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Seasons' Greetings



Carol Latter

In our Winter 2019 edition of *Seasons*, humor columnist Matt Dicks took a stab at what might be in store for us in the upcoming decade, starting with 2020. There was some mention of chicken dinners in a pill. It seemed a bit far-fetched at the time – but perhaps not more far-fetched than an imminent global pandemic that would transform our society overnight; cause virtually all of us to hunker down and/or work from home as we tried to home school our kids; and lead to widespread shortages of bacon, Clorox wipes, and toilet paper. Not to

mention make mask-wearing not only a state-ordered protective health measure but a fresh opportunity to make a fashion statement.

Talk about ridiculous.

COVID-19 gave new meaning to the oft-used phrase, “I never saw THAT coming.”

Yet as this worldwide scourge prepare to drag on into its eighth – yes, eighth! – month, there are bright spots to be found. I’m sure we’ve all heard through the grapevine or on the news about the many ways, large and small, that our communities have pulled together to make a difference. In this issue, Jim Battaglio shares four inspiring COVID stories in “The Up Side of Down.”

Chef and educator Amy S. White tells you how to infuse your food with immune-boosting nutrients, while Joel Samberg brings you tales of folks who have reinvented themselves after hitting a wheel-busting bump in their career paths.

These are just some of the stories that we hope you will enjoy and take to heart. My mom, a WWII veteran, taught all seven of her children to “find the silver lining in the darkest days.” I still try to live by that lesson.

As we look forward to brighter times, remember to do what you can to help others and to be thankful for the blessings in your life. From everyone at *Seasons*, our very best to you all.

Carol

Carol Latter
Editorial Director
Seasons Magazines



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We want to tell our readers stories about the interesting people and places in our beautiful state. It's that simple. – JIM TULLY



SEASONS of the Northwest Hills™

Autumn

“Life starts all over again when it gets crisp in the fall.”
– F. SCOTT FITZGERALD

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The Up Side of Down

Finding the silver lining in the midst of a pandemic

By JIM BATTAGLIO

Make no mistake about it. No one who has suffered through months of isolation and innumerable TV commercials telling us “we’re all in this together” is labeling their sheltering in place experience a panacea. Some have, however, used these endless periods of down time and hours of reflection as an opportunity to take control over their destiny – the “up side of down” – and have pursued lifelong dreams. It is that pursuit that has allowed them to “get through this,” as inspirational messages ad nauseam have encouraged us to do.

THUMBS UP

For Mary Quinn of Manchester, the furloughed food manager of an exclusive private club that she prefers not to name, her dream reached fruition during her months of unemployment, which were filled with highs, lows, tragedy, and the eventual success of creating a photography and graphics arts company with a strange name: “A Bear With Thumbs, LLC.”

“My company is the combination of a nickname and one-half of a Christmas gift 16 years ago, when I was 11 years old,” she laughs, explaining the answer to the question she’s met with most often – what’s ‘a bear with thumbs?’

“When I was a kid, my nickname was Mare Bear so I decided that the difference between me and a bear is that I have thumbs. I hope the name selection wasn’t a terrible choice.”

It all began one Christmas 16 years ago, when Mary asked for, and received, a Canon Rebel camera. The day after Christmas, her mother presented her with half the bill for that camera as a means of teaching Mary responsibility.

Along came COVID-19, and Mary was consumed with the question many have asked themselves: “What now?”

Reflecting on her many skills, ranging from media design to more than 10 years of experience in the food and beverage hospitality industry, 27-year-old Mary was faced with what she termed “a mid-life crisis,” asking herself when her job would return and what she should do with the tons of time she was now faced with as isolation became the norm.

“I was holding out for my job ... hoping to go back to

the private club I managed,” she says. Right about then, personal tragedy struck.

In the midst of her worry, her father passed away from ALS in June, and Mary went home to her parents’ house to spend time with family. “If there was a silver lining anywhere, it was that we as a family were all together during this difficult period,” she says.

Mary described her late father as a “collector of sorts, especially cameras.” Following his interment, the family began sorting through his belongings. It was then that a “hello friend” moment presented itself. “I found eight or 10 vintage cameras my father had collected – including the Canon Rebel from my 11th Christmas! – along with a bunch of film and slides that inspired me to utilize my talents,” she says.

“My friend Amy White began encouraging me to take advantage of our isolation in order to incorporate the things we loved and knew best: food and photography,” Mary says. “I agreed to fully commit to my creativity and opened my LLC, which is focused on creating media for personal or business use, offering services ranging from video and photography to logo design and more. Once my father was at peace, I had all the time in the world and thought, ‘Do it now or never.’”

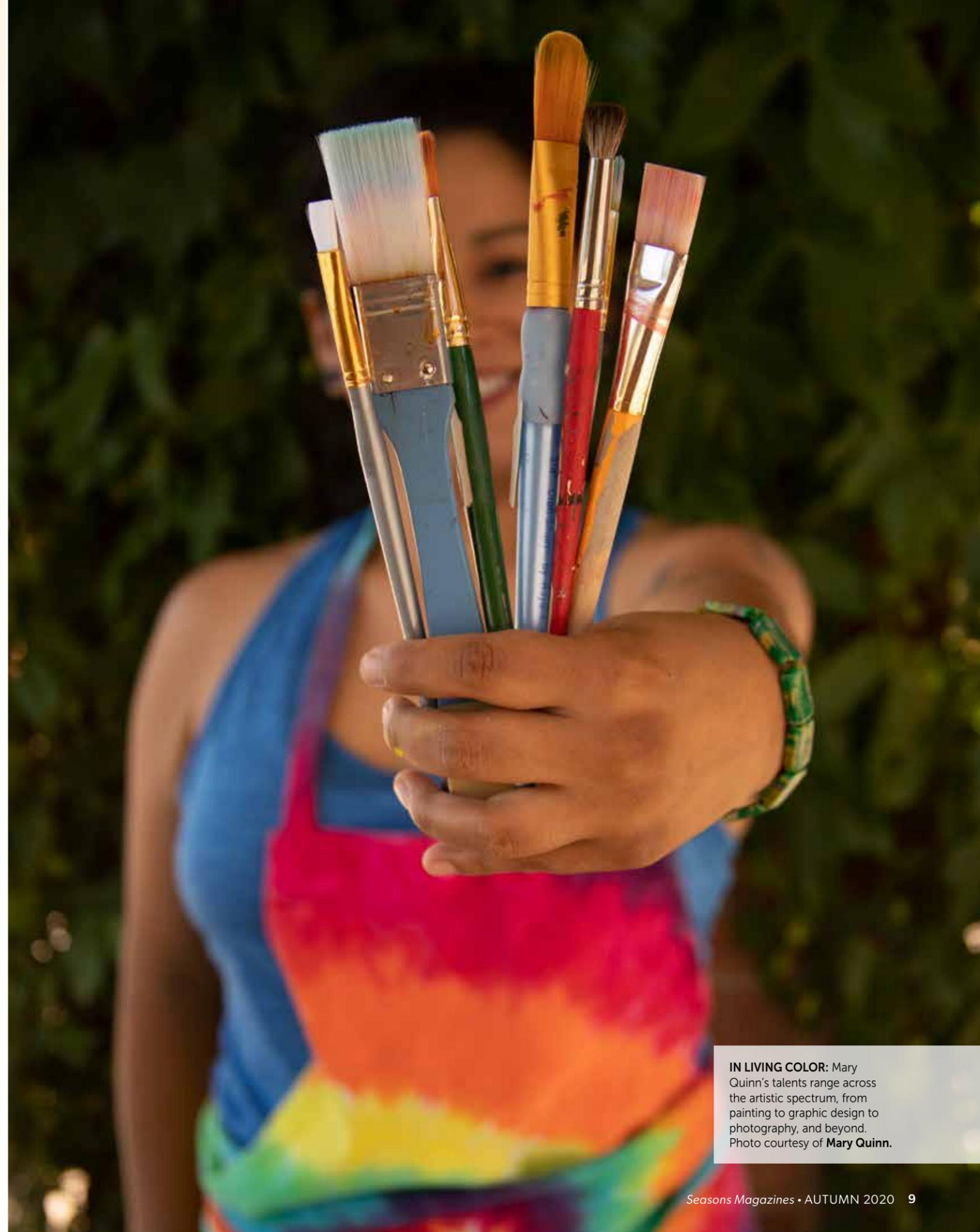
Despite the young artist’s talents, she is not shy about admitting, “I’m notoriously terrible with cell phones, including the camera component, so I still use regular cameras, including the old Canon Rebel. I also use the Canon Mark 2 that I bought with my government stimulus check when COVID hit.”

As if using the Rebel isn’t nostalgic enough, Mary admits to playing with a Polaroid Land Camera for fun; it was also part of her father’s collection. She uses that to photograph her menagerie, which includes bunnies, a variety of reptiles, and five chickens. “Fresh eggs every day!”

And if the cell phone isn’t baffling enough for her, book work is a mind-bender as well. “Fortunately, my sister Sharon has agreed to handle that end of the business,” she laughs.

While Mary’s decision to start a new business conjures images of a starving artist working for her next meal, that’s not the case at all.

“At this point, the phone rings almost every day. I do



IN LIVING COLOR: Mary Quinn’s talents range across the artistic spectrum, from painting to graphic design to photography, and beyond. Photo courtesy of **Mary Quinn**.



A NEW LENS: After her father's death, Mary Quinn found his collection of vintage cameras, and got a fresh perspective on her career possibilities. Photo courtesy of **Mary Quinn**.

a lot of photography – people, portraits, small events, and I even did a video pizza commercial,” Mary says. She has used a tablet to create logos for four different clients so far.

“Mine is a very fresh LLC and I’m trying to see how I can incorporate many talents. I’ve recently expanded to video, but the main thrust of my business is photography.”

What if her former employer asks her to return to work?

“It’s been a tough journey for my employer and for me,” she says. “I don’t foresee a future as a manager anymore, but I intend to ask them to consider using my company’s photography, logo, and website services. Being in the hospitality business, I have established a good network. People have been super supportive. At the beginning, I did everything for free in order to get exposure. Right now, I’m working out of a home office, but I’m hopeful a studio will come in time.”

For the most part, “these months have been a 100 percent positive experience, bringing family, business, and home together.”

PIANO MAN

Bob Burke has done it all, lived it all, and is nowhere near done with his life’s accomplishments. And as long as this coronavirus pandemic lingers, and possibly beyond that, he will continue to spend endless hours entertaining friends and family, playing from a repertoire that includes thousands of memorized songs over a musical career that spans nearly six decades.

At 75, Burke has water-skied, ridden in a hot air balloon, parasailed, completed the Manchester Road Race in 48 minutes and 35 seconds (35 years ago), and played piano with, and for, the biggest names in the jazz industry.

He has also been blind since birth and has never seen a single note of music.

“I read sounds,” says the Burke, who earlier this year felt the need to offset the loneliness and isolation that many people have been feeling during the COVID-19 outbreak.

“One day in March, just when the pandemic started, I decided to call a friend and play songs for him over the phone,” he says. “He liked it so much that he suggested I entertain other people like him, and I’ve been doing it ever since. It makes people happy.”

Burke was introduced to piano instruction in 1950 at the age of 5, when he was placed in Oak Hill School for visually impaired students in West Hartford, Mondays through Fridays. He remained there for 15 years, graduating at age 20.

“I didn’t want to leave my parents and I kept thinking, ‘How can I get out of this?’ But I realized I’d get in trouble at home if I didn’t attend,” he recalls. “I only cried the first day. I was introduced to Braille music, which I ‘read’ with one hand while playing notes with the other. Then, I’d switch hands until I ultimately learned to memorize songs and keys with both hands.”

By the time he was 10, he was an accomplished pianist. But much to his father’s dismay, Burke was interested in rock and roll by then. His father, who played a little piano himself, told Burke’s teacher of his dismay with this.

“Don’t let him listen to rock,” the child’s instructor told his father. “That’ll ruin him.”

Enter the world of jazz.

Burke started to listen to music performed by famous musicians he would ultimately meet and even play for.

“I learned to love jazz,” Burke says. “I took an interest in all the jazz greats: George Shearing, Dave Brubeck, Count Basie, Teddy Wilson (who played with Benny Goodman), Buddy Rich, Stan Kenton, Art Tatum, Maynard Ferguson, and my all-time idol, Artie Shaw.”

By the time he was 19, word of Burke’s talents got around. When the greats came to Connecticut to perform, they would often ask for various musicians to play for and with them, and Burke was frequently the pianist they selected.

“I even played for Sammy Davis, Jr. each year when he came to the Greater Hartford Open. He always asked me to play for him,” says Burke.

He has also played at many dances, weddings and social events over the years, although the guests often requested

“I even played for Sammy Davis, Jr. each year when he came to the Greater Hartford Open. He always asked me to play for him.”

more contemporary music rather than jazz, something he took in stride.

Burke still has his first piano. “This is my Hamilton,” he says, sitting on the piano bench and introducing the monthly-tuned instrument as though it were a family member. “It turned 57 years old on September 14.”

Suddenly, long fingers fly over 88 ebony and ivory keys. “This is ‘Bob’s theme,’” he calls out. “I composed this and play it for people over the phone, along with whatever else they want to hear.” He even had the composition copyrighted years ago.

Just as the music ends and you think there are no more surprises to come, Burke throws you one last curve.

“Let me show you my car,” he says, leaving the room and heading toward the kitchen, where one might expect to see a model car sitting on a shelf. Instead, Burke crosses the room and pulls open the door to his garage.

And there it is. A gorgeous, garnet red 1995 Chevy Caprice Classic, which Burke bought brand new 25 years ago.

“It has bench seats – I hate bucket seats – so my family can ride in it together,” he explains.

Please don’t tell us you’ve driven this car, Bob.

“No, my sister takes us places in it, although my father once let me drive a 1956 Plymouth at Harkness Park while my mother and sister were in the back seat ... they were a little bit scared,” he says, adding, “If I had my eyesight, I would have been a race car driver instead of a pianist.”

THE GREEN SCENE

When Henry Wadsworth Longfellow wrote “The Children’s Hour,” in which he included one of his three daughters, Allegra, he had no idea Allegra Anderson of Glastonbury would carry on her namesake’s free-spirited ways and bubble with enthusiasm while creating a new business in tandem with her successful existing photography business.



TICKLING THE IVORIES: Bob Burke, who has played for and with some of the country’s greatest jazz artists, decided to entertain his friends by phone during the pandemic. Photo by **James Battaglio**.

She giggles as she admits her parents were inspired to name her after Longfellow’s daughter, Allegra, whom he described as “a laughing child.”

A seven-year photographer for *Seasons Magazines*, and a professional with a fascinating background, Allegra had been thinking of adding to her numerous accomplishments by starting another business – one that focuses on health and the environment and appears light years away from fine arts.

“I wanted to start a healthy habits business that protects the environment,” says the Glastonbury resident from the home that she and her attorney husband Steve purchased this past summer and is also home to their 2-year-old son. “I did a lot of research and held a lot of discussions with suppliers and found them to be supportive of my business.”

Her business entails website purchases from shopallegraanderson.com. Through it, she sells not just products for the body, but for home and cleaning – all of which come in reusable packaging.

“These products are good for people and for the environ-

ment,” she enthusiastically explains while noting that the time gap created during the pandemic presented the opportunity to create Allegra Home and Lifestyle Shop.

Allegra’s transition to motherhood helped to inspire her business journey. “When I became pregnant, I became conscious of what I was using for body products. I noticed how everything is packaged in plastic and then read where even packaging impacts the body as well,” she says.

“I began to wonder why it is so hard for people to have access to products without plastic packaging. So I began doing research into products that are not packaged in plastic but still work well. I now buy a wide variety of these safer products from vendors and people order them off my website.”

Allegra’s products include dishwashing soap, shampoos, conditioner, deodorant, cleaning spray, body moisturizer, and lifestyle items such as washable sponges and reusable Swedish dishcloths to be used in place of paper towels.

“I have multiple options for each type of product so people can pick and choose,” she says.

Her new business has become somewhat of a family affair and incorporates a portion of her longstanding photography business.

“I’ve done the photography work for my website and even hired a friend to take photos of [my son] in order to show that my products are safe for everyone, including children,” she says.

