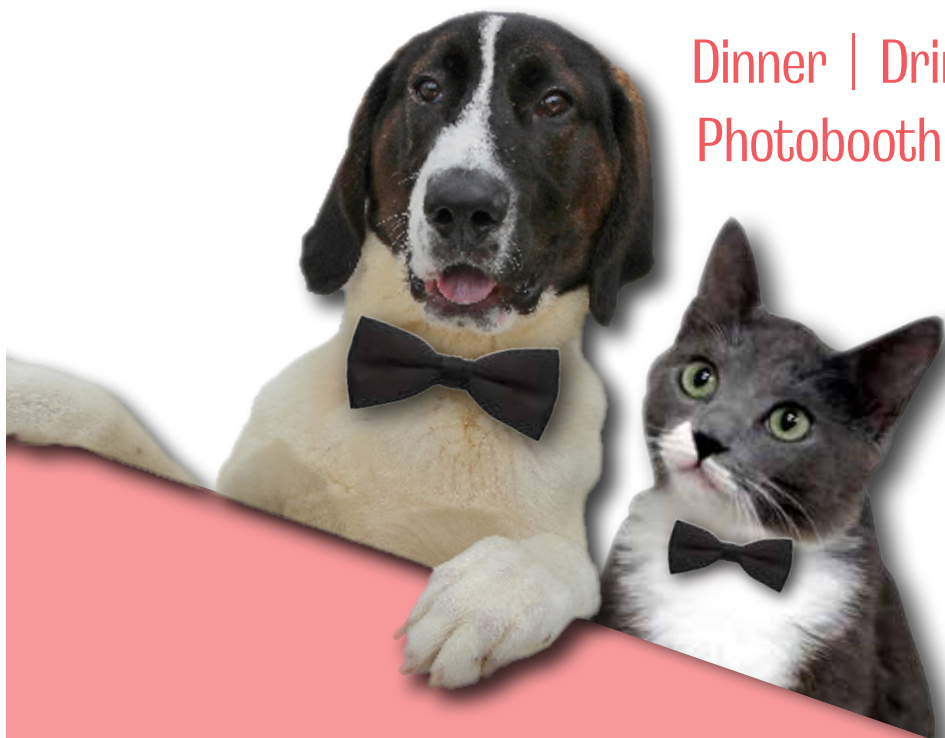
[sabinapools.com](http://sabinapools.com) / 2182 Boston Turnpike / Coventry, CT 06238



# DIAMONDS *in the* RUFF

Saturday, October 27, 2018 | The North House, Avon

Dinner | Drinks | Foster Puppy Visit  
Photobooth | Live & Silent Auctions



*Fetch your  
seats today!*  
[CThumane.org](http://CThumane.org)

*An evening to save pets in need*



An aerial photograph capturing a vast, verdant landscape. A winding river flows through a dense forest of tall, green trees. In the foreground, a large, open green field is bisected by a small stream. The scene is bathed in bright, natural light, highlighting the rich textures of the foliage and the calm waters of the river. In the upper right, a larger body of water is visible, possibly a lake or a wide river bend.

**FEATURE**

**FLYING HIGH:** A private plane offers a spectacular vista, high above the Connecticut River.





# From Sound to Source

## Exploring the Connecticut River

by DONNA CARUSO-BOWDEN / photography courtesy of TOM WALSH

Some 10 years ago, Jerry Roberts, then director of the Connecticut River Museum, looked up at Tom Walsh flying over the Essex docks in his yellow Piper Cub.

“One of the coolest things I saw Tom do before I knew him very well was at the River Museum,” says Roberts. “I guess it was Memorial Day or something. He’s flying in his Piper Cub pretty low, and the time I saw him do it, he dropped this wreath and it landed right off the end of the dock. It was amazing.”

Walsh laughs. The aerial photographer has since come to know the historian quite well. After meeting at the Essex waterfront, the two men began working together, beginning in 2009. Walsh, an international airline pilot,

photographed Connecticut’s 410-mile namesake river from the air for an exhibit Roberts would create for the museum.

“He asked if I had any shots of the river that they could use,” says Walsh. “And I said, ‘Well as a matter of fact, yes, but I’d like to fly the whole river.’ They provided the funding, and I flew the whole river, from the source to the south and back again, all the way up. As I went further north, it got wilder and wilder, and I had never seen any of this before either, so it was like an exploration. That was the initial idea of a book at some point in the future.”

The exhibit was a success. Roberts continued to contact Walsh for subsequent projects, including one multi-year quest to uncover the truth behind the “British Raid on Essex” during the War of 1812. (Roberts then authored a book of





**NATURE'S PALETTE:** Photographer/pilot Tom Walsh captured the artistic curves and colors seen along the river.

the same name.) All the while, the idea of creating a book together simmered. Two years ago, everything fell into place. They found a publisher and began the earnest work to make their vision a reality. In August, Globe Pequot Press released *The Connecticut River from the Air: An Intimate Perspective of New England's Historic Waterway*, penned by Roberts with stunning aerial images captured by Walsh. One working from the past, the other from the sky, the two men created a 256-page chronicle that flies high above and dives deep into the Connecticut River and the towns along its shores.

