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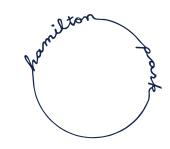


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# EDITOR'S NOTE



Summer is finally here: one of the best times of the year in Greater New Haven. As much as I enjoy the fall, and the energy that thousands of returning college students bring to our region every September, there's something so relaxing about summer, when we locals have a bit more space – and, hopefully, more time – to enjoy the riches this region has to offer. Now, when the entire summer lies before us, there's a particular sense of anticipation and excitement.

'Tis the season, so in this issue we offer a glimpse into the Shoreline's active boating scene, as well as a look at the role jazz plays in our state (there's no better time than summer to enjoy some outdoor music).

With downtown a bit less crowded, this can be a great time of year to check out New Haven's many amazing restaurants. In this issue, we visit longtime local favorite Zinc, and explore some of the newest eateries that have just recently opened.

We also sit down with New Haven playwright David Margulies, who has a new play opening in New York City, and reflect on the meaningful impact Special Olympics Connecticut has had over its 50year history in our state.

And as always, we continue to shine a spotlight on businesses and nonprofits doing great things in our region.

Welcome to the latest issue of Seasons of New Haven!

Cara Rosner, Editor cara@seasonsofnewhaven.com

# SEASONS of HAVEN

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**79 FINAL THOUGHTS** In a time when so many events are overblown, not everything has to be a "thing." Sometimes, simple pleasures are best.



Visit www.seasonsmagazines.com

### Seasons of NEW HAVEN • SUMMER 2019 7



# **OUT & ABOUT** IN

### The Patriotic Spirit June 29

There's no better way to celebrate Independence Day than with fireworks. Various fireworks displays will light the night sky throughout the region, including East Haven's 17th Annual Beach Party and Fireworks. It will take place at 9 p.m. on the Town Beach on Cosey Avenue. Rain date, if needed, will be July 1.

## A Celebration of Jewish Life July 14

The 14th Shoreline Jewish Festival will take place on July 14 on the Guilford Green. The event, which has free admission and runs from noon to 5 p.m., will feature various styles of Jewish music, traditional and Israeli fair food (all of which is kosher), crafts,

vendors activities and more. 203-645-4635. shorelinejewishfestival. com.

### Flights of Fancy July 25

The popular downtown New Haven wine-andshopping stroll Flights of Fancy is being planned for July 25. The event, which happens twice a year, draws hundreds of shoppers to the city's



boutiques, retailers and restaurants - many of which offer wine samples and shopping discounts for the occasion. Admission includes a souvenir wine glass, raffle prize opportunities, giveaways and more. **downtownnewhaven.com/fof** 

### Sip and Sample Aug. 10 and 11

Sample the best that Connecticut's vineyards have to offer when the 13th Annual Shoreline Wine Festival takes place Aug. 10 and 11 at Bishop's Orchards Farm Market and Winery in Guilford. Wineries from throughout the state will offer their wines, and visitors will be able to enjoy food and music - all against the scenic backdrop of Bishop's. 1355 Boston Post Rd., Guilford. **shorelinewinefestival.com** 

> Oysters by the Sea Aug. 17

The Milford Oyster Festival, one of the largest annual events on the shoreline, will return for its 45th year Aug. 17 on the Milford Green. The festival, which runs from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. and boasts 30,000 oysters, showcases oysters harvested in local waters. Attendees



# **GREATER NEW HAVEN**

will be able to enjoy them with craft beer, wine and other refreshments. 12 Broad St., Milford. **milfordoysterfestival.com**.

### **Farm Fresh**

Summer is officially farmer's market season in New Haven. City Seed markets throughout the city are running in Wooster Square, Edgewood Park, Downtown and Fair Haven. Support area farms

and businesses and enjoy the outdoors with a stroll through one of these popular events. For more information, including locations, times and vendors, visit **cityseed.org**.

### **Time to Reflect**

Take in the Yale University Art Gallery's latest exhibit, featuring more than 100 glass objects, before it closes in late September. "A Nation Reflected: Stories in American Glass" examines how glass has been used for generations to express cultural, technological and artistic aspirations. The collection includes objects on loan from the Yale Peabody Museum of Natural History. 1111 Chapel St., New Haven. **artgallery.yale.edu**.

### **Great Food, Great Music**

Enjoy sweet sounds during a savory meal with Blue Plate Radio's weekly jazz series, taking place Thursday evenings throughout the summer at Harvest Wine Bar, from 7 to 9:30 p.m. The weekly event features solo or duo jazz musicians on the patio (weather permitting) or inside the restaurant. For a calendar of weekly performers, visit **blueplateradio. com**. 1104 Chapel St., New Haven.

#### "Summer of '69" Aug. 26

Author Elin Hilderbrand will discuss her latest book, "Summer of '69" at 7 p.m. Aug. 26 at R.J. Julia Booksellers. Hilderbrand, who lives on Nantucket, has set most of her 23 novels there. Her latest, which is her first historical novel, takes place in one of the most tumultuous summers of the 20th century and focuses on the Levin family. Every year, the Levin children have looked forward to spending the summer at their grandmother's home in Nantucket, but in 1969 their lives - like the lives of so many - are changing. 768 Boston Post Road, Madison. rjjulia.com.



# Work of Art

Connecticut's Largest Arts-in-Education Non-profit Turns 40

By AMY J. BARRY / Photography by ALLEGRA ANDERSON

Thelma Ladeira



Eileen Carpinella, executive director of AFLCT since 2003, was honored at the organization's 40th anniversary gala on May 2 at Woodwinds in Branford. She is retiring this year, but hopes to always stay connected to the arts organization.

he arts are embraced more and more as a conduit, connecting students to every subject from English to science to history. The arts also serve as a window into different cultures and ideas, even helping to heal racial and ethnic divides. In education, the acronym STEM (Science,

Technology, Engineering and Math) has evolved to STEAM, adding an A for Arts, as proof of the power of creativity to open minds and change hearts.

Arts for Learning Connecticut (AFLCT) knew this back in 1979 when it was founded and continues to embrace those principles as it celebrates its 40th year.

An affiliate of the national program Arts for Learning – and previously called Young Audiences – AFLCT began at the University of Bridgeport as a music program offered in public schools. Incorporated as a non-profit in 1984, it relocated to New Haven for the next 17 years, where Executive Director Margaret Levine substantially increased funding and grew the program's artists' roster to include cultural and dance groups.

In 1997, the office moved to its current location in Hamden. Under the leadership of Eileen Carpinella, who joined the staff in 1995 and took the helm as executive director in 2003, AFLCT now includes more than 100 professional performing and teaching artists in all disciplines, offering programs to 250,000 school children, as well as to libraries and community centers in 87 percent of cities and towns statewide.

It is now the state's oldest and largest arts-ineducation non-profit organization.

Carpinella, who is retiring this year, says she still remembers the very first program she saw at Silas Deane Middle School in Wethersfield.

"It was 'Two For Freedom,' a historical story about two African Americans and how they got their freedom," she says. "It was so powerful and made me so proud to have just joined this organization that made such an impact on these students. In the whole auditorium, you could have heard a pin drop. And it was middle school students! It always amazes me – the power of the arts to transform a place, what's happening at that very moment, and how involved students are in learning from that art form."

Carpinella believes it's the hands-on, participatory approach with a big focus on sharing cultures from around the world that makes AFLCT stand out from other arts organizations in the state.

### TEACHING ARTISTS TELL THEIR STORIES

Efraim Silva of West Haven, founder and artistic director of Ginga Brasileira dance company, has been exposing students to Brazilian dance and culture for more than 25 years through AFLCT. The professional ensemble performs a repertoire of Afro-Brazilian dances that fuse rhythmic music with Capoeira, a high-energy martial arts dance form.

"I came from a family of 13 kids and I started doing Capoeira when I was 13 to defend myself against some of my brothers, being one of the small ones. But by learning Capoeira, I never had to fight anyone because everyone knew I could fight."

Silva left home at 17 and has been practicing his art form ever since. He came to the U.S. in 1989, settling in Bridgeport, where he had family. His sister and brother-in-law encouraged him to find another way of making a living because nobody knew what Capoeira was. But it was his passion, and within five years, he had connected with what was then Young Audiences. Silva is convinced that if it weren't for AFLCT, he wouldn't be the artist he is today, performing all over the world.

Students love Ginga Brasileira's performances, but there is a larger message Silva is always conveying, which is, "No matter where you come from, what language you speak, we can always learn from each other, love each other, and if we allow the space to be creative between anyone – men, women, black, white, fat, skinny – we can always make a difference."

He adds, "I have the most incredible job; I love every second of it," he says. "It never gets old. What keeps me alive and full of energy is because I work with children."

Rachna Ramya of Simsbury, teaching artist with AFLCT introduces students and the greater community to Kathak, a North Indian classical temple dance, which originated more than 2,000 years ago.

## "I HAVE THE MOST INCREDIBLE JOB; I LOVE EV

Efraim Silva of West Haven is an AFLCT teaching artist and founder of Ginga Brasileira, a professional dance troupe that fuses rhythmic Afro-Brazilian dances with Capoeira — a high-energy martial arts dance form.

**ERY** 

## SECOND OF IT. IT NEVER GETS OLD." - Efraim Silva

Like Silva, Rachna Ramya of Simsbury has been a teaching artist with AFLCT for many years, starting in 1997. And like Silva, it was AFLCT that made it possible for her to keep dancing professionally.

"When I came to the U.S. from India 30 years ago, everyone said, 'Oh, you won't be able to make it as an Indian dancer in this country," so I applied for my MBA. I got a job with a [financial company] but soon gave my resignation. That was a deciding moment for me that I was only going to be a dancer."

As a teaching artist, Ramya performs Kathak, a North Indian classical temple dance, which originated more than 2,000 years ago. She also has her own Sumbhaav School of Kathak Dance, as well as a dance company that performs throughout the United States.

She finds that her work with students hasn't changed over the years as much as it has become more intense. "America is a melting pot of





AFLCT teaching artist Cvd Slotoroff, a professional singer-songwriter, guitarist, and certified music therapist does an interactive performance with students at Rotella Magnet School in Waterbury.

cultures. And we have cultural tensions and tensions about sexuality, and ideas about what women can do," she observes. "So I bring social justice issues in right now that I talk to kids about and translate into my dance pieces. "What's wonderful

about all the staff here," she adds, "is they understand

art. They also understand education. So they propel us artists in a way that we can make a real difference in the school system."

A new addition to the AFLCT roster is puppeteer Kim Van Aelst of Hamden. She has performed her Oompapossum Puppets show in schools, museums, and at festivals throughout the state.

An occupational therapist, Van Aelst has worked in schools for many years, but says she never lost her passion for puppetry, which began as a young child, inspired by watching Sesame Street, The Muppet Show, and Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood on TV.

Although she had been a puppeteer for a while, she decided to go back to school to study puppetry at the UConn School of Fine Arts, "to do it professionally," she says. "I always had [AFLCT] in my web browser and I contacted them when I graduated. I wanted to really raise the bar."

ussic work-woman sho

Kimberly Van Aelst

tales and stories. She even writes and performs songs.

"I do it all. I'm truly a one-woman show," she says.

She also leads workshops after performances. During the workshops, students can both interact with and make their own puppets.

Van Aelst's favorite part of performing for children is when "all the kids are sitting there, cross-legged, so excited for the puppet show to start. I can feel the excitement in the air. I'm smiling and laughing behind the screen because I'm having such a good time."

## ART KEEPS OPENING DOORS

Carpinella admits it will be hard leaving AFLCT but hopes to always stay connected to the organization.

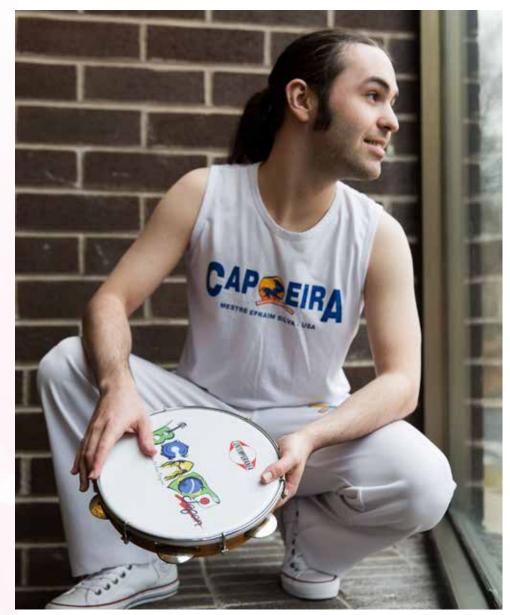
"I have been blessed with an extraordinary staff," she says, including [Program Manager] Loraine Brown, who has been with me for 20 of my 24 years. We've always had a team approach here. And we have such wonderful relationships with our artists that it really is like a family."