Her environmentally friendly products weren’t offered spur-of-the moment, either. For Allegra, it wasn’t boredom

or idle time that led to the new venture. Her dream of offering online, low waste and lifestyle products has been around for years.

“Once I finally went down the rabbit hole and tried these products, I ruled some out and chose others,” she explains. “A huge part of the business is educating the public. I want there to be a conversation between myself and my followers, finding solutions to our everyday product needs. Composting, recycling, and making better choices that impact our body and environment are important.”

Allegra conducts what she terms “a ton of research” into her product line and the companies that make the items she sells. Her investigations have shown that a lot of package-free items “are typically organic and better for your body. Because of this, I support farmers’ markets and Community Shared Agriculture.”

Something that pleases her a great deal is that a lot of companies that provide package-free products “are run by business owners who are as passionate as I am about their impact on the world. Today, we’ve gotten away from being connected to the earth. Do we know where that food and its packing are coming from?”

Prior to the pandemic, Allegra was considering opening a brick-and-mortar store, but the idea seemed a little overwhelming. The forced isolation period resulting from COVID-19 – and the increased online commerce that ensued – “gave me confidence and propelled me in a different direction and achieve a new goal.” She decided that her store



DOWN TO EARTH: Allegra Anderson’s online shop sells products that “are good for people and for the environment.” Photos by Allegra Anderson



GROWING UP GREEN: Allegra Anderson’s son helps her as she washes a glass using environmentally friendly products. Photo by Nicole Bedard Photography



WOOD FOR GOOD: The Rutledge family of Simsbury, including (from left) Kathryn, father Tom, Molly, and Dylan, unexpectedly launched a sign-making business as a way of giving back during the pandemic.

HEART TO HEART

A young girl's desire to acknowledge healthcare workers by planting a "Thank You" heart in the lawn of her Simsbury family's home helped pop their five-member isolation bubble during the COVID-19 pandemic, and subsequently spread hearts to 1,000 lawns across five states.

When Macy Rutledge, a 10-year-old 5th grader at Renbrook School in West Hartford, suggested to her dad that they "make a heart," no one in the Rutledge family dreamed her whim would become a massive undertaking that touched people everywhere and raised thousands of dollars for a non-profit organization.

You could say it was heartwarming.

It started one day soon after America shut down and went into self-isolation. Tom and Molly Rutledge and their three children, Kathryn, 17, a freshman at the University of Illinois in Chicago, Dylan, 15, a freshman at Avon Old Farms High School, and Macy, had been stuck in the house a bit too long.

"We needed to get out, so I decided to create a father-daughter day by taking Macy to my Barkhamsted woodworking factory," says Tom, owner of TR Custom Woodcrafts on the bank of the Barkhamsted River. His company makes custom furniture and what Macy likes to describe as "a lot of whacky stuff."

While checking out the factory, Macy asked if they could make a wooden heart sign for their front lawn to thank healthcare workers on the front lines, "so we went on the internet and looked up heart shapes [to use as a template] and selected a cool font. I taught her how to program a pneumatical control machine," says Tom.

Macy cut out a heart from 3/4-inch plywood and painted it red, with a blue "Thank You" message across it, recognizing the heroic efforts of healthcare workers treating COVID-19 patients. Once home, Molly then put a photo of the father-daughter team's accomplishments on a Simsbury Facebook page, offering signs to any and all who wanted them.

And want them, people did. Requests for hearts came

pouring in from all over Connecticut, Massachusetts, and even Florida, Virginia, and Colorado.

"We all worked together, during which time we made 1,000 signs! We were shocked by the number of requests we received," says Molly. "We weren't expecting to make that many. We figured we'd simply make a sign. One sign."

Tom, an engineer who knows how to run factories, "set everybody up in a factory-style manner."

"I stationed one person at a band saw, another at a router table, someone else painting signs, and another person assembling them," he recalls. Once the Rutledge children were done with their virtual Monday through Friday class work, they set to work on the signs project, and found that they could make 200 signs over eight hours each weekend.

However, delivering the signs was a daily job.

"I spent a couple hours a day for two months delivering signs," says Molly, who also took orders for the signs. "We started this in April and we went through June. Kathryn, who has a driver's license, delivered signs too."

Around June, after making 1,000 heart signs – "really, it was 2,000 hearts because the signs were double sided," Macy points out – the family stopped offering them on Facebook and people quit asking for them, although random requests continued to come in as late as September.

Tom says in June, when Connecticut companies resumed business, "I reopened my factory and brought back my employees. However, I think if we put signs on Facebook again, we'd get offers for a few hundred more."

As if showing their appreciation for healthcare heroes wasn't enough, the Rutledge family gave away all heart signs for free. Those who wished to make a donation were encouraged to send it to MakerspaceCT (makerspacect.com) a fledgling non-profit company located in Hartford's former G. Fox building. Makerspace encourages prospective inventors, manufacturers, entrepreneurs, hobbyists and students to access tools, technology, resources, and learning opportunities to start their own businesses by using its Main Street workspace.

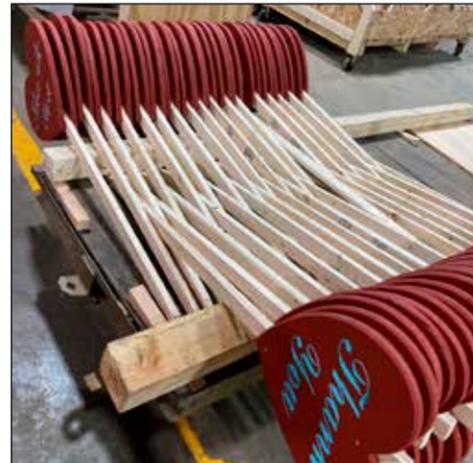
would be a virtual one.

Achieving new goals is something Allegra Anderson is an expert at doing. Before creating Allegra Anderson Photography out of Glastonbury, she worked on the "This Old House" TV show in Boston and nine years ago she produced the Emmy-winning documentary, "New Orleans Getting Back to Normal," which featured differ-

ent families rebuilding their lives following Hurricane Katrina.

While Allegra Home and Lifestyle Shop operates from a website, there's always a chance that one day people will enter a store filled with package-free products and maybe even an Emmy on display.

Longfellow would be so proud of this Allegra.



“We all worked together, during which time we made 1,000 signs! We were shocked by the number of requests we received. We weren’t expecting to make that many. We figured we’d simply make a sign. One sign.” – Molly Rutledge

And donate the public did. “Some people donated hundreds of dollars for a single 1x1 foot heart sign,” says Tom. “I’m a strong supporter of Makerspace CT. They, too, were shut down during the isolation period so they opted to make face shields for medical workers.”

Tom didn’t tell Makerspace what the family had done and that donations may be forthcoming. So it was no wonder that officials from Makerspace, during their weekly staff meeting, questioned how it was they’d received \$14,000 in donations! Tom ultimately told them what the five Rutledge members had done.

For their charitable efforts, the Rutledge children were recognized on Renbrook School’s media pages, showing what the family has been doing during the pandemic. Macy, who enjoys riding horses, was recognized on her stable’s social media page.

“Making people happy was the most fun for me,” says Macy.

And it’s a fair bet that there are 1,000 people out there who have a message for the Rutledge family: Thank You. 📧

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Dr. Deepti Rawal, MD

Charlotte Hungerford Hospital (CHH) endocrinologist Deepti Rawal's love for medicine started when she was in middle school. "I used to help my dad, who is an internist, with small, in-office procedures in India," she recalls. "It was not until my residency that I realized that taking care of patients with endocrine disorders was my calling." Dr. Rawal has been fascinated by the "intricacies involved in hormonal problems" ever since. "It was intriguing to me how greatly hormones impact everything else in the body," she says. "I just loved it from day one."

Dr. Rawal grew up in the small town of Panipat, Haryana, India, and received her medical degree from Jawaharlal Nehru Medical College in Ajmer. Though she and her family lived in the United States for about a year when she was 8 years old, she didn't return to the U.S. until age 26, for her residency training at Jersey Shore University Medical Center in Neptune, New Jersey. Dr. Rawal completed her fellowship in Endocrinology and Metabolism at the University of Buffalo in New York.

She practiced in Hartford for about eight years but decided last year that she wanted to make a change. "Sometimes when you are in a big town, you feel like you are kind of losing yourself," she says. "I wanted to practice in a close-knit community, where I would get to know the people a bit better."

Fortunately for Dr. Rawal, CHH was looking for a new endocrinologist at around the same time as she was looking to make a move. She joined Charlotte Hungerford Diabetes and Endocrinology Center in Torrington in July 2020.

DISORDERS OF THE THYROID ARE UNDERDIAGNOSED

Dr. Rawal treats metabolic conditions ranging from diabetes to osteoporosis but has a special interest in disorders of the thyroid, a small, butterfly-shaped gland that sits at the base of the neck and produces thyroid hormones.

Hypothyroidism, the most common thyroid disorder, results from an underactive thyroid – that is, your body doesn't produce enough thyroid hormone. "This is often underdiagnosed," says Dr. Rawal, "because people can have symptoms of an underactive thyroid like fatigue, weight gain, constipation, and hair or nail thinning, but still have test labs in the normal range."

Physicians typically test for TSH, or thyroid stimulating hormone, when they suspect hypothyroidism. The normal range is 0.4 to 4.5 milliunits per liter but may vary. "Sometimes

physicians don't realize that when you have TSH at the high end of normal, patients can still be hypothyroid," she says. "If TSH is in the normal range, but the patient is having symptoms, they should also have a thyroid antibody test, which could indicate a problem."

In addition, Dr. Rawal notes, the symptoms of hypothyroidism – which can also include irregular periods, joint aching, muscle weakness, cold intolerance, increase in cholesterol levels, difficulty concentrating and depression – are vague, and could also be attributed to other conditions, to menopause, or simply to aging.

Hyperthyroidism – or overproduction of thyroid hormone – is also commonly underdiagnosed, Dr. Rawal says. Too much thyroid hormone speeds up the system. Symptoms include rapid heartbeat, feeling jittery, tremors, anxiety, excessive sweating, and weight loss. One of the reasons for hyperthyroidism is Graves' Disease, an autoimmune disease that is often characterized by overactive thyroid and eye-related symptoms, such as bulging eyes.

"One specific example that I will never forget," she says, "was a patient who came to me because she was having night sweats and was just not able to sleep well for years." Dr. Rawal said she was a post-menopausal woman, so her symptoms could have been related to that transition. "But she had a slightly low TSH, and other symptoms, including anxiety, so we decided to treat it. She slept well all night for the first time in years."

When left untreated, hyperthyroidism can have serious repercussions, including arrhythmias and osteoporosis.

Both overactive and underactive thyroid can be treated with medication, says Dr. Rawal. Patients with hypothyroidism can take synthetic thyroid hormone to normalize hormone levels. Patients with hyperthyroidism can also be treated with radioactive iodine or surgery, though Dr. Rawal said she reserves surgery as a last resort.

"That's because Graves' Disease, in particular, has a relapsing and remitting course – so the body can go into remission by itself," Dr. Rawal explains. "We want to slow the thyroid with medication, so as not to risk complications and to make the patient feel better – but give the body a chance to treat itself."

Sometimes, Dr. Rawal says, hyperthyroidism is caused by nodules, or growths, on the thyroid that may need to be removed. Thyroid nodules, she says, are about five times more common in women than men, and 95 percent of them are benign. However,

“HYPOTHYROIDISM IS OFTEN UNDERDIAGNOSED BECAUSE PEOPLE CAN HAVE SYMPTOMS OF AN UNDERACTIVE THYROID ... BUT STILL HAVE TEST LABS IN THE NORMAL RANGE.”

even benign nodules may need to be removed if they are functional – that is, producing thyroid hormone, or causing problems due to their size, such as difficulty breathing or swallowing.

Medication or radioactive iodine treatment are the first-line treatments for thyroid nodules that are producing hormone. Surgery is reserved typically for larger growths or if there is a concern they may be cancerous.

Due to the risk of cancer, all nodules need to be monitored with ultrasound over time, even if they were reported benign. A decision on whether thyroid nodules need to be biopsied depends on their appearance and size.

“Thyroid cancer is very treatable, with an overall survivor rate of more than 98 percent,” says Dr. Rawal, who specializes in the diagnosis and treatment of thyroid cancer. “It’s a very slow, growing cancer, except for anaplastic thyroid cancer – a very aggressive type that fortunately accounts for less than 1 percent of thyroid cancers.” Symptoms of thyroid cancer include a lump in the neck, the feeling of a lump when swallowing, hoarseness, and difficulty breathing when lying down, Dr. Rawal says.

“Thyroid cancer treatment has to be individualized – you can’t do a one-size-fits-all kind of thing,” she says. “It depends on the age of the patient, the size of the cancer, what it looks like once you get it out, whether there are other nodules, whether lymph nodes are involved, and whether there are specific tumor markers.”

The mainstay of thyroid cancer treatment is surgery – specifically, total thyroidectomy. That said, Dr. Rawal says current thinking dictates that younger patients, under the age of 45, can consider having a partial or hemi-thyroidectomy – rather than having the entire organ removed – in an attempt to save part of the gland so the patient won’t be 100 percent reliant on synthetic hormones. Those patients, like any other thyroid cancer patients, should be closely monitored by an endocrinologist.

Radioactive iodine is also recommended for some patients after surgery, but Dr. Rawal says the thinking on that treatment – which used to be recommended across the board – has shifted as well. “Radiation can cause long-term problems, like a slightly raised risk of lymphoma in the long term and salivary gland problems in the short term, so the decision to use it shouldn’t be taken lightly.”

DIABETES: A GROWING PROBLEM

Like most endocrinologists, Dr. Rawal treats more patients for diabetes than for any other condition. Diabetes is a condition in which the body cannot make insulin (Type I) or is resistant to the insulin it produces (Type II).

Type I diabetes is an autoimmune disorder that affects the pancreas, the organ that produces insulin to keep the body’s blood sugar levels in check. Type II diabetes often develops in patients with metabolic syndrome, a cluster of conditions including high blood pressure, high blood sugar, abnormal cholesterol or triglycerides, and excess body fat, especially around the waist. (Metabolic syndrome also increases the risk of heart disease and stroke.) The incidence of type II diabetes is on the rise, Dr. Rawal says, likely because of the obesity epidemic in this country.

Type II diabetics suffer from insulin resistance – they have so

overtaxed their glucose-control system by overconsumption of sugar that their body no longer responds to the insulin produced by the pancreas, and blood sugar levels get out of control. Diabetics must learn to make healthier food choices, Dr. Rawal says, such as reducing intake of sugary snacks and beverages, and swapping out starchy foods like white bread for fiber-rich alternatives like whole grain.

Educating patients about how to control their blood sugar, and thus their diabetes, by managing their diets better is a crucial part of treating diabetics, according to Dr. Rawal. “We work hand-in-hand with our diabetes educators and nutritionists to achieve a common goal: helping manage diabetes better so that patients are able to avoid getting diabetes complications.”

Good control of diabetes, she says, prevents eye complications like diabetic retinopathy (which can ultimately lead to blindness) and neuropathy (which can lead to serious foot conditions such as foot ulcers and bone infection, or osteomyelitis, which often requires amputation).

Diabetics also tend to have other complications, such as heart disease and stroke, so treating them includes managing high blood pressure and high cholesterol, which are both risk factors as well. Poorly controlled diabetes, along with hypertension, is the leading cause of kidney failure in United States. Risk of complications can be mitigated by good control of diabetes, as shown by major diabetes studies.

DON'T DELAY CARE

It is crucial, says Dr. Rawal, that diabetics are monitored every three months to make sure that their hemoglobin A1C levels remain below a certain level (this test measures the average blood sugar level over the previous 3 months). It’s also important that they get eye checks and proper foot care. But many patients have been delaying physician appointments because of the COVID-19 pandemic, Dr. Rawal says.

“A month or two delay is not a big problem, but it doesn’t seem like COVID is going away any time soon, so it’s not a good idea to put off doctors’ visits,” says Dr. Rawal. This applies not only to diabetics, who are also at higher risk for COVID complications – and patients with chronic conditions – but to anyone with concerning symptoms.

“Medications can also have effects on liver function, so you also shouldn’t put off blood tests to monitor liver numbers.”

