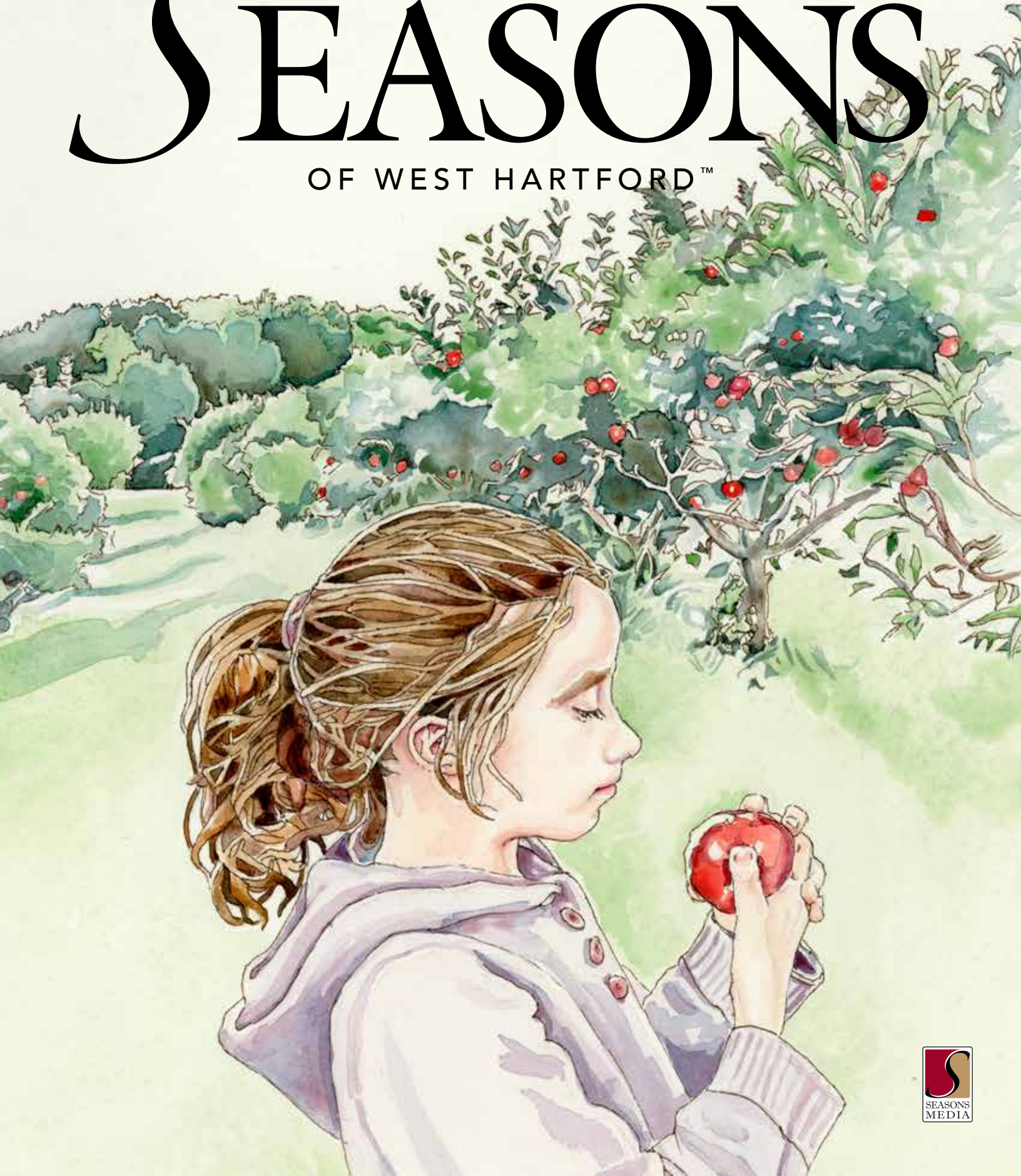


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# Seasons' Greetings



Many people consider autumn the best season of the year. No sunburns. No never-ending heat waves. No beach sand ground into the carpet.

Instead, the fall season offers cool breezes, verdant apple orchards, confounding corn mazes, and kids too busy with school to complain of boredom.

Autumn generally also offers a little more time to read, whether indoors or outdoors. We've got you covered. In this issue, we tell you how to enhance your backyard – and reap bountiful benefits – by planting a home orchard. And we explain how to make the most of the garden-variety root vegetable and whip up some incredibly delicious

meals for you and your family.

Wondering what might be going on with kids in school while you're left – however briefly – to your own devices? Learn how local artists are interacting with students through Arts for Learning Connecticut, a non-profit that this year celebrates its 40th anniversary.

And speaking of non-profits, In A Heartbeat is raising awareness about the critical need for community defibrillators – at gyms and in schools, for example – so that anyone who collapses from a cardiac issue can be saved, even before first responders arrive. Did you know that some 2,000 young people under the age of 25 die each year of sudden cardiac arrest, an abrupt loss of heart function that can be fatal if not treated within minutes? Please read this important story.

We also tell you about equine-assisted therapy (yep, horses) and about the growing popularity of CBD.

If anyone you know is looking for a new, well-paying career, check out our education feature. Connecticut's manufacturing industry is desperate for skilled workers, and jobs pipelines are offering the short-term training required, for little to no cost.

We hope you find these stories entertaining and helpful. Please feel free to reach out to us with any comments.

*Carol*

Carol Latter, Editorial Director

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Photo by Simply K Studios



# Autumn

“Autumn carries more gold in its pocket than all the other seasons.” 2019

- JIM BISHOP

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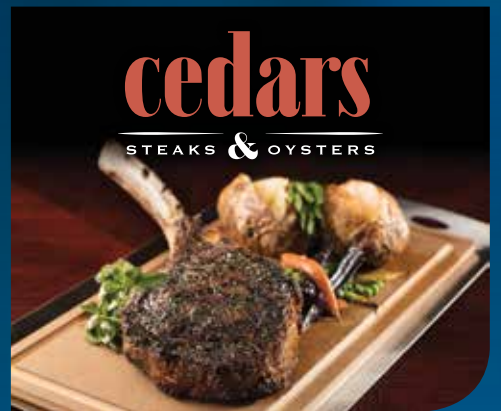
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# Work of Art

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

By AMY J. BARRY / Photography by ALLEGRA ANDERSON

Thelma Ladeira



**A FOND FAREWELL:** Eileen Carpinella, executive director of AFLCT since 2003, is retiring this year, but hopes to always stay connected to the arts organization.

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

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

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

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

In 1997, the office moved to its current location in Hamden. Under the leadership of Eileen Carpinella, who joined the staff in 1995 and took the helm as executive director in 2003, AFLCT now

includes more than 100 professional performing and teaching artists in all disciplines, offering programs to 250,000 school children, as well as to libraries and community centers in 87 percent of cities and towns statewide.

It is now the state’s oldest and largest arts-in-education non-profit organization.

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

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

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

## TEACHING ARTISTS TELL THEIR STORIES

Efraim Silva of West Haven, founder and artistic director of Ginga Brasileira dance company, has been exposing students to Brazilian dance and culture

for more than 25 years through AFLCT. The professional ensemble performs a repertoire of Afro-Brazilian dances that fuse rhythmic music with Capoeira, a high-energy martial arts dance form.

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

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

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

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

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



**“I HAVE THE MOST INCREDIBLE JOB; I LOVE EV**



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

**ERY SECOND OF IT. IT NEVER GETS OLD.”** – Efraim Silva

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

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

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

She finds that her work with students hasn’t changed over the years as much as it has become more intense.

“America is a melting pot of



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

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

“What’s wonderful about all the staff here,” she adds, “is they understand

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

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

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

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

Van Aelst makes her own puppets, designs her own sets and lighting, and writes her own scripts based on classic

*I can feel the excitement in the air.*

*I'm truly a one-woman show.*



Kimberly Van Aelst

tales and stories. She even writes and performs songs.

“I do it all. I’m truly a one-woman show,” she says.

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

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

## ART KEEPS OPENING DOORS

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

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

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

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

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



Jeff Escritor Herdle

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

Carpinella recalls an artist who was working with a group of non-verbal students telling her that one of the students became verbal for the very first time. And a father who had been unable to connect “in any way, shape or form” with his son, who has autism, saw digital artwork his son had produced in a photography workshop,

and went out and purchased two digital cameras. They now spend every weekend doing digital photography together.

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

*Visit [www.aflct.org](http://www.aflct.org) for a full roster of artists, programs, showcases, upcoming 40th anniversary events, and information on volunteer opportunities and making donations. 📌*



## Dr. Rahul Mutneja

**D**iagnosing interstitial lung disease (ILD) requires a lot of detective work, according to Rahul Mutneja, MD, director of Saint Francis Hospital and Medical Center's year-old ILD program. This is because ILD, a group of disorders that leads to scarring of the lung tissue and impaired breathing, can stem from a wide range of causes, including autoimmune disease, exposure to environmental toxins, and oversensitivity to airborne particles like dust or mold.

"You have to spend a lot of time with the patient and you have to think of several things when trying to make a diagnosis," says the pulmonary medicine/critical care specialist. "Where do you live, what do you eat, what's in your house, where have you worked, how many jobs have you had in your life, what did your parents do? The intellectual part of it is really stimulating."

Though there are more than 200 disorders that fall under the umbrella term ILD, says Dr. Mutneja, it is a relatively rare disease, and there are only a few centers of excellence dedicated to the illness. "I joined this institution last year with the goal of setting that up for Saint Francis and our sister hospitals," he says.

### GIVING BACK TO THE PROGRAM

Dr. Mutneja was born in Punjab, a state in northern India. He received all of his schooling in his native country, ultimately earning a Bachelor of Medicine and a Bachelor of Surgery at Bangalore Medical College and Research Institute. There, senior classmates who were preparing for the U.S. medical exams piqued Dr. Mutneja's interest in doing his residency training in America.

"I really loved how the education system is here – it is a little more structured than in India, with an emphasis on clinical skills," Dr. Mutneja recalls. He zeroed in on UConn because its Internal Medicine residency program was one of the biggest in the U.S. "I also liked how the director and staff of the UConn/Saint Francis Internal Medicine and Pulmonary Critical Care programs were very welcoming and approachable – it wasn't like we were working for them, but like we were part of a big family. They made me feel that way in the first few hours I spent with them during my interview." He also took an immediate liking to the beauty

of Connecticut. He went on to finish his residency and fellowship, and also met and eventually married his wife, who was training in the same program.

Dr. Mutneja stayed at Saint Francis when he finished his training. "I had so many relationships there with the people – the pulmonologists in my practice are the ones who trained me," he says. Now, Dr. Mutneja, in turn, trains the hospital's pulmonary medicine and critical care fellows, as well as residents in internal medicine, family medicine and emergency medicine, and medical students from UConn and Quinnipiac. "It seemed like the best way to give back to the program," he says.

He also enjoys the ongoing collaboration and interaction with his peers. "Dr. [Daniel] Gerardi, section chief of my department, is hosting its 23rd annual pulmonary symposium at Saint Francis this month, and I look forward to connecting with and sharing ideas with our pulmonary colleagues."

### A DISEASE THAT IS MANAGED, NOT CURED

Dr. Mutneja likens the scarring associated with ILD to the scarring that occurs when a person sustains an injury, say, to the hand. "It typically heals with a scar, but that scar may stay with you for life," he says. "ILD occurs when the lung doesn't heal properly and leaves a scar on your lung. The scarring in the lungs replaces your normal lung tissue, making your lungs stiff, so that they can't pull in a lot of air," he explains. "It's like a balloon – balloons are typically very compliant, but you really have to work hard to push air into a thick balloon."

The majority of ILD cases stem from connective tissue diseases like Sjögren's syndrome, scleroderma and rheumatoid arthritis. The immune system of people with these autoimmune diseases goes awry and attacks healthy connective tissue, like cartilage in the joints or collagen in the skin, causing inflammation and scarring. In some cases, these disorders also cause inflammation of – and damage to – lung tissue.