On the face of it, Roberts and Walsh seem like polar opposites. Roberts is a research-driven historian, author and accomplished museum executive, specializing in exhibit design. He served as vice-president at the Intrepid Sea Air Space Museum in New York City, and executive director at both the Connecticut River Museum and the New England Air Museum at Bradley International Airport. He is now a full-time writer and museum consultant.

Walsh explores and photographs intuitively from the air. He began flying at a young age and went on to become a fighter pilot in the United States Marine Corps before beginning his now 31-year career as a pilot for

an international airline. In 2004, he formed Shoreline Aerial Photography to capture bird's eye view images for corporations, government agencies, publications and individuals. (He photographed New Haven's Q bridge monthly for five years while it was under construction.) He continues his aerial photography when time allows.

When the men sit down together on Roberts' Deep River deck some 200 feet above a bend in the Connecticut River, it's easy to see their common ground. Walsh, 60, moved to Ivoryton from Atlanta in 1997, and married on the docks at the Connecticut River Museum. Roberts, 63, arrived for the Connecticut River Museum job in 2006 after 30 years in Manhattan, living on the Hudson River. Each with a keen interest in the Connecticut River, it was inevitable that they would meet.

Roberts writes that one of his fantasies when he lived in Manhattan was to live in a small New England village and walk down to the docks with a cup of coffee and shoot the breeze with local sailors and fisherman. "While I have, in fact, met plenty of New England Yankees and characters straight out of Central Casting, one of the most interesting locals I bumped into turned out to be an unexpected catch. Tom Walsh is not a sailor or a fisherman. He is a pilot,"



Roberts writes.

Their collaboration has coursed as naturally as the river itself. Walsh brought Roberts back into the sky after a decades-old decision to limit flying lessons due to the demands of the deep diving he was doing at the time. As for Walsh, his interest in history is constantly fed by Roberts. The two are already brainstorming future projects.

Perched on the deck above the tree line, chimes blowing in the breeze and an occasional plane humming over the river (“There’s a Piper Cub,” Walsh points out), their conversation soars, submerges, glides and ultimately lands on the banks of New England’s longest river. They pore over pages that have just been sent to print, reminiscing about the shared work that resulted in a book that is beautiful to the eye and fascinating to read.

The introduction begins: “From a remote pond less than three hundred yards from the Canadian border, New England’s great river begins its four hundred and ten mile journey to the sea.” With some 300 aerial photographs



**INTREPID DUO:** An unplanned meeting led to aerial adventure for this dynamic pair.



**PLACID PASSAGE:** The Connecticut River, which begins near the Canadian border, flows peacefully through the New England states to Long Island Sound.





**CAPITOL CROSSING:** Walsh snagged a unique views of Hartford.

throughout, it begins at the river’s mouth at Long Island Sound.

“Originally, even as I did this exhibit at the Connecticut River Museum, I was going to follow a theoretical drop of water,” says Roberts. “In the end, we decided it’s best to do exploration just like Tom flew it, just like [17th century Dutch explorer] Adriaen Block explored the river. The first encounter that you have is the Long Island Sound and the jetties at the mouth of the river.”

In Old Saybrook, the pages very quickly dive into the kind of surprises that surfaced during their work. As Walsh was flying, he noticed a shape just beneath the water at the entrance to North Cove. He zoomed in to photograph the timbers of a sunken hull sticking out from the remnants of an old railroad causeway. The story is told – replete with an additional photo of the living ship – of how the 300-foot steamboat *Granite Spray* burned upriver in 1883 and was towed to this resting spot. It still occasionally breaks the

surface at low tide.

“People pass this all the time; they probably don’t even know this is there,” says Roberts.

The stories climb ashore to the cities and towns in the four states where the Connecticut River runs its course. There are the well-known cities, such as Middletown, Hartford and Springfield, and there are towns and bridges (more than 80) with their own claim to fame: Sunderland, Mass., with the Cyclops corn maze that Walsh had not even realized he photographed; Brattleboro, Vermont, where the largest producer of pipe organs was once located and not far from where Rudyard Kipling wrote *The Jungle Book*; the Cornish-Windsor Bridge, the longest covered bridge in the country; and the Ledyard Bridge in New Hampshire, near where the Camp Fire Girls first organized. With the help of research by his wife, Roberts found another story of that bridge – the Ledyard Challenge.

“It’s been going on since the 1800s,” says Roberts.





“Freshmen come down from the campus, down to the riverbank. This is Dartmouth right in the hills here, so they come down, they strip naked, hide their clothes in the bushes, swim across the river, come up on this side, then run back across the bridge naked and get their clothes before the police can arrest them. Happens every year. They don’t announce when it is.”

Roberts accompanied Walsh on shorter flights, including one over Bradley International Airport. He writes about Walsh’s calm demeanor: “Here we were in our sparrow-like amphibian, orbiting above the runways as sleek jets came and went to destinations near and far. It was all pretty extraordinary to me, but just another day in the air for Tom.”