Dr. Rawal says that her office takes extreme precautions to keep their office safe for patients, including wearing masks, maintaining social distance, disinfecting “everything from the big furniture to the pens that patients use,” and leaving enough time between patients to completely disinfect patient rooms. Patients who are still concerned about coming in, she says, can call their doctor to see if a tele-visit would suffice.

“You don’t want to get out of this COVID pandemic with other problems to deal with – whether retinopathy or neuropathy, or medication side effects that could have been completely avoided,” she says.

“Make sure that you get the care you need.” ■

Lori Miller Kase is a freelance writer living in Simsbury.

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Will You Love Me Forever?

When adopting or fostering a pet, there's a lot to consider

By RENEE DININO

When we're kinder to animals, we're kinder to people. I cannot take credit for that phrase, but I say it every single day. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, things were "normal" in the animal world. Shelters were open; rescues were fostering and doing their best to get animals adopted safely, and were watching out for neglect and abuse cases. Animal control officers were answering calls, picking up strays or dumped pets, arresting animal abusers – you know, "normal."

When the pandemic became a reality in Connecticut, it seemed as if a magic wand spread its reach across the state, edge to edge, over all municipal shelters, rescues, and pet adoption facilities. All dogs and cats were placed in homes or foster homes. And then, nothing. Absolutely nothing. In fact, calls to animal control reduced drastically. When I spoke with several animal control officers across the state – Sherry DeGenova at Hartford Police Animal Control, Laura Burban at the Dan Cosgrove Animal Shelter, Roz Nenninger and Dana Natrillo at Wolcott Animal Control & Wolcott Police Department, and Deborah Monde at Wethersfield Animal Control and Police Department – they all said

the same thing: in fact, even invoking the same phrase: "eerily quiet."

Everybody, it seemed, had room in their homes for pets, finally! An actual positive side effect of COVID-19. But one question rang through my brain, "Will you love me forever?"

It's certainly tempting to adopt a furry new best friend. You won't be alone; they'll keep you company. But it's oh so much more than that. A real concern for many animal advocates, and what we are seeing now, is the result of mass fast adoptions/fostering and the realization that the right pet may not have been put in the right home, whether it be for personality, lifestyle, or financial reasons.

In one of my many conversations with DeGenova, she said, "One thing I always ask is, 'What is the plan when your life goes back to normal?'"

So, what do you need to know before you adopt or foster? There are some serious questions you need to ask yourself before offering to house a dog or cat.

"Are you willing to invest 12 to 15 years of your life to a

dog? Do you honestly have the quality time to give to a dog? Does it make sense in your current living situation? Why do you want a dog?" asks Brian Rogers of Leash on Life LLC, who has been a K9 behavioral trainer for 25 years.

Monde, of the Wethersfield Police Department and K9 Solutions of Connecticut LLC, who is a certified search and rescue canine handler, offers tips for new pet owners bringing an animal into their homes for the first time.

"Allow the animal some time to figure things out safely," she says. "If you have another pet in the home, take as much time as needed to blend the animals into their new pack. This does not happen with one meet and greet. Consider training and teach the new pet the boundaries in the home. A new pet in the home should never have free range of the house until the animal can be trusted and understands the new boundaries."

Susan M. Wollschlager, marketing and communications manager at the Connecticut Humane Society, agrees. "Have lots of patience and understanding," she says. "Give them



Sherry DeGenova



The Shannon Lewie Family



Laura Burban



Laurel Cox



calm and quiet as they settle in. For cats and small critters, their own room may be best at first. That then becomes their safe zone, one they will feel comfortable going to if they get nervous exploring the rest of their home later on.”

Wollschlager adds, “We don’t always know their backstories, so just be as understanding as possible as they try to learn your routines and their place in the family. Especially the shy ones – give them time and let them come to you.”

Also keep in mind when adopting a cat, there are differences between indoor and outdoor living arrangements.

“I strongly believe cats should be kept indoors to avoid dangers such as cars, predators, exposure to other cats that may carry diseases, parasites, etc.,” says Laurel Cox, volunteer and treasurer at Kenway’s Cause, a nonprofit that raises money to provide medical care to injured animals picked up by City of Hartford Animal Control. “This will result in a longer life span for them. So long as family members keep their feline companions entertained inside

the home, they can and will have very fulfilling lives.”

There are many things to consider before taking in a pet, even in a foster situation.

“Fostering is so very important to the rescue cycle. Without fosters, we can’t rescue animals,” says Shannon Lewie, volunteer and rescue coordinator at Kenway’s Cause. “Fostering is a commitment, and often for an undetermined amount of time. As a foster, you play an important part of the adoption process because you are the most familiar with the animal’s behavior, needs and wants.”

Jody Smaglis, event coordinator, says foster owners “should be confident in knowing they can commit to the care and well-being of the pet until the pet is adopted. They should also be prepared to fall in love with the pet and become a foster failure.” (Despite the negative name, a foster failure refers to temporary pet parents or families who fall in love with their foster pets and decide to adopt.)

People who foster pets are tasked with giving the animals as stable an environment as they can, says Rogers.

“You should also be able to understand behaviors so you can give a clear description of how the dog acts while fostering. Pack change is the hardest thing on a dog, in my opinion. The last thing we want to do is add more stress as a foster parent,” he says.

And if there are already pets or children in the home? “Transition slowly and establish rules and boundaries,” advises Lewie. “With existing pets, it’s important to make them feel that they are still equally as important and loved. Do not leave them unattended until you feel it is safe to do so.”

There are, of course, various expenses that come with taking in a pet, including vaccines.

“Vaccines and parasite prevention protocols should be tailored to the lifestyle and environment but should never be ignored or forgotten,” says Dr. Joshua Atz of Manchester Veterinary Clinic, noting rabies vaccinations are particularly important for many.

On average, cat owners can expect to spend at least \$750 on a healthy kitten in the first year of its life, estimates Atz. That includes neutering, basic health testing, vaccines, and food. Basic needs for a dog can run between \$1,000 and \$1,500 in the first year. In subsequent years, if they’re healthy, cats cost about \$400 annually while dogs can be between \$500 and \$1,500 depending on food choices and levels of parasite prevention, he says.

“Except for breeding animals, [spaying or neutering is] always recommended for disease prevention, reproduction control, and avoiding behavioral issues,” Atz says.

In all my years as a pet owner, I’ve always had a rescue in one way or another. Luke is my current dog – well, truth be told, I’m one of those people; he’s my son. My four-legged, handsome son from the streets of Hartford, rescued by Animal Control Officer DeGenova. I can tell you with certainty, adopting a pet is rewarding and brings love and joy to your world, but it is not always picture perfect. You must work with your pet, with your spouse, children, or roommates to make it a positive and enjoyable living situation.

One thing to consider is whether you rent or own your home, and how much space you have.



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"Pets should be obtained with considerations of your living situations. If you get a dog that requires a lot of exercise, then a condo may not be a good fit. Same with renting, as the landlords may have animal clauses in the lease that prevents certain animals," says Monde.

"If you do get an animal when renting and you're not allowed to have one, hiding that animal is not a good thing to do. That landlord can make you remove the animal. Most times in this situation, the animal pays the price of bad human decisions."

Jody Macrina of East Hartford-based Protectors of Animals notes, "Rescues should require landlord permission from the renter." She also suggests renters "should make sure their insurance carrier does not have restrictions on the number of pets or breed."

Like everything else, shelters, rescue groups, and foster programs have been affected by the pandemic.

"It was always busy, but since COVID-19 we have seen an uptick in the need for people to owner-release animals, and they need help financially for medical issues regarding their animals and they need pet foods," says Burban, director of Dan Cosgrove Animal Shelter and animal control officer for Branford. "I think the needs financially are increasing because people do not have the finances to care for the animals, and I think we will keep

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Renee DiNino and Luke

seeing the need for animals to be owner-released."

Burban adds she's seen an increase in the number of dogs, cats, and other critters being abandoned or dumped.

Unfortunately, that is not an isolated issue – other towns like Hartford, Wolcott and more also are noticing the trend. There's also an increase in animal abuse being reported across the state. Desmond's Army Animal Law Advocates have a full roster of court dates and cases to be the voice for the voiceless.

Dr. Alexis Soutter of Manchester Veterinary Clinic perhaps puts it best: "It's tempting to adopt a new pet right now, when social activities are so limited, and we are spending more time at home. But that will not always be the case! Do you have the appropriate time to devote to the species and breed you are considering? An active, high-energy dog breed like a German shepherd or terrier or border collie will have different requirements than a cat or a bunny, but those species also need their own environmental enrichment, affection, and care. When thinking about this, consider the time needed to train the pet, play with them, and groom them, and not just now, but in six months or five years or 10 years."

She adds, "Is everyone in your household prepared to help in the care for the pet? When adopting an animal, you are truly adding a member to your family, and everyone should be on board, or ideally excited, about that prospect. This includes cleaning up messes, dealing with household or personal objects being chewed or damaged, and potentially dealing with overly buoyant puppies or kittens who don't understand that humans don't like being stabbed by teeth and claws. Animals can provide us with so much love, but there is no such thing as an 'easy' animal to adopt, as they all have their own unique challenges and rewards. It is best to be honest and realistic about those factors before you open up your home and heart."

So I ask you again, on behalf of all would-be pets: Will you love me forever?

Renee DiNino is the director of community affairs for iHeartMedia in Connecticut, the midday host on The River 105.9 and host of an hour-long syndicated talk show on all Connecticut iHeartRadio stations. She also appears weekly on WFSB Channel 3's "Better Connecticut." An avid animal lover and advocate, she and her husband Sal have a German Shepherd, Luke, they rescued in Hartford. instagram @iheartcommunities.



Love

In the Time of COVID

Engaged couples show
creativity and flexibility in wedding planning

Written by **JOEL SAMBERG** / Photographed by **TODD FAIRCHILD**

Planning a wedding has always been an emotional jumble of considerations and decisions. Where, when, how many guests, kids or no kids, band or deejay, buffet or table service, big or small bridal party...

Now throw a pandemic into the mix.

With the need for face masks, social distancing, state-mandated crowd restrictions, and other challenges, couples getting married today face a set of circumstances completely unlike those of friends and relatives who tied the knot even a year ago.

For more than half a year, engaged couples have had to deal with the threat of coronavirus and the menace of COVID-19. Various reports from across the country share stories of subcontractors who self-quarantine after every event and couples who require their guests to sign liability forms. One wedding planner in the Midwest predicts that weddings will evolve into superspreader events. A wedding in Maine, held in early August, was linked to 170 coronavirus cases, making the national news. For many, deliberations surrounding wedding plans have prompted frustration, anxiety, and even fear.

But in Connecticut, it appears that COVID-era weddings have a decidedly different effect: they've given young newlyweds a reason to celebrate their own spirit and resolve, with many couples in the Nutmeg State focusing on acceptance and positivity.

BACK TO NATURE

Nature lovers Jeffrey Morton and Rebecca Paquette became engaged in the summer of 2019 during a hike to a bucolic waterfall. It was a very Jeffrey-and-Rebecca thing to do. Which is why relatives and friends were not at all surprised when their original inspiration was to get married this summer in a rustic lodge on Lake George in the Adirondack Mountains.



Jeffrey Morton and Rebecca Paquette

The pandemic had other plans.

Rebecca's parents' house in Glastonbury, where she grew up, borders a heavily wooded forest, and their backyard became the venue for this summer's wedding. Jeffrey had already hand-made countrified decorations for the Adirondack affair – but those decorations were a perfect fit for the Glastonbury setting.

"In the early spring, we went back and forth so many times, trying to make a decision about canceling or keeping our original plans. Rules about the pandemic seemed to change by the day," Rebecca recalls. It soon became apparent that in the interest of safety, the guest list would have to shrink to a fraction of its original size. "There definitely were some tears, but once we made the final decision, we moved forward and went with our Plan B, which ended up being what everyone agreed was a beautiful and intimate ceremony."

They were always aware that their decision affected dozens of people, from guests – some of whom had already made Adirondack plans – to suppliers, some of whom had already taken sizable deposits. Rebecca and Jeffrey knew they stood a chance of losing money and disappointing friends. But all deposits were transferred to another date in 2021, in Lake George, where the couple will have what they'll call a vow renewal ceremony. What's more, they intend to invite everyone who came to the Glastonbury backyard and also those who had to be omitted from the original list.

Rebecca, a registered nurse, and Jeffrey, an aerospace mechanical design engineer, now live in Manchester and look back on their wedding as a success. "After all," Rebecca muses, "there is no rule book for a pandemic wedding. But we pulled it off. We're proud of that."

TAKING CONTROL

When Margaret Thibault and Shawn Dyer look back on their late June wedding at home in Bristol, it is likely that two things in particular will stand out. First, how fun and intimate it was, and secondly, the weirdness of having one of the wedding officiates conduct the ceremony from an iPad several states away.

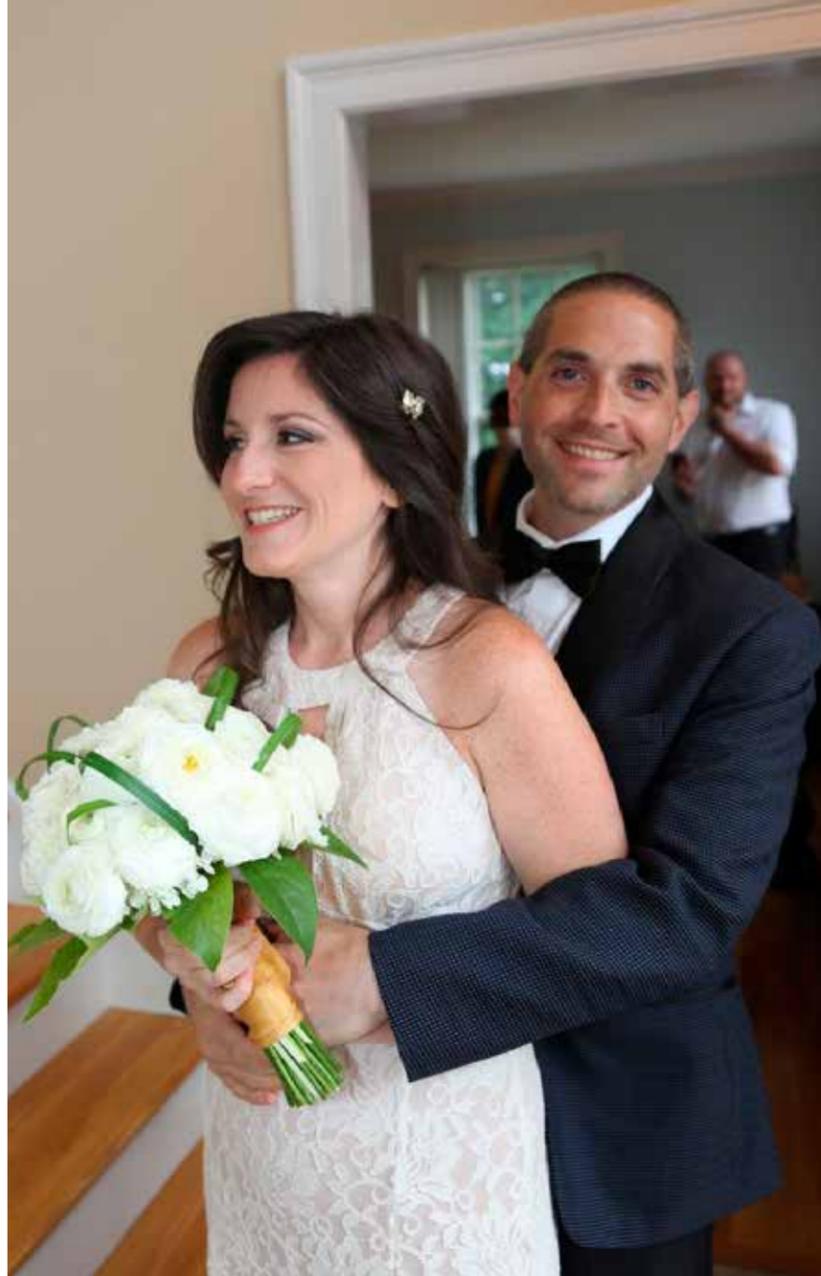
Both the bride and the groom work at the high-pressure, high-tech firm Pratt & Whitney – Margaret as a demand planner, Shawn as chief information security officer. So having a relatively low-pressure, low-tech event at home was a welcome change.