But ILD can also be caused by exposure to environmental toxins like silica dust or asbestos, or even to more common pollutants in the air, such as mold, dust or chemicals. Patients who have occupational exposure to fibrous materials that can be breathed in and cause damage to the lung – like cotton and sugar cane farmers, and people who work with





**BREATHE EASIER:** Dr. Rahul Mutneja is director of Saint Francis Hospital and Medical Center's year-old ILD program.

coal or asbestos – are at risk. “There is a small minority of people who get allergic reactions to mold or dust particles in the air, and their body reacts in an exaggerated way, leading to scarring in the lungs,” says Dr. Mutneja. For people with these reactions, symptoms often go unnoticed – “until they start having a cough that won’t go away, or shortness of breath while exercising, walking or doing household chores.”

Smoking can also lead to ILD, he adds. Tobacco smoke can damage the air sacs, causing them to fill up with inflammatory material, or can cause respiratory bronchiolitis, an inflammation and narrowing of the small airways in the lungs.

Scarring in the lung tissue can’t be eliminated, notes Dr. Mutneja, so the focus of ILD treatment is to find out what caused it and stop it from progressing. “ILD is something that is managed, not cured, in majority of the cases” he says. The appropriate management can also improve patients’ quality of life, he adds.

## A TRICKY DIAGNOSIS

The tricky part about ILD, says Dr. Mutneja, is that many of the symptoms – persistent cough, shortness of breath, fatigue – are commonly associated with other conditions. A tenacious cough can be a sign of post-nasal drip or chronic heartburn; shortness of breath can be a symptom of cardiac issues. Still, says Dr. Mutneja, “If you have something new or something that has changed, like a cough that’s not going away or sudden shortness of breath, you should consult your doctor.”

Sometimes, Dr. Mutneja says, primary care physicians pick up ILD during routine check-ups; indeed, he had recently had two such referrals. “I’ve had two patients in the last three weeks whose doctors, when listening to their lungs, heard what is called rales, a crackling sound that you can hear through the stethoscope and that is a subtle sign of scarring in the lungs,” he explains. “Those were ideal situations where the disease was picked up before it progressed to where the patients were having symptoms.”

Typically, however, ILD is picked up after damage has already been done, and patients are experiencing symptoms. Dr. Mutneja says he spends about an hour during the initial visit with suspected ILD patients, taking an extensive history, which includes questions about symptoms and exposures the patient has had at work and at home. (Is there water damage or a humidifier that hasn’t been cleaned?) He conducts antibody tests and other blood tests to check for autoimmune disorders. He sends patients for a high-resolution CT scan of the lung “to get a precise picture of what is happening with the lung tissue.” He usually checks the lung tissue via surgical biopsy as well.

“You put all this together with a team of physicians – the pulmonologist, radiologist, pathologist – and we all discuss how we should approach the patient,” says Dr. Mutneja. “The biggest highlight of our ILD program is that you have a team of specialists trying to solve this problem from different angles. This collaborative approach continues throughout a

patient’s treatment at Saint Francis.”

Doctors collaborate regularly and meet monthly to discuss when treatment should be changed or what to do about a patient not responding to treatment, or to decide whether a patient with progressive disease should be referred for transplant.

Management of ILD depends on the cause, though many patients ultimately end up requiring oxygen to help them breathe. “But medications do help stabilize the disease, and pulmonary rehab – which we have at Saint Francis – helps improve quality of life,” says Dr. Mutneja. Pulmonary rehab focuses on breathing exercises and building endurance. Steroids and other immunosuppressive medications can sometimes help reduce inflammation in the lungs as well. Of course, if ILD is due to environmental exposure, the first step is to eliminate any further exposure.

Though people don’t always know that they are being exposed to something that is damaging their lungs, those in occupations that entail exposures to dangerous substances should be sure not to work without protection, Dr. Mutneja says. Quitting smoking is another way to prevent ILD. “But early recognition can go a long way in preventing progression to severe disease and improving quality of life,” he says. “So get attention at the first sign that something is off.”

## TREATING THE CRITICALLY ILL

In addition to running the ILD program, Dr. Mutneja sees patients suffering from other pulmonary diseases, like asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), and lung cancer. He also spends at least two weeks each month caring for critical care patients in the intensive care unit (ICU).

“Critical care ultrasonography is one of my other passions,” says Dr. Mutneja, who has special expertise with this technology. “Use of these portable ultrasound machines in critically sick patients can get you quick answers to determine what could be making them sick. Critical care ultrasound also improves the safety profile of procedures performed in the ICU, he says. “If I have to drain fluid from someone’s chest, for example, I can see exactly where I’m going, which reduces the risk of complications.”

Dr. Mutneja says that he finds both his work in the ICU and his work with ILD patients to be extremely fulfilling. “Spending time with ILD patients and doing the detective work involved in caring for them and helping to improve their quality of life gives me personal and professional satisfaction,” he says. “And in the ICU, seeing patients who were very, very sick get better right in front of you is very rewarding. There’s not a single day that I go home that I don’t feel like I did some good today.” ■

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

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# New Horizons

College freshmen share their dreams and ambitions

By AMY S. WHITE

Robin Chiburis

**J**ust months ago, high school graduates all across the nation bid their hometowns goodbye as they prepared to head off to college and out into the great unknown that everyone told them was “the real world.”

We talked with local students to find out what’s next for a few of Connecticut’s own Class of 2019. Wherever it is their futures take them, we congratulate all those who graduated earlier this year and wish them best of luck in their future endeavors.

## **FUTURE TEACHER** **Robin Chiburis, Glastonbury**

Watching her father go through a career change made Robin Chiburis realize she needs to set her sights on a career doing something she has a strong passion for.

Having always enjoyed reading and writing, Chiburis considered becoming an English teacher, but it wasn’t until she visited the classroom of her boyfriend’s mother, Rockville High School English teacher Victoria Nordlund, that her mind was made up.

Chiburis was not only inspired by the classroom itself, a space she describes as “a cozy environment, with plants everywhere, and posters, and even a couch” but also by Nordlund’s valiant efforts to minimize her students’ stress levels while in her class. Chiburis admits that anxiety is becoming an increasing problem for today’s teenagers, saying, “I personally have struggled with anxiety that made school harder to deal with, and everyone I know is burdened by the ever-increasing stress that schools encumber them with.” Her goal is to follow Nordlund’s example by creating a comfortable learning environment and being the kind of teacher who “goes out of her way to help students learn.”

In order to prepare herself for her future career, Chiburis took as many English courses as she possibly could during her career at Glastonbury High School, including classes in poetry, composition, American Literature and even Advanced Placement Literature. She adds that the Latin classes she has taken for the last four years “greatly helped to improve (her) English vocabulary.” She also strove to read at least 24 books every year, which she claims has helped advance both her time management and reading comprehension skills.

Like many language students who are also avid readers, Chiburis hopes one day to write her own books and comic books. To that end, she attended a writing conference in Vermont this spring. She feels that being an English teacher will help with her writing, saying it will “help keep my writing skills sharp while at the same time allow me to

interact with students and help them learn.”

She is now studying at UConn Storrs, majoring in Secondary English Education.

## FUTURE LINGUIST

### Chris Coolbeth, Litchfield

During his freshman year at Litchfield High School, Chris Coolbeth decided it would be fun to create a language. That task was the beginning of what has become a keen interest in linguistics – more specifically, the newer field known as psycholinguistics, which studies the psychological processes that make it possible for humans to master and use language.

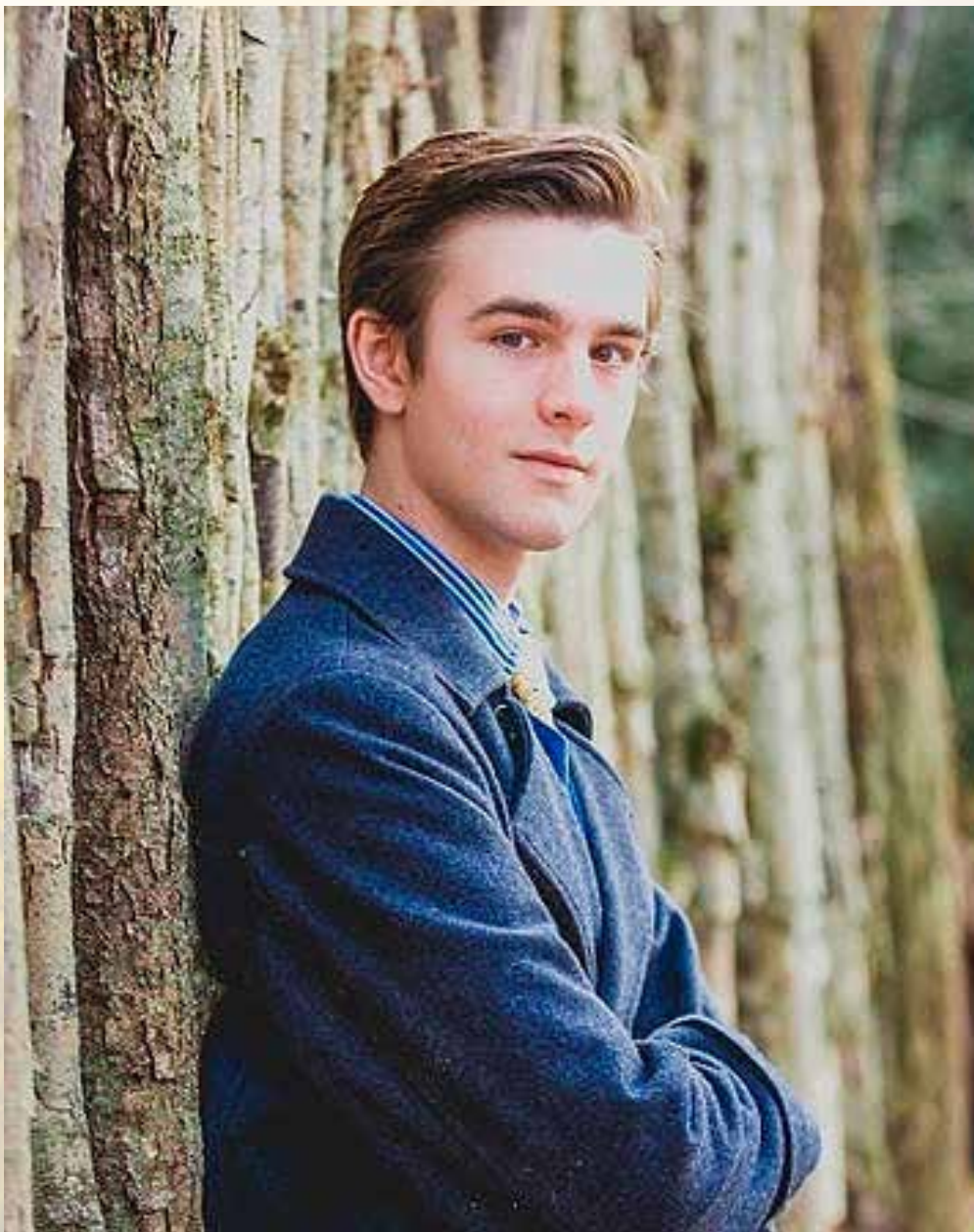
It’s a field so obscure that he wasn’t able to find a college that offered it as a major.

Regardless, Coolbeth is now attending Keene State College in Keene, New Hampshire, studying the development of philosophical languages.

“Recent studies in psycholinguistics suggest that human cognition gives rise to far more information than is overtly expressed by natural language,” he says. In other words, languages impose limitations on us, whereas philosophical languages “pursue grammatical nuance and expression of intention, among many other things.”

Although he has not taken any formal linguistics classes, he has studied the topic on his own, reading several books that fueled his interest. One, in particular, drove him to realize how important studying language is to him, and that was *A Grammar of the Ithkuil Language* by linguist John Quijada. Quijada created a synthetic language he named Ithkuil and wrote the book as a grammar reference. However, contained within the book, Coolbeth says, “there is a much deeper reflection and criticism of the way humans communicate.”