Walsh’s river-length flights were done alone. He’d find a place to stay overnight before making the return trip the following day. Some of his earliest images were taken from a Piper Cub, which he sold. He now owns a Cessna Cardinal and a SeaRey amphibian for his work, using gyrostabilizers with high-end cameras. Walsh shot thousands of photographs of the river, which he and Roberts had to whittle down for the book.

“We had to discard some phenomenal pictures,” says Roberts, detailing a photo they almost cut until they realized that what they were looking at was three sunken barges that had grown into islands: “They were probably moored and abandoned there, laying there for decades. And literally, that picture was going to go on the cutting room floor until we noticed something odd about those islands. So that happened many times.”

Both are fascinated with the river’s many oxbows – switchbacks that create undulating patterns and leave behind crescent-shaped lakes. They make artistic images and also reveal the history of the river.

“I was always attracted to the oxbows,” says Walsh. “I love history, and what you are looking at is hundreds and hundreds of years of history in one glance. It was surprising to me how often the river changed course and is still changing course up there [in the north], and I don’t think people realize that.”

The final section of the book heads into The Great North Woods, where Walsh ventured to the source of the Connecticut River. The terrain becomes rugged and uninhabited, and a series of lakes emerges: the First, Second, Third and Fourth Connecticut lakes, labeled from south to north. It is the Fourth Connecticut Lake in New Hampshire, just below a ridge where a U.S. Customs station sits at the Canadian border, that is the source of the Connecticut River. Just 528 feet long, it features a floating bog with insect-eating plants.

Walsh was so intrigued that he rode his motorcycle to the Customs station and hiked the trail to the source of the river. There, he



**GLIDING THROUGH:** The book captures some magic moments. Here, a drawbridge lifts to allow a sailboat to pass by.

stepped across one end as easily as if it were a puddle. ❧



# SEASONS EXPERIENCE



Your Community  
Connection



Visit us at [SeasonsMagazines.com](http://SeasonsMagazines.com)

**Seasons Magazines** are lifestyle magazines direct-mailed to Connecticut households, focusing on what is important in each community, and reaching an audience of the most affluent consumers with unique and engaging content. From the hills of Litchfield County to the shoreline of Connecticut, Seasons Media brings eye-catching visual appeal, articles and essays with local flavor, sophisticated editorial and an extraordinary shelf life to the most desirable households in the state.

**Seasons Magazines** are LOCALLY owned and operated and are part of an award-winning multimedia experience.

Seasons publications include

***Seasons of NEW HAVEN, Seasons of the Shoreline, Seasons of Glastonbury,  
Seasons of West Hartford, Seasons of the Farmington Valley and  
Seasons of the Northwest Hills/Litchfield.***

For advertising opportunities call [Jim Tully](mailto:Jim.Tully@SeasonsMedia.com) at **860-413-2022**





First runner up in the  
2018 Miss America Contest and  
recipient of a FREE CAR FOR A YEAR  
from McDermott Auto Group ...

# Congratulations Miss Connecticut Bridget Oei!



McDermott Auto Group is a  
proud sponsor of Miss Connecticut  
and the #1 preferred auto dealer  
by women car buyers.



**LEXUS**  
203-466-9999  
[www.mcdermottlexus.com](http://www.mcdermottlexus.com)

**CHEVROLET**  
203-466-1000  
[www.mcdermottchevrolet.com](http://www.mcdermottchevrolet.com)



# The Spectrum of Success

**PRECIOUS  
OPPORTUNITY:**

Walgreens associate Dustin Atkins, who has autism spectrum disorder, says he's grateful for the job-skills training he received and an employer that hires people with disabilities. Nationally, 86 percent of adults with ASD are unemployed.



# Businesses Step Up To Welcome Employees With Autism.

by **THERESA SULLIVAN BARGER** / *photography by ALLEGRA ANDERSON*

**D**ustin Atkins enjoys helping customers at his part-time job at the Simsbury Walgreens and the satisfaction of doing his job well. His job as an associate requires multitasking, including replacing weekly ad tags and working the cash register.

Only a few years ago, says Atkins, 21, he spent his junior year of high school as a virtual shut-in because he had difficulty talking to classmates. Born with autism spectrum disorder (ASD), he had to learn how to talk to others, how to make decisions quickly, and how to problem-solve, he says. He graduated from high school in 2014 and subsequently completed a local college program. He credits years of internships and on-the-job-training through Favarh, a Canton-based organization for people with disabilities, as well as Walgreens' staffs' experience with other employees with autism, for his success.

Atkins is one of the lucky few. Nationally, the unemployment rate among adults with ASD is estimated at 86 percent, according to the National Autism Indicators Report published by the A.J. Drexel Autism Institute in 2017. Underemployment rates also exceed 50 percent. (State figures were unavailable.)