"The original plan was to have more than a hundred people at the Pond House in Elizabeth Park. Our decision to cancel was very emotional," shares Margaret. "But once it was made, it felt like we took control over our destiny. It helped us remain optimistic, as if we had reached an acceptance phase after a period of grieving. That helped us realize that the most important thing was being married and spending our lives together."

The Pond House was accommodating to the change in plans, as were most other vendors, with the exception of the cruise line on which they had booked an Alaskan honeymoon. Margaret and Shawn were offered only credit that has to be used by July 2021 to book a cruise departing in 2022, which, of course, is not a guaranteed option.

Every relationship has surprises. With the Dyers, it began on a mutual vacation in Bermuda a little more than a year ago. Margaret was admiring a blue lagoon, turned around to say something to her boyfriend Shawn, and saw him on his knees, holding a ring. The surprises continued 48 hours before their revised wedding when one of their out-of-state officiates learned that new travel restrictions forbade him from traveling to Connecticut.

"In life, sometimes you have to roll with the punches.



Margaret Thibault and Shawn Dyer

We got really good at adapting to the unexpected and maintaining a good sense of humor," she says.

A CHANGE OF PLANS

Usually when the photographer calls before a wedding, it's just to confirm a few details. When Cecilia Menendez and her fiancé Franz Michel received a call from their photographer seven weeks before their own event, it was to tell them about new CDC guidelines that would affect their plans.

The wedding ceremony took place at the Cathedral of St. Joseph in Hartford, but the reception, which was to have included 200 people at the Madison Beach Hotel in Madison, was canceled entirely. Cecilia and Franz took several guests to Artisan, the noted bistro in West Hartford's Delamar Hotel, which had outdoor seating.

"There were several times we had a screw it! moment, where we almost decided to elope. We thought we'd go to the church with two witnesses, and that would be that," says Cecilia, who is originally from Avon and is now a Catholic outreach missionary for Brown University in Providence, RI. She and Franz, who grew up in Norwalk and works at Otis Elevator, are thankful that most of their vendors were gracious about the unprecedented change in their original plans and caused very few financial problems for the young couple. (The helpful photographer stayed on board for the revised blueprint.)

Cecilia says that prior to the re-envisioned nuptials, she and Franz prayed a lot and constantly spoke with family and friends for support and advice.

"A large part of my family was to have flown in from Argentina, so I'd love to have some sort of celebration with them in the future," Cecilia muses. "But I wonder if it will feel odd in two years to put on a wedding dress again. Still, I'm open to it. And if there's no risk then, maybe we'll go

back to inviting 200 people!"

Even if that's the case, though, one thing the pandemic taught the Michels is that simple is often better – and safer. "If we do something in the future," she admits, "it will look different from the original plan. It will be much more casual."

PUPPY LOVE

Jen Bunnell and Kevin Siegel will be Mr. and Mrs. Siegel in October, thanks to Andrew.

Andrew had nothing to do with the pandemic or the fact that the young couple decided to stick to their original wedding date. But without a doubt, he set the whole thing in motion.

Andrew is a springer spaniel. Kevin took the dog along on his first date with Jen, who fell in love with both of them.

Jen is a NICU nurse, and Kevin works for the veterinarian to which her family always bought their pets. It wasn't long before fate intervened, and a wedding was being planned.



Cecilia Menendez and her husband Franz Michel



Jen Bunnell and Kevin Siegel. Below: Their springer spaniel named Andrew.



“After a while, there were so many things in place for this fall – so many ideas, plans, details, and confirmed participants – that it seemed as if 2020 was our year! COVID was not going to stop that!”

They moved the venue to her parents’ backyard in Wethersfield and pared down the guest list. The caterer, Matthew’s Catering, has remained onboard with face

masks and gloves, guests will be required to sanitize their hands at the beginning of the food line, and attendants will plate the food so that no one has to touch serving utensils.

“Our family and friends have been supportive,” Jen says. “They all expected these concessions from watching the news, and it’s no big deal.”

One thing that has changed is the honeymoon. They canceled their plans to go to Charleston, SC and instead

will spend some time alone in the Vermont home of a family friend. For them, it’s just another small concession. Despite the pandemic, Jen and Kevin never stopped believing that 2020 would be a special time in their lives. Especially since Andrew will be one of the guests.

JUMPING THROUGH HOOPS

Tanisha Vasquez and Chris Hayden used what might be called a logistical workout and a jolt of adrenaline to make their wedding plans work out just the way they had hoped. It makes perfect sense; after all, Tanisha is a gymnastics instructor for youngsters and Chris is a fire department paramedic. They know how to jump through hoops and keep things ticking.

The only change to their wedding – albeit a major one – is that it will be one year after the original midsummer 2020 date. The Wallingford couple will still get married at the Saltwater Farm Vineyard in Stonington with most of their original vendors and all of their original guests.

“We found a new date next year that everyone was able to commit to,” Tanisha reports proudly, “so we decided to go with it. If we stuck to this summer and scaled it down for the



Chris Hayden and Tanisha Vasquez

pandemic, it would not have been our dream wedding. I will say, though, that as the original date came close, it got tough for us, emotionally. So we still celebrated by going out to dinner that night and enjoying each other’s company.”

Both Tanisha and Chris believe the pandemic will be with us for a while but remain cautiously optimistic that after a one-year delay, the wedding will come off as intended. They currently plan on having neither masks nor an occupancy restriction. Nevertheless, they will continue to count all sorts of blessings, one of which was meeting before the pandemic. Had that not happened, they may have never met at all. “Just going out with my fiancé is hard these days,” Tanisha acknowledges, referring to the fact that dating is quite a challenge today. “Movies? Bowling? No. I’m glad we started going out when we did!”

They may wish to thank the pandemic for waiting as long as it did to arrive (that’s one way of looking at it). But because of the one-year delay in their wedding, they’d have to jump through a lot of hoops in order to say something really nice about it. 🍷

Joel and his wife Bonnie will soon celebrate their 40th wedding anniversary, and their 10th as Connecticut residents. Joel, a frequent Seasons contributor, spent 10 years as a professional writer in New York and 20 in New Jersey.

Taylor Kemp Photography

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Conscious Decisions

Patients appreciate the benefits of “wide-awake” surgery

By CAROL LATTER / Photography courtesy of UConn Health

For the past four years, patients with hand and wrist pain or dysfunction have been able to find the relief they need at UConn Health – without the inconvenience or risk of complications often associated with sedation and general anesthesia.

Rather than using a traditional surgical approach, physicians Anthony Parrino, Joel Ferreira, and Craig Rodner – part of the “hand, wrist, and elbow” team at UConn Health’s Department of Orthopedics and Sports Medicine in Farmington – offer “wide-awake surgery” to many of their patients.

This technique, more formally known as WALANT (wide-awake, local anesthesia, no tourniquet), can be used to treat conditions like carpal tunnel syndrome, trigger finger, nerve compression, nail bed injuries, and arthritis. It can also be used to repair ligaments and tendons, repair bone fractures, and remove masses from the hand or wrist.

So how does it work? Prior to incision, the patient’s hand or wrist is numbed up with a small injection of lidocaine – a local anesthetic – and epinephrine, which extends the action of the lidocaine and acts as a vasoconstrictor to control bleeding. No tourniquet or IV is needed. Once the surgery is complete, the incision is bandaged, and the patient’s blood pressure is monitored for a short time before they head home.

Dr. Parrino, who sees patients in both Farmington and Southington, says performing the surgery without sedation or general anesthesia offers a number of important benefits. The first is convenience. Patients aren’t required to have a physical beforehand, have preoperative bloodwork done, or temporarily discontinue medications like blood thinners. There’s no need for patients to stop eating or drinking at midnight the evening before their surgery – a huge plus for diabetics, since fasting can interfere with their blood sugar levels.

“I also tell patients that they have the option to drive themselves to and from surgery, if they like, so they don’t have to depend on a ride,” Dr. Parrino says.

There are other benefits, too. Compared with traditional hand and wrist surgery, patients generally have less bruising and swelling, need fewer pain medications, and find recovery quicker and less painful. And for patients with

medical conditions that make them high-risk for anesthesia, WALANT makes it possible for them to have procedures that they wouldn’t otherwise be medically cleared for.

Dr. Parrino says if the procedure involves fracture fixation or tendon repair, having the patient awake allows the surgeon to test the repair during the procedure. “For instance, during trigger finger surgery, I have the patient make a full fist to assess motion. If they have general anesthesia, I am not able to check that active motion and make any needed adjustment.”

The surgery itself is quick; patients are generally in and out of the facility in about an hour and a half. And because they don’t experience the common side effects of general anesthesia – like nausea, vomiting, and fatigue – healthy patients can return to their regular daily activities right after the procedure. Some can even return to work the same or following day, depending on the type of job they have.

Conservative approaches, like braces or injections, are generally tried first, but if those things fail, surgery becomes the next best option.

“And if you come to see us for a carpal tunnel or a trigger finger, 95% of the time, we’re going to recommend a wide-awake procedure for it, as opposed to going with general anesthesia or sedation,” says Dr. Parrino.

AN INNOVATIVE APPROACH

Wide-awake surgery is not common in the Northeast, and while it is available in some metropolitan centers like New York City, surgeons offering it in Connecticut are few and far between.

Dr. Parrino first began practicing the technique during a one-year fellowship at the University of Rochester in upstate New York, after completing medical school at Mount Sinai in Manhattan and his residency at UConn Health. As a resident, he says, “I didn’t really see any surgery where patients are completely awake, and the surgeons are just using local anesthesia.”

However, on the first day of his fellowship in Rochester, he found himself in the “wide-awake room,” where surgeons were doing 10 to 12 such procedures each day. “I would say half of the procedures I did there were wide-awake,” he says.

When he was hired by UConn Health after his fellowship,

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When Dr. Joel Ferreira (top) and Dr. Anthony Parrino (left) – who both trained as UConn orthopedic surgery residents – returned to join the faculty, they brought their fellowship training in wide-awake hand surgery to establish the procedure at UConn Health. Photos by Peter Morenus (top) and Stan Godlewski (left)

“one of the things that I wanted to do was to start a wide-awake surgery program. With the help of the orthopedic chairman and some of the staff in the surgery center, we were able to do that, and we’ve continued to build it up.”

His new position gave him the chance to work with Dr. Rodner, as he did during his residency, and with Dr. Ferreira, who got his medical degree at Boston University School of Medicine, and also completed his residency at UConn.

Dr. Ferreira recalls that while he did his hand fellowship at the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center, “I always wanted to come back and teach residents here.” He practiced in Pittsburgh for one year but when a job opened up at UConn, “I took it immediately.”

Today, Dr. Parrino and Dr. Ferreira – an assistant professor of orthopedic surgery – spend a half-day most Fridays conducting wide-awake surgery in Farmington, with each doing approximately 25 of these procedures each month. Dr. Rodner now performs this innovative surgery as well.

Dr. Ferreira says many patients, especially those with underlying conditions like diabetes or cardiac issues, find the opportunity to avoid general anesthesia ideal, “not only for the convenience, but for the safety, too.”

One patient who needed procedures on both hands chose to be asleep for the first surgery, but experienced significant nausea and vomiting afterwards. She chose wide-awake surgery for the second, and it turned out so well that “she was kind of kicking herself that she didn’t do straight local the first time,” Dr. Ferreira says.

WALANT is also less expensive than traditional surgery, since patients don’t require an anesthesiologist.

“IT WAS ABSOLUTELY AMAZING”

If you’re wondering what it would be like to be wide awake when your surgeon makes an incision in your hand or wrist and then gets to work correcting whatever has gone wrong inside, just ask patient Janet Smart of Coventry, who underwent not one but three wide-awake surgeries within a short period of time. She can’t say enough about how impressed she was with this new surgical approach. “It was absolutely amazing,” she says.

A few years ago, Smart found that her both hands were painful and numb. She tried hand braces, ice packs and massages, but nothing improved her condition. In early 2019, she finally complained to her primary physician, who told her she was actually losing muscle in her hands and would probably need surgery. Smart then visited Dr. Ferreira at his Storrs office, located about 10 minutes from her home.

After a nerve conduction study showed that she had carpal tunnel syndrome in both hands, Dr. Ferreira offered her the WALANT option. Recalling a bad reaction to anesthesia in her teens, she agreed.

“Dr. Ferreira explained it all to me and drew me a picture of what he was going to do. I love learning about medical things, so it was great being awake during the procedure,” Smart says.

Dr. Ferreira says team members do their best to help put patients at ease. “We have two nurses, Barbra White and Andréa Hunter, who are amazing. And Christine Moran is our wonderful surgical technician,” he adds. “They’re kind of our

unsung heroes, because they chat with the patients throughout the whole thing. They’re very calming for anyone who might be feeling nervous.”

Smart was awed by her wide-awake experiences. “The nurses are great. They have music playing in the background, they’re taking your blood pressure, and they’re talking with the doctor. It was just awesome,” she recalls. “Then you get up off the table, you walk down the hall, they monitor your blood pressure for a while, you get your discharge papers, and you drive home.”

She adds, “It was great. No pain. You take a Motrin before you go to bed and the next day, you’re fine.”

Smart’s positive experience is pretty much the norm, according to Dr. Parrino. Although some patients have “looked at me like I was crazy when I first suggested it,” once they learned about the rationale for WALANT and the steps involved, most have been willing to take the leap. “The overall reaction from patients has been very good,” he says, joking, “I have not had anyone run out of the room.”

Prior to surgery, patients are kept in the same general area, separated by curtains. “And even though they can’t see each other, they can hear the people coming back from surgery and realize they’re not in pain – they’re really very comfortable, and they’re talking and laughing. The response from patients after we’re done is, ‘That wasn’t bad at all.’ I haven’t had anyone say they would not do it awake again.”

Because numbing medication is injected only where it’s needed, patients retain full functionality of their hand or wrist, he notes. “They may be a little tingly, but the motion still works,” he says. Once the surgery is complete, the hand or wrist is placed in a padded wrap but it’s not very bulky. “We want them to move their fingers and use their hands for light, normal daily activities. And then on post-op Day 3, we typically will take the wrap off, switch to a Band-Aid, and have them try to get back into their normal routine.”

And what about the recovery period? “Depending on the procedure, there are usually some restrictions for 10 to 14 days until the stitches come out,” Dr. Ferreira says. At the two-week mark, “patients might still be a little sore, but they don’t necessarily have restrictions.”

While some patients may experience some discomfort for up to six weeks, Smart says her first carpal tunnel procedure restored so much function to her hand that she was able to get the other one done within a month. This summer, she returned for a wide-awake trigger finger release.

The surgeries have allowed her to return to her normal activities, after years of dysfunction and pain. “I work part time for the parks and rec department in our town. I clean and mop floors, and I do gardening over there and at home,” she says. “So it’s pretty much back to normal for me, thanks to my dear doctor.” 📧

Carol Latter is Seasons Magazines editor and a freelance writer living in Simsbury.

Hear more about wide-awake hand surgery from Drs. Ferreira and Parrino in the UConn Health Pulse podcast, <https://h.uconn.edu/wide-awake-podcast>



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HOME



LIVING IN GLASS HOUSES: The greenhouses at Elizabeth Park are magnificent historic structures that date from the 1890s and have no automation. Photo courtesy of Elizabeth Park Conservancy

Growing Greener

The ins and outs of building your own greenhouse

Written by **JOEL SAMBERG**

One spinoff of the COVID-19 pandemic – beyond the mad rush on toilet paper – is a spike in puttering around the house, both indoors and out.

In addition to a heightened interest in home renovations, an increasing number of people have started gardens – both because they’ve found themselves with more time on their hands at home, and because of a desire to be more self-sufficient when it comes to their food supply.

Growing your own flowers and produce does seem like a no-brainer. Many people find that it’s relatively easy to manage a small garden by themselves or with the help of their kids, the supplies and materials are quite inexpensive, it seems like an environmentally friendly thing to do (as opposed to buying items shipped from hundreds or thousands of miles away), and it helps save

money that might otherwise be spent at nurseries and grocery stores.