Coolbeth is inspired by the idea of improving how people communicate. “Language is the filter we use to distill our internal thoughts into a cohesive and understandable phonological package,” he says. “But like any distillation, if you want to articulate an idea or concept to someone, including yourself, you must do so within the confines of language.”



Chris Coolbeth



Chanelle Dortch

## **FUTURE DIPLOMAT** **Chanelle Dortch, Madison**

The summer before her senior year in high school, Chanelle Dortch moved across the country from her long-time home in California to Connecticut. While at first the move was daunting, Dortch viewed it as a challenge that proved she could not only adapt to change, but also embrace it. So much so, that she hopes to go into politics and be someone who can make positive changes in the world.

Dortch says that throughout her school years, she was always drawn to her history and social studies classes. However, that interest became a passion once she reached high school, particularly during her junior year, when she started studying the impact of imperialism and how it still affects many third world countries. She says, “The continuous exploitation of such countries is due to their lack of wealth, and more importantly, their lack of education.”

As she continues her own education after graduating from Daniel Hand High School, Dortch says she has become more and more grateful for the many opportunities she has been given to expand her knowledge, including performing a variety of community service projects with her Girl Scout troop. While she looks forward to all of the

new experiences, learning, and even difficulties college will offer, she is actually looking far beyond her own life: “As I gain a broader knowledge about the world, I want to use it to give those in third world countries the opportunities they deserve.”

She envisions that happening through a future in diplomacy and politics, where she hopes to combine her interest in learning about various countries, cultures, and people with her desire to serve the greater good. The challenge of politics intrigues her. Dortch summarizes her goals quite succinctly, saying, “I’m interested in understanding how we can examine political and social differences to come up with solutions that serve the needs and interests of everyone.”



Andrew Kehoe

## **FUTURE ENGINEER** **Andrew Kehoe, Simsbury**

When asked what he wants to do for a career, Andrew Kehoe firmly says he’s going to be a mechanical engineer. One could say that engineering is in his blood. His father and cousin are both mechanical engineers, and his uncle is

an aerospace engineer. Kehoe jokes, "It's the family way."

Kehoe credits his middle school math teacher, Mrs. Marlene Reisler (now retired), for helping him realize that it would take more than good genes to be successful in the field. It would also take a good foundation in math. He says, "She made math super interesting to me, and influenced me a lot."

During his four years at Simsbury High School, Kehoe continued to build on that foundation. He made sure to take an engineering course each year, and even took two math classes as a sophomore to ensure he would be able to take calculus as a senior. He says, "I'm going along with my plan so far."

That plan had a wrench thrown into it last summer when Kehoe's father suffered a stroke. Thankfully, he has recovered very well, but Kehoe admits it was difficult at first. He says, "I had to do a lot around the house and at work," referring to his father's contracting business. He adds, "That made it hard to focus on school." But focus he did, and he has made the honor roll each semester this year.

When Kehoe started looking at colleges, one of the campuses he visited was Southern New Hampshire University. Its mechanical engineering major balances project-based, hands-on learning with traditional, theory-based engineering study. Once there, he says, "That's when I started to get 'hyped-up' about going to college. I knew that was the place I wanted to be."

## FUTURE SCREENWRITER

### Julia Tannenbaum, West Hartford

When Julia Tannenbaum was in middle school, she battled mental illness. During her treatment, she found herself having a hard time articulating her thoughts and feelings, and turned to writing in order to do just that. As she puts it, "I discovered my love for writing in eighth grade, when I was in a dark place. In a way, writing became my voice."

Four years have passed, and in that time, writing has taken on a far greater role in Tannenbaum's life. In September of 2018, she did something very few high school seniors have been able to do – she self-published her debut novel *Changing Ways*, which is available on Amazon. The fictional story follows 16-year-old Grace as she seeks to control her tumultuous adolescent life through dieting and self-harm. Tannenbaum pulled elements of the plot from her own experiences. She admits, "I've been through a lot, and I'm still fighting." Reliving parts of her own story through writing helped her.

She recently published her second book – the sequel to *Changing Ways*, called *Breaking Free*. It's also available on Amazon.

Now in recovery, Tannenbaum plans to continue writing, and she says some of her favorite authors, including J. K. Rowling, inspire her to continue to grow as a young author. While she has known for a while that she would pursue writing as a career, she admits that it wasn't until touring



Julia Tannenbaum

## TANNENBAUM PUBLISHED HER SECOND BOOK – THE SEQUEL TO *CHANGING WAYS*, CALLED *BREAKING FREE*. IT'S ALSO AVAILABLE ON AMAZON.

local schools last spring that she decided college was in her future. She explains, "I used to be conflicted as to whether or not college was for me, but once I stepped onto my first campus, I could actually see myself going. It was a great feeling."

Tannenbaum was accepted into Emerson College's Media Arts Production program in Boston. She is studying screenwriting in the hopes of moving to California, where she was born and still has family, and turning it into a career. Of changing her mind and deciding to attend college, Tannenbaum says, "I'm really glad that's changed!" 📖

Amy S. White lives, teaches and writes in eastern Connecticut. To read more by Amy, visit [amywhite.com](http://amywhite.com).








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# Heart of the Matter

## Organization Delivers Lifesaving Technology

By AMY J. BARRY

**T**he expression “It can all change in a heartbeat” may sound like a cliché, but for those who have survived a life-threatening episode, like Mike Papale, nothing could ring truer.

The morning of Aug. 24, 2006, started out no different from any other day in the life of the 17-year-old high school basketball player, who planned to continue playing his beloved sport in college that fall. But soon after arriving at Wallingford Parks & Recreation summer camp, where Papale coached basketball, he suddenly slumped over on the bench where he was seated and onto the floor, where he lay unresponsive while someone called 911.



Mike Papale, president of In A Heartbeat Foundation.

There was no automated external defibrillator (AED) on-site but, fortunately for Papale, an EMT working nearby got to him in time, performing CPR for eight minutes and saving the teenager's life.

It turned out Papale had suffered sudden cardiac arrest, and after arriving by ambulance at MidState Medical Center, he suffered a second arrest and was revived. He was then transported by LIFE STAR to Hartford Hospital, his parents not knowing if their son would survive and, if so, whether he would have brain damage.

The good news was that Papale survived with no brain injury. The bad news was that the doctors determined he had hypertrophic cardiomyopathy, creating a thickness of the septum and apex of his heart. This required the insertion of an implantable cardioverter-defibrillator (ICD) in his chest, which meant he would never again be able to play competitive basketball.

Papale, now 30, doesn't pretend that this wasn't a devastating experience for a teenager.

"Basketball was my whole life at that point, and it got taken away from me," he says. "I felt anger, frustration, and depression and it took some time to get over that. But it was also a balancing act for me between thinking, 'OK, I can't play basketball anymore, but I'm also lucky to be alive.' When a doctor tells you there was a one in a million chance you'd survive, it really puts things into perspective."

Doctors determined Papale had heart disease that went undetected until the cardiac arrest.

"That's how it happens a lot," he says. "Kids are born with these undiagnosed conditions. You don't get an EKG until you're older and so they may not have signs or symptoms until one day, they just drop."

Papale's mother Joan says it was the most terrifying day of her life, as well as the most blessed because she had no doubt that "God stepped in and put every player exactly where they needed to be, at the exact moment – and that's what ultimately saved Mike."

Papale says shortly after

returning to their home in Wallingford, his mother set up a meeting at a local branch of the American Heart Association (AHA) and signed them both up as volunteers.

"I didn't really want to do it. I was 17," Papale says. "But she got me going because she told me that by sharing my story and raising awareness about what happened to me, and talking about CPR and the importance of AEDs in cardiac arrest, it could prevent someone else from going through the trauma we experienced as a family."

An AED is a portable, easy-to-use device that can analyze the heart's rhythm and deliver an electrical shock, if needed, to help bring back an effective rhythm.

Mother and son participated in many AHA events and walks, and lobbied in Hartford and Washington, D.C. They helped get two Connecticut bills passed that mandate AEDs be placed in all of the state's public schools.

"We watched the governor sign the bill into law in 2009," Papale recalls. "It was a really cool and rewarding experience."

## A FIRM FOUNDATION

As the years passed, life began to feel normal again for Papale. He graduated from Quinnipiac University in Hamden and pursued his new dream of being a college basketball coach. After a year as an assistant coach at the University of Massachusetts, he was hired as director of basketball operations at Quinnipiac.

But in August 2014, eight years after his cardiac arrest, Papale suffered a major setback. A series of problems occurred following what began as routine surgery to change his defibrillator battery. His defibrillator became infected, requiring risky emergency open-heart surgery and eight blood transfusions. A new defibrillator was installed five months later and luckily, the surgery went perfectly.

After his recovery period was over, Papale knew how lucky he was to survive two





**LIFESAVING GIFT:** Mike Papale (center, right) presents a donation of an AED to Ed Williams (center left), owner of 3E CrossFit of Cheshire. They are joined by In A Heartbeat Foundation board members Matt Gade (left) and Brandon Gade (right).

major life-threatening situations and that's when the idea for In A Heartbeat Foundation was born – a nonprofit with one goal: to save lives.

In A Heartbeat focuses on four things that Papale, its president, thinks are most critical: donating AEDs where needed, providing training to use AEDs, raising money for heart disease research, and supporting patients and screening kids.

According to Papale, In a Heartbeat Foundation has donated close to 100 AEDs to date (at a cost of about \$1,000 each), and given \$25,000 for heart research.

**SAVING LIVES:** A close-up of an Automated External Defibrillator (AED) — a portable easy-to-use device that can restore the heart's rhythm.





**YOU CAN DO IT:** Mike Papale demonstrates how to operate an AED.

There are plans to donate another \$12,000 by year's end to another research project.

How has the nonprofit raised so much money and awareness in such a short time? Papale gives a lot of credit to his dedicated board of directors, including his mother, father, brother, several friends, other survivors, patients and others.

Joan Papale is astonished by the foundation's quick growth.

"We live in a community that has embraced Mike's quest to save lives and spread awareness," she says. "However, Mike as president is the driving force."

Mike Papale, she notes, does public speaking, trains people in CPR and AED use, has started a support group, connects with doctors and electrophysiologists all over the country, plans and runs fundraising events, and attends symposiums to educate himself with the newest information.

Like many who run nonprofits, Papale acknowledges fundraising is the biggest challenge.

"I don't have a business background, but it's what I love to do," he says, "so I'm self-learning and reading, and learning what works and what doesn't."

Another challenge, Papale notes, is that although AEDs are becoming more prevalent, the survival rates of cardiac arrest aren't going up because people are unsure how to use AEDs or are afraid of them.

"We're trying to raise more awareness that these machines are simple to use. You cannot hurt someone with them; they're actually made for the layperson," he says. "So even if you don't have training, you can use it as long as you

## **"WHEN CARDIAC ARREST STRIKES, AN AED CAN MEAN THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN LIFE AND DEATH."** — Carlos Collazo

listen to the instructions."

Carlos Collazo, executive director of the Ulbrich Boys & Girls Club in Wallingford, which received a donation of an AED from In A Heartbeat, says it couldn't have come at a better time.

"Part of creating a culture of safety is ensuring we have the necessary resources in place to provide a safer environment," Collazo says. "When cardiac arrest strikes, an AED can mean the difference between life and death."

### **MAKING A DIFFERENCE**

Today, Papale runs In A Heartbeat full time and continues to coach basketball part time. He feels it's a good balance of doing the things about which he is most passionate.

He has lived with an ICD for 13 years now and says, "Heart disease is scary for a lot of people and it was for me for a long time. And it's still always in the back of my mind, but I've learned to live my life very normally. I go to the gym every day. I'm active. I run. I just do things in moderation."