ASD, a lifelong condition, is characterized by challenges with social skills, speech and nonverbal communication – and also by strengths: attention to detail, logical thinking, independent thinking, honesty and loyalty, according to Autism Speaks, a national advocacy group. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that one in 59 U.S. children has been identified with ASD, more than 2.5 times the one in 150 reported in 2007.

About half the people diagnosed with autism

have an IQ above 70, and about half below 70, research shows. A retail or distribution center job may be too repetitive or boring for some people, and too demanding mentally or physically for others – with or without autism. As the saying goes: If you know one person with autism, you know one person with autism.

Internationally, parents of children with autism spark the programs and companies designed to capitalize on the strengths that people with autism bring to the workforce. The father of a son with autism created Specialisterne, a Danish software firm, as a for-profit business to draw from an untapped, overlooked resource – 75 percent of its workforce is diagnosed with ASD. Others soon followed. Germany-based SAP SE launched its Autism at Work program in 2013 and employs more than 140 people with autism. In the U.S., Microsoft, Ernst & Young, Ford, JP Morgan Chase, SAP and Walgreens have made commitments to hiring people with disabilities.

## CONNECTICUT EMPLOYERS

In Connecticut, with help from the state Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS), Travelers launched a pilot program in early 2017 to hire people with disabilities based on employees' advocacy. Four additional groups have been hired, says Jim McMahon, director of talent acquisition for Travelers.

Research shows that “if you structure a program properly, you’re not compromising productivity or any of your standards,” McMahon says. “We’re trying to be more inclusive in our hiring. We’re not trying to put any preconceived notions on people [with disabilities]. We’re trying to identify individ

“Half the people in Silicon Valley probably have autism.”

- Temple Grandin, autism expert, author and speaker





**MAKING IT WORK:** With help from the state Bureau of Rehabilitation Services, Jim McMahon, director of talent acquisition for Travelers, oversees a new program to hire people with disabilities. Research shows, he says, that “if you structure a program properly, you’re not compromising productivity or any of your standards.”

uals and give them an opportunity.”

After completing a five-week training program that includes job coaching from a human services organization funded through BRS, 21 people with disabilities – most of them ASD – have been hired by Travelers and receive salary and benefit packages comparable to other employees, says Kathy Marchione, bureau chief, vocational rehabilitation program with BRS. “It’s a huge success. I’m thrilled with it,” she says.

McMahon and Marchione attended the Autism at Work summit at Microsoft’s headquarters last spring to learn from businesses that had hired people with disabilities.

“I’ve been doing this work for 30 years,” she says. “When I saw employer after employer sell this on how it makes good business sense, it felt so right.”

### A GROWING PROBLEM

Parents of children with disabilities worry how their adult children will support themselves in the future, once the parents are elderly or gone. Given all their children could bring to a job, mothers express frustration with the limited number of opportunities available today.

More employers large and small will have to embrace neurodiversity (a concept where neurological differences are recognized and respected like other human variation) in the workforce in order to drive down unemployment rates. Each year, an estimated 50,000 young adults with autism age out of school-based services, according to Autism Speaks. If these adults can’t get jobs, they seek Social Security and Medicaid.

“The whole thing is going to implode because it’s just not sustainable,” says Michelle Ouimette, managing director of Roses for Autism in Guilford and director of its parent company, Ability Beyond, a service provider in Bethel. “I’ve never felt good about an 18 year old going on Social Security because he can’t get the opportunity to work. It feels good to work, to showcase your talents and be part of a team.”

Jane Thierfeld Brown, assistant clinical professor at Yale Child Study Center, says with the numbers of people with ASD becoming adults, “we don’t have



**LOVE OF LEARNING:** Amy Langston, who is earning her master's degree at Hartford Seminary, has ASD and works as an autism sensitivity copy editor. Photo by **Emily Sullivan Barger**

enough of any kind of work for adults on the spectrum, no matter their functioning level.”

The state Department of Developmental Services offers training and supervised, sheltered work for those with disabilities, including ASD, whose IQ is below 70, but there are few programs for those with autism who have average, above average and superior intelligence. One well-respected program, Project Search, gives young adults three six-month, supervised work experiences, including social skills training. But there's no guarantee of a job at the end, and it costs parents \$35,000.

“We have tons of folks who are at the mid- to high-range of the spectrum, what used to be called high-functioning autism or Asperger's, who have graduated from college,”

says Lois Rosenwald, founder and retired executive director of Autism Services & Resources Connecticut, in Wallingford, and a long-time autism consultant. “The problem is when they graduate and try finding work. If they are working, they often end up working in jobs that don't fit their skill set, and that's when they can [actually] find work.”

Hartford resident Amy Langston, who is earning a master's degree in religious studies at the Hartford Seminary, has autism and works occasionally as a freelance autism sensitivity copy editor. But she has a scant work history because the typical jobs that college and grad students work – retail and food service – would be a bad fit for her, she says.

Langston, 23, recently left a temporary administrative work-study job

because the stress of the work, on top of graduate school demands, caused her health to decline. She also wanted to focus on her studies. “My condition necessitates that I have plenty of free time,” she says. “I'm still working out how I might be able to have both a job and go to school.”