But because Connecticut has a relatively short growing season, some folks have given thought to ways of extending it – in short, buying or building a greenhouse. And why not? In addition to allowing people to plant and harvest vegetables beyond the normal growing season (we fall into USDA plant hardiness zones 5-7), greenhouse owners can also get an early jump on cultivating flower seedlings that will add color and variety to any home landscape.

Rosemary Aldridge, consulting horticulturist for the Elizabeth Park Conservancy, frequently overhears visitors who pass by the park’s four greenhouses – which are accessible only to Conservancy volunteers and staff members and to City of Hartford personnel.



Richard and Lynne Creed's greenhouse in Farmington.

“People peek in and say how much they’d love to have a greenhouse of their own at home,” she shares. After all, when the park’s thousands of colorful flowers and ornamental bushes bloom during parts of the spring, summer and fall, there is no denying the feeling of peace and harmony that blooms right along with them.

But an informal survey of several homeowners in Connecticut who already have a greenhouse, or have considered it, shows that for the most part, having one in the backyard or attached to the house isn’t always as peaceful or harmonious as it may appear. For better or worse, that’s because of the maintenance and expense involved.

“It’s a wonderful idea to have one, but you must go into it with your eyes open because it’s a huge commitment in time and money,” Aldridge cautions.

To be run properly, greenhouses require constant sources of water, electricity for cooling in the summer and heating in the winter, a solid foundation, fans, a humidifier, window shades and other functional and mostly automatic

components – more components, in fact, than most amateurs realize are required.

The greenhouses at Elizabeth Park are magnificent historic structures that date from the 1890s and have no automation. Aldridge is quick to remind anyone who wants to volunteer for the Conservancy that they can do so, and get a first-hand look and feel of what working in a true-blue greenhouse is all about.

Many homeowners who have a greenhouse (while not always of Elizabeth Park vintage, they’re usually from long ago) let their structures remain on their properties even though they rarely, if ever, use them as real greenhouses. In some cases, they’re turned into sunrooms. Why people keep the structures around is often a case of historical pride: there are many greenhouses that are just too beautiful to relinquish. Sometimes, a homeowner will even find a source of financial income, albeit small, to warrant holding onto their distinctive glass shelters.

Richard and Lynne Creed of Farmington check many

of those boxes. Richard, who owns a manufacturing company, and Lynne, a retired CPA, have a greenhouse that was built in 1927 on the former Winchell Smith estate on the Farmington River. Their gorgeous greenhouse is a timepiece, a reminder of how much care used to go into the design of such garden centerpieces. But the couple did have to replicate quite a number of components due to the structure’s age. According to Richard, every decision was made with enormous care so that the original architectural and aesthetic character was maintained.

In the old days, Richard explains, greenhouses like his required the full-time care of what were often called “yardmen” who had to attend to them seven days a week.

“Everyone thinks they would love to own a greenhouse – until they do,” Richard says. He mentions the need to periodically replace the soil, to keep up with pest control, to be vigilant to avoid frozen pipes in the winter, and enough additional responsibilities to make anyone wilt.

“Lynne and I choose our battles wisely in terms of how far to go to sustain our greenhouse in the manner in which it was originally intended. Generally, we use it now primarily in the spring to cultivate very forgiving leafy greens. In truth, these days it’s not much more than a very expensive lawn ornament, and it’s not for the faint of heart.”

One idea that made it just a little more enjoyable recently for the Creeds was when they found a commercial gardener who wanted to use their greenhouse to prepare hundreds of unique flowerpots. The gardener paid a small fee for the privilege, and would have returned to do it again, but she moved to a local farm when her business grew to include crops.

Nora Howard is aware of many Connecticut home

greenhouses from the past, including the one she grew up with in Avon, owned by her mother, Elinor Oakes.

“My mom always had flowers in the house, many of which were nurtured in the greenhouse. I never actually worked in it myself – it was totally mom’s thing – but I loved the humidity and the feel of the soil and all the scents of everything growing. It was very special,” she says.

The greenhouse was heated by oil. When oil prices climbed precipitously in the 1970s, Oakes decided to cut back. But Howard remembers it with fondness. While still standing, it is now used only for storage.

Howard’s familiarity with greenhouses has its roots in her work with garden clubs and historical societies. Currently the historian for both the Town of Avon and Avon Congregational Church, she is past president of the Garden Club of Hartford and former director of the Avon and Wethersfield Historical Societies. She has documented several homes that have greenhouses for the Smithsonian Archives of American Gardens.

Howard also has friends with old greenhouses, some of whom gave up on them when the maintenance became too much, and others who, like Richard Creed once did, rent them out. She doesn’t think she could be convinced now to build one of her own, though she most certainly feels a strong connection because of all her research.

It is commonly believed that greenhouses got their start in Italy. Several accounts assert that about 2,060 years ago, the emperor Tiberius was very particular about the fruit for which he yearned, and his minions developed a way to satisfy those anytime/anywhere cravings. The early storage units they built did not look like today’s greenhouses, mostly because they had wheels and were transported like a





AGE AND BEAUTY: J.C. van der Spek Greenhouse Services in Windsor Locks is home to this gorgeous greenhouse structure.



GROWING CLIENTS: Hans van der Spek of J.C. van der Spek Greenhouse Services mostly sells and services commercial greenhouses. His few residential customers live in or near New York City and Boston.



YEAR-ROUND PLANTING: Nora Howard grew up in a home with a greenhouse owned by her mother, Elinor Oakes.

would leave their greenhouses vulnerable to disorder and disrepair unless they hired someone to take care of them. That's why greenhouses have ceased to be front and center in Connecticut domestic living.

Despite all this, Hans van der Spek of J.C. van der Spek Greenhouse Services in Windsor Locks, stays very busy – although it must be noted that the greenhouses he sells and services are massive structures unfit for most suburban homes. In business for more than 35 years, van der Spek says his few residential customers live in or near

New York City and Boston. “They’re the kind of people who want to give everything a try,” he concedes, “even something as involved as a greenhouse.”

But van der Spek also adds that more people today, particularly since the pandemic began, are starting to be creative in their home gardens without the use of greenhouses. Many more homeowners, he has noticed, are starting to grow herbs and vegetables for the first time. “Many of us are being more creative in our backyards than ever before,” he says. “Now what’s needed is some more education so that people do it correctly. And we all need to find more time and energy to devote to this very special kind of activity.”

The end result of something like what van der Spek suggests may be three seasons – between April and October – of lush garden delights and sensations all around the state, and one season – between November and March – that perhaps is exactly the way New England winters were always meant to be. For better or worse. ■

Joel Samberg has landscaped his Avon home with raised beds, walkways and bordered gardens using only materials found around the property, which he says is a great option, given today's cost of living.



PREPPING THE PRODUCE SECTION: Since the pandemic hit close to home, many people have begun growing their own vegetables and herbs as a way to become more self-sufficient when it comes to their food supply.

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A Seat at the Table

LEADING THE WAY: A suffrage parade in 1916 in New Haven. Photo courtesy of Connecticut State Library

100 Years Ago, Female Trailblazers Fought For Their Right To Vote

By CINDY SIMONEAU

They wrote letters. They lobbied politicians. They conducted meetings. They argued with friends and family members. They went on hunger strikes. They held rallies. They were jeered by opponents. They marched down the streets of Connecticut's cities and towns. They were arrested.

Such were the actions of the Connecticut's suffragists, who like many of their sisters in solidarity across the United States, spent decades demanding local, state and national legislation providing women the right to vote.

More than 100 years ago their hard-fought efforts paid off with passage of the 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution guaranteeing women voting rights. While the national movement was launched decades before in the 19th century by the women's suffrage movement, it was action by the U.S. Congress in 1919 that helped proponents see that an end to the fight was near.

The start of the fight for women's suffrage often traces

its roots to the "Declaration of Sentiments" drawn up at the women's rights conference in Seneca Falls, N.Y., in July 1848 with Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Mott as leaders. The first woman suffrage amendment was introduced in Congress in 1878 by California Sen. Aaron Sargent. It was defeated but later reintroduced each year, often as the Susan B. Anthony amendment, until it was passed in 1919.

GRASSROOTS BEGINNINGS

The Connecticut Woman Suffrage Association (CWSA) was organized in Hartford in October 1869 by John Hooker and his wife, Isabella Beecher Hooker; her sister, and author, Harriet Beecher Stowe; another sister, Catharine E. Beecher; and Frances Ellen Burr.

Early CWSA efforts under the leadership of Isabella Beecher Hooker focused on letter writing and informational meetings. A more aggressive approach followed the election of Katharine Martha Houghton Hepburn (mother of the later famous actress) as head of CWSA in 1910.

Connecticut had its first suffrage parade in 1914 in Hartford attended by thousands of supporters.

Hepburn was followed by Katharine Ludington, portrait painter of Old Lyme, from 1918 until the organization was disbanded in 1921. Ludington went on to be a founding member of the League of Women Voters in the state.

The Connecticut Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage was holding its own rallies and meetings, including one at Hotel Taft in New Haven featuring statewide and national speakers.

On May 21, 1919 the U.S. House of Representatives passed the 19th Amendment, followed by the Senate, 56-25, two weeks later.

The role of the Constitution state in the constitutional fight for suffrage was marred by political control to the extent that the state finished in the race to ratification as the plus-one. With 36 states needed to reach the ¾ majority required to ratify, Connecticut finished No. 37 after Tennessee's action in August 1920 made the amendment the law of the land.

The first three states to act were Wisconsin, Illinois and Michigan, all on June 10, 1919.

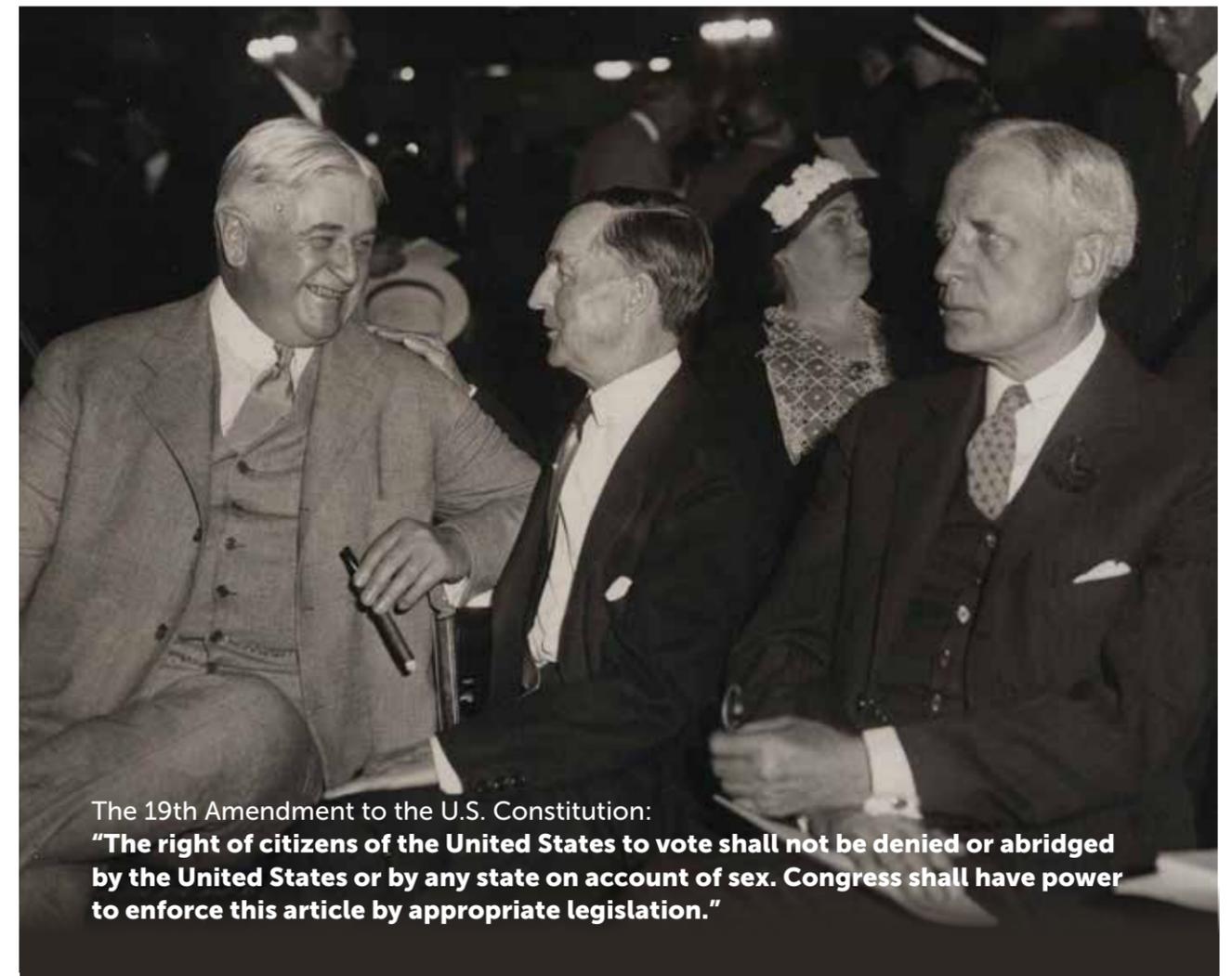
POLITICAL OPPOSITION IN CONNECTICUT

In Connecticut, it was more a case of who was the holdout, rather than what was the hold up, in this state moving forward as a leader in ratification.

"Opposition was more political than ideological," explains University of Connecticut political science professor Ronald C. Schurin.

The delay in action was in the hands of then-Gov. Marcus Holcomb, of Southington, who refused to call a special session of the General Assembly before its planned January 1921 session. Backing Holcomb was a small group of fellow Republicans known as the "Big Six."

There was no bigger decision-maker for state political actions at the time than the powerful John Henry Roraback of Canaan. Roraback was the Republican State Central Committee Chairman from 1912 until his death in 1937 and Republicans dominated the state legislative political



The 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution:
"The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any state on account of sex. Congress shall have power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation."

CONTEMPLATING CHANGE: J. Henry Roraback (left) at the 1932 Republican National Convention in Chicago with Daniel E. Pomeroy of New Jersey and Charles D. Hill of New York. (AP photo/ Courtesy Connecticut State Library Archives)



John Henry Roraback. Photo courtesy of Falls Village Canaan Historical Society.

[Bailey was elected chairman of Democratic State Central Committee in 1946, and later head of the Democratic National Committee] was a time when legislators very rarely broke with the party line and leaders,” says Schurin.

Despite appearances, Schurin says Roraback was known also as a good listener within party ranks and led more in step with others rather than in a dictatorial style.

Ideological opposition to women’s voting rights largely centered around family and social issues, including child labor laws, religion and Prohibition. The Connecticut Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage argued that much of the social progress gained by women in prior decades created additional burdens for women and that the responsibility for voting only added to these burdens.