Carpinella is the only full-time staff member and other positions are all part-time. Therefore, the board of directors and volunteers play an integral role in keeping the multi-faceted, statewide nonprofit running smoothly.

Longstanding partnerships with key organizations are the reasons AFLCT has been able to grow and thrive. These organization include ACES Educational Center for the Arts in New Haven, the Anti-Defamation League's Connecticut regional office, a host of libraries, museums, and cultural centers, along with schools in New Haven, Hamden, West Hartford, New Britain, banon Gratan, and more schools

Lebanon, Groton – and more schools coming on board every year.

Among Carpinella's proudest accomplishments has been bringing Very Special Arts (VSA) to Connecticut.



Jeff Escritor Herdle

"Every year, we're fortunate to get a contract from The Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C. to specifically do work with students with disabilities. It's amazing how these artists, who are specially trained, are able to reach every single child and make such a difference," she says.

Carpinella recalls an artist who was working with a group of nonverbal students telling her that one of the students became verbal for the very first time. And a father who had been unable to connect "in any way, shape or form" with his son, who has autism, saw digital artwork his son had produced in a photography workshop, and went out and purchased two digital cameras. They now spend every weekend doing digital photography together.

"What an amazing thing to change someone's life, really," Carpinella marvels, "and for parents and teachers to see that these students can be reached through the arts. They can be art makers. They are creative. And to unlock that creativity is amazing."

Visit www.aflct.org for a full roster of artists, programs, showcases, upcoming 40th anniversary events, and information on volunteer opportunities and making donations.



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### Whether Near or Far, Connecticut Boaters Love Life on the Water

**By DAWN ENNIS** 

oaters love to boast about the benefits that being a boater brings. That's no less true for Connecticut's boating community.

"It's decompression," explains Don Harwood of Wallingford, as he waxes his 2007 35-foot cabin cruiser. "It helps me disconnect."

Says West Hartford native Christine Arabolu: "I enjoy the social life of boating. I remember as a kid going boating with my father. Most of our family vacations revolved around going to the shoreline. It's very relaxing."

"The salt air, the wind coming through the partition in the windshield, the sun streaming through the windows of the cabin in the morning," adds her husband, Raja. "There's nothing like it."



Lawrence Stewart installs the diving platform onto the stern of his classic wooden boat, dubbed "Gypsy Soul." Photos by DAWN ENNIS

### THE YACHTSMAN

"I spend a lot of time, and life, on the river," Lawrence Stewart of Deep River told me, as I helped him install the diving platform onto the stern of the "Gypsy Soul," his classic 1987 wooden boat. We stood in Midway marina in Haddam, on the shore of the Connecticut River, 10 miles from Long Island Sound. The river itself runs 410 miles, from the New Hampshire side of the Canadian border, south through Vermont and Massachusetts, down to the sound.

A cabinetmaker by trade, Lawrence has handcrafted exquisite cherry wood panels and features in the restoration of his yacht. With the platform firmly attached to the hull, he started to secure a new ladder, and began to spin a few fish tales, of growing up around boats.



Boats docked in Deep River await prepping by their owners for the season ahead. Photo by DAWN ENNIS

"My grandfathers, both of them, were fishermen, so we'd always go to Scituate, Massachusetts, and go fishing," he says. "I always had a love for boats. It's never, ever stopped."

He remembers finding a submerged wooden boat when he and his brother went snorkeling in a lake in the Berkshires.

"We pulled it ashore and dragged it halfway around the lake to where we were staying, where we patched the holes and dried it out and refloated it," he says, smiling. They added their grandfather's antique outboard motor. "It would push the boat just about as fast as you could row it, and it was loud as hell. But we just went everywhere in that thing, you name it. That's where I really got hooked."

In his song "Boats," country singer Kenny Chesney calls them "vessels of freedom, harbors of healing." And that certainly has been the case for Lawrence, 54. Forging a new life after a divorce, then a breakup, boating has long been a bond between him and his children, now adults. His son is with the Coast Guard, his daughter is a paramedic, and Lawrence works as a charter captain.

He doesn't call himself a boater, but a yachtsman, and like his grandfathers before him, he's given his children a lifetime of memories on the water. A favorite time was when he sailed them across the sound from Noank to Flat Hammock.

"We dropped anchor and the kids thought we were in Africa," he said. He's now living his dream of living on the water, something that – you'll be surprised to learn – the vast majority of boaters in Connecticut don't do.

### THE TEACHERS

Joyce Bonney of Coventry grew up around powerboats. Her husband, Bill, is a lifelong sailor, starting with the Sea Scouts as a young boy. Living more than 50 miles from the mouth of the Connecticut River at Long Island Sound, Joyce confessed that, these days, they mostly canoe. But when they do sail, she makes sure Bill gives them a wide berth from other boaters. She doesn't like for other ships to get too close.

"I need my space or I don't enjoy and relax," says Joyce, 69. After we're underway, the stress is over, and it's relaxing and enjoyable. That's sailing. Powerboating, on the other hand, is fun and adventurous."

While it's clear that Joyce prefers powerboats, it was obvious that a silly thing like a motor could never keep them apart. Joyce and Bill have many memories of ocean adventures from Connecticut to Mexico – some good, some in 21-foot swells.

The Bonneys work together as instructors for the United States Power Squadrons (USPS) chapter in Manchester.

"We teach a safe boating course which is so that people can get their certificate," something that's required in the state of Connecticut,



says Bill, 68. "There's a lot of people out there that don't necessarily know what they're doing."

The USPS is rebranding as "America's Boating Club," focusing on the social aspects. But the Bonneys remain true to their calling, to educate boaters on water safety, basic navigation, and proper planning for emergencies. Their girls, now in their 20s and 30s, are blessed to have a seadog for a dad and a mom who loves adventure to provide a free education in sailing and canoeing.

### THE NEWBIE

For those not so lucky as the Bonney girls, seafaring is not so simple.

There are "rules of the road" to obey, just like in driving a car – except you obviously can't "walk away" from a mishap, as you would after a minor automobile accident.

And unlike most cars, a boat can cost as much as a house to own and maintain, and that's on top of the premium that

boaters pay for marine fuel.

Now, if you can afford all that, owning a boat is like having a second home, a floating getaway with room to entertain, with space for overnight guests and scenery that is only limited by how far that tank of gas – or the wind – will take you.

And part of the experience, says Raja, 62, is getting there.

"It's similar to when you go on vacation," said the West Hartford insurance executive. "It starts as soon as you get into your car and start your engine."

He invited me to join him in his minivan for a 45-minute trip from his hometown to Old Saybrook, to look over his three-year-old Monterey powerboat.

"Route 9 is beautiful," he said as we cruised along. "It's a very calming parkway, and the drive puts me in the mood."

So why does he keep his dreamboat so far from home? West Hartford does not permit homeowners to store boats of any kind on their property.

While many towns do allow boats on residential property, it turns out most boaters in our state choose to commute. After all, there's only so much shoreline.

Along the way to Old Saybrook, we stopped at the shop where Paul Zable and his wife, Diane Bassett Zabel, sold the 35-foot cabin cruiser to Raja in 2016.

Bill Bonney of Coventry started sailing at age 8. He and his wife Joyce have been teaching boating safety for almost 25 years. This is a cherished photo from 2002, from a memorable outing with friends.

Taking the suggestion of one of their friends, Raja Arabolu and his wife Christine named their boat "Indian Summer." Photo by ALLEGRA ANDERSON 0

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OLD SAYB





Raja and Christine's boat offers luxe accommodations. Photo by ALLEGRA ANDERSON

"About 90 to 95 percent of my customers are people who live far away," Paul says. The day we visited him, another customer was on his way from Yonkers, N.Y., to look over his new purchase.

Paul and Diane own Bassett Yacht and Boat Sales, an offshoot of a family business started by Diane's parents, who began making wooden boats in 1944. Diane and Paul met Raja in 2016, when he and wife Christine visited the Norwalk boat show to celebrate his 60th birthday.

"It was a dream of his, a passion,

to want a boat," Christine said, and being out there was something she's enjoyed since she was a young girl. "I've always been drawn to the water."

Her father – and their neighbor, Mark Kotyla – shared that feeling, too. They have since passed, and Raja and Christine talked about not only fulfilling his dream but honoring their memory while giving something to the next generation. Raja said Christine and their children, Sarah-



Anjali, 25, and Krishna, 20, know that this is something he didn't just do for himself.

"His decisions are to bring the family together," says Christine, 59, "so that everyone can come together and enjoy it."

With his children finally charting their own courses in life, Raja embarked on his own navigation. But he zigzagged, at first planning to partner with his neighbor Mark on buying a boat together, then to deciding to buy his own used boat.

That was, he says, until he stepped aboard the Monterey at the Norwalk boat show, where all the boats are already in the water. That's where he met Diane.

"She threw the fishing line and hooked me," he recalls. "She asked me, 'Why would you want to sleep in someone else's bed?' We drove back home that day and I was talking to myself," says Raja, who had realized he had to buy a brand-new boat. And so he did.

In December 2016, Raja and Christine held a Christmas



When not in use, "Indian Summer" is kept securely, and decoratively, tied to the dock. Photo by ALLEGRA ANDERSON

party and asked friends and family to help them come up with a name. Given his Indian heritage, "Raj-Mahal," was an early favorite.

But the winner turned out to be something another neighbor suggested. It's the one that popped into Raja's head when Diane asked him what name he'd chosen, just before they took delivery: "Indian Summer."

Raja still recalls the purchase date – "It was April 28, 2017" – as proudly as he remembers the birthdays of his two children.

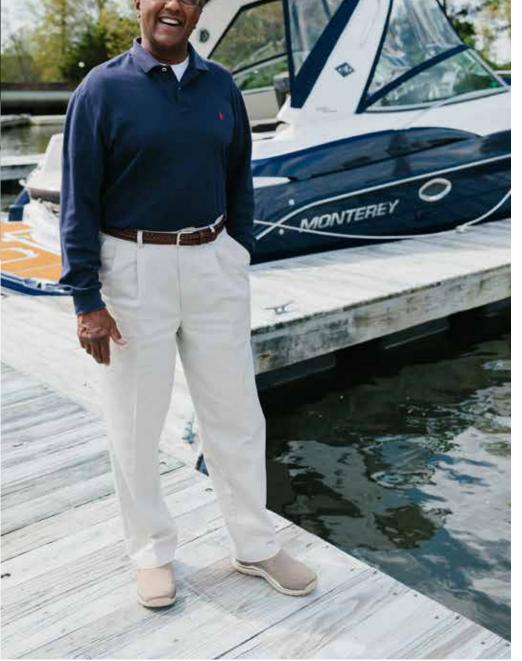
### THE PRICETAG

The dream of sailing, boating, yachting, or whatever you call it, doesn't come cheap. Beyond the purchase price is a mooring, marina slip, or at least a trailer to get you to a boat ramp, plus that expensive special fuel boat engines require, and all the accessories: from life jackets to wax, and adult beverages to fenders, and more.

"I did the math, and from the loan to the marina fees, fuel, maintenance and upkeep," Raja confided, "it all adds up to just about \$100 a day per year to own my boat."

There's also the cost of state registration, a state boating certificate, and the safety lessons required to obtain one, like those the Bonneys offer.

"We took a condensed course offered by the Coast Guard Auxiliary,"



Although boating is an expensive hobby, Raja and Christine wouldn't trade it for the world. Photo by ALLEGRA ANDERSON



Christine Arabolu at the helm of "Indian Summer," cruising the waters of the Long Island Sound. Contributed photo.

says Raja. He, Christine and their son Krishna crammed a lot into two long days, rather than take several classes. "It doesn't give you the practical experience of learning to operate a boat. Most of that I learned at the helm."

Sometimes the best lessons are learned by making mistakes. Like that time last summer when he was rushing around and fell into the water; that was just one of three mishaps that made 2018 a painfully short season of boating. Raja said he's learned his lesson: "No more rushing!"

We finally reached Island Cove Marina in Old Saybrook, which "Indian Summer" calls home year-round. From October until mid-May, it sits shrink-wrapped from bow to stern.