At an earlier job in Virginia, a coworker became annoyed when Langston didn't realize that a request to pick up the mail was intended as an ongoing directive, not a single day's errand.

“Trying to get and maintain a job while having autism is hard,” says Langston, who grew up and got her bachelor's degree in Raleigh, North Carolina. Employers look for communication and teamwork skills. “We're often low in those kinds of skills. We're trying to look for a workplace where we can really use our talents and live independently.”

To overcome the difficulty of face-to-face interviews, which “are one of the biggest hurdles autistics face,” Langston would like to see companies offer autistic people phone interviews. “I think that would solve many problems,” she says.

Getting a job isn't the only challenge for people with ASD, says Brown, who is also director of College Autism Spectrum, a consultancy in college counseling and work readiness. To keep a job, people must not only do the work, but get along with coworkers, respond appropriately to their bosses and colleagues and, in



**DOING WELL:** Dustin Atkins places and removes “sale” signs, restocks shelves and runs the cash register at his part time job as an associate at the Simsbury Walgreens. Nationally, Walgreens has made a commitment to employ people with disabilities.



some cases, interact well with customers.

Companies with successful hiring programs for people with disabilities offer internships, training programs and job coaching from a service provider such as Favarh (officially the Arc of the Farmington Valley) or mentor coaching from a coworker. Some businesses allow outside experts to provide staff training in how to work with people with ASD; training can be offered to fit the employer's preference – either in-person or through a webinar or short video, Brown says.

Atkins, a Burlington resident, says he's grateful he had the chance to begin as an intern at Walgreens because, when he applied for a paid job, the manager interviewing him had been a supervisor, and he knew that she was kind, easy to talk to, and understanding. During the interview, he says, he imagined talking with a relative so he could meet the manager's eye.

"It was one of my crowning moments, getting over that fear of talking to another person," he says.

## BUSINESS BENEFITS

While autism advocates bemoan the dearth of white-collar jobs, the routine and structure of distribution centers suit some adults with autism, such as Aaron Rudolph, 32. The West Hartford resident began working full time at the Walgreens Distribution Center nine years ago this November. When the center first opened, people with disabilities went through an 18-month, unpaid training program – six months in the classroom, and six months each of simulated workstations. If they passed each phase, they advanced to the next one.

Rudolph's mom, Alison Rudolph, appreciated that her son was given the time and support to be successful, and she didn't mind that the training was unpaid. When he wasn't fast enough to work fulfilling stores' order lists, a job coach helped him work in a different area.

"It's a tight ship, but I believe it's fair," she says. Her son doesn't mind the repetitive nature of the work and



**BEHIND THE SCENES:** Seasons volunteer photo assistant Patrick Tully chatting with Atkins after the photo shoot.

gets satisfaction out of keeping stores stocked. He has been given added responsibilities and has received raises, she says.

"We're very grateful he has this job," she says. "It does so much for him because he is contributing."

At least 30 percent of the workforce at the Connecticut Walgreens Distri-

## Employee loyalty and retention rates among those with ASD are high, another boost to the bottom line.

bution Center has either a physical, intellectual or social disability they've disclosed, says Joe Wendover, corporate field inclusion manager. Businesspeople from Asia, Europe and South America visit to learn from Walgreens' business model.

"We're not a charity," Wendover says. "It is tapping into a labor pool that most companies don't include. We've found that when you put standards on everybody, people rise to those standards and above." Employee loyalty and retention rates among those with ASD are high, another boost to the bottom line.

Getting hired at the Walgreens Distribution Center isn't easy, but there are different pathways that a person with a disability can take to become a Walgreens employee. One of them is the Transitional Work Group, or TWG.

The TWG is a training program lasting for roughly 12 weeks. People with disabilities begin as temps, with on-the-job training through a human services provider that pays workers and provides job coaches. Prior to the job training, there is a one-week orientation that includes learning soft skills as well as policies and procedures.



After that, there are two to three weeks of working in a simulated setting, followed by working with supervision on the warehouse floor with the permanent staff.

These days, virtually the only openings are on the third shift, which runs from 10 p.m. to 8 a.m., four days a week. Many people with ASD don't drive, so their parents drive them or they take buses. Wendover says 95 percent of the people who complete the TWG training program are hired.

Those who work in the distribution center are on their feet except during breaks, and they have to work quickly. Justin Riley, 25, didn't make the cut, says his mother, Laura Riley, of Simsbury. Her son completed the Project Search program, where he developed work skills through a series of jobs and "a nice-looking resume and reference sheet." It did not result in a job for him – nor did they promise it would, she said.

Walgreens made it clear that employees have to meet their standards for speed, she explains. "We heard so many good things about Walgreens, we hated not to try it, even though we knew the only openings were for the third (overnight) shift," she says. "The people working with him and training him were great."

The BRS staff is still working with Justin Riley to help him get a job. "The nice thing about going

through BRS [is that employees] go into a job where the employer knows they have a disability and they might need a bit of training."