After Tennessee’s action in August 1920, Holcomb finally called for a special session on Sept. 14, for the limited purpose of setting up a voting process for women in the 1920 presidential race. The legislators took matters in their own hands and pushed for ratification of the 19th

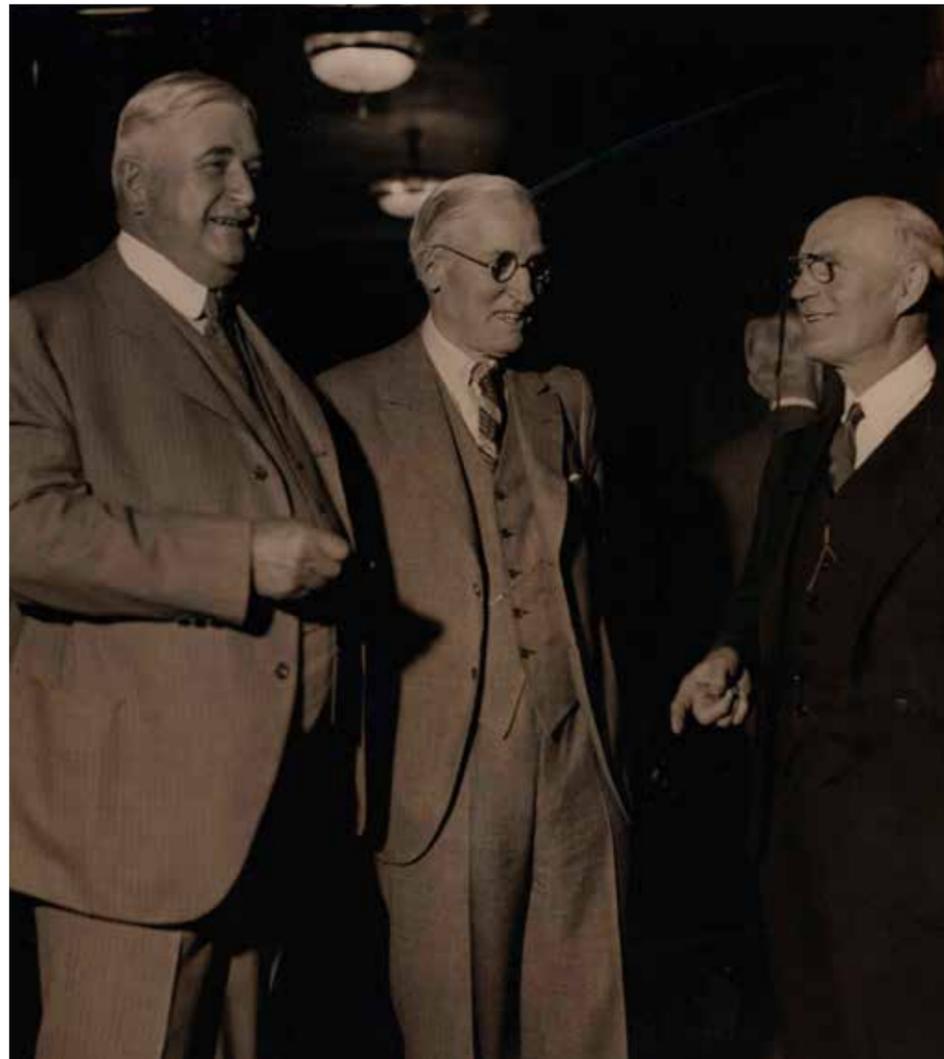
landscape, including control of the governor’s office.

“At that time, Connecticut was a very ‘Boss’-driven, dominated state. No Republican legislator would speak out in opposition to any party policy or practice in those days,” says Schurin, who has served as analyst and speech writer for the federal government.

From the perspectives of Roraback and Holcomb, the Republicans had plenty of voters and controlled state politics, so they had no need to add more, or even double, to the ranks by allowing women to vote.

In addition, Schurin points out that state political control was comprised of the many rural and farm communities of the state. Roraback was from a family of lawyers who dominated Litchfield County. Adding women might swell the voting ranks, thus the political power of the cities.

“During the Roraback years on into the shift to the John Bailey-led Democrats



WINDS OF CHANGE: Roraback (left) at the 1932 Republican National Convention, talking with James E. Davison of Michigan and Sen. Simeon Fess of Ohio. (AP photo/ Courtesy of Connecticut State Library)



CELEBRATING PROGRESS: Secretary of State Denise Merrill, dressed as a suffragist, addresses a town hall launch of the Celebration of the Centennial Women’s Suffrage in the House Chamber of the General Assembly at the State Capitol in Hartford on Sept. 12, 2019. Merrill and Lt. Gov. Susan Bysiewicz, seated, co-chaired the Connecticut Women’s Suffrage Centennial Commission with Annie Lamont, the governor’s wife. (Photo courtesy Sec. State’s office)

Amendment. Among some concern the step could be illegal, the General Assembly met again in a second special session to verify the vote.

WOMEN ASCEND TO ELECTED OFFICES

The 1920 presidential election, the first in which women could vote, was won by U.S. Sen. Warren G. Harding, a Republican, who defeated Gov. James M. Cox, a Democrat. Both men were from Ohio.

That year Connecticut elected its first women to the General Assembly: Emily Sophie Brown of Naugatuck and Lillian S. Frink of Canterbury, both Republicans; Helen A. Jewett of Tolland, a Democrat; and Grace I. Edwards of New Hartford, an Independent.

The first woman in the State Senate came four years later when Alice Merritt, a Hartford Republican, was elected.

Connecticut was in the national political spotlight in 1970 when Ella T. Grasso, a Democrat from Windsor Locks, became the first woman in the country elected in her own right (not succeeding a husband). Grasso had a storied leadership until she resigned after being diagnosed with ovarian cancer in December 1980.



UConn Associate Prof. Ronald Schurin.

The U.S. Congress approved the 19th Amendment on June 4, 1919. It was finally adopted on Aug. 18, 1920 after 36 states ratified the amendment, ending decades of battling over the movement which began in the mid-1800s.

Here are the states (in order), whose ratification votes helped make this law:

Wisconsin, first state to ratify	June 10, 1919
Illinois	June 10, 1919
Michigan	June 10, 1919
Kansas	June 16, 1919
New York	June 16, 1919
Ohio	June 16, 1919
Pennsylvania	June 24, 1919
Massachusetts	June 25, 1919
Texas	June 28, 1919
Iowa	July 2, 1919
Missouri	July 3, 1919
Arkansas	July 29, 1919
Montana	Aug. 2, 1919
Nebraska	Aug. 2, 1919
Minnesota	Sept. 8, 1919
New Hampshire	Sept. 10, 1919
Utah	Sept. 30, 1919
California	Nov. 1, 1919
Maine	Nov. 5, 1919
North Dakota	Dec. 1, 1919
South Dakota	Dec. 4, 1919
Colorado	Dec. 15, 1919
Kentucky	Jan. 6, 1920
Rhode Island	Jan. 6, 1920
Oregon	Jan. 13, 1920
Indiana	Jan. 16, 1920
Wyoming	Jan. 27, 1920
Nevada	Feb. 7, 1920
New Jersey	Feb. 9, 1920
Idaho	Feb. 11, 1920
Arizona	Feb. 12, 1920
New Mexico	Feb. 21, 1920
Oklahoma	Feb. 28, 1920
West Virginia	March 10, 1920
Washington (state)	March 22, 1920
Tennessee (making women's suffrage legal)	Aug. 18, 1920
> Connecticut	Sept. 14, 1920
> Vermont	Feb. 8, 1921
Delaware	March 6, 1923
Maryland	March 29, 1941
Virginia	Feb. 12, 1952
Alabama	Sept. 8, 1953
Florida	May 13, 1969
South Carolina	July 1, 1969
Georgia	Feb. 20, 1970
Louisiana	June 11, 1970
North Carolina	May 6, 1971
Mississippi	March 22, 1984

Alaska, Hawaii were not yet states



CELEBRATING PROGRESS: Secretary of State Denise Merrill (right) attends a Westport Library event Oct. 17, 2019 to discuss an exhibit on 19th Amendment suffrage history. (Photo courtesy Secretary of the State's office)

One twist to Roraback's political role in Connecticut's legacy is the feminist and civil rights legacy of his own great-niece, Catherine "Katie" Roraback. She was the daughter of the Rev. Albert E. Roraback, and granddaughter of Alberto T. Roraback, a prominent politician from North Canaan and Chief Justice of the State Supreme Court.

Catherine Roraback, who died in 2007, was inducted into the Connecticut Women's Hall of Fame. She was the only woman in her Yale Law School class of 1948. Among her legal achievements in a 50-year career, she successfully defended a case against Estelle Griswold and Dr. C. Lee Buxton, who were arrested for opening a New Haven birth control clinic. Connecticut had one of the strictest birth control laws in the nation, which she was able to successfully challenge in *Griswold vs. Connecticut*.

With a presidential election on the horizon, current Secretary of State Denise W. Merrill had hoped for a year-long celebration leading up to the November 2020 election until all plans for public events were derailed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Merrill and Lt. Gov. Susan Bysiewicz joined with Annie Lamont, wife of Gov. Ned Lamont, to co-chair the Connecticut Women's Centennial Suffrage



Among other conclusions, the report found that when women run for office, they win at the same rate as men.

Commission. In January the commission issued a report, "Fifty Years of Women Candidates," studying women in statewide elected office.

Among other conclusions, the report found that when women run for office, they win at the same rate as men.

"The hope," says Merrill, "is that this report will start a conversation about how far we've come in terms of women's representation, where we are now, and what's left to be done. Even today, only 35 percent of candidates in Connecticut are women – we need to change that. So, to those women contemplating a first run for office, or a second or a third or a fourth, consider this your official ask: run for office." **■**

Political Pioneers

To commemorate the 100th anniversary of the passage of the 19th Amendment, the office of Secretary of State Denise W. Merrill and the Connecticut Women's Centennial Suffrage Commission issued a report on 50 years of women candidates in the state. They plan to update the chronicling of women candidates after each election.

The report says, "only in the last roughly 50 years have women started to build political power and achieve higher political office. We have much further to go, but with more visibility of women in elected office we can be role models and mentors for future women."

The state women candidate "firsts" included:

Emily Sophie Brown (R-Naugatuck), **Grace I. Edwards** (Independent-New Hartford), **Lillian S. Frank** (R-Canterbury), and **Helen A. Jewett** (D-Tolland): first women elected to General Assembly in 1920.

Alice Merritt (R-Hartford): first woman elected to state Senate in 1924.

Sara B. Crawford (R-Westport): first woman elected Secretary of State in 1939.

Ella T. Grasso (D-Windsor Locks): first woman elected governor in her own right in the United States; inaugurated in 1975.

Margaret Morton (D-Bridgeport): first African American woman elected to state General Assembly in 1972 and in 1980 to State Senate.

Florence D. Finney (R-Greenwich): first woman elected president pro tempore of State Senate in 1973.

Joan Kemler (D-West Hartford): first woman to serve as state treasurer, appointed in 1986.

Maria Colon Sanchez (D-Hartford): first Hispanic female elected to state General Assembly in 1988.

Clarine Nardi Riddle (D-New Haven): first woman to serve as state attorney general, appointed to vacancy in 1989; also first female attorney general to argue before the U.S. Supreme Court.

Denise Nappier (D-Hartford): first African American woman elected state treasurer in the United States in 1998.

Moira Lyons (D-Stamford): first woman to serve as majority leader and speaker of General Assembly in 1999.

Themis Klarides (R-Derby): first female to serve as Republican minority leader in General Assembly in 2007.

The Road to Success

Hit an unexpected pothole in your career path?
It might be time to switch gears.

By JOEL SAMBERG

In a matter of months, the U.S. has gone from experiencing historically low unemployment to an historic number of layoffs, leaving millions of people out of work. But abrupt career changes are not confined to a global pandemic. Even in good economic times, people may be unceremoniously let go, may need a line of work that better accommodates

family or other commitments, or may just secretly yearn for a new career that they are certain they'd find more fulfilling. Fear not. Switching gears is not only possible but eminently doable – provided you take time to reflect on what you'd like your next adventure to look like and take advantage of the available resources to help you succeed.

“By failing to prepare,” Benjamin Franklin once said, “you are preparing to fail.”

But for all his astonishing insight, Franklin was unable to consider the fact that companies in the future might let go of long-term employees at a moment's notice, leaving them little if any room to prepare.

For three decades, Sandra Long of Westport worked as a top sales executive for Pitney Bowes, including one stretch as a vice president of sales. A few years ago, there was a major restructuring that suddenly hastened the end of her career at the technology giant.

Having lost her job with the company after 30 years, you might think that Pitney Bowes was the last name she'd have preferred to hear mentioned on any given day. But after founding Post Road Consulting, a LinkedIn marketing advisory firm, she now counts Pitney Bowes as one of her most important clients, and that's because she kept in close contact with a network of former colleagues.

That's just a single tale of many that show how the world

of exchanging careers – as opposed to merely changing jobs – can be full of surprises. But as a stroll down Exchange Lane will prove, it can also be full of challenges and opportunities, not to mention anxiety and excitement.

“Now I work with companies, universities, associations, and individuals, teaching them how to turn LinkedIn into the most effective sales and career tool,” explains Long, whose book, “LinkedIn for Personal Branding: The Ultimate Guide,” covers many career tips. “When you're looking for a new profession, former colleagues can make all the difference in the world. My client list is comprised of people I worked with years ago. Everyone should stay in touch with their network.”

It's an important tip for any successful career-switching scenario. Ben Franklin would approve.

Tom Truitt of Fairfield had a similar experience – with an interesting twist. In his case, former clients of his photography business actually sparked the idea for his next professional endeavor.



Job





Sandra Long of Westport

Truitt spent 15 years as the proprietor of T-Square Productions, a corporate and children's fashion photography business. Among his subjects were dozens of medical professionals in New York. But he had grown disgruntled with the frequent schedule changes, chasing bills, creative clashes with clients...

"I had fallen into a niche that was artistically stifling, plus I wasn't making enough money to support a Fairfield County lifestyle," Truitt



Tom Truitt of Fairfield

recalls. "It was giving me more stress than I could handle."

He began to contemplate putting T-Square behind him but had no idea what to replace it with. Then he recalled all the conversations he had overheard at hospitals and health care facilities about the growing need for qualified doctors. So, with

a friend, Truitt founded Alpha Medical Group, a company that facilitates the placement of physicians at hospi-

tals and medical centers. He sold his share in 2017 and built a new one, Clear Staffing Solutions.

"When I was a full-time photographer, if I didn't work, I didn't get paid," Truitt says. "So the idea of having a business with employees that can keep producing, even if I have to go somewhere or step away for a while, was very appealing."

He was scared at first; he had no fiscal stability when he opened the first agency. Fortunately, he found his footing and the business began to prosper. Truitt now advises people who are looking to switch professions to create a plan of action that includes a way to survive in the interim. Plus, he adds, it always helps to have some passion for what you want to do.

Marie Simons of Branford couldn't agree more. "When it comes to a career," she says, "my first objective is to work with people who want a positive outcome. Without that, I wouldn't even want a career."



Marie Simons of Branford

Simons spent several years as an internal sales specialist for Fujifilm Medical Systems, formerly of Stamford. Like many large corporations, Fujifilm experienced major changes in recent years, and when departmental shuffles triggered her exit, she decided to return to an industry of which she had been a part more a dozen years earlier. She is now a real estate agent with an office of the William Raveis agency in her hometown. She had left

WRITING HIS OWN TICKET

Over the years, Chris Knopf has observed a handful of dramatic career-switching scenarios that may be worthy of a book.

"I've seen some flame-outs by people who just weren't ready to make the change they were determined to make," says Knopf, who recently traded a career in advertising and public relations for one in mysteries and plot twists.

Knopf is the former chief executive officer of Mintz & Hoke, a marketing communications agency in Avon. In an intriguing variation on the theme, Knopf in his newer role occasionally finds himself tapping into decades of agency experience to use as fictional fodder for his writing. His published works include the popular Sam Acquillo detective series, such as "Deep Dive" and "Back Lash."

Knopf traces his passion for writing to childhood. What he did, in essence, was to turn an enduring hobby into a full-time career, not long before he would have closed the book on his former occupation anyway. As a lifelong lover of fiction, Knopf already had absorbed quite a bit about the role of a full-time novelist before he actually became one, which probably made the switch a bit easier than it might otherwise have been.

"Before you make a change, take some time to figure out a way to have some sort of safety net during the transition," the author advises. "On the other hand, don't just sit there and marinate in frustration when you're doing something you really don't want to do. That's not healthy, either."

that field when home sales nationwide went into a serious decline and didn't think she'd ever return.

"I was getting used to a career in medical equipment and never thought I'd go back to real estate," Simons shares. "But sometimes you just have to use the skills and talents you already have for whatever works best for you. I applied mine to a new career and then just let even more passion grow from there."

Simons enjoys helping people realize their dream of owning a new home, and now admits that going back into the field after more than a decade away was an easy switch.

But it isn't *always* easy. After all, not everyone has an effective network or an earlier career to return to. Sometimes the process requires a deep dive into internet research, more schooling, or career counseling.

The Gordon Career Center at Wesleyan University in Middletown works with many alumni who have been out of school for a while and are now trying to determine what kind of post-graduate study to pursue. "The most important thing when seeking a new career, especially in a new field, is to have a professional and personal narrative that helps prospective employers understand what transferable skills you have, and why you're looking for a new role," counsels Sharon Belden Castonguay, executive director of the Gordon Career Center. "The emphasis should be on why you're moving



Lisa Natcharian of Simsbury

toward something, not on why you're walking away from what you did before."