It has to be said, living here in Connecticut, you have to make peace with the fact that the climate makes this pricey sport a seasonal adventure. You'll see the sea as few as five, perhaps six, months out of the year.

Raja drove up alongside the 35-foot vessel, which was perched upon wooden blocks and metal stands, ready to return to the Connecticut River.

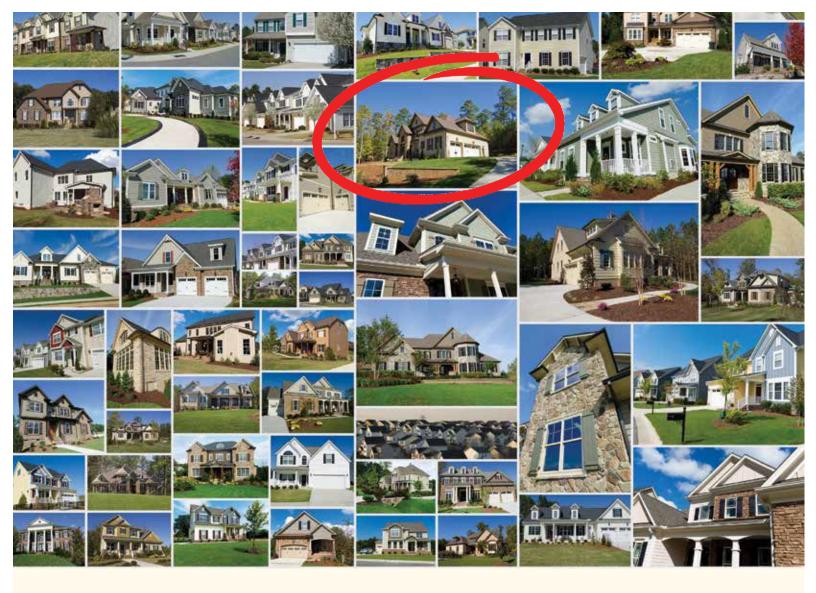
### DESPITE THE DISTANCE FROM RAJA'S STREET ADDRESS, "INDIAN SUMMER" PROVIDED NOT JUST AN ESCAPE, BUT ANOTHER KIND OF HOME.

His boat has already taken him to Block Island, Newport, Greenport, Montauk and Mystic.

"The seas were unbelievably calm, just gorgeous that day," he recalls about a memorable trip with his marina neighbors. As he spoke, he reclined deeper into the cushions lining his cabin in the bow of the "Indian Summer."

"This is my deflation, my decompression point of enjoyment," Raja said with a satisfied grin, already planning new destinations to visit in the weeks to come.

After a pause, and a glance around at his floating palace, he confirmed that despite the distance from his street address, "Indian Summer" provided not just an escape, but another kind of home. "I am totally home when I'm here."



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# Upstaged by Love

### For these theater folks, "A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Altar"

### By JOEL SAMBERG

hen Dan Pavone auditioned for the part of Captain von Trapp in "The Sound of Music" at the Windham Theatre Guild in Willimantic, there was only one thing on his mind. Not love, not marriage, not a brand-new

baby carriage. What mattered was getting the part.

As an audition exercise, the director asked him to say whatever came to mind. Affecting the persona of a stern naval officer, he turned to the actress beside him and loudly bellowed, "Who are you?!"

The actress, Annette LaCasse, who had already been cast as Maria, was shocked by his ad-libbed snarl.

Three years later, they were married.

It happens more times than we may think. Many couples in Connecticut start out on one stage and end up on quite another. While there are no official statistics, they're not hard to find. What's more, it seems as if Connecticut's stage spouses really seem to have the clues to marital success.

"Know that your first responsibility is to your family," offers Annette, underscoring the first of two common denominators mentioned by almost all of these theater couples. The other is to learn how to communicate well. "Also, do as much as you can together," she adds, "but don't be afraid to take a step back from time to time and let your spouse be the star."

Annette, an accounting manager at UConn, and Dan, who owns an awards and engraving business, live in Mansfield and still look for opportunities to perform together. But with three children now in the mix, it's not always as easy as it was during their von Trapp days. "Everyone knew there was chemistry when we did that show," Annette recalls. "It was obvious when we kissed on stage."

Ah, chemistry. That's what inevitably kicks it off – though sometimes, like a good play, it develops slowly, with one dramatic scene building on another. Take the case of Kate and Jim Buffone.

Kate (née Samberg) was a recent college graduate in Avon who had to decide what her next move would be. She sought a pleasurable diversion before making that choice and settled on auditioning for community theatre. A skilled improv performer who had already acted in many plays, Kate won the part of a secretive nun in "Drinking Habits" at the Phoenix Stage Company in Naugatuck (which has since moved to Oakville). Jim, an IT manager who had performed on several Connecticut stages, stopped by the theater one night to drop off something he had borrowed.

"Kate was on stage, in her street clothes, wearing a nun's habit. That seemed a little bizarre," Jim admits. Despite that, he was unable to stop watching her rehearse from the wings. "I guess that meant either there was something about Kate that was appealing, or I had a secret attraction to nuns."

A few months later, Jim and Kate auditioned for "It's a Wonderful Life: A Live Radio Play" at the Phoenix. Kate won the role of the floozy Violet, and Jim was cast as George Bailey. They began to hang out together after rehearsals.

"He made me laugh," Kate says. "Sometimes he said things that were a little inappropriate in a funny way, which I found refreshing. And even though he was the lead, he never acted pretentious or obnoxious, like some people I've known in the past."

She started to come to rehearsals early just to have more



Kate and Jim Buffone with their daughter Ella.



Amy and Ray Michaud

time to be with him.

As for Jim, he was not actively looking for a relationship, mostly because he was ending one that had been something of a challenge.

"One night backstage," he shares, "when Kate was at the far side of the room, I wearily mumbled how I'd love to find someone really special. An older woman in the cast leaned over to me and whispered, 'No need. You've got one right over there.' I looked at her and smiled."

Kate and Jim are now married and living in Milford. They have two daughters, a two-yearold and a two-month-old. They, too, attribute the strength of their marriage to putting their love of

family above their love of theater. But soon they'll be ready to get back on stage – maybe this time to play a married couple.

That doesn't always happen, of course. The first time



Roxie and John Quinn

Roxie Floyd and John Quinn acted together, she played a would-be stripper and he played her would-be stepfather. The show was "Gypsy," at the Thomaston Opera House. Roxie, now a project manager for Aetna, was only 21 at the time. John, a machinist, was 36. Now married for more than a decade, they recently did another "Gypsy" at the Warner Theater in Torrington, with John once again as Herbie, but this time with Roxie as the inimitable Mama Rose.

"The first time I saw John, at the audition, I didn't know him at all since he wasn't part of my circle of theater friends," Roxie recalls. "But I was impressed because he showed up with his two children. That seemed really sweet. Then

he auditioned and I was impressed again because he was so good."

He was there with his kids because it was his daughter

who wanted to audition – not him. "In fact," John admits, "in my previous marriage I practically wasn't even allowed to do theater!" Something compelled him to hop on stage and give it his best shot. "My daughter was shocked. She never even knew I could sing."

Rehearsals progressed. Love blossomed.

"I was a little more reticent than him at first," Roxie says. "After all, he was older and had children, and I wasn't sure if it was just a showmance, or the real thing."

Showmance is one of those terms that every theater couple knows. If two performers are sad to be apart when a show is over, then it's not a showmance.

For Roxie and John, it wasn't a showmance - it was true love.

What's more, they found value in their romance beyond the fun they had on stage. John, who admits to being obstinate at times, learned to tamp down the obstinacy thanks to Roxie's influence. He's thankful for that. And Roxie is grateful for John's candor. When they first met, for example, she wasn't confident enough to make some important life decisions. "He actually yelled at me – politely – to stand up for myself and be strong," Roxie says. "That was a good lesson."

Speaking of lessons, after a patent paralegal named Cathy Wilcox sang a song called "Learn Your Lessons Well" at the Act 2 Theater in New Haven, she discovered that love

NEW HAVEN SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

can bloom on stage. The show was "Godspell," and Cathy thought the man playing Judas was a warm, sweet and affectionate guy. That was Kevin Sturmer, now a creative director for a market research firm. He thought she was just as sweet.

"She was very nice," Kevin says. "She even gave back rubs to all the cast members." (Cathy has a degree in physical therapy.)

A year later, in a production of "Man of La Mancha" in which Cathy played, among other roles, a Spanish prisoner and Kevin a mule driver, the lead actor stopped the curtain calls and asked the audience to halt their applause. Kevin walked over to Cathy, took a ring out of his pocket, and proposed. As he recalls, "A woman in the front row leaned over to her friend and said, 'Is this for real?"

It certainly was.

Before that happened, neither was entirely certain that a relationship was a great idea. Though rehearsals went well, Kevin didn't want to do anything that might change the cast dynamic before the show opened. But it was an impossible dream the two of them made possible with common sense and mutual sensibility.

They've done about 20 shows together since then. Now they have a special-needs child, which naturally has taken theater out of their family spotlight because of the enormous amount of time it takes to care for him. But here, too, a

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Cathy and Kevin Sturmer

theatrical intuition and musical background come in handy for Cathy and Kevin from time to time, if only for their ability to put on little extemporaneous shows that elicit a few extra smiles and laughs from their child.

"Life is short," Cathy says. "If you find someone you have a connection with, go for it." From the day they became engaged (while covered in stage mud), that's just what they've been doing.

But it's not always acting that brings couples together. Robin Frome and Stacy-Lee Erickson met doing a series of short plays collectively called "Almost, Maine" at TheatreWorks New Milford, half of which Robin directed and in which Stacy performed. At one point he gave her a direction that involved running up a narrow stairway behind the stage. "Not a chance!" she shouted in no uncertain



Jim and Kate Buffone

terms. That's when he fell in love.

Robin, the artistic director for the Sherman Playhouse, and Stacy, a customer service representative for a technology firm, confirm they have a lot of common interests outside of theater, which they feel is what makes their marriage work.

Neither Sharon nor Stephen Houk are actors, but they still could win an award for the most theatrical performance by a theater couple about to get married.

Sharon is the production manager for the Warner Theater in Torrington. Stephen is a manager at nearby Taylor Rentals. After a production of "A View from the Bridge," Sharon (then Wilcox) needed as much help as she could get because the set was enormous and had to be taken apart quickly. Stephen volunteered – and that was the beginning



**Robin and Stacy Frome** 



Sharon and Steve Houk

of a beautiful friendship. Certainly Sharon was attracted to him, but also readily admits that his competence with tools was the dealmaker!

She says she's consumed by theater. For her, art doesn't imitate life; they are one and the same. So when she saw that Stephen seemed not just to understand, but also to truly respect and appreciate that passion, she knew she had found a life partner.

But the partnership came about only because Stephen did something sneaky behind her back.

The Warner was doing a festival of short plays. Stephen privately wrote one of his own, borrowing and modifying a few lines and situations from a play on which he and Sharon had worked the year before. He had it cast and directed without her knowledge. Then, on one of the performance nights, he slipped the play into the night's agenda. Stephen and Sharon watched from the lighting booth at the back of the theater. There were several clues in the story that made Sharon realize the characters on stage were actually stand-ins for the two of them. When the actor got down on his knees to propose to the actress, he stopped talking for a moment to allow Stephen a chance to do it for real up in the booth. Then the characters finished the scene.

Sharon was stunned, mesmerized, thrilled – and perfectly happy to let life imitate art.

Today, the couple lives happily in Goshen.

Amy Allen doesn't act, either, but that didn't stop her and Raymond Michaud from taking on the real-life role of husband and wife. The Darien Arts Center was doing "Getting Away with Murder," where Amy was on the production management team. (She's now its executive director.) The lead dropped out suddenly and the producer recommended Raymond, a member of the Actors Equity Association. Amy knew that the theater didn't have the budget for a professional and was reluctant to cast him. But she did anyway. A few chance meetings later, they realized they belonged together.

Raymond, who mixes theater with his work in the financial services sector, met Amy later in life, and both felt more secure in who they were than many other couples in similar situations. For one thing, they knew the value of allocating enough time to truly understand one another. "Like it is for good acting, listening is what's really important for a good marriage," Raymond says.

With that rule firmly in play, all of these stage partners have gotten to know each other so well that nobody has ever had to say, "Who are you?"



Amy and Ray Michaud

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### **ARTS & CULTURE**



Pulitzer Prize and Tony Awardnominated writer Donald Margulies

t's not unusual to see Donald Margulies hanging out at a cafe in downtown New Haven, or dashing to a class at Yale University or attending an opening night at Long Wharf Theatre or Yale Rep.

