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Seasons' Greetings



Ah, winter! 'Tis the season ... for so many things! Christmas, Hannukah and New Year's Eve celebrations. Pine wreaths. Hot chocolate with marshmallows. Cozy sweaters, mittens and socks. The thrill of the wind in your face as you swoosh down a steep hill on skis, a sled, or a snowboard.

Though some may complain about the falling (even freezing) temperatures, there is much beauty to be appreciated, and many things to be thankful for beyond Thanksgiving.

In this issue, we visit with interfaith families who make the most of the season by incorporating multiple festive traditions into the holiday gatherings and rituals. We also meet a couple who left their old way of life in Morocco to pursue the American dream and are now living their best life, thanks in large part to an innovative job training program that led to a fulfilling career.

And speaking of careers, don't miss our feature on the many talented women who are thriving in leading roles at Connecticut museums. Their shared passion has helped them to rise through the ranks and make a difference in the art world. Looking for some inspiration when it comes to your own career? Check our story on the unusual - and fun! - courses you can pursue at Connecticut colleges and universities.

If you're feeling social, take your cue from our fabulous foodie, Amy White. Follow her tips for whipping up an easy-to-prepare brunch feast, then invite a dozen or two of your closest friends and family members over for an unforgettable weekend gathering. It might even become a new winter tradition.

Happy reading!

Carol

Carol Latter, Editorial Director

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

Creative Director
Stacy Wright Murray

Editorial Director
Carol Latter

Cover Art By
Claudette Lambert ©2019
www.claudettelambert.com

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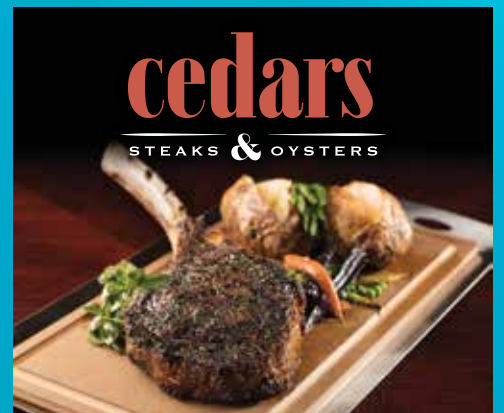
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ARTS & CULTURE

CURATING SUCCESS

CULTURE SHIFT: Stephanie Wiles, the Henry J. Heinz II Director, in the American paintings and sculpture galleries, Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven. Photo by **Jessica Smolinski**



Gender gap narrows as women take the helm at Connecticut art museums

By **AMY J. BARRY**

Until recently, few women were in museum leadership positions in this country, and their salaries lagged behind those of their male counterparts.

The first woman to direct a major art museum in the U.S. was Agnes Mongan, who served as curator and director for Harvard Art Museums from 1969 to 1971. Earlier this year, Kaywin Feldman became the first woman director of the National Gallery of Art in Washington, DC and is only the second woman currently directing one of the nation's top art museums. The other is Anne Pasternak, director of the Brooklyn Museum since 2015.

According to the most recent demographic survey by the Association of Art Museum Directors (AAMD), women in museum leadership positions in North America has increased from less than 50 percent in 2014 to 62 percent in 2018.

The survey also found that there is a preponderance of women in curatorial, conservation, and education roles with the potential of moving up to leadership positions.

Connecticut happily mirrors the national trend, with more women taking the helm of our major museums. Several of these dynamic museum directors spoke to us about how their female perspectives are enhancing and shaping the future of their art institutions.

STEPHANIE WILES YALE UNIVERSITY ART GALLERY NEW HAVEN

In April of 2018, Stephanie Wiles took the reigns of YUAG, the oldest university art museum in the western hemisphere (founded in 1832) from Jock Reynolds, who had been the museum's director for 20 years. Wiles came to Yale with more than 20 years of experience leading college and university art museums, most recently Cornell. She was on the board of the AAMD during this growth period in which women were breaking the glass ceiling and moving into museum director roles.