According to most experts, confidence is also an imperative ingredient.

Before founding the Storyteller's Cottage in Simsbury, local resident Lisa Natcharian had been a teacher, public relations consultant, and freelance writer who, by her own admission, was never entirely satisfied with her professional life. She came across a membership-based store down south that was devoted entirely to video game players, and also had a cafe and rooms to rent for private events. In her mind's eye, Natcharian, an unabashed book lover who was already looking for something new, replaced video games with books and realized she suddenly had a business model for her own idea. She opened the Storyteller's Cottage in 2017.

"When I was describing what I wanted to do to some of the people I

According to most experts, confidence is also an imperative ingredient.

hoped could help me create the cottage, I made sure I sounded confident, even if I may have had a little skepticism,” Natcharian admits. “I discovered that confidence and courage are invaluable.”

The Storyteller’s Cottage, which had been housed in an old Victorian home in the center of town, had become well-known throughout north-central Connecticut for its uniqueness. Book lovers had gone there to read, listen to authors, participate in creating storytelling, and relive famous tales in distinctive group encounters.

“I surrounded myself with people who were not shy about telling me what they thought I was doing right and wrong,” says Natcharian. “That’s what you need when you start a brand-new profession – other opinions.”

Having a distinctive vision also helps.

That’s how Paul Dunn of Madison discovered his new profession. “When my position as a senior project manager at ESPN was eliminated as part of a workforce reduction, I



Paul Dunn of Madison

immediately thought about the college environment,” he says. “That’s because one major demographic of the ESPN fan base is comprised of college students about to enter the workforce. So the moment I learned of my impending departure, I thought about my level of comfort with that demographic and realized it could translate to a new career.” All he had to do was find a college with an appropriate spot.

A tall order indeed – but in 2017, Dunn became the coordinator of the Integrative Career Development office at Mitchell College in New London. “I received great support from people in my network,

kept an open mind, pursued an industry in which I felt I could make a difference, and never gave up,” he asserts.

It may have been somewhat serendipitous for Dunn to have found an open position at Mitchell so quickly, but then again, that dean of all career-changers, Ben Franklin, had it absolutely right when he said that diligence is the mother of good luck.

Flexibility is also critical. In late summer, Natcharian of The Storyteller’s Cottage made the difficult decision to close her business and move its operations online, due to a drastic reduction in visits caused by COVID-19. The result was a new but related venture: The Storyteller’s Cottage Online Academy at storytellerscottage.podia.com. Its stated mission is “To bring literature to life, both by providing opportunities to bookworms to immerse themselves in their favorite fantasy realms, and by expanding the discipline of storytelling through master classes taught by expert writers, artists and storytellers.”

Asked about it, Natcharian said her clients’ reactions to the switch in business model “have so far all been lovely – lots of comments about how the [in-person] business will be missed. Currently, there about a hundred comments on our Facebook page.”

As for what comes next, she says, “I don’t have any specific contingency plans if the online version of The Storyteller’s Cottage doesn’t work out as planned, but my brain is a constantly-churning idea factory, so I’m sure I’ll think of something else to try! I guess the pandemic has taught me that life never follows a straight path, and that flexibility is key in dealing with the surprises fate may have in store.”

She says in addition to resilience and flexibility, “an ability to read the market in an unsentimental way is necessary to prevent pouring funds into a business model that will no longer be profitable. In other words, it’s important to know when to cut your losses and move on. It was fun while it lasted!”

In addition to journalism, Joel Samberg consults on employee communications, edits books, writes plays, and has one or two other word-related careers. His website can be found at JoeltheWriter.com.

RESOURCES:

10 steps to a successful career change. The Balance Careers.

thebalancecareers.com/successful-career-change-2058452

Career Change in Connecticut.

The Internet Chamber of Commerce.

icc.org/career-change/connecticut.htm

Connecticut Back to Work Initiative.

business.ct.gov/jobs-and-resources

career.uconn.edu/blog/2020/07/06/free-remote-job-training-with-ct-back-to-work-initiative/

Find Something New.

findsomethingnew.org

Getting, changing, or losing a job. Fidelity.

myguidance.fidelity.com/ftgw/pna/public/lifeevents/content/changingjobs/overview

Good news for Connecticut career changers. Career Counselling Connecticut.

careercounselingconnecticut.com/good-news-for-connecticut-career-changers

Gordon Career Center.

41 Wyllys Avenue, Middletown, CT.

(860) 685-2180

wesleyan.edu/careercenter

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DELICIOUS

Healthy from the Inside Out

Try these immune-boosting bowls and bevs

By AMY S. WHITE / Photography by MARY QUINN

Wash your hands. Keep your distance. Don't touch your face. Wear a mask. Whether it's COVID-19, the flu, or just the common cold, recently we have all become more aware of the most important behaviors that can help us ward off illness. Building the body's natural defenses, or immunity, against viruses and bacteria is key to preventing sickness and maintaining good overall health.

However, when it comes to immunity, not all foods are created equal. Antioxidants make the best immune-builders, and our bodies absorb them better through foods rather than supplements. While no diet can cure or prevent any disease, read on to learn which vitamins and nutrients contain antioxidants. Then turn the page to find four recipes – two bowls and two beverages – that feature ingredients known for these immune-boosting properties.

We have all heard that taking vitamin C can help stave off a cold. That's because this essential vitamin, which is also an antioxidant, encourages the production of white blood cells that aid in fighting infections. Our bodies don't produce or store vitamin C, so it's important to try to include some in your daily diet. Most people think of citrus fruits when they think of vitamin C, but it is plentiful in many other foods as well, such as red bell peppers, pineapple, broccoli, and leafy greens like spinach or kale.

Vitamin E is another antioxidant that is vital to helping immunity. In addition to being a key player in the formation of red blood cells, this powerful nutrient helps the body fight infection by protecting

cells from damage. Nuts, dates, seeds, and green leafy vegetables are some foods that are rich in vitamin E.

Known for giving yellow and orange vegetables their bright color, beta carotene is another antioxidant that has been shown to help bolster the immune system. Foods high in beta carotene include carrots, red and orange peppers, broccoli, and leafy greens.

Flavonoids are plant chemicals that serve as antioxidants and therefore can help your body function more efficiently and protect it against toxins. Flavonoids are found in berries, tree fruits like bananas and apples, nuts, and tea.

Other foods that have been shown to have a variety of immunity-building capabilities are: brown rice, ginger, garlic, onions, spices like turmeric and cinnamon, and yogurt.

You will notice the recipes here specifically use the immune-boosting ingredients mentioned above. The "sweet" rice bowl makes a great breakfast or a snack, while the "savory" rice bowl is meant as a snack, lunch, or dinner. Connecticut mixologist Mary Quinn created a smoothie that you can try as a meal replacement or snack, as well as a delicious fall mocktail that tastes so good you won't miss the alcohol.

So, continue to wash your hands, keep your distance, avoid touching your face, and wear your mask. But while you're at it, incorporate these immune-boosting bowls and bevs into your meal rotation, and stay safe and healthy out there. 🍷

Amy S. White is a Connecticut teacher, writer, and line cook.

POTENT MIX: This "Sweet Rice Bowl" combines brown rice, dates, chopped walnuts, orange pieces, chopped spinach, turmeric, and honey.



Known for giving yellow and orange vegetables their bright color, beta carotene is another antioxidant that has been shown to help bolster the immune system.

Foods high in beta carotene include carrots, red and orange peppers, broccoli, and leafy greens.

HEALTHY CHOICES: Foods like garlic, walnuts, and a variety of fruits and vegetables have proven immunity-building capabilities.

"SWEET" RICE BOWL

Ingredients:

- 1/2 cup prepared brown rice**
- 2-3 dates, chopped**
- 1/4 cup chopped walnuts**
- 1/2 orange, peeled and cut into pieces**
- 1/4 cup chopped spinach or other leafy greens**
- Turmeric, to taste**
- Honey, to taste**

Stir together or layer rice, dates, walnuts, orange, and spinach in a bowl. Sprinkle with turmeric and drizzle with honey.

"SAVORY" RICE BOWL

Ingredients:

- 1/2 cup prepared brown rice**
- 1 Tbsp. vegetable oil**
- 1 Tbsp. fresh ginger, peeled and grated**
- 1 clove garlic, peeled and chopped**
- 1 green onion, chopped**
- 1/2 cup chopped broccoli**
- 1/2 red pepper, chopped**
- 1 carrot, peeled and julienned**
- 1/2 cup pineapple chunks**
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste**
- 1/4 cup slivered almonds**

Heat vegetable oil in a large frying pan. Add grated ginger, garlic, green onion, broccoli, red pepper, carrot, and pineapple. Cook over medium-high heat, stirring often, until fragrant and hot, 5-6 minutes. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Remove from heat and stir in prepared rice and almonds.

KICK-START SMOOTHIE

(Recipe courtesy of Mary Quinn, mixologist)

Ingredients:

- 1 5-oz. container Greek-style key lime yogurt**
- 1/2 cup pineapple chunks**
- 1/2 cup almond milk**
- 1/4 cup green tea**
- 1/2 cup spinach or other leafy green**
- Cinnamon, to taste**

Place all ingredients except cinnamon in a blender and blend until well incorporated. Garnish with a light sprinkle of cinnamon.





CRANAPPLE SHRUB (A MOCKTAIL)

(Recipe courtesy of Mary Quinn, Mixologist)

Note: Shrub must be prepared two days in advance

Ingredients:

- 1 cup cranberries**
- 1 cup apple cider vinegar**
- 1/2 cup turbinado sugar**
- 2-3 apples, shredded (use the shredding side of a cheese grater)**
- 1 cinnamon stick**
- Peel from 2 oranges**
- 1 can or bottle of ginger beer**
- Additional cinnamon stick and/or apple slices for garnish**

To make the shrub:

Puree together the cranberries, apple cider vinegar, and turbinado sugar. Add the shredded apples, cinnamon stick, and orange peels. Pour into an airtight container such as a canning jar. Allow to sit for two days in a cool, dry place.

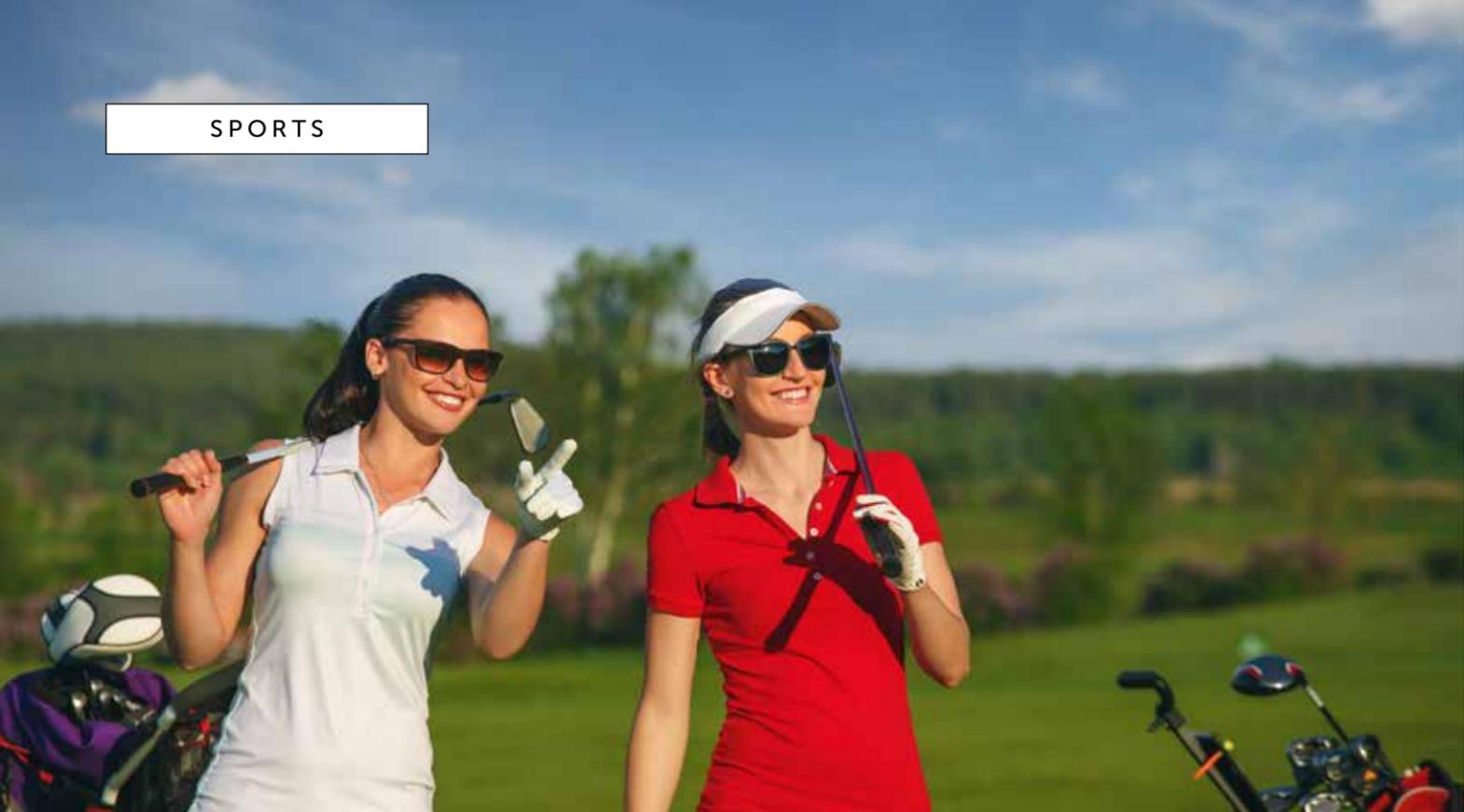
To make the mocktail:

Fill a glass with ice. Mix 1 part shrub with 1 part ginger beer. Garnish with apple slices and a cinnamon stick if desired.



MAKING EVERY BITE COUNT:

This "Savory Rice Bowl" combines a mix of immunity-boosting foods - brown rice, garlic, green onion, broccoli, red pepper, carrot, pineapple chunks, and almonds.



TEED UP: New England residents are having a blast on Connecticut's golf courses, enjoying the chance to get some fresh air, exercise, and a little competitive play.

Taking a Swing at it

Pandemic spurs golfers new and old to flock to Connecticut's golf greens and fairways

By **JOHN TORSIELLO** / Photography By **MARK WILLIAM PAUL**

Thanks to golf, 2020 in Connecticut has not been quite as isolating as we had feared it would be when the COVID-19 pandemic hit with full force in late winter.

In fact, most golf courses report that play is up considerably this year, and pros are seeing new golfers by the dozens taking up the game. All of this is a good sign for a sport that endured an unwelcome flattening and dipping of the curve in popularity in recent years, for a variety of reasons. Now, people seem more than pleased to get out and spend four or five hours in the company of friends, when before they would bemoan how long it took to play 18 holes.

My, how attitudes change about life's opportunities when a crisis rears its ugly head!

Governor Ned Lamont on March 24 ordered all non-essential businesses, including golf courses, to close

when the pandemic hit, in an effort to limit the spread of coronavirus. But only 36 hours later, after lobbying by the Connecticut State Golf Association and individual courses, Lamont and the Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD) allowed courses to continue operation, as long as they adhered to strict guidelines meant to eliminate any kind of contact and encourage social distancing.

At Hop Meadow Country Club in Simsbury, the course has been packed since it opened. "Play has been busy and active all year long," reports Joe Cordani, Jr., director of golf. "We are up approximately 40 percent in rounds this season. The COVID-19 pandemic has in this way been a blessing and golf has been a terrific way to get outdoors and spend time with your family and friends. It has been like a perfect oasis to be able to have members play here during the pandemic."

Jason Loomis, head golf professional at Great River

Golf Club in Milford, says "play has been through the roof!" He also reported rounds to be up 40 percent this year over last. "So many people are just happy to have something to do," he says.

Harwinton's Fairview Farm Golf Course opened early this year, as other Connecticut courses did, but had to close for a while when the pandemic hit. Since the course reopened in late March, it has been flooded with golfers. "Play has been significantly more than usual," says head golf professional Bob Sparks. "I have been here 20 years and it's the most amount of play I have ever seen. Tee times have been sunup to sundown."