The Pulitzer Prize and Tony Award-nominated writer and his wife Lynn Street, a retired clinical scholar and internist, have lived in their adopted city for more than 35 years.

They first arrived in the 1980s when Street was studying at the Yale School of Medicine, but then returned to New Haven after her residency was completed at New York's Bellevue Hospital.

"I grew up in Brooklyn and spent my 20s in Hell's Kitchen in a railroad flat on 47th Street," Margulies says over a cup of hot chocolate at Atticus Bookstore Cafe on a recent spring afternoon, shortly before teaching an undergraduate class in English and theater studies at Yale.

# THE NEXT ACT

### Local playwright Donald Margulies' latest work debuts in New York

By FRANK RIZZO

"I moved there in 1979 and the rent-stabilized apartment was \$230 a month, but when it came time to think about having a child we could not imagine [doing that] and schlepping up three flights of stairs all the time in that apartment. It was just too depressing. We wanted space, we wanted a dog, and we found that we missed New Haven."

Street received a research fellowship and established a practice here, and found it was also the right place to raise their son Miles, who is now 27 and living in Los Angeles.

"We love living in New Haven and have had a wonderful life here," Margulies says. "It's been conducive to work, with just enough distractions and with my affiliation with Yale."

Indeed, Margulies – a lean, soft-spoken, thoughtful, white-haired man in tweed – could be typecast as the "professor/writer" that he plays in real life.

Away from the urban angst and theater-centric focus of midtown Manhattan, most of his friends here have nothing to do with show business. "I don't mind being the only playwright in my circle of friends. It's a good mix."



Darren Pettie, Heather Burns, Jeremy Shamos and Marin Hinkle in the New York City production of Donald Margulies' play, "Dinner with Friends."

#### THE WRITER OF RELATIONSHIPS – AND THEN SOME

His friends were the inspiration for "Dinner with Friends," a drama of contemporary marriage and friendships set in suburban Connecticut. It brought Margulies the Pulitzer Prize for Drama in 2000 after two earlier plays – "Collected Stories" and "Sight Unseen," both dealing with the complex relationships of artists – were finalists for the honor. The following year, Margulies' play was aired as a television movie starring Andie McDowell, Dennis Quaid and Greg Kinnear.

His play "Time Stands Still," which explores the effect of traumatic events on relationships, was nominated for a 2010 Tony Award for Best Play. "Mr. Margulies is gifted at creating complex characters through wholly natural interaction, allowing the emotional layers, the long histories, the hidden kernels of conflict to emerge organically," wrote Charles Isherwood in *The New York Times*. "His dialogue throughout ... crackles with bright wit and intelligence."

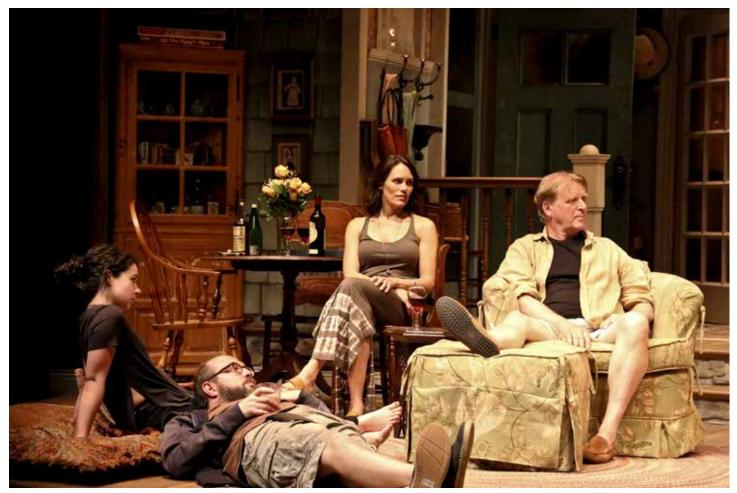
His latest stage work, "Long Lost," brings him back to a family dynamic that marked some of his earlier work: "The Loman Family Picnic," and "Brooklyn Boy." It begins performances in May at the Manhattan Theatre Club (MTC), his artistic home in New York which has premiered many of his works, including his last one, "The Country House" in 2014.

The play features Alex Wolff (of the film "Hereditary"), Kelly AuCoin (of TV's "Billions" and "The Americans"), Annie Parisse (of "Friends from College") and Lee Tergesen (of "Oz").

"Long Lost" centers on the unexpected visit of an estranged sibling to his wealthy younger brother's home, raising questions of filial responsibility that metaphorically reflects to a world.

MTC, with Margulies' input, describes it as "a funny, unsettling, ultimately moving play about the limits of compassion and filial obligation. When troubled Billy appears out of the blue in his estranged brother David's Wall Street office, he soon tries to reinsert himself into the comfortable life David has built with his philanthropist wife and college-age son. What does Billy really want? Can he be trusted? And how much can family bonds smooth over past rifts?"

"Everything is autobiographical," says Margulies when asked if there were aspects of his own life in the play. "But is this about the relationship between me and my brother? No. Incidentally, my brother loves this play."



Sarah Steele, Eric Lange, Emily Swallow and David Rasche in the Broadway production of Donald Margulies' "The Country House."

It took a while before the work was fully developed, however, because Margulies was busy with a television project.

"For two-and-a-half years, I was doing a mini-series about Andrew Jackson for HBO that eclipsed everything else on my plate," he says. That mini-series is now dead, he says regretfully but without malice.

"I've written a lot of screenplays and some of them are big, but nothing on the scope of what this Jackson work was, which was one of the reasons I relished it so much," he says.

But he's used to screenplays being developed and then shelved or finding a new life in another writer's hands. Before the Andrew Jackson project, he worked on an adaptation of Jeffrey Eugenides' Pulitzer Prize-winning novel "Middlesex," also for HBO.

It's also not the first time he worked for television. In the 1980s, at the start of his career, he wrote an afterschool special called "Divorced Kids' Blues." Also in the '80s, he was under contract for Norman Lear's company to develop new pilots for television. In addition, Margulies was briefly a producer-writer for the short-lived television series "Baby Boom."

More satisfying was his work in film, specifically his critically acclaimed screenplay for the 2015 indie film "The End of the Tour" – a compelling portrait of novelist David Foster Wallace, starring Jason Segel and Jesse Eisenberg – which Margulies also executive produced and his former student James Ponsoldt directed.

#### **BACK TO THE BOARDS**

Margulies says he's "thrilled" to be back in the theater – at a venue that has been his artistic home for decades, and with a director who has been a close collaborator for years, Daniel Sullivan. At 64, Margulies is now one of the youngest of a senior generation of living American playwrights, which includes Terrence McNally, John Guare, David Rabe, Christopher Durang, Paula Vogel, John Patrick Shanley and David Mamet. But he's also at the stage of his career when he is seeing his early and mid-career plays being revived.

"I'm one of the alter kockers," he says, laughing at the Yiddish word meaning a crotchety old man. "And that's shocking to me but also kind of great. The not-so-great thing about it is that I'm old news – and that's fine. It's the natural order of things. I don't mind being in a senior position."

Much of that pleasure comes from teaching, first at the Yale School of Drama in the 1990s and now for undergrads, eager to learn what the veteran writer has to share.

One is the lesson of patience.

Margulies had been writing plays, receiving grants and commissions, even having productions for 10 years before his eighth play – the break-out "Sight Unseen" in the early 1990s – finally gave him the star writer spotlight, and an Obie Award for the off-Broadway production.

Another lesson is the openness to try new things. A commission to write a play for young audiences resulted in "Shipwrecked! An Entertainment: The Amazing Adventures of Louis de Rougemont (as told by himself)," which was presented at New Haven's Long Wharf Theatre. That turned out to be one of his most popular works.

Margulies recently returned from Florida where he was on a writers' retreat working on a new play, tentatively called "Lunar Eclipse." "ONE OF THE THINGS THAT HAPPENS WITH [CAREER] RECOGNITION IS THAT YOU BECOME MORE SELF-CONSCIOUS, NOT LESS."

- DONALD MARGULIES

Again he steps out of the box by telling a story of an older farm couple watching the lunar eclipse.

He says he also enjoys seeing his earlier plays revived.

"People ask me when I see something that I've written a long time ago, like 'The Model Apartment,' do I have the urge to rewrite it, and my response to that is no," he says. "In fact, I'm jealous of that writer because it's a kind of messy play and I [later] became more meticulous about writing. But in that play, for example, I was working out all kind of things about fantasy and dreams and voice and direct audience stuff. One of the things that happens with [career] recognition is that you become more self-conscious, not less. So with this new play, the assignment I gave myself was, well, just write a play. Just write it. So the writing now is a little messier, a little exploratory in places, and I'm just going to let it happen."



Shipwrecked!

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# THE ENDURING





## THE NEW HAVEN RESTAURANT'S CHEF BRINGS AN ARTIST'S TOUCH TO THE MENU

*By* **TODD LYON** *Photography by* **WINTER CAPLANSON** 

hef Denise Appel is an artist. The fact that she is an artful chef is obvious; her exhilarating, ever-changing, always-original menu is the heartbeat of ZINC, the downtown New Haven eatery that turns 20 this year. Nowhere else in our state, or perhaps our country, or perhaps the whole wide world, would diners be presented with choices ranging from a Salmon Gravlax Bowl with kefir coconut milk sauce, candied mangoes and kimchi, to Crab Fondue with fried artichokes, or Ricotta Gnocchi with celeriac-fennel sauce and crème fraîche pickled beets. The menu pings and bounces between continents, madly grabbing flavors and making crazy bedfellows of dishes like Lettuce Wraps with mintchile-garlic sauce, Vegetarian Vindaloo, and Weisswurst and Knockwurst Grilled Sausages.

It is an artistic adventure indeed – culinary collage comes to mind – but what diners might not realize is that Appel's cuisine is part of her life as an artist. She is a chef, a painter, a sculptor, a leather worker, a woodworker, and a metalsmith.

Those of us lucky enough to have seen her paintings (albeit on a bitty phone screen) have gotten a shot of her primal energy: Vibrant abstract expressionist works, with flying paint and integrated objects, occupy huge canvases, some as tall as nine feet.

"Painting and food: that's how I get my thoughts across," explains Appel. "I make constant adjustments to my paintings, and sometimes I'll paint right over a canvas and start over. I do the same with food. I'm always experimenting, always changing."

Art has been entwined with Appel's cookery ever since she started working at the Museum Café at Hartford's Wadsworth Atheneum. That was back in 1987, but it wasn't quite her first restaurant job. In high school, she was a fry cook at Burger King. "The polyester outfits drove me out," she laughs. Much earlier, it was her grandmother, Katherine Crites, who instilled a love of cooking in Appel, the young





Diver sea scállop with green olive and mustard seed, celeriac puree, carrot redux, charred caúliflower and white radicchio

est of seven kids.

"My grandmother would come and stay with us and cook for the family, to help my mother out," she recalls. "She would make German food, French food, spaetzle, beef-onthe-bone broth. She had been a private cook for a priest for 24 years."

Fast forward to when the 17-year-old Denise Appel took a job at the Buckboard in Glastonbury, her hometown. Fate struck when she met manager Donna Curran, who would become a major influence in Appel's life. Young as Appel was, their professional bond became the stuff of legend, and Curran remains co-owner of ZINC to this day. After the Buckboard, Appel worked at a gourmet shop and catering firm – back when the word "gourmet" meant something. Very much like New York's tony Silver Palate, it was where Appel learned about upscale ingredients like smoked salmon, pâtés, expensive cheeses and the like. "We were doing events for 800 people and charging \$400 per person," as befitted the excessive '80s.

When Curran became GM of the Museum Café, she brought Appel along. "I started out as a waitress and hated it," recalls the chef. The day a kitchen worker called in sick, Appel jumped on the chance to get behind the lines. "That was the only time in my life that anyone told me I couldn't







do something because I was a girl." She did it anyway, and from that day – still a senior in high school – she soaked up techniques and learned the wisdom of ingredients from a steady stream of mentors. Appel remembers them all, their names and how they enriched her life, from the young New Orleans native who'd worked at the famed Commander's Palace and taught her classical French cuisine, to front-of-house wizards who elevated dishes with impeccable service and perfect wine pairings.