He adds, "I'm always telling cardiologists when I speak at conferences to have their patients call me. It would have



**GROUP EFFORTS PAYING OFF:** Mike Papale, president of In A Heartbeat, presents AJ Jacques, from North Haven CERT with an AED. Also pictured (left to right) are board members John Papale, Joan Papale, Sara MacDonough Civitello, Chris Gatcomb, AJ Pace (from Defibtech), and board members Alyssa Budkofsky, Matt Gade, Mike Papale Jr., and Brandon Gade.


been cool for me when I was 17 if I had a 25- or 30-year-old guy who had already gone through what I've been through to talk to, to be a mentor."

Papale's father, Mike Papale, Jr. of Cheshire, is in awe of how his son has handled this major change in his life.

"His strength and courage really helped me to deal with the situation," he says. "As time went on, it was truly amazing how Mike took this experience and became a difference-maker in the world of heart research and saving lives through the donations of AEDs. He's so passionate about the work he does. His enthusiasm is always at a high level."

Adds Joan Papale: "Mike's journey began with his determination to protect other families from what we went through. This would eventually segue into a crusade to save lives. Standing alongside my son through all his battles and joyous moments has been an honor."

"I think a lot of people spend their whole lives trying to figure out their purpose," reflects Mike Papale, "and mine kind of got handed to me."

To learn more about In A Heartbeat Foundation, visit [www.inaheartbeat.org](http://www.inaheartbeat.org). 

*Amy J. Barry has been publishing feature stories and reviews for 30 years. She has received numerous first place awards for her columns by the Society of Professional Journalists, CT chapter. She also facilitates expressive art and writing workshops and retreats.*



**HEART OF THE COMMUNITY:** Mike Papale presents Chief William Wright of Wallingford Police Department with an AED, along with In A Heartbeat board members (left to right) Matt Gade, Mike Papale Jr., Chris Gatcomb, Joan Papale, John Papale, Brandon Gade, and Kevin Dingus.



**HELPING THE HEALERS:** Mike Papale (center) presents Dr. Martin Maron of Tufts Medical Center in Boston with a donation of \$6,000 for heart disease research. Also pictured (from left to right) are In A Heartbeat board members Brandon Gade, Kevin Dingus, John Papale, Joan Papale, Mike Papale Jr., and Matt Gade.

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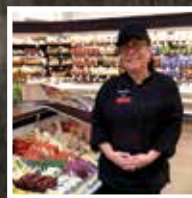
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**DELICIOUS**





# From Dirt to Delicious

## Exploring unusual root vegetables

Written by **AMY S. WHITE** / Photographed by **ALLEGRA ANDERSON**

They're dull in color and have strange "eyes" or shoots growing out of them like antennae. They are often as bulbous as the nose in a caricature. They grow underground, for goodness' sake.

Maybe we can all admit that they aren't the prettiest of all the produce on display. Still, root vegetables have a lot going for them. Because they absorb water and nutrients to feed the rest of their plant, they are some of the most nutrient-rich vegetables out there. They are low in calories, high in antioxidants, and most of them can be consumed in their entirety, including their skins, stems and leaves. Let's go beyond the ubiquitously boring potato and carrot and explore how to transform a few "ugly-duckling" roots into the homecoming court of your fall table.

Probably the weirdest looking of the bunch, celeriac, also known as celery root, has a brown, knobby skin and white flesh. It is harvested in the fall and winter months. When eaten raw, its crunchy texture and flavor is similar to celery stalks, but that flavor grows slightly sweeter and nuttier when it is cooked. High in fiber, vitamins C and K, and potassium, celeriac can be a great lower-carb alternative to potatoes in soups, stews and casseroles, or even simply mashed. The leaves can be used in a salad or as a garnish.

Another unfortunate-looking root is cassava. Also known as yuca, this starch is ground to become the more-familiar tapioca. But after it is completely peeled and its tough, string-like fiber is removed, its flesh works very similarly to a potato. Because it is high in resistant starch, research suggests it can act as a probiotic. It is also high in vitamin C and fiber as well as saponins, which are said to reduce bad cholesterol. This high-carb vegetable should never be eaten raw and can rot pretty quickly, so it should be used right away or pre-cut and frozen.

If you're sick of carrots, try their skinny pale relatives, parsnips (even in a cake, as you see done here). Parsnips are sweeter than their orange cousins, but in cooking, they are just as versatile. Grate them into salads

and slaws, use them in soups and stews, or make them into a puree. Like the other vegetables mentioned here, parsnips are high in fiber, low in calories and are a good source of vitamin C and manganese, which is essential for bone health. Look for smaller ones, as larger ones can become fibrous and woody.

Fennel – with its white bulb, pale green stalks, and dark green fronds – is familiar to many because its seeds are used to flavor Italian sausage. In fact, this entire plant is edible and tastes mildly of licorice, but that flavor can be softened by sautéing, roasting, or grilling it. Fennel adds a nice crunch to salads and slaws, and pairs very nicely with seafood. Try substituting it for celery in your favorite recipe for a more unique flavor. Use its feathery fronds as you would parsley or dill, to add flavor or as a garnish. It is high in fiber, potassium, folate, and vitamin C, and has anti-inflammatory properties.

The recipes included here act as fairy godmother to these unusual roots. My own Rosemary Root Veggie Pot Pie is weeknight-simple and a Meatless Monday favorite. Personal chef and caterer Chef Lise Jaeger of Chef for Hire, LLC ([ctchefforhire.com](http://ctchefforhire.com)) in Middletown offers up her Latin-Style Cassava and Potato Stew, which she famously pairs with roast pork shoulder. The Olive Oil, Parsnip and Apple Cake is featured on the award-winning farm-to-table menu at Bistro on Main in Manchester ([bistro-on-main.com](http://bistro-on-main.com)).

Some spices – like ginger, turmeric and cardamom – are related to root vegetables, so "dig" in and experiment by adding those for added flavor and nutrition. And remember to buy local! Connecticut farmers harvest root vegetables in fall, and there are plenty of winter farmers' markets throughout the state. 🍷

*Amy S. White is a teacher, food writer, and line cook in eastern Connecticut. This fall she can be found "rooting" around her local farmers' markets to find the freshest ingredients for her seasonal recipes. For more about Amy, go to [amyswhite.com](http://amyswhite.com).*



## LATIN-STYLE CASSAVA AND POTATO STEW

Courtesy of Chef Lise Jaeger

Makes four to six servings

Ingredients:

- 2 Tbsp olive oil**
- 1 large onion**
- 4 garlic cloves, minced**
- 1 serrano chili, whole with seeds**
- 2 cups cassava, cut into 1-inch chunks**
- 2 cups potato, cut into 1-inch chunks**
- 3 Roma tomatoes, chopped**
- 2 cups low-sodium chicken broth or water**
- 1 envelope Sazon seasoning**
- 1 tsp ground cumin**
- 2 tsp Adobo powder**
- Salt and pepper, to taste**
- ¼ cup chopped cilantro or Italian parsley for garnish**

Preparation:

In a four-quart pot, bring olive oil to medium high heat. Add onions and sauté until onions are softened. Add garlic and sauté for one minute. Add serrano chili, cassava, tomatoes, potatoes and enough chicken broth or water to cover. Add Sazon, cumin, and Adobo powder. Stir to combine. Bring mixture to a boil and cook for 10 minutes, then reduce heat to a simmer until broth has thickened, about 30 minutes. The cassava and potatoes should be softened and fork tender before serving. Adjust seasoning with salt and pepper. Garnish with freshly chopped cilantro or Italian parsley. Enjoy!

An apple a  
day keeps the  
doctor away!

## OLIVE OIL, PARSNIP AND APPLE CAKE

Courtesy of Bistro on Main in Manchester

Makes a 9x13 cake

Ingredients:

- 1 Tbsp butter, softened
  - 1 cup parsnips, peeled and grated
  - ½ cup apple sauce
  - 1 cup all-purpose flour, sifted
  - 1 cup granulated sugar
  - 2 large eggs, lightly beaten
  - ¾ cup olive oil
  - 1 tsp baking powder
  - ¾ tsp baking soda
  - ½ tsp salt
  - ½ tsp ground nutmeg
  - ½ tsp ground cinnamon
  - ½ tsp ground ginger
- Optional: top with cream cheese frosting or whipped cream and sprinkle with lemon zest, or serve with ice cream**

Preparation:

Grease a 9x13 baking dish with the softened butter. In a standing mixer, combine all ingredients and mix until well combined. Pour mixture into prepared baking dish. Bake at 350 degrees F until tester inserted into center comes out clean, approximately 35 minutes (it will be on the dark side). Allow to cool. Frost and garnish as desired.

## ROSEMARY ROOT VEGGIE POT PIE

Makes four to six servings

Ingredients:

- ½ fennel bulb, sliced
- 1 celeriac root, peeled and diced
- 2 carrots, peeled and diced
- 2 small potatoes, diced
- 3 sprigs fresh rosemary, leaves removed from stems and chopped
- ¼ cup olive oil
- ½ stick butter
- 1 onion, chopped
- 1 fennel stalk, chopped
- ¼ cup flour
- 1 cup vegetable stock
- 1 cup milk
- Salt and pepper, to taste
- 1 package puff pastry shells

To roast the vegetables:

In a large bowl, toss the diced celeriac, fennel, carrots, and potatoes with the chopped rosemary and olive oil. Spread on a baking sheet and bake at 350 degrees F for 35-40 minutes.

To prepare the gravy:

Melt the butter in a medium stock pot over medium heat. Sauté the chopped onion and fennel stalk until softened, then add the flour. Cook for 2-3 minutes until it starts to brown. Slowly stir in the vegetable stock and milk, and cook, stirring often, until thickened. Season with salt and pepper to taste.

To assemble:

Remove the vegetables from the oven and add them to the gravy; mix well. Reduce the heat to low to keep warm. Meanwhile, prepare the puff pastry shells according to package directions. When the shells are ready, remove the tops with a fork and spoon the vegetable mixture into the shells. Garnish with rosemary or fennel fronds.



*Veggie pot pies  
are three of my  
favorite things.*

# PERFECT PAIRINGS

## *Fall in Love with Spirits*

By **SCOTT CLARK**

**A**s the leaves begin to change and autumn is officially underway, it's time to consider which seasonal beverages to add to your lineup. Wine is an all-seasons beverage, but if you're eating seasonally, it would make sense to be drinking seasonally, too. Fall beer offerings abound, with options as crisp as the leaves on the ground and as warm as your favorite sweater. It's also the time of year to stow your boat drinks and switch to a little something to warm you right back up – and fall cocktails will do just the trick. (And with the holidays coming up, you deserve a sip of something a little stronger to help you unwind a bit!)

### WINE

Without knowing what specific seasonal dishes you will be enjoying, a few choices come to mind for fall wine pairing. For reds, Syrah- and Grenache-based wines and Pinot Noirs strike me as autumnal, and of course, so does Beaujolais. These reds are light- to medium-bodied and have a range of spicy flavors that will pair well with autumn fare. Similarly, with whites, Viognier, Roussanne and Chardonnay pair well. And the most versatile year-round wines of all? Champagne and other sparkling wines.

### BEER

Fall favorite beers include amber ales, Oktoberfest beers, imperial or double IPAs, pumpkin spice beers, and the growing selection of ciders.

Amber ales are malty beers offering a deep amber color that matches the leaves outside, while boasting a warm flavor that makes them perfect for when sweater season is upon us. Also known as "red ale," this style of beer has a caramel flavor that is evenly balanced with bitter hops. Oktoberfest beers feature a toasted, bready flavor with

relatively low hop bitterness. Lederhosen are optional! Imperial or double IPAs pair piney flavors and floral aromas with a high ABV and are sure to warm you up. Pumpkin beer is a popular trend, with warm spices like cinnamon and vanilla mingling with the quintessential fall gourd. What's not to love?

### CIDER

Hard cider is usually gluten-free and has the crisp, refreshing taste of apples or other fruit. Cider provides an alternative to the hoppy, malty flavors of beer.