Wiles, who describes herself as coming from a standard art history Ph.D. and curatorial work in one specific area of drawing and prints, says she's



FRESH PERSPECTIVE: Becky Beaulieu, director of Old Lyme's Florence Griswold Museum in the Florence Griswold House, built in 1817 as a boarding house for American Impressionist artists.

is interested in implementing and expanding intergenerational and elementary school programs, lectures, and opportunities for community conversations about exhibitions.

A priority for Wiles among the challenges and opportunities at YUAG is developing The Margaret and Angus Wurtele Study Center on Yale's West Campus – a new open-access storage facility containing tens of thousands of art objects – and expanding its access to the public.

She also wants to make sure exhibitions are balanced.

"We have 11 curatorial departments, including ancient and numismatic, so we're not a modern or contemporary or American museum of art," Wiles points out. "I'm excited and committed to expand the scope of exhibitions that reflect all the research we do and the nature of our collections to appeal to many people's interests."

REBEKAH BEAULIEU FLORENCE GRISWOLD MUSEUM OLD LYME

Rebekah Beaulieu became the new director of the Florence Griswold Museum in February 2018 after Jeffrey Anderson retired from the position he held for 40 years. Prior to this appointment, Beaulieu was associate director at Bowdoin College Museum of Art in Brunswick, Maine.

Beaulieu has an M.A. in Art History and Museum Studies, an M.A. in Arts Administration, and a Ph.D. in American and New England Studies.

"It was important to me to foster my knowledge from a scholarly perspective and also to foster tenets of strong leadership, management, strategic planning, and finance," she says. "I interned from age 16 on. I was passionate about being in museums and museum culture."

happy to see the new wave of museum leadership coming from a broad variety of backgrounds and education.

"It's incredibly exciting – not only that it expands the ecosystem of ideas but provides a strength for all of us to be coming to art expertise from different vantage points," she says.

Wiles stresses that in addition to more women coming on board, diversity of all kinds plays an important role in the future of museums. "Our efforts with the younger generation are going to be key to making museums look more like our communities down the line," she says.

One of the things she has found

in particular about women museum directors is that they are excited about mentoring other women.

"I'm proud of the fact that some of the women I've mentored have become museum directors and feel comfortable coming to me to draw on my experience," Wiles says.

Along these lines of expanding communications, she would like to see a network set up in Connecticut where staff can meet their colleagues in similar roles in other museums to talk, share ideas, and problem solve.

As well as interacting with the museum's built-in audience of Yale students and faculty, Wiles

CONTINUED ON PAGE 12

WOMEN OF THE WADSWORTH

Women play an integral role in the vision and operations of Hartford's Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art. Founded in 1842, the Wadsworth is the oldest continuously operating public art museum in the U.S. and is home to a collection of almost 50,000 works of art, spanning 5,000 years. Here are some of the women in key curatorial positions who create and execute the museum's featured and permanent exhibitions.



BRANDY S. CULP

Brandy S. Culp was appointed Richard Koopman Curator of American Decorative Arts in 2017. Before joining the Wadsworth Atheneum, Culp served as curator of Historic Charleston Foundation and was the Andrew W. Mellon Curatorial Fellow in the Department of American Art at the Art Institute of Chicago. She has also held

positions at the Metropolitan Museum of Art and Bard Graduate Center. Culp received her Master of Arts degree with an emphasis in American Decorative Arts from the Bard Graduate Center. At the Wadsworth, Culp is currently working on the American art galleries reinstallation, a permanent silver installation, and an exhibition on the material culture of sugar.



ERIN MONROE

Erin Monroe joined the Wadsworth in 2007 and today serves as the Robert H. Schutz, Jr. Associate Curator of American Paintings and Sculpture. She works with an extensive collection ranging from colonial portraiture to American modernism. Monroe was previously a curatorial assistant at the Lewis Walpole

Library, Yale University. She obtained a B.A. in Art History from Northwestern University and earned her master's degree from Hunter College (CUNY), with a concentration in Modern American Art. Since arriving at the museum, Monroe has curated and co-curated numerous exhibitions, including *American Moderns on Paper: Masterworks from the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art* (2010), *Andrew Wyeth: Looking Beyond* (2012), *John Trumbull: Visualizing American Independence* (2016), and *Gorey's Worlds* (2018).