People who have tried for years to get hired will work hard to keep their jobs, says Rosenwald, the autism advocate and mother of an adult son with autism. Generally speaking, she says, people with autism are loyal, dependable, thrive on routines and like to follow rules, minimizing workplace accidents and absenteeism.

"They can make wonderful employees once they learn the job, if the employer allows job coaching," Rosenwald says.

Today's younger workforce has grown up with people with ASD because children with autism have been mainstreamed in public schools for more than 30 years. Across the country, Brown says, advocates have been working to shift the culture beyond autism awareness to autism acceptance.

"Kids with autism grow up and they're adults for a lot longer than they're kids," says Brown, a West Hartford resident whose 26-year-old son has ASD. "It's not just about educating them; it's about employing them and finding appropriate housing and medical care."

Multiple studies show that millennials place a premium on feeling engaged at work. Wendover says

# Christmas Decor

*Convenient • Safety • Astounding Results*



These are the primary reasons why our clients have us create their holiday display. Our trained experienced professionals will design and install your decor to magically transform your property into a holiday wonderland.



**Christmas Decor by Aqua Pool • 860-623-8374 • [www.aquapool.com](http://www.aquapool.com)**



# The Good Therapist

**A young man with ASD has found his calling – in helping others.**

by **CAROL LATTER** / *photography by TODD FAIRCHILD*

**A**lex Agostini has something exceptional to share with the world.

Currently in his third year of a master's program at Central Connecticut State University, the 26-year-old was diagnosed at about age 5 with high-functioning autism, formerly known as Asperger's Syndrome. He struggled socially in school, and after graduating from college, struggled to find a single employer who would hire him as an intern, let alone give him a job. But he found encouragement in Nancy Martin, LMFT, his clinical supervisor at wellness counseling in Farmington.

Martin, who has been working as a therapist for 22 years, realized during some of their earliest discussions that he had an amazing gift.

"You have something here, Alex," she'd say as she listened to his substantial insights and depth of perspective about human nature. "I think you should consider becoming a therapist. Not only are there very few male therapists, but there's no one I know who has the knowledge and life experience that you do."

Agostini, whose parents own a company in New Britain, has worked there part-time since 2009. His job has mostly involved doing paperwork. "I wanted something more meaningful, something that would allow me to contribute to society. You can find a paper pusher anywhere but you'll only ever find one of me," he says.

He thought the completion of his degree in environmental sciences at Keene State College in New Hampshire would be his ticket to a more satisfying future, but it didn't lead to a job in that field. He says despite his



qualifications, no one would hire him the first year out of college, especially once he shared that he had autism. The lack of call backs or responses by prospective employers caused him so much anguish that his aunt suggested he speak with Martin, who could be a

resource for him. And the rest, as they say, is history.

Buoyed by Martin's confidence in him and his unique skills, he decided to give a career in therapy a try. After his acceptance into the graduate program at CCSU and his first classes,

Alex knew he'd made the right decision. "It's the first time I've truly felt comfortable in my own skin," he says. "I know that this is my purpose in life."

Recently, however, he hit another roadblock. Now in the internship stage of his graduate education in marriage and family therapy, he began going on multiple interviews but couldn't land an internship. He shared his frustration with Martin.

"It became clear that he wasn't getting a fair shake," she says. "There aren't a lot of people who know how to interview people on the spectrum. I certainly know about autism and I know about Alex so I said, 'Why don't you come on with me?' I'm steadfast in my beliefs of the talents of all people, and I saw the talent and possibility in Alex. It was just one of those moments of divine intervention."

The result has been almost magical. Alex has found a niche with the ever-growing ASD population, Martin says. "He is relatable, reachable, compassionate and nonjudgmental. People on the spectrum light up when they see him. There's an instant recognition. One non-verbal client smiled and smiled the first time he met Alex – not something this client typically does. I've had clients with autism, who are near and dear to my heart, for years. But Alex speaks a language beyond my experience and training. It's groundbreaking. And gratifying."

She adds, "I'm blown away at what I see happening. With my years of experience and training, I'm no match for Alex."

Martin says Agostini offers perspectives that people gravitate toward – both those with autism and those without. "More than once, I've heard non-ASD clients say, 'Wow, I've never thought of it that way.' One client said, 'You have a laser-like ability to pinpoint the problem.' It just gave me the chills."

Agostini says while autism has its downside – people with ASD are sometimes deemed too sensitive and overly focused on details – it also allows him to put himself in his clients' shoes.

## "I'm steadfast in my beliefs of the talents of all people, and I saw the talent and possibility in Alex. It was just one of those moments of divine intervention."

"I understand where that pain and misunderstanding comes from. I understand feeling out of place, not having a place in society. I know that better than anyone. It means a lot to the client that they have a person to talk to who has been through the same kind of strife," he says. "They open up a lot more. The relationship shifts. By the time they walk out of the room, they know they have someone in their corner."

Thrilled by Agostini's success, Martin and Agostini have launched "ASD Therapy for Me," a new, one-of-a-kind therapy for teens and adults on the spectrum and their families. It provides "in-depth insight into ASD through anecdotal knowledge of overcoming adversity firsthand" as well as "compassionate empathy for clients through a non-pathological, non-patronizing lens."