One colleague who changed the course of Appel's life was Paul Rossman, formerly of Cavey's. "He was an amazing chef," she recalls, "and he also had a master's degree in painting." She loved his artwork so much that she was inspired to return to painting herself – a passion since the age of eight that had faded in the heat of her restaurant career and her studies at Manchester Community College (she has an associate's degree in hotel food service management). What's more, he was the first to expose her to high-end seasonal cooking.

"That was back in the mid-'90s before we even had phrases like 'farm-to-table," she says. "I was 23 years old; I started cooking with the seasons and working directly with farmers." Thanks to a travel and dining stipend provided by the Atheneum, Rossman and Appel also went on culinary adventures that landed them at some of the most exciting and influential restaurants in New York.

"At the Museum Café, the menus were designed to complement the exhibits," explains Appel. "The world came to us." Thus, for a Fabergé egg exhibit, the team produced a Russian menu; for surrealism, they carved letters out of giant blocks of cheddar; a Warhol exhibit inspired a pop art sensibility. Special events had Appel working side by side with chefs from Africa and Malaysia; it is also where she first discovered her love of Indian and Vietnamese cuisine. "Vietnamese is my favorite," she says. "There is the cleanliness of the vinegars, the citrus, and also that French influence."

When Curran and Appel opened ZINC in 1999, downtown New Haven was in the midst of a renaissance that included a new crop of chef-run eateries. Many have come and gone – the city's dining landscape is in constant, lively flux – but Zinc has remained an oasis of low-key sophistication. With soothing lighting, muted tones, modernist design, a small-but-friendly bar and a private dining room that seems always to be the site of lively gatherings, it has the feel of a boutique restaurant in a terribly expensive big-city hotel.

And yet ... snacks. Yes, you can order the \$35 Grilled Rib Eye with porcini/red wine demi-glace, truffle butter, mashed Yukon potatoes and shaved Brussels sprouts. Or, you can dig into an order of Steamed Dumplings with pork, ginger, sake, soy and chile sauce, and scallion-ginger





pesto. Have the outstanding Scottish Salmon with arborio risotto and carrot juice, lemon-thyme pesto, peas and spinach, and fresh gooseberry and pomegranate relish ... or kick back with the Duck Nachos, featuring whiskey barrel smoked duck, fried wonton skins, chipotle aioli, and lime crema. (Duck Nachos, says Appel, is one of the dishes that would cause a customer uprising if she took it off the menu; another is the Tuna entrée, which is a soy-cured grilled yellowfin served with vegetable spring rolls with ponzu sauce, fried spinach, wasabi oil and chile-garlic sauce.)

"We're a neighborhood restaurant," says Appel. "You don't need a special occasion to eat here. We have customers who come in five days a week." And then, of course, there is Kitchen ZINC, the pizza restaurant directly adjacent to ZINC that faces the Temple Plaza courtyard. Opened by Curran and Appel in 2008, it more than holds its own in a pizza-mad town. But that's another story for another day.

The combination of fine dining options and Asian street food is what makes ZINC's personality so distinctive. A fantastic way to experience this culinary territory is via one of ZINC's special tasting menus. Available with a week's advance notice, Mondays through Fridays, this five-course meal features "smallish" plates paired with wines, and is custom-designed by the chef with people's dining preferences in mind. "We always respect people's food restrictions and choices," says the chef. "I customize the menu for you – sometimes I'll invent dishes based on what you like." The cost for this one-of-a-kind dining adventure is \$100 per person with wines, \$65 without.

Wine, beer and cocktail choices change with the menu, guided by the expertise of third-level sommelier Michael

Egan and special events expert Elizabeth Ciarlelli. Appel says they are part of a rock-solid team that keeps the restaurant humming, including pastry chef Alba Estenoz, who has been at ZINC for 10 years, and chef de cuisine Alex Blifford, who first worked there at age 18 and came back at 28.

For the past several years, Appel, often along with her life partner Liz Jacovino, her business partner Curran, and Curran's husband, Patrick McCaughey, has traveled the world, seeking and finding inspiration. "Sometimes the trips are as much about art as they are about food," she confesses. That makes sense: Not only is Appel an artist, but McCaughey is the former director of both the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art and the Yale Center for British Art. But there is plenty of eating, too, in places like Rome, Paris, London, and Berlin.

On their own, "Liz and I have eaten our way through some major places," says Appel, and mentions Amsterdam, Prague, the Tuscan Valley, Florence, and stopovers along the Danube River – just a few of their overseas trips. The two have cycled through Yellowstone, have visited Alaska, and have a special place in their hearts (and their stomachs) for Key West. "There are so many places I'd still like to see in the U.S.," says Appel, but her culinary travel bucket list includes Japan and the home of her favorite flavors, Vietnam.

Soon Appel will turn 50 (it's a big year for ZINC). When asked what she'll be doing in 10 years, her answer is strong and certain: painting. And continuing to love and care for her beloved rescue dogs. As for her final meal – which we hope won't be for another 50 years – forget the kimchi and nuoc cham sauce. She'll be having Lucky Charms in milk, a forbidden childhood treat.





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# New Energy

#### UCAN's popular products sprang from a very personal need

By CARA MCDONOUGH

t first glance, one might assume UCAN, a product marketed predominantly to athletes, is similar to other performance products that promise quick results and lasting energy. But delve deeper into what UCAN is all about and some major differences emerge.

For one, UCAN, manufactured by a Woodbridgebased company of the same name, has a unique signature ingredient: a long-burning complex carbohydrate it has dubbed "SuperStarch." It provides sustained endurance that UCAN's fans and brand ambassadors claim has changed the way they exercise, compete, and live their lives by delivering on its promise – a slow release of carbohydrates that steadies blood sugar for hours.

But while the product has become a favorite of marathoners, cyclists, and sports teams, UCAN's story didn't start with any of them.

#### **IT BEGAN WITH JONAH**

Jonah was born in 2001 with Glycogen Storage Disease (GSD), type 1a, a metabolic disorder that prevented him from breaking down glycogen – the polysaccharide humans use for energy. This meant that his parents had to feed him every two hours to maintain his blood sugar level and prevent seizures. They could never sleep more than a few hours at a time, setting alarms to ensure they never missed delivering uncooked cornstarch through a feeding tube (which at the time provided the best source of carbohydrate-based fuel).

The difficult reality they faced meant was that they would have to maintain this way of life indefinitely, recall Jonah's parents, Wendy and David Feldman. "We were exhausted, just trying to go day by day and night by night," says Wendy Feldman. They wanted more. Ultimately, they hoped for a cure for the rare disorder, which affects roughly 3,000 children in America each year.

So the Feldmans decided to act. In 2002, with the help of family and friends, they started a public, not-for-profit (501c3) foundation called The Children's Fund for Glycogen Storage Disease Research Inc.

They started by finding scientists with the right kind of expertise. One of the first meetings they had was with Stephen Squinto, cofounder of Alexion Pharmaceuticals, a biomedical company that focuses on rare disease research.



UCAN is available in multiple flavors and forms: an energy powder, an energy bar and an electrolyte replacement drink.

The company was then located in Cheshire and now is headquartered in Boston.

From there, the enthusiasm grew. Squinto helped set up a symposium, bringing together researchers and families grappling with GSD.

Peter Kaufman, an IT expert, and his business partner Shoba Murali heard through word of mouth about the



UCAN ambassadors and atheletes - like four-time U.S. Olympian and Boston and New York City marathon champion Meb Keflezighi and three-time U.S. Olympian and cross-country champion Dathan Ritzenhein - help spread the word about how the product helps them compete with sustained, slow-release energy.

project and wanted to help. Together with the Feldmans, they formed a small company dedicated to the research at hand, with Squinto on board as a scientific advisor. Their aim was to find a cure but, with that goal potentially a long way off, they at least wanted to find a way to make life more manageable for Jonah and his family until then.

The seeds of UCAN were being planted, although nobody knew it yet.

"Sometimes you start with a purpose and never know where it's going to lead, and ours is a success story," says

Murali, who is a co-founder of UCAN along with David Feldman, as well as its president and CEO.

As they began wrangling research and ideas, they stumbled onto something that would change everything: the work of Scottish researcher Richard Tester, who was using corn to make a slowrelease starch, with a similar aim of helping kids with diseases like Jonah's. The newly formed group paid initial rights to acquire that technology and worked from there. Murali explained that a very particular cooking technology, applied to a unique kind of non-GMO corn, provided the best results. "SuperStarch" was born.

generationucan.com

UCAN products are often available at local road races, as well as online and in select local running stores.

They were ready to try the new formulation with Jonah in

2009, when he was eight years old. He made it through the night without a blood sugar drop for the first time in his life.

"The thought of being able to get a full night's sleep was huge for us," says Wendy Feldman. "We realized it worked and was reliable, and was giving us all a normal night's sleep and a normal life."

They'd figured out a "carb that doesn't act like a carb," says Murali. And they realized that although they may have discovered its most meaningful implication first, there were far more uses for the product, particularly in the athletic community.

Meb Keflezighi agreed. The renowned long-distance runner, who has competed in numerous marathons, won both the New York City and Boston Marathons and is an Olympic silver medalist, was one of the first athletes to try UCAN and jump on board as an athlete brand ambassador. He found it provided a more consistent energy level than other sports drinks and he didn't feel as much soreness the day after a

race. Other athletes quickly

joined his ranks, including swimmer Michael Andrew,

triathlete Natasha van der

Merwe and a wide range

individuals listed on the "athletes," "experts," and

the company's website.

"ambassadors" sections of

at the Boston Marathon in

comes in sugar-free, multi-

flavored energy bars, energy

powder - is currently sold

at various running stores in

Connecticut, on the UCAN

online, including Amazon.

The company sponsors

as the New Haven Road

local road races, such

website and elsewhere

2010 before it officially

went to market in 2012.

The product - which

powder and hydration

UCAN had a soft launch

of other accomplished



Race, giving out samples to runners on site.

UCAN has also been adopted by a large number of college and professional sports teams that buy directly from the company, and has officially partnered with Lifetime Fitness gyms, which offer it in their onsite cafés.

"UCAN really symbolizes the inspirational belief that if you set your mind to something, you can do it," Murali says. "We are on a mission. This is not just a product. We





are about managing your steady energy and making that a very healthy part of your life."

With that in mind, the company is growing, with team members working in Connecticut and beyond. Last June, the company completed a \$5.75 million Series D funding round, led by eighteen94 capital, a venture fund of the Kellogg Company. A food and agricultural fund called S2G Ventures also invested in the round.

Murali says while the company's current business goals are fitness and endurance, members of the UCAN team continues to evaluate how they can help populations dealing with various diseases, as they did with Jonah. She says they are conducting studies with individuals who are pre-diabetic or diabetic and "are very excited about the results."

Dr. Cathy Yeckel, an assistant clinical professor at Yale University studying human metabolism, is among the experts who advise the company. In laymen's terms, she describes what makes UCAN different like this: "Simple carbs are really small and absorbed very fast," whereas complex carbs are bigger molecules, which are harder for the body to break down, and therefore provide longer-lasting energy.

And SuperStarch? It's a really, really big molecule, and therefore breaks down really, really slowly.

The product has the capacity to allow "glucose-challenged" individuals take on

activities – running a marathon, for example – they never thought possible. Yeckel believes the product has myriad uses in dayto-day activities, too.

"To me, it's a puzzle. How do we use it in real life? A lot of it boils down to the metabolic process, whether you're talking about an athlete or a busy mom," she says.

What's more, UCAN has the passion, authenticity and drive that differentiates it as a truly great organization, she says. "As a company, they're very gracious with their desire to help with all levels and activities, and to give back in lots of ways," said Yeckel.

To the parents who started this entire journey, the growing UCAN team "has become like family, and is looking out for the well-being of our kid," says Wendy Feldman. Jonah, now 17, has met many of the UCAN ambassadors and is a thriving teenage athlete himself. His parents hope he'll continue to flourish using UCAN, until there's a cure. It allows Jonah to "be a kid," they say.

Just like the rest of the team, they can't wait to see what's next for UCAN.

"When we first started the company, it was to find a cure for a rare disease. But it just snowballed into something bigger and bigger," says David Feldman. "People buy into the story and are compassionate about the process, and once you do that, it really doesn't feel like work. That's the key to our team, our family, and everybody working so hard – because they believe in the product and the story behind it."

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Trombonist Delfeayo Marsalis headlines opening night of the Greater Hartford Festival of Jazz on July 19 in downtown Hartford.