### COCKTAILS

The best cocktails for fall are the drinks that are too stiff to enjoy properly in the blazing heat. They're robust. They don't play it timid with flavor. Some are stalwarts that go with any season, but especially autumn – like the Old Fashioned, the Manhattan, and the Rob Roy. Enjoy the vivid fall colors while sipping one of these concoctions, or mix up a White Russian, a Dirty Martini or a hot cup of Irish Coffee.

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

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FEATURE



# HEALING HORSES

Equine-assisted therapy helps clients  
on a path to health

by ALIX BOYLE





**HOOFIN' IT:** Manes & Motions is the only therapeutic riding stable that's associated with a hospital in the U.S.

**W**hen Christine Valeri suffered a brain aneurysm followed by a stroke in her mid-60s, she lost strength in her right hand and had difficulty speaking. Now, 18 months later at age 67, she's riding horses.

"She has to use both hands on the reins and greet and speak to the instructor," says Christine's son, John Valeri. "It's like physical, occupational, and speech therapy rolled into one, in a fun way. She's giving the horse commands, like 'walk' and 'trot,' and she's even posting."

Christine Valeri rides once a week at Manes & Motions Therapeutic Riding center in Middletown.

Affiliated with the Hospital for Special Care in New Britain, the program offers equine therapy for people with a variety of physical and emotional diagnoses, including cerebral palsy, autism, Down Syndrome and traumatic brain injury. Participants are assisted by volunteer leaders and side-walkers as they ride a horse, play games and perform exercises on horseback in a heated indoor ring, or go out on trail rides. Riders who are unable to mount the horse on their own are placed into a lift.

Riding a horse helps to build core strength and loosen tight muscles. Each horse is unique, with a long stride or shorter one, and riders are paired up with one of 11 horses in the herd that will meet their needs, says Jeanna Pellino, the program coordinator at Manes & Motions.

Equine therapy can also help veterans suffering from PTSD, teens battling eating disorders, kids with ADHD or behavior problems, neglected and abused children, or people with anxiety, to name a few applications. Connecticut is home to a number of equine therapy programs, many of which are certified by the Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship International (PATH) or the Equine Assisted Growth and Learning Association (EAGALA). Many programs take children ages four and up, as well as adults.

"The lessons we can learn from horses are unlimited. A horse is a great equalizer," says Kitty Stalsburg, executive director at High Hopes Therapeutic Riding in Old Lyme. "He [a horse] will give you unconditional acceptance as long as you treat him with respect."

Many of the student riders at High Hopes have autism, Stalsburg says. Working with horses helps



“HORSES HAVE A HIGHLY SENSITIVE FIGHT-OR-FLIGHT INSTINCT, MAKING THEM IDEAL FOR WORKING WITH VETERANS AND OTHERS SUFFERING FROM POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER ...”



quell the repetitive motions often associated with the disorder and teaches them fine and gross motor movements, social and emotional skills and teamwork. In grooming or tacking a horse, riders learn to follow instructions and complete the task in the assigned order.

Horses have a highly sensitive fight-or-flight instinct, making them ideal for working with veterans and others suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder, who may also be unable to shake the hyper-vigilance that served them well on the battlefield, Stalsburg says.

High Hopes offers the Equus Effect program, combining exercise, mindfulness meditation, and herding the horses, under the guidance of a veterans' counselor.

Mark, who appears in a marketing video for High Hopes and is identified only by his first name, a 30-year veteran of the Air Force and diagnosed with PTSD, credits his relationship with Latino, a thoroughbred/shire horse mix, with saving him from the depths of depression. "Looking back, I think he [Latino] knew what I needed before I did," Mark says in a video about his experience with equine therapy. He's now a volunteer at High Hopes.

Dylan and Ethan Richmond of Madison, both 16, volunteered last summer at High Hopes as side-walkers in the summer camp. "It made me feel good to help other kids who would not normally be able to ride a horse. Then they ride and realize they are just as capable as anyone else," says Ethan Richmond, who also mucked stalls, groomed horses and took photos for the website.

"It was a great opportunity," says Dylan Richmond. "When do you get a chance to be that close to a horse? I felt very excited and in awe, because horses are very majestic beings."

Some 650 people volunteer at High Hopes annually for 28,000 hours, according to Stalsburg. The 120-acre farm is home to a herd of 24 working horses serving 230 riders per week. High Hopes is also a leading facility for teacher training in equine therapy, with students from all over the world.

Mary Acri, an associate professor of social work at Southern Connecticut State University, says there has been too little research into the effectiveness of equine therapy for children with anxiety and other mental health issues. In a 2016 paper in



“ THE HORSE STANDS RELAXED SO A PERSON CAN JUST LAY THEIR HEAD ON HIM. I’VE SEEN TEARS; PEOPLE JUST GET OVERWHELMED WITH EMOTION. WE CAN HARNESS THAT TO USE IN A THERAPEUTIC SETTING. ”

the journal “Applied Developmental Science,” she and colleagues reviewed studies of animal-assisted therapies for kids at risk for, or diagnosed with, mental health problems.

Acri hopes to work with area stables to test various interventions and conduct research. She also plans to write a curriculum about using equine therapy to treat children with anxiety.

“There’s a lot of variability in animal-assisted therapy,” Acri says. “It’s not always run by a psychotherapist, and we want to look at who the therapist is and what are the activities. Otherwise, it’s hard to draw firm conclusions. We want to move the field forward and create rigorous research.”

Nestled in Hartford’s Keney Park, Ebony Horsewomen, Inc. Equestrian & Agricultural Center has been offering equine therapy and equestrian activities since 1984. Among its many programs, the junior mounted patrol is comprised of young African-American and Latino men, ages 10 to 18, who meet on Sundays under the guidance of adult mentors to encourage them to become productive leaders in their communities and eventually patrol the park.

“In Hartford, there’s a shortage of positive male role

models,” says Patricia E. Kelly, described on Ebony’s website as “a former U.S. marine, award-winning community leader and equestrian trailblazer with a storied history as a Black cowgirl” who has headed the non-profit youth organization for more than 30 years.

“Boys tend to imitate whatever thing they think a man should be doing – like being loud and boisterous and fathering a bunch of kids. You can’t control a horse, but he is hardwired to be in a herd and is looking for a leader. We are teaching that young man to let go of that macho stereotype and think of the horse as a partner. You get the horse to trust you by leading in a positive manner, not a threatening manner. You become the stallion with compassion.”

Ebony Horsewomen has three licensed social workers on staff as well as a nurse, and provides equine-assisted psychotherapy. For example, one middle-school-age boy came to the stable to talk about being bullied in school. He role played what he would say the next time the bully approached. This new skill broke the aggression, and his schoolwork improved.

“Nobody can change the mess in your life, but you can



**FOR THE KIDS:** Ebony Horsewomen, Inc., founded by Patricia Kelly, offers a variety of equine activities, from summer camps and after school programs to equine assisted psychotherapy, at its facility in Keney Park in Hartford.

change how you approach it,” Kelly says.

For girls, Kelly runs a dressage program. “It’s not about hair and make-up, but whether you can sit to the trot,” she says.

The psychotherapy is done under the EAGALA model, in which a therapist, an equine specialist and a horse come together in an arena. Client and horse interact, which creates an environment for the client to reflect on issues in their life. The horse is not ridden during this particular type of therapy.

In addition to horses, the farm has chickens and rabbits that are also used for therapy. Kids learn about horse anatomy in a science classroom, read horse books in the on-site library and eat healthy meals including produce grown on the farm.

All of the kids involved graduate from high school and 82 percent graduate from college, Kelly says.

Feeding, stabling and providing veterinary care for horses is an expensive endeavor. Ebony Horsewomen, High Hopes and Manes & Motions are all nonprofits that rely on fee-for-service, grants and donations to fund programs. If a child is referred for equine therapy from a social service agency, often the agency will pick up the tab.

Niki Cogliano, the owner and operator of Red Skye Farm in Bethany, has participated in equine-assisted

psychotherapy sessions as the specialist in charge of the horse, is certified by EAGALA, and seen the impact firsthand.

“Horses are intuitive prey animals. Their instinct is to be aware of their surroundings. If you’re angry, or sad, the horse will sense that vibe,” Cogliano says. “The horse stands relaxed so a person can just lay their head on him. I’ve seen tears; people just get overwhelmed with emotion. We can harness that to use in a therapeutic setting.”

Currently, the barn is no longer offering this service because the therapist needed to stop due to other commitments. Red Skye still offers lessons, birthday parties and other activities.

“The adult clients who take lessons have said they feel better after riding and their relationships at home are better,” Cogliano says. “It’s their therapy, informally, an hour away from the job or the kids, and time to be mindful and just think about what you are doing on the horse.”

*Alix Boyle’s work has appeared in a variety of publications including The New York Times and Bloomberg News. She lives on the Connecticut shoreline with her husband, Josh, and Helen of Troy, a pug who rules their home. Instagram @alixbpug*

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# MAKING THINGS RIGHT

Connecticut's manufacturing jobs pipelines offer well-paid jobs in the industry

By CAROL LATTER

**I**n high school, Armstrong Alcius had big dreams. He wanted to pursue a career in industry, help support his mother and siblings, and obtain his U.S. citizenship. Now, at age 19, and with a little help, he's accomplished all three.

Alcius, who moved with his family to Connecticut from Haiti at the age of 10, attended high school at Norwich Free Academy. "I wanted to be an engineer, and I was taking an engineering class," he recalls.

Then fate stepped in to jumpstart his plans. "In my senior year, I heard there was going to be a big presentation [at school] about the Electric Boat manufacturing pipeline program." Essentially, the program would offer five weeks of free training that would almost certainly lead to a full-time job with a local manufacturer, and possibly with Groton-based submarine producer General Dynamics Electric Boat.

"It sounded interesting," says Alcius. "Before that, I was thinking of going to Three Rivers Community College after graduating from high school and taking engineering. But I thought, 'This is a great opportunity.' I just took the chance."

The goal of the manufacturing pipeline initiative (MPI), developed and run by the Eastern Connecticut Workforce Investment Board (EWIB) and its partners, is to help local manufacturers find skilled workers, and to provide lucrative career opportunities for students willing to undergo the customized training they need to be successful.

In July, after earning his high school diploma and passing the math test required to get into the MPI program, Alcius began attending classes at the Three Rivers campus in Norwich. "I liked the training," he says, explaining that it offers hands-on learning in a

variety of skills – carpentry, blueprint reading, welding, machining, and more.

"In the shops, we got to have experience in different trades to see how we liked them. My favorite was the blueprint reading, the layouts, and precise measuring. They have mentors and other people there from Electric Boat who would let us problem-solve on our own, and then you could ask them for help if you couldn't [find the solution]."

In August, Alcius graduated for a second time.

Almost immediately afterwards, the Taftville resident landed a job as a full-time apprentice with AMGRAPH Packaging in Baltic, just 10 minutes from home. His duties include inspecting rolls of packing, operating hoists, and more. He's a member of the union, earns \$18 per hour, and has plenty of opportunities for advancement. "Right now, I'm learning the assistant operator position. I've done it a couple of times when the other guys went on vacation," he says.

He can't say enough about MPI. "It's a great program. After I completed it, I recommended it to all of my friends. Two of them finished the class a few weeks ago."

Best of all, unlike college or university training, the program allows students to obtain their training without going into debt. "No student loan," Alcius says. "That's what caught my eye from the start."

The program's organizers are very invested in the students' success, and make sure they know that assistance is available if they run into any hurdles while attending classes. "They have a budget we can access if we need it, and they help with transportation if we have problems getting to class," Alcius explains.

He also received a more personal kind of help.



Armstrong Alcius signed up for a five-week Manufacturing Pipeline Initiative (MPI) training program at Three Rivers Community College this past summer and almost immediately landed a job as a full-time apprentice with AMGRAPH Packaging in Baltic, just 10 minutes from home. Photo by Jan Tormay

“Before the program started, I didn’t have my U.S. citizenship. They gave me the money to pay the application fee.” In August, he got the call that his application had been approved, and soon after, he and his family proudly attended his citizenship ceremony.