"Alex and I work as a therapeutic team. Our styles mesh and flow. I respect his input and perspectives," Martin says. "Our model offers a rare look below the surface of the condition and, to the best of our knowledge, is not found anywhere else in the field of clinical therapy."

Others in the field of ASD and therapeutic services have begun to take note.

Since the launch of this therapy, Martin and Agostini have been invited to speak to a parents' group at Autism Services & Resources Connecticut (ASRC) in Wallingford.

Agostini has also been asked to be a panel speaker at the Annual Northeast Regional Conference on Autism at

Southern Connecticut State University in March 2019. The invitation is a prestigious one. "This is a conference where well-known researchers such as Temple Grandin, PhD, have spoken," she explains.

The collaboration between Martin and her protégé has changed both of their lives.

"I love what I do," she says. "I love it even more now, with Alex. I think we have a direction that is going to be big. It's very heartwarming to us and we're very enthused about it."

Agostini is equally grateful. "Had it not been for Nancy, I probably would have still been at my job, wondering if I would ever amount to anything," he says.

Both are excited about the future. "Not only does Alex have natural acuity, he is a beacon of hope for parents, families, and siblings of people on the spectrum, and also for educators and people in the helping profession. He's been through the ropes; he's faced the challenges. He knows what works and what doesn't," Martin says.

"Alex is going to be in demand. He's a much-needed resource, contributor and soon to be leader in today's world. I can't say enough about the good he's doing for all of us." ■

**For more information, please contact Nancy Martin at 860-676-1134 or by email at [nancy@wellnesscounselingct.com](mailto:nancy@wellnesscounselingct.com). Her office is located at 128 Garden Street in Farmington.**

*Carol Latter is a Simsbury-based writer, and the editor of Seasons Magazines.*





# NO LIFT LINES? REALLY.

**AT THE ONLY PRIVATE SKI MOUNTAIN IN THE NORTHEAST**

First tracks conditions all day without ever waiting in a lift line, and that's just the beginning. Our luxury Clubhouse has a world-class spa, gourmet dining, state-of-the-art health club, pool and bowling. Our members-only entertainment features renowned artists such as Blues Traveler and Train. And four seasons of private mountain activities, including our 18-hole championship golf course, let you enjoy the best of Deerfield Valley year-round.



  
**THE HERMITAGE**  
*Club*  
AT HAYSTACK MOUNTAIN

Call **802.464.7734** or visit  
**hermitageclub.com**  
for more information.  
Deerfield Valley, VT



## Good Sports

**I**t's the bottom of the whatever. Two men on base and I don't know how many outs. I'm sitting beside my six-year-old son in a minor league ballpark in downtown Hartford. He's stuffing cotton candy into his already stuffed mouth. He's giggling. Barely watching the game, but it doesn't matter. He's sitting on the edge of a green field, watching underpaid ballplayers play a game he doesn't quite understand yet, but when ball and bat connect, a crack fills the stadium with sound and his heart with excitement.

In the seat to my left, my nine-year-old daughter continues to talk to me about Degas. And Madam C.J. Walker. And Marie Curie. Earlier this evening, she went down a 30-foot inflatable

slide behind the outfield wall. Before making the plunge, she shouted "Ruth Bader Ginsburg!" three times. After she hopped off the slide, I asked her why she shouted the name of a Supreme Court justice, and she said that when she's afraid, she speaks the name of someone she admires, and it helps her to find strength.

It was a beautiful moment, but ever since that moment, she's been talking to me about other women she admires. She hasn't stopped. She never stops.

I'm raising a daughter who I would've considered intolerable when I was her age, but here, in this ballpark, she can speak to me forever, because this is baseball. Slow, plodding, glorious baseball. It's a sport that contains tiny fits

of excitement surrounded by enormous amounts of time when nothing actually happens. It's a predictable game. It has a flow and pace and rhythm that allows me to watch when necessary and look away when possible without missing a thing.

It's the perfect game for a boy who loves the crowd and candy, and a girl who hasn't stopped talking since she started talking almost nine years ago.

It's perfect for me, too. A perfect way to spend a leisurely summer day.

When and if my children ever choose to play this sport in some organized manner, I will be thrilled. While I love my little ones dearly, the idea that I could sit in the bleachers, book in hand, reading, waiting for every ninth at-bat when my child might stand



at the plate, is thrilling. The notion that I could simply look up at every crack of the bat to see which child has misjudged a fly ball, bobbled an infield grounder, or thrown the ball 15 feet over the first baseman's head, allowing a dribbler to the mound to result in what the child will later declare an inside-the-park homer, strikes me as delightful.

Baseball is the sport made for parents who love their children dearly but can only watch them in a sustained manner for so long. It's a sport for the selfish parent. The wise parent. The parent who understands that his happiness is at least as important as his children's happiness.

If I'm not happy, no one is happy.