10



## Connecticut's jazz scene is huge – and historic

#### **By DOUG MAINE**

The Monday night jazz series in downtown Hartford's Bushnell Park – now known as the Paul Brown Monday Night Jazz series – has featured some stellar performances by some of the biggest names in jazz, but surely none has been more electrifying than one that took place on Aug. 4, 1997.

By the time the headline act, Mark Elf Guitars Inc., took the stage, an unrelenting torrent of rain was drenching the park and a good part of the park pavilion's covered stage. Technicians had moved cables and electronic equipment into dry spaces, while Elf and fellow electric guitarists Melvin Sparks and Roni Ben-Hur, plus bassist Marcus McLaurine and drummer Jackie Williams, were set up close to the back wall of the stage.

A half dozen or so water-logged fans stuck it out, leaning on the front of the stage. At stage right, two volunteer radio announcers, including this writer, and the radio station's engineer, nearly jumped out of their skin when lightning struck between the back of the pavilion and the embankment on which trains move in and out of Hartford's Union Station. Fortunately, the only sparks to fly that night were creative.

Smooth jazz saxophonist Jazmin Ghent performs July 20 in Bushnell Park in Hartford, part of the Greater Hartford Festival of Jazz. Weather forecasts that morning had convinced series founder and organizer Paul Brown that the show could go on outdoors, and once that decision was made, there was no turning back; sound and lighting crews went to work. Once the musicians took the stage, their determination as artists to create and share their work took over, even if it was mostly for a radio audience.

These days, jazz is showcased and celebrated at popular events statewide, particularly during the summer.

#### **BRANFORD IS BUZZING**

The Branford Jazz on the Green series is celebrating its 11th year of free summer concerts. The 2019 series will consist of nine weekly shows beginning at 6:30 p.m., from June 27 through August 29.

Dale Izzo, assistant director of the town's recreation department, says the lineup of performers is put together by a committee of town employees and local residents, some motivated by their love for the town and others who love jazz.

"The crowds are anywhere from 2,500 to 4,000 or 5,000. Some of the artists have a big following. We've really put Branford on the map. We get people that come from all around the state and sometimes beyond," says Izzo.

Some bring chairs and sit enjoying the music, while others bring picnic suppers, Izzo says. The children of



With music packed into a single weekend, the Greater Hartford Festival of Jazz often packs Hartford's Bushnell Park with music fans.

some concertgoers get up and dance to the music. Most sit on the main part of the green or in front of the Town Hall. There's an ice cream shop across from the green, and restaurants where diners can dine al fresco and listen to the music.

Izzo says the committee "tries to choose performers in a variety of jazz genres," and an effort is made not to present the same groups year after year. She adds, "we're really thankful to our sponsors, most of whom have been with us from the beginning."

In case of rain or other bad weather, the concerts are canceled. The status of each show will be posted on the website branfordjazz.com. No dogs or alcoholic beverages are permitted.

#### **MORE ON THE SHORE**

From 2008 through 2016, Jazz New Haven presented the New Haven Jazz Festival on the Green each August, in

Bassist Julian Vaughn will be part of a day of smooth jazz July 20 at the Greater Hartford Festival of Jazz.



Singers, from left, Angela Clemmons, Darryl Tookes and Cindy Mizelle of the group Run N' Fly perform at the 2018 Branford Jazz on the Green concert series. Photo by Bill O'Brien.

cooperation with the city and festival sponsors. While the festival is no more, jazz is alive and well in the Elm City, and fans can find it all over Greater New Haven, and beyond.

Drummer Gil Hawkins leads the Hawkins Jazz Collective every Wednesday from 9 p.m. to midnight in the cigar lounge and bar at the Owl Shop Cigar Shop. These free performances offer "hard-driving, straight-ahead jazz that represents the best of the post-bop era," according to the collective.

Firehouse 12 presents experimental and contemporary jazz concerts on Friday nights during its 12-week fall and spring series. Musicians can submit a narrative description of their music, a recent bio, and links to streaming audio for a chance to perform at the venue, which offers an acoustically balanced, soundproofed recording studio and performance space, along with an in-house bar and lounge.

Cafe 9 is home to a long-running jazz jam session every Saturday from 4 to 7 p.m. Each week, musicians come to the club eager to show what they can do and put their names on a list, and the musician hosting that week's session sorts it all out, trying to keep the line moving and the music coming, according to guitarist Gary Grippo, who sometimes acts as the host while also performing.

The Blake has a weekly Sunday jazz brunch series

showcasing some of the state's finest musicians, providing smooth, Latin, straight-ahead, and many other styles of jazz, along with a unique menu and great service.

And if you don't mind a short drive, The Side Door Jazz Club at the Old Lyme Inn presents some of the top touring jazz acts from New York and beyond, on Friday and Saturday evenings. The club really is the Connecticut's heavyweight venue for year-round jazz performances, attracting audiences from all throughout the state. Seating is limited but reservations are available.

The Ayuthai Restaurant in Guilford hosts Dr. Joe Cardinale & Friends every Sunday from 6-8 p.m. This group of jazz musicians consists of a rotating group of local and international jazz greats, offering everything from classic standards to new compositions.

Every Sunday from 5-8 p.m., Home Restaurant in Branford offers jazz performances in its "living room." Seating is first come, first served.

Sarah's Wine Bar in Ridgefield not only offers awardwinning cuisine by French chefs Bernard and Sarah Bouissou but hosts The Jazz Masters Series on the last Sunday of each month. The series features world-class jazz musicians in duo and trio settings.

The Ridgefield Playhouse, which presents national and

local acts and is the cultural hub for the town of Ridgefield, serves up jazz performances on a regular basis, along with many other types of music, comedy, film-related events.

New England Arts & Entertainment's "Jazz at the Poli Club" series takes place in an elegant space in Waterbury's historic Palace Theater. Subscriptions are available for the fourshow summer jazz series, with two shows each in July and August.

#### MONDAY NIGHTS IN THE PARK

Hartford's Monday night jazz series is just one of multiple jazz festivals and

events that are available to fans of this music genre, many of them started or maintained by musicians whose talents and expertise are known far beyond Connecticut's borders.

Brown, an esteemed and beloved educator, community activist and bassist who played in New York and toured with many of the top musicians in jazz, founded the Hartford series in 1967, under the auspices of the Garden Area Neighborhood Council, a grassroots organization formed to enrich the lives of residents of the city's North End.

The first three outdoor concerts were held at Fred D. Wish school on Barbour Street. They featured the great saxophonist Cannonball Adderley with his quintet, blues legend Muddy Waters, and trumpeter Clark Terry's big band. It was an auspicious start.

The concerts were held in various locations until the series settled into its permanent home at Bushnell Park. Despite perennial struggles to obtain funding, Brown managed to bring many of the most highly regarded jazz musicians to Hartford. After 41 years, he stepped down at the end of the 2007 series. The nonprofit Hartford Jazz Society took over production in 2008, assuming responsibility for fundraising, securing permits and the countless other details



The Paul Brown Monday Night Jazz series consistently draws big crowds in downtown Hartford. Photo by **Maurice D. Robertson**.

that make the series happen. This year's series runs from July 8 through August 12.

Paul Brown passed away in May 2016, and the series was renamed in his honor. Today, Maurice D. Robertson, a member of the jazz society's board of directors and the committee that plans the series, emcees each show and has to make the sometimes agonizing decision as to whether the expected weather warrants moving that night's show indoors. The rain location for the concerts is the Asylum Hill Congregational Church, 814 Asylum Ave. in Hartford.

Every concert is a team effort, says Robertson. "The board members show up, take charge and do what they have to." The evening's opening band hits at 6 p.m. After their set and a short break, the headliners take the stage at 7:30 p.m.

The crowds are congenial and diverse, and some people are more attentive to the music than others, but that's okay, he says, "as long as you're considerate of your neighbors."

All concerts in the series are broadcast live by WWUH 91.3 FM, the University of Hartford radio station, and streamed live at wwuh.org. The broadcasts are hosted by members of the station's volunteer staff, who interview the performers during the breaks between sets.



#### MORE JAZZ WHEN YOU LEAVE THE PARK

Parkgoers can get more jazz just by crossing the street from Bushnell Park to Black-eyed Sally's at 350 Asylum St. in Hartford. Every Monday night, a featured band – usually local musicians but not infrequently big-city jazz names – plays the first set; after a break, a jam session ensues, and other musicians are welcome to test

Vocalist Erica T. Bryan of the band West End Blend gives the music all she's got at one of last year's Paul Brown Monday Night Jazz series concerts. Photo by Maurice D. Robertson their mettle. On most Mondays, the music happens from 8 to 11 p.m. On the six Mondays of the Paul Brown Monday Night Jazz series, the start time is pushed back to 8:30 p.m. Musicians under 21 are welcome. The series is also sponsored by the Hartford Jazz Society.

On the east side of downtown, near the Connecticut Convention Center, the 16-piece Hartford Jazz Orchestra has been performing every Monday night at the Arch Street Tavern since 1998. In 2016, band members told Michael Hamad of the Hartford Courant that what makes the HJO sound unlike that of any other big band are the 150 or so charts, or arrangements, given exclusively to the band by Charles "Chic" Cicchetti, an orchestrator, trombonist and pianist who led the aggregation from the late-1970s until his passing in 2000.

Since then, the band has been directed by jazz pianist and arranger Donn Trenner, a New Haven native whose career has included playing with Charlie Parker and Stan Getz, participating in seven of comedian Bob Hope's Christmas



Jive By Five returns to Music Mountain July 6.

USO tours, working as pianist-conductor for Lena Horne, Nancy Wilson, Vicki Carr and Jack Jones, and serving as musical director for television's "The Steve Allen Show," before moving back to Connecticut in 1996.

The Hartford Jazz Society's biggest annual fundraising activity is its annual jazz and blues river cruise, and this year's cruise, the 58th annual, is scheduled for Sept. 7. The seven-hour floating jazz party travels from the State Pier in Haddam, down the Connecticut River to Long Island Sound and back. It will feature continuous music as two bands alternate, Ronnie Burrage & Holographic Principle and Liviu Pop & Friends. Riders can bring their own picnic baskets, drinks and coolers, although hot dogs and free ice and cold drinks are available on board. Reserved table seating is available. The event is for adults only, and pets are not permitted.

#### **AN ENTIRE WEEKEND OF JAZZ**

The Greater Hartford Festival of Jazz packs free jazz in Bushnell Park into one weekend. The crowds are big, and there will be a variety of food for sale and other vendors offering items like art, crafts and apparel. Concerts are held rain or shine. Like the Monday night series, the festival was created by Paul Brown, who researched weekend jazz festivals around the country before proposing a summer weekend event that would bring additional business to downtown Hartford. The new festival debuted in 1992.

The 2019 festival will get underway at 6:30 p.m. July 19, with the Funky Dawgz Brass Band, followed by an octet led by trombonist Delfeayo Marsalis, a member of the famous family of musicians from New Orleans. On July 20 and 21, performances begin at 2:30.

#### **UPSTATE JAZZ**

The Litchfield Jazz Festival, long the brightest star in Connecticut's constellation of summer jazz activity, has left its longtime home at the Goshen Fairgrounds and will be held July 26-28 in the intimate, air-conditioned Emerson Performing Arts Center at the Gunnery, a private school in Washington, Connecticut.

> Friday, July 26 will include a "Friends of the Festival Gala" starting at 5:30 p.m., at the Judy Black Memorial Park and Gardens in Washington Depot. At 7:45, the music begins in the Emerson PAC, with the Litchfield Jazz Orchestra and guest vocalist Alexis Cole.

While space is limited and all seating is ticketed for performances inside the Emerson PAC, other elements of the festival – such as student concerts, artist talks and clinics, food, drink and family entertainment – will be part of a new "OuterFest," next door to the concert hall, on July 27 from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. This part of the festival is free.

Music Mountain may seem an unlikely location for Saturday evening jazz concerts. Founded in 1930 and set on a 120-acre mountaintop campus in Falls Village, in the state's northwest corner, its primary

mission is "the performance and teaching of the string quartet literature," which it realizes as a summer center for music education and performances.

The series – now called "Twilight Jazz & More," and with an earlier starting time of 5 p.m. – isn't 100-percent jazz; there are evenings of Gilbert and Sullivan, show tunes and a cabaret singer.

All concerts are held in the 348-seat Gordon Hall. "The concerts are intimate," says Music Mountain's artistic director, Oskar Espina-Ruiz, a noted classical clarinetist. After they perform, "the artists come out and they mingle with audience members."