Loomis says his club, in compliance with state and CDC guidelines, adopted rules and regulations out of the norm. "These changed almost weekly, between the state and CDC. We started out not allowing carts, then we moved to single rider, now you can ride together if you wear a mask. We also started out not being able to touch the flagstick and we used foam inserts to prevent the ball from going in the hole. Now we are back to normal flags and cups. We have always been very liberal about cleaning our carts; we just add a disinfectant to the cleaning procedure."

Clubs in late summer were still not allowed to have water stations on the course or ball washers. They could also not

have tournaments or events larger than 100 people.

Cordani says guest play at Hop Meadow, a private club, was restricted until June. Then, it became Monday through Thursday only. "After July 4th, we got back to normal guest policy. Our bag room was closed until mid-May and carts are restricted to one rider per cart, unless it's a spouse or child."

"We opened up for play on March 8, the earliest it has ever opened, and were excited for a great season," says Jeffrey Beyer, head golf professional at South Windsor's Topstone Golf Course. "Once the COVID-19 pandemic began, we all felt that we would have to close the golf course for the foreseeable future, with no idea on when we would open again. When it was announced that Connecticut golf courses could remain open with specific guidelines, we quickly began preparing for the restrictions."

Topstone's clubhouse was closed and management installed self-swipe credit card readers at the outside entrance to the golf shop; set up a cleaning schedule of all high-touch areas around the staging area and clubhouse; and made sure its entire golf cart fleet was cleaned before going out again when turned around for new customers. The golf carts were also cleaned again at the end of the day. Says Beyer, "In addition, we took in all ball washers, water coolers, scorecards, and pencils from the golf course. Players were also restricted



Golfers abide by the masking and other safety rules at Fairview Farm Golf Course in Harwinton. Photo by **Mark William Paul**

“I’m happy to say that our new normal really isn’t that bad after all. Play in general has been significantly busier as people seem to have more free time, and golf is in a good place moving forward.” –Head golf professional Jan Wivestad

to riding one player per golf cart.”

Over time, according to Beyer, restrictions began to loosen. “Now, the clubhouses and the golf shop are open, scorecards and pencils are being given out, and players can ride two to a golf cart. We still clean and disinfect all high-touch areas plus keep up the strict golf cart cleaning schedule. We keep using the self-swipe credit card readers because they are safer and speed up the check-in time.”

Beyer has seen “a lot of new golfers this year” most initially from out of state because courses beyond Connecticut were closed. But, to local course owners’ and managers’ delight, many out-of-staters keep coming back on a weekly basis. There have also been many more Connecticut resi-

dents coming to play Topstone for the first time who have become “regulars.” Most golfers express gratitude to Beyer that the course remained open and say that they feel safe while playing.

Watertown’s Crestbrook Park Golf Course allowed play beginning in late March but started the year with the pro shop building closed, and taking only online and phone payments. “We were fortunate to open the building and get back to normal check-ins,” says head golf professional Jan Wivestad. “Masks to enter our building and social distancing seem to be the most significant change from normal operations. We can now touch flags but we started with no touching flags, no rakes around bunkers, and only one person per cart,

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LEARNING PROPER FORM: A player enjoys a golf lesson at Blue Fox Run in Avon. Photo by Mark William Paul

which made it hard on business with no tournaments. We are catching up with things. We had an event here that was safe and went off without a hitch. I’m happy to say that our new normal really isn’t that bad after all. Play in general has been significantly busier as people seem to have more free time, and golf is in a good place moving forward.”

Blue Fox Run Golf Course in Avon also saw a lot of out of state play, mainly from Massachusetts, early on. For several months, course restrictions included no rakes near bunkers, ball lifts in holes, asking golfers to stay six feet apart, and one rider per cart. “Now, rakes are okay, scorecards are okay, and you can now pull the pins on the greens,” says Barry Wilson, general manager, “as well as allowing two people in a cart with masks.”

Wilson says if courses were not allowed to open, they would have suffered economic damage that some might not be able to recover from, as is the case with other businesses. “We would still have had to pay our superintendent and grounds crew, as well as pay for chemicals to maintain course conditions.” All that with no income.

Wilson has also seen a number of new players, “lots



PAR FOR THE COURSE: Golf is a sport that can be played safely in a time of COVID.



FORE! A golfing party makes the most of a beautiful day on the course at Blue Fox Run in Avon. Photo by Mark William Paul

of first-timers, plenty of college kids. I think golf is the safest sport to play. Most people are 200 yards away when on the courses. Hopefully we can keep the new golfers.”

Peter Joyce, general manager and COO at Wampanoag County Club in West Hartford, says opening the course allowed membership a “mental escape” from the day-to-day challenges that COVID-19 presents. “Play has increased significantly. With no school or after-school recreation, along with college being dismissed earlier than expected, golf became one of the only options for families. Wampanoag became a haven for families to enjoy their club in a safe environment.”

As with other courses, Sparks says he and management at Fairview Farm Golf Course didn’t know what they would be faced with when they originally had to close. “We had an early start (in early March) and it looked like it was going to be a great year. COVID-19 hit, and we didn’t know what was going to happen.”

He believes golf has proven to provide some normalcy and an outlet for many during these “crazy” times. “Customers were very thankful, understanding, and appreciative to be able to play golf. Of course, parties and outings have suffered. But we have had some outings with no food and tee time starts that have been successful.”

Sparks says the guidelines that were put in place initially were very challenging, with payments having to be taken over the phone. “We purchased a gazebo to take payments outside and alleviate the phone calls because we just couldn’t keep up. Single golf carts were challenging since we just don’t have enough carts and it was much more traffic and wear on the golf course.”

Fairview Farm is known as a learning ground for youngsters. Sparks was pleased that camps and lessons have kept him and others busy. “Many sports are not able to be played, but golf is the only sport outdoors where you don’t share any type of equipment. My U.S. Kids Junior Tour has had record numbers and is not slowing down during the fall.”

Former PGA Tour pro Bobby Gage, head golf professional at Winsted’s Green Woods Country Club, was disappointed that his club’s junior camps were cancelled this season but he plans to get them going again next year. “New golfers have been prevalent, and the game seems to be growing in that respect.”

One aspect of golf courses that has suffered has been food and beverage operations. The chow and drinks have been mostly takeout, which cuts into proceeds from liquor and food sales because, as we know, golfers usually enjoy hanging out at the “19th hole” after a round and talking over the



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FRESH AIR FUN: Families are finding golf to be a perfect way to get out of the house.

day with a cold one nearby.

Great River Golf Club shut its impressive indoors bar and dining area at the start of the season but later offered pre-made sandwiches and bottled beverages outdoors. Says Loomis, “Once the state allowed us to do outside dining, we were very fortunate because we have a large patio.”

Hop Meadow Country Club, says Cordani, is adhering to all DECD guidelines as it pertains to food and beverage. “We started the year doing takeout only, which was well received by our members.”

Beyer says Topstone Restaurant has kept busy by offering food delivery to golfers on the course and began a “robust” to-go Family Meal Deal. “As restaurant restrictions eased, we set up outside dining on our patio and in other outside areas that we have never used before. Both have become so popular that we will continue to use them in the future.”

Joyce and his staff had to “think outside of the traditional country club box” to give options to members. “We are offering to-go, both à la carte and family-style options, and themed to-go nights as well. When we were able to open our large patio, it became a sell-out nightly. Providing a safe environment for membership and staff was paramount,” he adds. “The hours of training and guidance to ensure mem-

bers and staff felt comfortable has paid off. We have been very fortunate that the weather has been so dry this summer, which allowed us to enjoy many nights outside.”

Opening a new business in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic has, of course, been a challenge. Such was the case for Ron Beck, PGA director of golf coaching at Northeast Performance Institute in Portland. “Mostly, it was just getting our building built. Programming changed to only include individual coaching and very small groups.”

Beck has noticed the golf market is “booming” with new players and “lapsed” players getting back into the game. “It’s no wonder. People are craving entertainment and outdoor activities with social distancing. What could be better than golf?”

Beck opened his business July 20 and has been busy. clientele has run the gamut, he says, from advanced competitive players to rank beginners who show up with their newly purchased box sets.

Says Beck, “In the long run, golf will be viewed as one of the few industries that is better off because of COVID-19. We just have to keep all these new and returning players interested and engaged.”

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FINAL THOUGHTS

Written by **Matthew Dicks**
Illustrated by **Sean Wang**



When Tricks Were Treats!

Halloween night, and thankfully, I am prepared. A week ago, I went to the grocery store and bought two dozen eggs. This was necessary because on Halloween, the Almacs grocery store in my hometown of Blackstone, Massachusetts does not sell eggs to kids. For good reason.

I've also painted my eggs black. I'm not sure how much this is going to help. I like to think that the eggs will be camouflaged as they fly through the night sky at their targets, but many of my targets are houses, which can't exactly dodge the attack. But with some luck, I may find some small, human targets as well on this night.

It's going to be the best night of the year.

"That's how you spent your Halloween night when you were a kid?" Clara asks.

Charlie punches me in the arm. "What's wrong with you?"

Clara, age 10, and Charlie, age 7, are eating grilled cheese sandwiches as quickly as possible so we can begin trick or treating. I thought they might like to hear the story of their father's childhood antics as they devour their dinner.

Apparently not.

I shouldn't be surprised. Something disturbing has taken place on this planet since I was a child. I had initially chalked it up to my move from a small farm town in eastern Massachusetts to the center of a more

conservative, more sophisticated Connecticut, more than two decades ago, but I don't think the change is geographic. I think the cultural landscape has shifted, and somehow a newfound sense of decency, order, and rigor has not only infected parents but their children, too.

"But what if we all had eggs?" I ask my kids, hoping to light a spark. "You have a dozen. I have a dozen. We go to the cemetery on Halloween and battle it out!"

They look at me like I'm crazy. "Your mom brought you to the cemetery on Halloween?" Clara asks.

"Of course not," I say. "No one brought us anywhere. I was on my own on Halloween night. We dressed up in terrible costumes and were off!"

"How old were you?" Charlie asks.

"I don't know," I say. "Fourth grade? Maybe fifth grade?"

"I'm in fourth grade!" Clara hisses.

"Exactly!"

It turns out that I need no Halloween mask on this night. My children are looking at me like I'm a monster.

I try to explain to them that eggs and toilet paper and general mayhem sound outrageous by today's standards, but I promise that it was a far more innocent time to be a child. You strapped a plastic Spiderman mask to your head or rubbed some coal on your cheeks, declared yourself a hobo, and went 'a walking. You collected candy along the way, devouring it in fistfuls as quickly as possible, looking for the right target for your eggs and toilet paper.

For me, it was always the house near the bottom of the hill, where an old lady would hand out Chex mix in Ziploc bags.

"Trick or treat!" demands a treat, and repurposed cereal did not qualify as a treat, so every year, she got a trick.

Toilet paper in her pine tree.

"Stop talking and finish taping us!" Clara demands. I'm wrapping my children in the requisite reflective tape in the unlikely event either one of them would ever be permitted (or ever want) to leave our sight for half a second and venture into the road where a driver might not spot them.

Doubtful considering the path chosen for this evening is primarily small side streets and tidy cul-de-sacs.

"What if someone toilet papered you?" Charlie asks.

"Actually, they did," I tell him. When I was 19 years old, I exited my apartment on the morning after

"That poor guy will be digging out his car for hours," I thought as I walked to the end of the row. Then I realized: Wait. That was my car.

Halloween in order to go to work. I went to the parking lot and walked past a car so covered in toilet paper that was completely invisible.

"That poor guy will be digging out his car for hours," I thought as I walked to the end of the row. Then I realized: Wait. That was my car.

"See?" Clara asks, "How did you feel?"

"Actually, kind of great," I say. Two girls, Jen and Sherry, spent hours toilet papering my car, then they stuck a small block of wood under the windshield wipers with their names written on it, as a calling card.

"You call that great?" Charlie asks.

It was great. Two of my friends spent their time and money on an unforgettable prank. Even though I was the victim, I was kind of happy. They could've pranked anyone. They chose me.

Almost 30 years later, I still look back on that morning with such fondness.

My kids look at me like I've lost my marbles.

And off we go, to trick or treat.

I spend the night refereeing whose turn it is to ring the doorbell. Reminding my kids to say please and thank you. Saying hello to neighbors who offer Clara special treats to avoid her peanut allergy.

"Pat and Ken always give us the best treats," Clara says. "You'd really want to egg their house?"

No, not Pat and Ken's house. Nobody's house, really. Other than my high school science teacher's home, there was never much joy in egging inanimate objects.

But if I had a chance, I think I'd like to egg my kids. Break a well lobbed egg atop each of their heads, hoping that the combination of egg, yolk, and shock might rouse some inner ruffian lurking within, desperate to emerge and offer the world a little bit of mayhem.

Sadly, I don't think that will be the case. For reasons I will never understand, these kids are rule followers. Upright citizens. Respectful, responsible little souls.

This is fine most of the time, but tonight is Halloween. A night for tricks and treats.

Instead, I'm saddled with flashlights, reflector tape, and disgustingly well-mannered children.

Kids these days are the worst. 🗑️

Matthew Dicks is an elementary school teacher, bestselling novelist, and 50-time Moth Story SLAM champion. He was once brought home by police on a Halloween night after getting caught by his high school science teacher while egging his house. Bad night. Good story.

Sean Wang, an MIT architecture graduate, is author of the sci-fi graphic novel series, Runners. Learn more at seanwang.com.

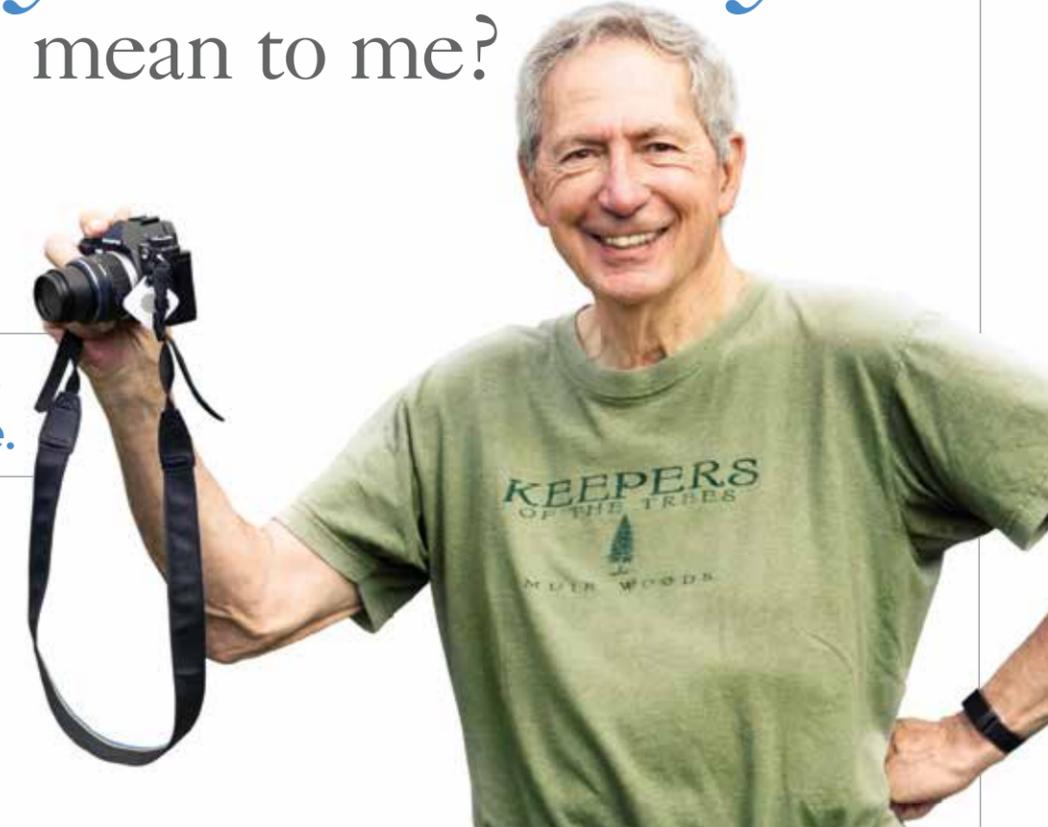
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