Baseball. This is what I want my kids to play.

But please... not soccer. Anything but soccer.

Soccer is the sport for parents who are burdened with inexplicable guilt that can only be alleviated by self-inflicted suffering. These are the moms and dads who sit in the grass on the edge of an enormous field while 38 children run after the same ball at the same time.

Soccer. A sport that the world adores but America has yet to embrace despite the barrage of newspaper articles declaring that youth soccer or Mia Hamm or the World Cup are about to push aside basketball or baseball forever and allow soccer to reign supreme. I've been hearing this since I was a teenager and, 30 years later, I still hear it.

America does not love soccer. Americans are too smart to love soccer with all of their hearts.

Self-important, urban-dwelling professionals who have the job flexibility that allows them to inhabit pubs midday and watch the World Cup profess a love for soccer. Middle-aged men who see soccer as a way of clinging to their once-athletic physique love soccer until they blow out an Achilles and turn to golf or the couch. Contrarians who insist on calling soccer "football" and take pleasure in correcting others love soccer. But we hate these people, and they

obviously hate themselves.

But your average American? No. Our children love soccer, but most of them grow out of that foolishness the same way they eventually come to realize that bullies can be defeated with disinterest and high school wasn't so bad when compared to mortgage payments, dental insurance and hair loss.

I can't abide by the notion that my children might play soccer someday. Unlike baseball, where the action is predictable and paced, and moments

Our children love soccer,  
but most of them grow  
out of that foolishness the  
same way they eventually  
come to realize that  
bullies can be defeated  
with disinterest and high  
school wasn't so bad when  
compared to mortgage  
payments, dental insurance  
and hair loss.



of potential excitement are known and expected, soccer is a sport that demands your constant attention. In a game where the score might end up being 1-0, you can't afford to miss your child's game-winning goal. Possibly her only goal of the entire season, especially when every other move made on the field will have an indeterminate and indiscernible impact on the game.

"Hey Dad, did you see me kick that ball at midfield? I passed it to Francine. Did you see it?"

"Did you see the way I raced down the sideline at the end of the second period?"

"I dribbled that ball right past that girl before that other girl stole it from me and kicked it out of bounds. Did you see that?"

You can't read a book during a soccer game. You can't answer email between innings. You can't make a quick run to the coffee shop immediately after your child has struck out, knowing you have at least eight batters before she will do anything again.

Soccer is a ball-and-chain. It's a relentless master. Perfect for those parents who question every decision, lament every bad choice, and want to do everything possible to make their child's life bright and gleaming while ruining their own.

Not for the wiser set like me. The ones who love their kids to pieces but understand that you can only give so much before you'll become the cliché parent who says things like, "Someday I'm told I'll have a life again" or "I feel like nothing more than a shuttle service for my kids."

I can't be that parent. I can't be the ever-attentive, constantly cheering father. I know my limits.

I want to be the marginally attentive, occasionally cheering father who is more than willing to pay attention to every ninth at-bat, look up at the crack of every bat, and buy ice cream for my kid after every game, as long as I get some, too.

Baseball is the game for me. ■

*Matthew Dicks is a teacher, storyteller, and the author of several novels and the recent Storyworthy: Engage, Teach, Persuade, and Change Your Life Through the Power of Storytelling. He played goalie for his middle school soccer team, and even in that vaguely participatory role, he thought the sport was boring and stupid. Learn more at [matthewdicks.com](http://matthewdicks.com).*

*Sean Wang, an MIT architecture graduate, is author of the sci-fi graphic novel series, Runners. Learn more at [seanwang.com](http://seanwang.com)*



Bruce DePrest  
& Mark Dixon



**EARLY WARNING**

**WEATHER**

**STARTING AT 5:00PM**





SEASONS OF WEST HARTFORD™  
 P.O. BOX 92  
 WEST SIMSBURY, CT 06092

PRESORTED STD  
 U.S. POSTAGE  
**PAID**  
 PERMIT NO. 21  
 FREEPORT, OH  
 43973



**QUALITY FUELS, QUALITY HEATING and COOLING  
 PRODUCTS, QUALITY SERVICE,  
*Quality of Life!***

Our community is the most important part of our business. Therefore, Quinoco Energy Services' continued mission is to help our customers conserve energy while maintaining safe, comfortable home and work environments. We seek to do so by hiring dedicated employees with proven work ethics, by keeping our employees educated and protected, by returning your queries promptly and sufficiently, and by delivering your services with the highest quality and at a fair price every single time. ***Servicing your town since 1877.***

**Bristol Office**  
 289 Terryville Avenue  
 Bristol, CT 06010  
 860-583-4609

**Farmington Office**  
 1400 New Britain Ave  
 Farmington, CT 06032  
 860-677-1944

**Torrington Office**  
 1016 Migeon Ave  
 Torrington, CT 06790  
 860-482-1836

**24/7  
 EMERGENCY  
 CUSTOMER  
 SERVICE**



For more information visit [quinoco.com](http://quinoco.com)

HOD #305 | HOD #948 | LIC. # 303214