Anyone under 18 can attend performances at Music Mountain for free if they accompany a paying adult; those planning to bring a young guest should notify the box office in advance, to ensure that that seating is available.

For more information on the Paul Brown Monday Night Jazz series, the Jazz River Cruise, and The Side Door Jazz Club, visit hartfordjazzsociety.com. Information on other events is available at branfordjazz.com, litchfieldjazzfest. com and musicmountain.org. Also check out newhaven. jazznearyou.com and hartford.jazznearyou.com.

# Breakfast with MARTHA BROGAN

New Haven's city librarian discusses the NHFPL's evolution, and her local favorites

by CARA ROSNER / photography by TONY BACEWICZ

Martha Brogan stands in the lves Main Library of the New Haven Free Public Library (NHFPL). In May, the NHFPL was named as one of 10 recipients nationwide to earn the 2019 National Medal for Museum and Library Science.

**KFAST WITH** 



hen Martha Brogan became the city librarian and director of the New Haven Free Public Library in 2014, it seemed to her that having a woman lead the library was long overdue. As is the case with many libraries

nationwide, and the library science field as a whole, the staff of NHFPL is comprised mostly of women. Yet in the 132 years since the library – originally located on Chapel Street – opened its doors in 1887, Brogan is the first woman appointed to the top post.

Throughout its storied history, only eight people in total have held the title of city librarian and director at NHFPL.

It's no small task. Brogan oversees the Ives Main Library, which is located at 133 Elm St. and serves as the primary branch, as well as four neighborhood libraries across the city, a 24/7 digital branch, and the Readmobile, which travels to early learning centers and sites that lack a public or school library.

During her tenure, Brogan has reinstated seven fulltime positions at the library, expanded library hours at four branches, and overseen two major renovations at the downtown location. A capital campaign is under way, and the foundation has raised \$1.7 million of a \$2 million goal to relocate the Stetson Library branch across the street from its current location on Dixwell Avenue. Today, NHFPL has about 30,000 active cardholders, a number Brogan says she "would love to grow."

In addition to her job leading the library, a municipal

department with 45 full-time and 35 part-time city employees, she is executive director of the New Haven Free Public Library Foundation, NHFPL's nonprofit fundraising arm.

In May, the library was named one of 10 recipients nationwide to earn the prestigious 2019 National Medal for Museum and Library Science. The honor, bestowed by the Institute of Museum and Library Services, recognizes libraries and museums that provide unique programming and services to make a difference in the lives of individuals, families and communities.

With everything going on, and even amid myriad changes in an increasingly digital age, NHFPL's mission has remained steadfast.

"We are in the business of understanding New Haven as a city, and its 130,000 residents," says Brogan.. "What has changed is the way information is accessed and delivered."

Brogan, who lives in the Westville section of New Haven, took time to sit down on a recent afternoon in the library's bustling Ives branch, to talk about her job and her local favorites.

#### Q: What drew you to this career path?

A: I have a lifelong interest in other cultures and providing access to knowledge. [After obtaining a Master's degree in international administration from the School for International Training in Vermont and working in the University of Minnesota's Office of International Students and Scholars], I decided to return to grad school to pursue a degree in library science, combining my interests in foreign languages, international relations and access to knowledge. During my 35-year professional career as an academic librarian, I had the opportunity to work at premier research universities and help build area studies collections and resources crossing the globe.

In 2014, I leapt at the chance to transition my career to public librarianship when the directorship opened at the New Haven Free Public Library. Having resided in New Haven since 1990 and having raised my two now-adult sons here in the New Haven public school system with my spouse, who recently retired as professor of humanities at Gateway Community College, I was eager to advocate for strong public library services for all New Haven residents. I was thrilled to be appointed as city librarian as well as executive director of the library's foundation in September 2014.

## Q: How have you seen the role of the library change and evolve over the years?

A: The fundamental vision and values of public libraries as shared communal "practical" assets have held strikingly constant. Public libraries benefit from a long heritage as trusted institutions, are known as safe havens for everyone, and are especially important to those experiencing a critical juncture in their lives. From its inception, the NHFPL was valued as place of learning for newcomers and immigrants – a place to respond to "their appeals ... to furnish them, through the library, with such books in their own various languages, as will bring to them this knowledge and start them on the road to good citizenship," as Mayor Frank Rice eloquently stated at the dedication of the Ives Memorial Library on the historic Green in May 1911.

What has changed is the means of delivering information and accessing knowledge, thanks to online resources and the Internet. This is a blessing to many residents who can rely on any time, any place access, while to others it's an obstacle when they lack the computer or personal e-device to download, read or listen to library materials or don't have an Internet connection from home. The library offers high-speed broadband and Wi-Fi access across all five of our locations in New Haven, with more than 220,000 active logins last fiscal year. Wi-Fi access has increased by 80 percent in the last three years and along with that increased access, the library ramped up its basic technology classes to teach residents how to update their résumés, apply for jobs, access health care information, file taxes or complete other necessary regular routines that have now moved online.

NHFPL engages with scores of community partners to extend our reach and impact. We are an active hub for meet-ups, learning, and community conversations, with a focus in the last five years on the NEA Big Read with the International Festival of Arts & Ideas and the Long Wharf Theatre's participatory theatre-making with library users.

#### Q: What's your favorite area of the library?

A: I like to refer to NHFPL as a constellation of libraries – that is, the Ives Main Library on the New Haven Green, our four neighborhood branches located on New Haven's "main streets" and the Readmobile, which circulates to early learning centers, schools that lack libraries, and festivals across the city. Each of our locations is a "star" in its own neighborhood and contributes to the overall vibrancy and well-being of residents in the city.

#### Q: What's a typical work day like?

A: There's a great deal of variety to my days and I always have to be prepared to switch gears and adjust my calendar! Overall, I give my attention to garnering the fiscal and human resources that our dedicated staff needs to provide outstanding service to the public. We typically have two or three full-time vacancies and a half dozen part-time vacancies a year and I consider recruiting, retaining, and helping library staff thrive among my highest priorities. The library staff are without a doubt our most valuable resource. Without them, we are unable to open our doors, let alone offer the astonishing array of programs and services that we make available together with the community.

NHFPL has also an extensive physical footprint: five library facilities comprising over 175,000 square feet of space. We always have projects underway to improve the infrastructure of our facilities and upgrade them for contemporary use. Right now, we have an active capital campaign underway to move the Stetson Library branch into the multi-use Dixwell Community Q House. Thanks to the Seedlings Foundation, we have a community challenge where donations of \$50 to \$10,000 are matched. We are in the homestretch in reaching our \$2M goal to open the next Stetson in 2020 [visit nextstetson.org for more information].

The library is supported by an active governing board, consisting of nine New Haven residents appointed by the mayor,

together with the Board of Alders, which meets monthly, as well as by the NHFPL Foundation Board, whose 14 members are laser-focused on promoting the library's accomplishments and attracting philanthropic support so the library will continue to flourish. In the evening, you will often find me at a board meeting, enjoying one of the library's programs or attending an event hosted by one of our partners – including great theater at Long Wharf and the Yale Rep.

# **Q**: Where's your favorite place to grab a bite to eat in New Haven?

A: It's a great spring day when I have a chance to run across the New Haven Green to get a smoothie at Claire's. We also launched café services, currently in transition, at Ives Main Library so it's convenient for me to stay on site and enjoy a quick bite in Ives Squared. I am always pleased to serendipitously run into neighbors, library customers, our partners, and board members when I drop in. And, of course, my husband and I love to dine out in the evening and enjoy New Haven's flourishing culinary scene. We can't wait to enjoy the beautiful summer weather at Shell & Bones Oyster Bar & Grill on City Point. The library appreciates the way local restaurants offer tastings each year at our annual Mardi Gras fundraiser so we can showcase all the great dining options in the city. So many choices, so little time!

## **Q:** What's your favorite summertime activity in Greater New Haven?

A: In June, of course the International Festival of Arts & Ideas brings world-class performances to our front yard on the Green. We are proud to partner with them in showcasing local talent at the neighborhood festivals, typically organized with the library branches. In July, my husband and I enjoy going to the Beecher Park Summer Concert Series on the backyard lawn of the Mitchell Branch Library in the Westville neighborhood where we have lived for 30 years. This is always a casual and fun family time, with pie tastings and great music!

# Q: What's one thing the NHFPL offers that may surprise people?

A: Well, I hope that they know we have a Tinker Lab at the Ives Main Library where you can learn how to use 3D printers or laser and vinyl cutters and also book appointments for coaching and mentoring your business ideas. It may surprise people to know that in addition to free museum, zoo and theatre passes (this year we added Yale Rep, alongside Long Wharf Theatre), we have a cake pan collection in the Young Minds & Family Learning Department at Ives Library. Our 45 thematic and character cake pans circulate about 90 times a year. On a more serious note, we are very proud of our productive partnership with Liberty Community Services (LCS), which offers counseling and referral services to meet the basic needs of individuals who may be experiencing homelessness, job loss, reentry, domestic abuse or other challenges to their well-being. We would love to expand this service to all of our locations and be able to offer additional hours of service at Ives Main Library. Last year, the LCS case manager at Ives assisted more than 550 people during about 15 weekly hours of service.



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# Seller, prepare!

#### A few helpful tips can help you sell your home

By MARIA ALI

f you happen to be in the market to sell your home this year, you're in luck: a favorable forecast for the Connecticut housing market seems to be taking shape. Recently lowered mortgage rates are likely to trigger activity in markets that saw single-family median home prices achieve an 11-year high in 2018. Hartford and Tolland counties saw the most growth in average home sale prices. It's true that the winter months saw a slump in sales. But the addition of inventory sets the stage for renewed interest and buyers tend to re-engage in the market when summer arrives.

SALE

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So you've made the decision to sell your home. What do you need to do to succeed?

One of the most important things as a seller is to create an environment that helps the buyer visualize living in your home. Having a clean, organized and decluttered space is paramount to achieving this. Go through every room in the house as if you were ready to move out.

"Pre-packing shows buyers you are serious about moving," says Seabury-Hill realtor Jennifer D'Amato.

Get rid of items that need to go in the trash, and store away seasonal clothes, accessories, knickknacks, appliances, and anything else that doesn't get used regularly. Edit items from rooms to depersonalize all the spaces.



Clean light fixtures, ovens, chandeliers, baseboards, fireplaces, windows, and any rooms that may not be cleaned often. Shampoo carpets – or remove them and have hardwood flooring installed. Put kitchen appliances away and keep countertops as bare and spotless as possible.

D'Amato says keeping your home ready to show at all times makes it accessible to buyers and can help promote a quick sale. "The most activity is during the first couple of weeks, so the more available and showready the home, the faster it will sell."

Hiring a professional stager can be very useful too. "Many homeowners who stage their homes prior to selling see an increase of up to 10% on their sale price compared to similar, un-staged homes," she says.

Curb appeal is also very important. A buyer should see a well-groomed front lawn. There should be fresh mulch, flower beds and well-maintained plants. Trees and bushes should be trimmed. Adding pretty flowers in planters by the front door is also helpful.

"Be sure to power wash or paint the exterior. A pop of color on the front door can make the house stand out and look more inviting," D'Amato advises.

Hiring an experienced realtor is a key piece of the puzzle. A realtor's ability to navigate unexpected situations could determine whether you lose or keep a buyer. Sometimes, "deal breaking" events can occur between a buyer and seller, but a real estate professional who has been in the business



for a long time can help both parties reach agreement for a successful sale.

When you interview agents, inquire about their marketing plans. Roughly 90 percentf of buyers begin their searches online, and having an agent well-versed in social media channels can help your home reach a larger audience.

Jennifer D'Amato

Work with your realtor to come up with a realistic price for your

home. Strategically priced homes sell faster. Look at homes that have recently sold in your area and your competition. You don't want to deter buyers by overpricing your home. If your house is on the market for a long time, it will sell for less.

Whether you're listing a Tudor, Ranch, Victorian, Dutch Colonial or some other style of home, remember that selling your house is a process. Showcase all of the qualities that make it special to you, and you're likely to find the right buyer.



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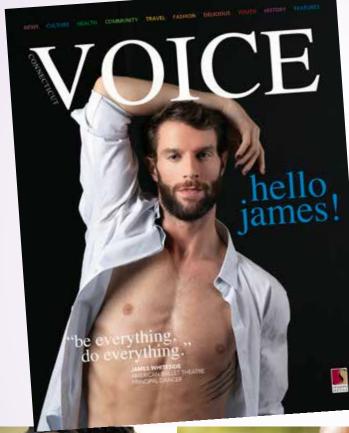
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# GAME ON

#### For 50 years, Special Olympics Connecticut has fostered inclusive competition

By TERESA M. PELHAM / Photos courtesy of Special Olympics Connecticut/contributed

f Justin Mazza didn't have Special Olympics in his life, he figures he'd probably spend a lot of his time playing video games. Instead, he practices and trains and competes nearly every month of the year, has forged strong friendships, and is making memories to last a lifetime.