Alcius has an 11-year-old brother, a 9-year-old sister, and an 18-year-old sister who is handicapped. His father isn’t really in the picture, he says, so Alcius feels a responsibility to assist the family financially. “That’s what’s motivating me the most. They look up to me to help them out. I buy them what they need – not everything they want. I don’t spoil them,” he explains. “I feel like the program helps me support my family instead of going straight to college and getting into debt.”

Future plans do include college, he says, but right now, he’s just feeling grateful for the amazing opportunity presented to him. “I want to save up and pay for my college myself. I’m looking forward to going Three Rivers and taking engineering, mechanical, and business classes. I want to invest in my career.”

## TOO MANY JOBS, NOT ENOUGH WORKERS

Connecticut has long faced a shortage of qualified workers to fill positions in the state’s manufacturing industry. Four years ago, having realized that this situation would not improve without a targeted effort to address it, the EWIB applied for and received a three-year, \$6 million U.S. Department of Labor grant to identify unemployed and underemployed job candidates, and offer them specialized training for positions with manufacturers in the region. In return, the EWIB, led by president John Beauregard, promised to fill 400 jobs.

The board worked closely with educational institutions and area manufacturing firms to determine the exact type of training needed and then offer it at no cost to students. The results have exceeded all expectations. Since MPI began, more than 1,300 participants have been trained at local schools and colleges, and placed in jobs. Roughly 200 manufacturers, both large and small, have been hiring through the program.

“That was the intent here – to make sure that not only large employers but smaller and medium employers had a place to turn to for the development of tomorrow’s manufacturing workforce,” Beauregard says.

Since the program started, eastern Connecticut has seen ongoing economic growth, much of it attributed to an expansion in advanced manufacturing and eastern Connecticut’s “unique ability to find the workforce talent for that sector,” says economist Don Klepper-Smith. “The MPI program has provided a clear and dramatic boost to the economy.” He says in addition to putting more money in people’s pockets, the jobs pipeline has prompted more people to buy homes.

Meanwhile, applicants are streaming into the program, lured by the prospect of a lucrative and interesting career. Because the training curriculum and standards are determined by employers, students’ chances of being hired once they graduate are high, even though almost 80 percent have had no





Theresa Grills. Photo by Tony Bacewicz



Theresa Grills traded a bartending career for a more lucrative one as a welder. Photo by **Tony Bacewicz**

previous manufacturing experience.

With millions in additional funding provided by the state and private sources, the original timeline for the program has been extended. Over the next few years, Beauregard says, Electric Boat plans to spend more than \$800 million on construction projects related to the development of its new Columbia class submarine. “So, obviously, there will be a great need for construction workers.”

He would like to see this successful model used

elsewhere – and in fact, that’s already happening. The board shared its approach with its sister workforce development board in New Haven, which started similar classes of its own. The EWIB also contacted the New England Board of Higher Education to discuss implementing the program throughout New England. Meanwhile, other organizations across the state have launched their own manufacturing pipeline initiatives.

In February, Mark Ojakian, president of the Connecticut

State Colleges & Universities (CSCU) system, announced its “TEAM Works” advanced manufacturing strategic plan, designed to train 35,000 students to fill jobs in the sector over the next 20 years.

Ojakian said while CSCU’s 17 post-secondary schools make up the largest higher education network in Connecticut, its community college-based advanced manufacturing technology centers don’t have the capacity to produce all of the highly skilled graduates that will be needed by the growing high-tech manufacturing industry.

The plan calls for the close collaboration of “stakeholders across education, government, and industry, including CSCU’s colleges and universities, Connecticut’s comprehensive and technical high schools, Goodwin and other private colleges, the state’s regional workforce development boards, and advanced manufacturers and business organizations, among others.” Multiple partners have already signed on, and the momentum is growing.

Meanwhile, Eric Brown, vice president of manufacturing policy and outreach for the Connecticut Business & Industry Association (CBIA), has been working with his team over the past year to create new initiatives aimed at shifting the already vigorous manufacturing sector into an even higher gear. For instance, a new Connecticut Manufacturers’ Collaborative has been formed to help manufacturers work together to drive positive change.

Brown says the state’s companies are in “a time of transition. It’s a challenge for manufacturers to gain awareness of technologies that might be helpful for them, and to keep up – not just in the state but globally – with the technology associated with manufacturing advancements.”

And he warned that the pace of change isn’t going to change any time soon, except to speed up. “Manufacturing 4.0 – that’s coming. Our manufacturers tell us that over the next five years, the advancements are going to be rather dramatic. The industry is going to need higher skilled workers to not only use these technologies but to create them, to build them, to service them. It’s going to be a continual upward trend.”

## RAISING THE BAR

It’s important to know that manufacturing pipeline programs are not restricted to young people seeking a career. They also welcome older folks looking to change direction or re-enter the workforce. Theresa Grills is a case in point.

Grills, 37, had been working in restaurants and bars as a bartender for 25 years. After going through a divorce,

the mother of two began reassessing her options. “As a bartender, there’s a cap on how much you can make,” she says.

As she worked to provide for herself and her children last year, the Waterford resident began to hear about opportunities in manufacturing. “I knew that the money is really great and that it doesn’t require a lot of schooling, and a light bulb kind of went on. I thought, ‘Maybe I’ve been doing the wrong thing.’”

But before she could put any plan into motion, things took a turn for the worse. Grills learned her existing company was going under. She lost her job. Money grew tight as she hunted for another one. A tree fell on her house. She found the manufacturing pipeline website online and applied to get into a welding class but wasn’t accepted.

Nothing was going right.

Finally, she found a new job in downtown New London. Then one of the students in the welding class left and Grills got a call from the manufacturing pipeline program, saying, ‘If you want it, you have to start now.’ She phoned her new employer and said she couldn’t take the job.

The next thing she knew, she was taking welding classes five nights a week. She graduated at the end of March and began looking for work. After being “brushed off” by several employers who were only willing to hire an experienced welder – and receiving a few job offers at \$12 an hour – she went back to bartending for a while. Then, in

early May, she got her big break.

Today, Grills works full time as a welder at Sound Manufacturing in Old Saybrook. “They’re a great company,” she says. “They give me flexibility, and I get paid holidays and benefits, which is something I never had before.” She works the first shift, Monday to Friday, in an all-female manufacturing unit.

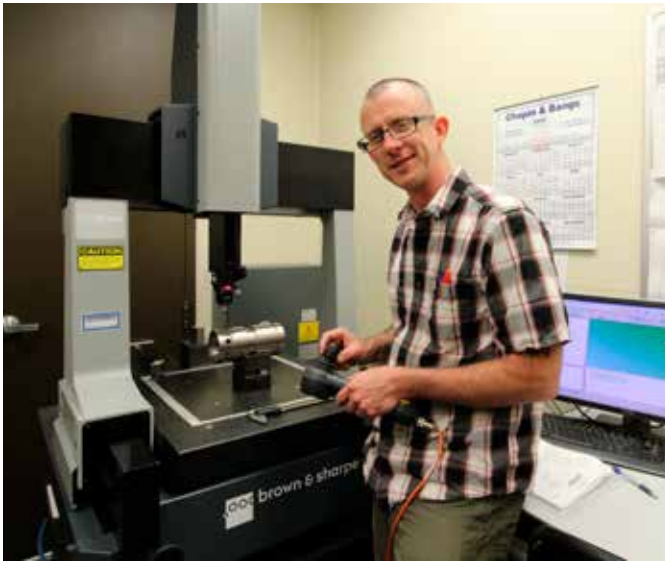
And how does she like her new welding career? “I found that I love it. In the beginning, I was really out of my comfort zone. I’d never even held a tape measure before. But it’s a weird mix of art and science, and you have to have an eye for detail and a steady hand,” she says. “Now I go to work and build things; it’s pretty cool. I work with a lot of really great people.” She also already knew one of her coworkers – a female student from her welding class.

Now she’s trying to give back, guiding other people through the online application process for the jobs pipeline program, which she says isn’t always intuitive. “I’ve helped a number of people apply. It’s such a great program. I was able to complete schooling in three months for a trade, with no debt racked up from it. It was pure benefit to me.”

She says her kids are intrigued with their mom’s new

**“I’ve helped a number of people apply. It’s such a great program. I was able to complete schooling in three months for a trade, with no debt racked up from it. It was pure benefit to me.”**

– Theresa Grills



**BRIGHT FUTURE:** The MPI program provided Jason Dodge with an exciting new career. Photo by Jan Tormay



**PRECISE WORK:** Jason Dodge, a Grade 1 inspector in Micro Precision's Quality Control Department, works on a Romer Arm. Photo by Jan Tormay



**TEAM EFFORT:** Eric Rogde (left), Ray Ouimette (rear) and Jason Dodge (right) work on a project at a coordinate measuring machine at Micro Precision. Photo by Jan Tormay

job. "They think my tools are neat. My daughter, who's seven, calls it my 'dirty work.' With my son, who's 11, we watch welding videos together. He loves it."

Grills says she has endless appreciation for the people who opened the door to her new life.

"I can't say enough good things about the Montville training center, and the people who work there are wonderful. I'm four or five months out of training and they still call to check in with me, and make sure that I'm OK. They're really always out there, willing to help people. I hope more people find out about this program."

## SHOPPING FOR OPPORTUNITY

Jason Dodge is glad he did.

After dropping out of college, Dodge spent almost 20 years working in retail or warehouses. "I wanted to work instead of going to school," he explains. But he recently began to have doubts about his career path as the major retailer that employed him continued to downsize. "There was downward wage pressure, and I was told that there was nowhere for me to move. In the interest of job security, I decided that once my children were old enough that I could be away during the day, I would look for something else. I started out looking for welding jobs, even though it was not something I was particularly interested in; it was a skill that was in demand."

Then one day, a friend shared a Facebook post about someone else in a welding program. "He said the training was great and if you do well, you can make really good money. I found the pipeline website and contacted them," he recalls.

He visited one of the program's testing centers and "I did really well on the test, but then I met with a case worker who said, 'They're not holding the welding class for eight or nine months. But you can take machining and CNC.' That was something I'd always been interested in anyway."

Dodge, who was still working the graveyard shift at his retail job, had to show up for his new training at 7 a.m. – right after work – a couple of times. "It wasn't easy, but it was definitely worth it," he says. "I started the intro program in mid-June for seven weeks at Quinebaug Valley Community College (QVCC) in Danielson. I live in Lebanon, so it was a 45- to 50-minute drive each way. Training was six hours a day for seven weeks, just like going to college. It was way more than I expected. But I was hoping to get a foot in the door somewhere."

And that's exactly what happened. "A cornerstone of the QVCC program is that they have strong connections to local industry," Dodge explains. "Most of instructors were machinists for many years. They get you paid internships. I did well in the course and one of the instructors recommended me and I was hired from the intro program. That's pretty rare. A company hired me sight unseen and then paid for my tuition to go to a 32-week machinist course, also at QVCC."

Today, Dodge still works at Micro Precision LLC in South Windham, which hired him under Connecticut's apprenticeship program. "When I graduated, there was a need for people for the quality control program, so I'm not machining at all. That's a nice thing about the industry – there are a lot of different directions that you can take, and you can specialize in things that have a lot of opportunity."

He really enjoys working for a smaller company and the flexibility it allows. "If my kid's bus is late in the morning, it's not a big deal. They're very people centered. I've been thrilled with the new job. It's nice to have room to grow, finally."

He sees himself staying put for a long time. "If I could retire from Micro Precision in 23 years, that would be ideal for me. I'm 20 minutes from home so I can be home with my kids [12, 9, and 7] after school. It's such a different life from what I had before. If I could stay there forever, that would be awesome."