Mazza began training with Mary-Jane Hussey when he was six years old, when Hussey was his special education

teacher at South Elementary School in Windsor Locks, and began competing two years later. Now 26, he competes in track and field, floor hockey, bowling, bocce, and croquet. Although the state Summer Games (held annually each June in New Haven) are the highlight of his year, his shining moment was winning the silver medal in the 4x100 relay at the USA Games in Seattle last year.

"To see where he started, when he couldn't

run 50 meters, to where he is now, is just amazing," says coach Hussey. "But it's not just the athletics. It's also how he's grown socially and confidently."

Mazza proudly wore his medal for this interview, during which he and Hussey shared their experiences with Special Olympics Connecticut, now in its 50th year.

The Hamden-based program has grown to include 6,651 athletes and 5,885 partners enrolled in its traditional sports, Unified Sports, and Young Athletes programs. Nearly 14,000 volunteers and 769 certified coaches donate their time and energy to ensure that individuals with intellectual disabilities have opportunities to develop physical fitness, demonstrate courage, and experience the joy of sports.

Special Olympics Connecticut is led by Beau Doherty, who began working with Special Olympics in the early 1980s and became president of Special Olympics Connecticut in 1993. He's driven by the philosophy of Special Olympics Founder Eunice Kennedy Shriver, a pioneer in the fight for equality for people with intellectual disabilities.

Shriver, angered by the discrimination people with



pecial Olympics Connecticut has been celebrating the accomplishments of thletes with intellectual disabilities - and their allies - since its inception. Here, oach Mary-Jane Hussey receives an award for Outstanding Local Program.

intellectual disabilities faced, spearheaded efforts to create Special Olympics. Following years of her work and advocacy, the first International Special Olympics Summer Games took place on July 20, 1968 at Soldier Field in Chicago. Those first games, which included more than 200 events, resulted from a partnership between the Kennedy Foundation and Chicago Park District. Later that year,

governing organization Special Olympics, Inc. was formed, and the games have only grown – in scope and popularity – since.

"I've noticed that volunteers get just as much out of it as the athletes," Doherty says. "Something happens when you do something good for someone else but volunteering with us is a lot more hands-on than doing a walk for charity or raising money. That's where we're different."

Several decades ago, institutions for people with intellectual disabilities began closing, leaving many people without opportunities for exercise and socialization, Doherty says. Special Olympics Connecticut helped fill that void. Now with 74 local programs, it has evolved to offer athletes



opportunities in dozens of sports.

Doherty was instrumental in the creation of the Unified Sports program, made up of 2,300 athletes and 3,500 nondisabled partners. In Unified Sports, athletes with and without disabilities train and compete as teammates.

"With Unified Sports, the athletes and non-disabled partners form these incredible bonds," he says.

Hussey, now in her 37th year of volunteering with Special Olympics, says the program has special meaning.

"When you see the athlete and the partner together, everybody is equal," she says. "To see how they help each other is just so cool."

Special Olympics also has expanded over the years to include health and wellness in its mission. The Healthy Athletes initiative began in 1997 after Special Olympics leaders learned from athletes and their families about the lack of quality health care for people with intellectual disabilities from athletes and their family members.

The unique health challenges of those with intellectual disabilities historically were not on the radar for most health organizations, policymakers, universities, and health care associations. Special Olympics began to explore ways to address these disparities, and to date has provided more than 1.4 million free health exams to athletes and trained more than 120,000 health care professionals worldwide.

For athletes like Mazza, Healthy Athletes events are fun, and often include plenty of giveaways. But exams at Healthy Athletes events have also uncovered significant preventable health issues, such as skin conditions, obesity, poor oral health, low bone density, and reduced vision and hearing. As an example, in 2008 the global adult obesity rate was 12 percent compared with 30.9 percent for adults with intellectual disabilities examined by Special Olympics.

Locally, Jean Herzog, PhD., senior director of health and wellness for Special Olympics Connecticut, notes that Special Olympics Connecticut offers seven of the eight Healthy Athletes programs and will offer all eight later this year. Programs offer a wide variety of services, including hearing exams, podiatric screenings, physical therapy, guidance on self-advocacy and making healthy lifestyle choices, free vision assessments, dental examinations, tactics on how to manage stress during competition and daily life, and other physical screenings.

"This is a medically underserved population," says Herzog. "For many years, people were kind of warehoused. People got ignored. People were on Medicaid or had no health insurance. Special Olympics has made inclusion and equity in health care a focus."



Special Olympics Connecticut President Beau Doherty, shown here with an athlete, began working with the organization in the '80's and became its leader in 1993.

More than 1,800 health screenings are now done each year in Connecticut, and there have been 2 million screenings internationally. One of Herzog's goals is to help educate those who provide health care to offer better care for people with intellectual disabilities.

"The standard of care still applies," she says. "Everyone deserves the same level of care. It's been very rewarding to watch our health care students who come to volunteer get comfortable and have such a wonderful experience."

Herzog says Special Olympics now holds the world's largest data set on the health status of people with intellectual disabilities. Moving forward, Special Olympics is evolving from providing screenings to the larger goals of inclusive and equitable healthcare through partnerships and education, so that not only athletes but everyone with intellectual disabilities can be healthy.

Despite the high number of volunteers who donate their time to Special Olympics Connecticut, Doherty says more volunteers are needed. Coaches and partners are particularly difficult to secure, given the time commitment. But once that bond is formed, these relationships often last for decades.

"When I started coaching, there was nothing here in Windsor Locks for the kids," says Hussey. "There was no Special Olympics program. So we started our own program. Now we're in our 23rd year in Windsor Locks, and it's the 21st year for Justin. It definitely keeps us busy."

For Mazza, the games present opportunities to keep pushing himself.

"I like to compete in different sports, cheer for my teammates and go to the states," he says. "I always try my best."

*For more information on a Special Olympics program near you, visit soct.org/get-involved/local-programs.* 

#### UPCOMING SPECIAL OLYMPICS EVENTS

#### Dream Ride August 23, 24 and 25 The Farmington Polo Club, Farmington

The Dream Ride Experience is more than an event - it is a movement that makes dreams come true. Dream Ride benefits Special Olympics and The Hometown Foundation, Inc. and provides a weekend packed with fun activities, extraordinary cars, motorcycles and entertainment for guests of all ages. The largest philanthropic endeavor of Bozzuto's, Inc. and The Hometown Foundation Inc., this three-day event brings thousands of attendees and hundreds of athletes together to participate. The event will take place August 23-25 at The Farmington Polo Club, 152 Town Farm Road in Farmington. To find out more, see a schedule of activities, register your car/motorcycle, and purchase passes online, visit DreamRide.org. Questions? Call 844-DRM-RIDE. Sponsorship and volunteer opportunities are also available.

#### Over the Edge September 6 Mohegan Sun, Uncasville

Over the Edge is a fundraiser (to benefit Special Olympics Connecticut) that gives participants the awesome opportunity to rappel more than 30 floors and see amazing sights from atop Mohegan Sun's Sky Tower!

Participants must pre-register and raise a minimum of \$1,000 through online fundraising. No experience is necessary, as training and guidance throughout the descent are provided. Individuals and teams are welcome, and spectators are encouraged to come out and join Special Olympics athletes in cheering on the fearless!

#### FINAL THOUGHTS //



## **Simple Pleasures**

By MATTHEW DICKS / Illustrated by SEAN WANG

hen I was 16 years old, I marched in the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade as a member of my high school band. I pounded on my bass drum as we made our way down a frigid mobs of people lined the streets and

Sixth Avenue while mobs of people lined the streets and enormous balloons danced overhead.

I remember being excited and cold that day. Mostly cold. I also had to pee for much of the parade, and given that it was New York City, peeing was not really an option.

Mostly I was cold and had to pee. But the balloons were amazing.

When I was 17 years old, I marched in the Rose Bowl in Pasadena on New Year's Day. We stood alongside enormous floats made entirely of flowers. A small earthquake shook the bridge beneath us while we waited to begin marching. Californians laughed as we New Englanders trembled in fear. Two teenage girls sitting on a curb remarked that I looked a lot like Tom Cruise. I've clung to those words for the past three decades. I loved those girls despite their obvious visual impairment. I still love them.

These were big parades. Possibly the most notable and famous parades in the entire world, and I was fortunate enough to march in both. My high school marching band also paraded down Main Streets in both Disneyland and Disney World.

I also marched in many hometown parades throughout my childhood, first as a Cub Scout and later as a flutist and drummer. Too many hometown parades, if I'm being honest. Once you march down Main Street a few times, it gets pretty old.

Years later, I would stand on a sidewalk in Willimantic,

Conn., watching the world-famous Boom Box Parade march by. This tradition began in 1986 when local residents learned that there would be no parade that year because the high school had no marching band. In lieu of live music, the local radio station was convinced to broadcast two hours of marching band music on the Fourth of July. Residents then obtained a parade permit, dressed in red, white, and blue, and carried boom box radios with them.

"The best parade in the country, in my humble opinion. The parade itself lasts about nine seconds."

f

More than 30 years later, this

parade has grown into a hilarious and unorthodox spectacle featuring trucks that spray water from hoses onto paradegoers, fire-breathers and fire-eaters, and a little girl campaigning for the presidency in 2048.

But the Macy's Thanksgiving Day parade, the Rose Bowl, and even the Boom Box Parade pale in comparison to the parade I've witnessed for the past five years on the Fourth of July.

On that most patriotic of days, my family and I travel to Monterey, Mass., home of my in-laws, for their Fourth of July hometown parade and celebration. It's fantastic. The best parade in the country, in my humble opinion.

The parade itself lasts about nine seconds. It's about 47 feet long. It consists of a single high school band that marches two blocks to the center of town, where it stops and faces a church. Moments later, the band members erupt into the Star-Spangled Banner, reading the music off those small, portable music stands attached to horns, clarinets, and drums.

(I hate those little music stands. When I was marching, we didn't read music. We memorized our music. Committed it to our hearts and minds. And don't you think for a minute that I sound like an old man lamenting the good old days. Those stupid, little music stands existed in my day, but no self-respecting marching band would've been caught dead with them.)

When the band is finished playing, a couple of local officials tap on the microphone of an aging, failing sound system and attempt to stir the gathering of folks with some unprepared, stumbling sentences. Last year. the sound system failed completely, forcing officials to shout their uninspiring remarks to all who would listen. Thankfully, the town's center is tiny. It consists of a post office, a library, the church, and a general store, which is inexplicably closed, seemingly, every Fourth of July.

After those few remarks, the band turns and marches up the hill. Fire trucks pass by. Maybe a Boy Scout troop or two. An ambulance or a police car. Candy is sometimes tossed. Small Americans flags are handed out. Children laugh.

A few years ago, the drag queen son of the town cop drove through in

a convertible. People cheered. It might've been the most exciting thing that had happened to Monterey in years.

Paradegoers follow the trucks up the hill to the firehouse, where firefighters are standing by to give away free hot dogs and soda to all who arrive. An ice cream truck is parked alongside the firehouse, waiting to give free ice cream to anyone willing to wait in line.

Hot dogs, soda, and ice cream are amazing foods in their own right. Some of the best ever created. But when they are free and attached to a parade and patriotism, they are elevated to new heights.

Monterey residents and the occasional interloper like myself sit on the lawn and eat. We aggressively ignore our children. Face painters and balloon artists sometimes offer their wares free of charge. One year, my son arrived back at our blanket with what was supposed to be a balloon sword but was so phallic in nature (not to mention flesh colored) that I was sure the balloon artist had made it on purpose. Who makes penis-colored balloons?

It's all over in less than an hour. Parade. Hot dog. Ice cream. Penis balloon. Then we turn and head home, feeling like we've had a real adventure. A day filled with memories to last a lifetime, and photographs that we will treasure forever.

All in the span of about 60 minutes.

The Fourth of July parade in Monterey, Mass. is a reminder that not everything has to be a "thing." It's also a perfect reminder that there is nothing better on a summer day than a free hot dog and a couple of small children waving tiny American flags as a band marches by.

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