That is not to say that the work is easy. "Everything about it is challenging. I was shocked by just how smart those guys who wear T-shirts and boots are. I've been really lucky because in quality control is a gentleman who has been here for quite a few years; he makes really difficult things seem really easy and he's there with me all day, willing to explain things and taking the time to do that," Dodge says. "I'm definitely not comfortable. They say if you feel comfortable, you must not be growing, so I must be growing. At my other job, I was bored. I'm definitely not bored now."

He would highly recommend manufacturing pipeline programs to anyone interested in giving it a shot.

"Connecticut is second largest manufacturing economy in the country. Machine shops in eastern Connecticut are world renowned," he says. "We're dying to hire people. We'd love to hire three more people right now, if you're willing to show up to work and learn. The jobs are out there if people want them."

He wishes a lot more employers – and potential employees – would take advantage of the state apprenticeship program that opened the door to his new career. "They subsidized my education. Now, they offset educational expenses for employers and subsidize my wage. That takes a lot of the risk out of it for the employer. And I have a state journeyman credential that I can take with me anywhere."

At age 43, he says, "it was kind of weird going to school. But it just proves that it's never too late to start something different if you're not happy with what you're doing. You literally spend a quarter of your life at work. Life is short. You can't afford to be miserable. ❏"

*For more information about EWIB's manufacturing pipeline initiative, or to apply, visit [ewib.org/pipeline](http://ewib.org/pipeline).*

*Carol Latter is the editor of Seasons Magazines.*



## Dog Tail

*Seasons Magazine's* own Teresa Pelham just released her third children's book. Her first chapter book for elementary-age readers, *Stuey & Veronica* is a silly-yet-serious story about a little brown dog's struggles with anxiety. He meets a wise goat who helps him find his way.

A Farmington resident, Teresa regularly visits elementary schools to share her message about dog rescue. If you'd like to invite Teresa to visit your school, visit her website at [www.roxysforeverhome.com](http://www.roxysforeverhome.com). That's where you can buy books, too. The new book is \$8.99. Teresa donates a good portion of her profits to animal rescue groups, including Kenway's Cause in Hartford. She has to date given more than \$10,000 to rescue groups.



Arranging sponsored school visits is a big part of what Teresa does. Any size donation from an individual or business helps her to get her books into the hands of hundreds of local children in need. Contact Teresa at [tpelham@comcast.net](mailto:tpelham@comcast.net). ❏

# Going Green

**CBD is good for business and, proponents say, good for your health**

By ALIX BOYLE

Photography by TODD FAIRCHILD

**Before taking CBD, Denise couldn't complete tasks like grocery shopping or make decisions due to anxiety. She was even treated in the emergency room for an anxiety attack.**

**D**enise W. says that taking cannabidiol, or CBD, one of the many active compounds found in marijuana or hemp plants, has been “life-altering.”

“I tried a tincture and within an hour I felt a difference,” says Denise, who grapples with anxiety. After taking a water-soluble CBD liquid twice a day for a few weeks, and a CBD gummy as needed, Denise felt her anxiety significantly reduce. Before taking CBD, she couldn't complete tasks like grocery shopping or make decisions due to anxiety. She was even treated in the emergency room for an anxiety attack.

“My anxiety level went from a 15 out of 10 down to a three,” says Denise, who lives in the Greater New Haven area and did not want her full name used. “I researched CBD for a year. Why did I wait so long to take it?”

Denise was shopping recently at Your CBD Store in Milford, buying another month's supply. A 1,000-milliliter bottle costs \$110 and lasts for about a month, says Chief Operating Officer and General Manager Clayton Percy. The spa-like shop, decorated with comfy couches and soothing baby-blue paint on the walls, carries all things CBD – everything from tinctures and oils to lip balm, bath bombs, pet items, and so much more.

On a recent weekday morning, shoppers peppered Percy with questions about CBD and tried samples of CBD cream meant to reduce pain. He spoke with some customers for 20 minutes or more, patiently answering every query. Your CBD Store is part of chain of more than 400 stores nationwide that carry CBD products derived from hemp, a marijuana plant that is bred to be low in tetrahydrocannabinol (THC), the chemical in marijuana that causes the high people experience when they use it. If the plant creates 0.3 percent THC or less, it is called hemp; if it makes more than 0.3 percent THC, it is called marijuana. Both plants are in the cannabis genus.

CBD has been touted as a panacea for pretty much everything: pain management, mental health conditions, inflammation, physical ailments including arthritis and migraines, and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. It's sold pretty much everywhere, including gas stations, gyms, and your local Bed, Bath and Beyond.

At Your CBD store, a woman who identified herself as having Parkinson's disease said she had less pain, less anxiety, and was able to walk more quickly after sampling CBD. She was returning to the store for more.

But, with one notable exception, CBD is not approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA). In 2018, the FDA approved Epidiolex, a drug for Dravet and Lennox-Gastaut syndromes, difficult-to-treat forms of epilepsy. It contains high levels of CBD.

All the products at Your CBD Store are made by a company called Sunflora. The plants are grown in Colorado and certified by the state Department of Agriculture. The company touts its carbon dioxide extraction process that eliminates the need for harmful chemicals and solvents.

The bottles are labeled with QR codes, leading the customer to a website with third-party testing for the product, showing the strength of CBD in the product and listing all the trace chemicals.

Third-party testing is a key to knowing what you are getting in the CBD world, says C. Michael White, professor of pharmacy practice in the UConn School of Pharmacy. White recently published a paper on human studies of

CBD's therapeutic actions and potential in the *Journal of Clinical Pharmacology*.

"It is impossible to reliably tell how much CBD or THC is in a product unless it is verified by an outside laboratory," White says. "The concentrations of CBD (or THC for that matter) the manufacturer puts on the label are very often a work of fiction, not reality. Many products you buy in smoke shops or over the Internet have little to no CBD in them and some have more CBD than they disclose. If it is verified by an outside laboratory, the product label will refer you to a certificate of analysis that they have on file."

White urges people who want to try CBD to first discuss with their doctor and pharmacist how CBD might interact with prescription medication they are already taking.

"One important risk is that CBD is broken down in the body by the liver and also impacts how other drugs are broken down by the liver as well. This means there is a risk of serious drug interactions with CBD products," White says.

CBD can also cause sleepiness and lethargy, so it's best not to drive after using it until you know how it affects you.

And as far as the legalities are concerned, check to be



**GOOD VIBES:** Participants in a yoga class at Chamard Vineyards in Clinton learn about various CBD products offered by sales rep Kayla Tyska.



**LEARNING MORE:** Kannaway representative Tammy Prevost of Southwick, Massachusetts (left) explains the benefits of using CBD products to a potential customer. “There’s no regulation of CBD yet. It’s the Wild West,” Prevost says.

sure your CBD does not contain more than the allowable 0.3 percent amount of THC.

“Outside of a medical marijuana dispensary-created product, if you use a CBD product that has more than 0.3 percent THC, even if you didn’t know it had it, you could be arrested for possession of marijuana in Connecticut or when traveling across state lines,” White says. “There are cases of two grandmas who got busted in the spring for possession of marijuana when drug sniffing dogs detected the THC in the CBD product. One was arrested at a Disney amusement park and another at an airport.”

Dana Krete, an acupuncturist and naturopathic physician at the Wellness Center at Privé Swiss in Westbrook, has seen her patients have great success using topical CBD for pain relief. “The first patient I used the topical CBD with was a patient I was treating with acupuncture for knee pain from arthritis. She used the topical salve and got four solid hours of pain relief with each application,” she says. “I find these results to be typical for most patients when treating pain.”

After researching various CBD products, Krete began carrying them in the clinic and has been recommending the topical salve for patients, and then also using the internal oil for the past eight months. Krete says there are plenty of studies showing the efficacy of CBD for various ailments.

Despite its benefits, there is little reason for the drug industry to spend the money to do phase three clinical trials on CBD, necessary to bring CBD to the public, because it is not patentable. Phase three trials involve thousands of patients and can take years to complete.

Krete believes CBD works for pain, inflammation, anxiety and insomnia, and also helps in regulating digestion. She stresses that patients should use CBD as part of an overall treatment plan.

“It is the most reliable thing I’ve used for pain,” Krete says. “As in anything, you have to make sure you are getting it from a good quality source.”

“Hemp is a bio accumulator and will absorb all the

chemicals in the soil around it,” Tyska says. “Kannaway is one of 13 companies that has the seal from the U.S Hemp Authority Certification Program. There’s no standardized testing in this industry. Ninety percent of labels are wrong.”

The Kannaway plants are grown in Switzerland, which has more stringent laws about chemicals used on plants than the U.S., and Tyska believes it is some of the purest available.

In addition to using CBD products for themselves, people are also giving them to their pets.

Ellen Botwin, a consultant and retired special education teacher who lives in Guilford, gave CBD oil to her beloved border collie, Archie, who lived to be 15 years and 5 months. The last two years of his life, he had trouble walking, getting up and seemed to be stiff with hip pain. She tried acupuncture and swim therapy, to no avail.

Botwin already had a medical marijuana license and was taking CBD for back pain as well as PTSD. She gets her product from a dispensary and believes it’s a pure, unadulterated medical-grade product. She calibrated the dose of CBD for Archie based on his weight and her knowledge of how much she takes based on her own weight.

“At that time, vets were not allowed to prescribe CBD for dogs or even give an opinion,” Botwin says. “I heard vets in California were prescribing CBD, so I just tried it. Sure enough, he was much spunkier and acted like the dog we knew. It was an amazing change. We gave Archie another year of life.”

Chelsea Casper of East Berlin, a hospice worker, vapes CBD oil and feels that it elevates her mood and helps with anxiety and insomnia. She gives CBD-infused dog treats to Penelope, her Shiba Inu, especially before a bath or long car ride. The treat seems to make her a little sleepy, a good thing for this high-energy pooch.

“I think it’s a miracle drug, and I’m lucky that I can afford to pay for it,” Botwin says. “I wish it were available to everyone.” ❧



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# Backyard Orchards: Create Your Own Eden

Written and photographed by **TOVAH MARTIN**

“**G**uess how many fruit trees I planted this year?” That was the challenge Peter Montgomery laid down not long into our chat on the back porch (the one overlooking his own backyard orchard) of his Warren home. I thought that I’d be daring, so I ventured the “two dozen trees?” guesstimation. I wasn’t even close.

“One thousand, fifty trees,” he proudly proclaimed.

Actually, he served as a consultant for the planting of most of those fruit trees, helping nascent orchards across Connecticut and into Rhode Island become established in his capacity as an absolutely outspoken proponent for growing your own fruit trees. You’ve heard of Johnny Appleseed? Well, Peter Montgomery is the most recent iteration, with an emphasis on fruit that you might not be able to find at your local supermarket.

If Montgomery hadn’t encountered an Asian pear, this region might be lacking a whole lot of lip-smacking, homegrown fruit. Back when he was working in California, he frequented farmers’ markets and came home with a newly attuned taste for that relatively arcane fruit. Don’t judge Asian pears on the mushy version found in northeastern supermarkets, he cautions, because those pathetic representatives don’t compare to the tree-ripened nuggets of crisp, juicy goodness he produces in his two-acre backyard.

Striving to rediscover that taste was the impetus that started the orchard on his Warren property in 2005. “If you haven’t sunk your teeth into an Asian pear from your own tree, you are in for an experience,” he says provocatively. But he isn’t the type to settle for a couple of lone trees. He currently hosts 41 fruit trees, including 11 Asian pear trees, nine apple trees, and a smattering of perry pears, European pears, apricots, nectarines, peaches, and sweet cherries.

Despite less than ideal conditions (the wrong pH and soggy soil), the only disappointments have been the European pears that have refused to produce a crop to date and the cherry trees, which also failed to fulfill their

destiny – a lack that Montgomery blames on the humidity in our climate.

He might actually bristle at the Johnny Appleseed comparison due to the misleading nickname. Contrary to the popular folktales, John Chapman (alias Johnny Appleseed, 1774-1845) did not

sling handfuls of apple seeds across the countryside. In truth, Chapman wisely planted nursery orchards for his neighbors and taught them to produce nursery stock for sale to nurture further orchards.

As Montgomery points out, seed is the least effective way to grow an apple tree and the results will not produce the same apple as the parent. Not only are apples complex hybrids at this point, but flowers must be pollinated by another variety to produce fruit. Instead, he plants whips that result from grafts. That way, the resulting fruit will mirror its parent. The key to success is planting the tree with the graft union placed above the soil level. He recommends selecting semi-dwarf root stock for a robust, quickly maturing tree that produces fruit within easy harvesting reach. Whereas standard apples mature to 30-35 feet tall, a semi-dwarf tree tops out at a convenient 10-12 feet.

Although it was Asian pears that jumpstarted Montgomery’s orchard ambitions, apples followed closely on their heels. Supermarkets typically focus primarily on a handful of apple varieties selected for their ability to survive shipment from a distant source to your shopping cart. Unfortunately, they aren’t necessarily the tastiest examples of this fruit. Instead, Montgomery focuses on more delectably flavorful apples that are not necessarily great candidates for transporting far and wide. They make a good argument for growing in your own backyard, some





of his favorites being Mutsu, Arkansas Black, and Roxbury Russet.

But all sorts of factors might come into play when selecting the right fruit for you.

Montgomery is fond of hard cider, which is why he turned to perry pears. The endeavor proved so fruitful, in fact, that he pursued courses in cider-making and received certification from Cornell University's Cider & Perry Academy. But cider-making is just one of the delights of growing your own fruit and he urges potential home orchardists to explore fruit

that's geared toward their fancies – for example, apples are bred specifically for fresh eating, cooking, sauces, salads, beverage, pies, and storage purposes. Select according to your taste.

There are factors beyond personal preferences that should guide your selection. Most importantly, fruits must be able to survive in Connecticut's plant hardiness zones, which range from the chillier 5b in the northwest corner to the balmy 7a along most parts of the shoreline. (Visit [planthardiness.ars.usda.gov/PHZMWeb](http://planthardiness.ars.usda.gov/PHZMWeb) for more information on your particular zone.)

Sunlight and soil are also key. No matter where you live in the state, we have no problem providing the 500-plus hours of temperatures below 45 degrees F that apples need annually. ("Most fruit trees also prefer 8 hours or more of sunlight," Montgomery suggests.) But you would be wise to check your soil pH, which varies considerably in our region. Montgomery's soil pH in Warren is 5.2, which is more acidic than the 6.8 ideal pH for apples. However, by amending the soil, he has been able to conquer that hurdle.

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**SEMI-DWARF ROOT STOCK RESULTS IN  
A ROBUST, QUICKLY MATURING TREE  
THAT PRODUCES FRUIT WITHIN EASY  
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Good drainage is also critical, a lesson Montgomery learned the hard way when he sited his initial trees in a gully. “A south-facing slope is optimal,” he recommends. Of course, other factors are involved as well, with pruning being key to a tree’s ultimate success. It’s a science. Montgomery delves into the details when teaching courses on backyard orcharding through EdAdvance, and takes immense pride in the fact that his students (and potential home orchardists) count in the hundreds. Not unlike Johnny Appleseed, he is spreading word of the scrumptious goodness of homegrown fruit.

On a much larger scale, Linda Allard planted her own orchard 20 years ago, when she built her home in Litchfield County. At the time, the head fashion designer for Ellen Tracy was traveling back and forth from New York City, but she felt strongly that cultivating her own fruit was an important facet of the country life experience. An accomplished cook and author of *Absolutely Delicious!* (Random House, 1994), Allard planted more than 135 apple trees on her north-facing slope, with some peach trees represented as well. It’s about an acre of apples and, on a good year, she can press 200 gallons of fresh cider.

Last year was not a good year and, despite the fact that she grows nine different apple varieties including Liberty, Golden Russet, Winesap, Northern Spy, and Cortland, the crop was a major disappointment across the board. But Allard has noticed that her trees tend to alternate years of productivity. So this year she might be enjoying a bounty.

Home orchards run the gamut. And interest is definitely on the upswing. Richard Crouch, who runs the landscape department for Kent Greenhouse & Gardens, has noticed that the nursery is selling a lot of fruit trees. Apple trees are a favorite, followed by peach trees.

Acquiring a couple of fruit trees is a valid starting point. Whether you go whole hog or have just inherited a gnarly old apple that came with your property and are striving to prune it into prime again, it’s all incredibly rewarding and enticing. After all, wasn’t it an apple that baited the prototypical gardener to take a bite in the beginning? Adam had no idea what he was starting... 🍏

*Tovah Martin is an author, lecturer, and garden/lifestyle writer – to say nothing of a plant expert. Her latest book is The Garden in Every Sense and Season (Timber Press, 2018).*





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**Cider-making is just one  
of the delights of growing  
your own fruit.**

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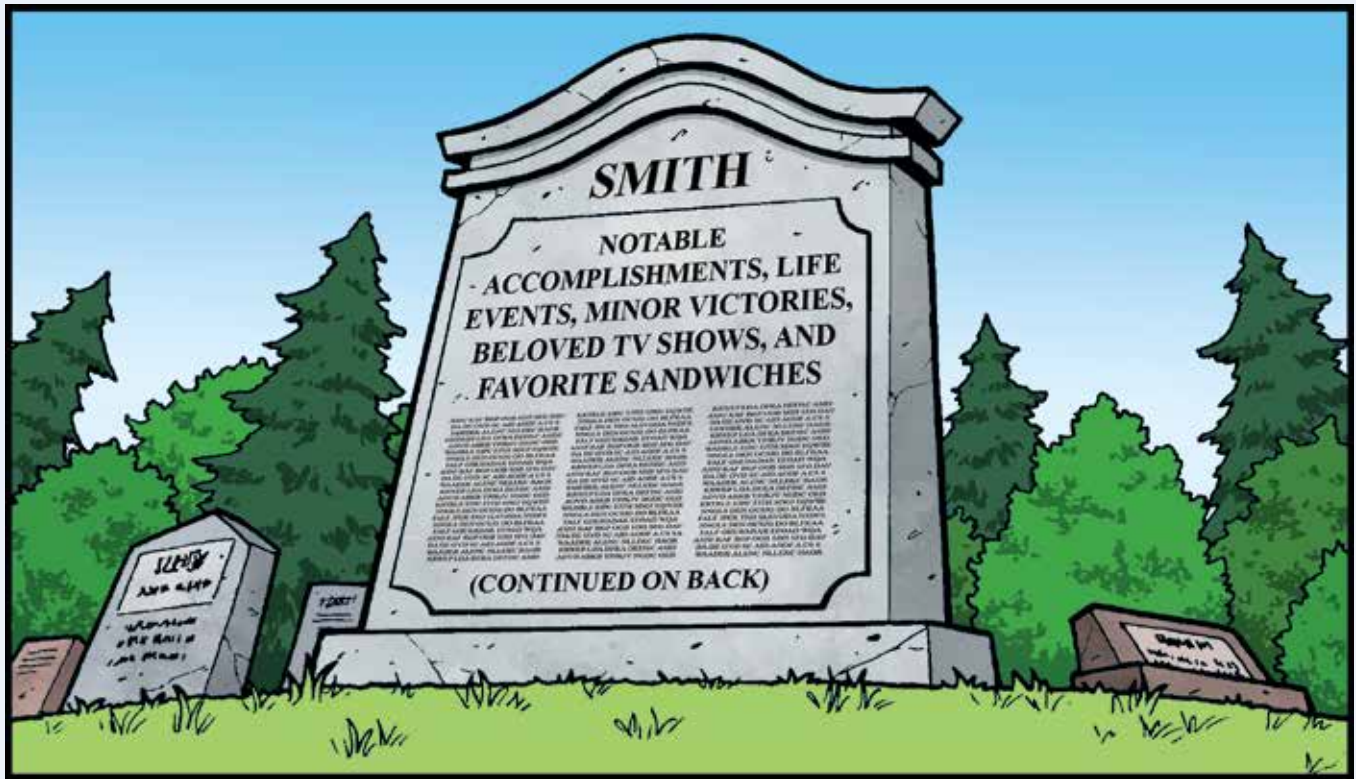
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# Funny Bones

## National Plan Your Own Epitaph Day Lets Us Poke Fun at Ourselves for Eternity

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

**T**om Sawyer was a lucky boy. As you probably know, he had the opportunity to witness his own funeral when his friends and family assumed that he was dead.

What a joyous day that must be ... to stand by inconspicuously and witness that glorious ceremony marking your life.

If you're still alive, of course.

Friends and family pull out their finest compliments, most memorable stories, and most amusing anecdotes to share with the world. All of your past indiscretions are immediately forgiven and forgotten, or they are somehow transformed into moments of levity.

When you were alive, for example, Aunt Betty never let you forget the time you accidentally ran over her pet guinea hen with your motorcycle. But now that you're dead, she laughs about it as your body slowly decomposes beneath her feet.

Most of us never get to bear witness these glorious statements of love and appreciation, but Tom Sawyer did.

I suspect it was Mark Twain's desire, too, wistfully encapsulated in his fiction.

Sadly, few of us will be as fortunate as Tom Sawyer, but on November 2 of this year – and every year – we have an opportunity to play a small but important role in the ceremony commemorating our worst day ever: national Plan Your Own Epitaph Day. (Many websites will also tell you that this day is marked on April 6, but for the sake of argument, we'll go with November 2, the Day of the Dead.)

When you are long gone, the final reminder of your existence will likely be a granite marker. A monument to your life. For most people, their epitaph inexplicably amounts to a name and two dates:

John Ultra Ordinary  
19-whatever to 20-who cares

Does anyone else find this a little ... dumb? When deciding upon the words that will be carved into granite – a monument that will likely exist longer than you did, the best your supposed loved ones could do is your name and two of

the least consequential dates of your life?

Sure, your birthday is important, and yes, the day that you die is significant, but wasn't your wedding date more memorable and enjoyable than both? Or how about the days that your children were born? The year that you graduated college? The day you passed the bar? The summer afternoon when you hit your first and only home run?

These were the important dates in your life. The most important, in fact. But no, forget those. Instead, your loved ones are likely to opt for the day you emerged from a vagina or abdomen, and the day you finally stopped breathing for good.

That's it. Two dates. A subtraction problem so that future generations can calculate the length of your life.

How sad. How stupid.

I propose that you instead embrace national Plan Your Own Epitaph Day and prevent the possible atrocity of the name-date epitaph from befalling you, too. Rather than running the risk of having the people who love you the most say least consequential things possible about you, why not plan it now before it's too late?

The options are boundless. You could, for example, try to make future graveyard visitors laugh with an epitaph that tickles the funny bone. Rodney Dangerfield's epitaph reads, "There goes the neighborhood."

Or maybe you're worried that even in death, you might be concerned with what others think of you. If so, perhaps pen a defense of your character and moral standing.

Robert Clay, one of the most accomplished gunslingers in the Old West, has this on his headstone:

"I never killed a man who didn't need killing."

Or maybe practicality makes more sense to you.

Shakespeare, fearing that his body might be exhumed and studied, wrote his own epitaph. It reads:

"Good Friend, for Jesus' sake forbear  
To dig the dust enclosed here:  
Blessed be the man that spares these stones,  
And curst be he that moves my bones."

Or maybe you're hoping to continue an ongoing battle even after you're six feet under. If so, why not use your epitaph as one final salvo in that fight? Famed outlaw Jesse James' epitaph reads:

"Murdered by a traitor and coward whose name is not worthy to appear here."

Not bad.

As for me, I have no intention of ever dying and am incapable of even considering the possibility lest I collapse in a puddle of existential goo. But presuming that this is nothing more than a thought experiment, I think I'd opt for a list. Encapsulate as much of my personality and lifetime achievements as possible on the granite marker.

It might read something like this:

"Husband  
Father  
Friend  
Teacher  
Writer  
Storyteller  
Terrible golfer  
Better poker player  
Planned on living forever." 🐾

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