PATRICIA HICKSON

Patricia Hickson has been the Emily Hall Tremaine Curator of Contemporary Art since 2009. She oversees the contemporary art collection and acquisitions, organizes special exhibitions, and leads the MATRIX program – a series of changing contemporary art exhibitions. Hickson

previously held curatorial positions at the Des Moines Art Center, Williams College Museum of Art, San Jose Museum of Art, and the Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston. She earned a B.A. in Art from Bates College and a M.A. in Art History from Williams College. At the Wadsworth, her exhibition *Warhol & Mapplethorpe: Guise & Dolls* received popular and critical acclaim.



LINDA HORVITZ ROTH

Linda Horvitz Roth is Senior Curator and Charles C. and Eleanor Lamont Cunningham Curator of European Decorative Arts. She attended Bowdoin College, earning a B.A. in Art History, and later an M.A. in Art History from University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. Roth has been a member of

the curatorial department of the Wadsworth since 1980. Since then, she has organized a number of exhibitions, including *J. Pierpont Morgan, Collector: European Decorative Arts from the Wadsworth Atheneum* (1987); *Theater, Dance, and Porcelain in the Eighteenth Century* (2004–2005); and *Morgan: Mind of the Collector* (2017). Roth co-curated the 2015 re-installation of European art at the museum.



Photo courtesy of New Britain Museum of American Art.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 10

Beaulieu says she finds it fascinating to see and be part of this tidal wave of female leadership unfolding in Connecticut museums.

“It’s an interesting combination we sometimes can’t acknowledge: youth and gender,” she says. “I’m 37 years old, which is impressive for a man and concerning for a woman. There are times as a woman that you have to prove yourself more than others. The way I look at it, Miss Florence was female. It’s one part of my character that’s important, but not wholly defining. And I’m lucky to have joined an organization that has a spectrum of ages and male and female representation.”

Thinking about her vision for the museum, Beaulieu says, “When a museum undergoes a leadership change, for the board, staff, and community, it’s an opportunity to reengage and reinvest in an institution. This museum has a strong reputation and relationship with the community and surrounding area.”

Finding new ways for the public to experience the museum’s landscape is high on Beaulieu’s list.

“We’ve always had plein air painting on site,” she says. “We have a whole new visitors’ guide and are looking at future collaborations with organizations focused on sciences and nature, and collaborations with schools to promote the arts with life sciences and the environment, from preschool through college through adult education.”

Looking at future exhibitions, she says, “We have a year of contemporary programming, which is unusual for the Florence Griswold. We’re finding ways to continue to hone the work of the Lyme Art Colony, as well as be a steward of contemporary art in Connecticut.

“I’m continuing to find new and exciting ways to use the resources here and find new ones,” Beaulieu says. “And as we transition into a new era here, it’s absolutely vital to the future of the museum.”

FRESH FACE FOR AN OLD PLACE: Min Jung Kim is the executive director of the New Britain Museum of American Art, New Britain, Connecticut. It is the oldest museum of American art in the country (founded in 1903). Photo courtesy of New Britain Museum of American Art.

MIN JUNG KIM NEW BRITAIN MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART (NBMAA)

Min Jung Kim came to NBMAA in mid-2015, becoming the sixth director of the oldest museum of American art in the country (founded in 1903). Before that, she was deputy director of the Eli and Edythe Broad Art Museum of Michigan State. And for more than 12 years prior to that, she was program director at the Guggenheim Foundation in New York City.

Overall, Kim says, her personal experience moving through the ranks of the museum world has been very positive.

“I was born and raised in Seoul, South Korea and came to the U.S. to pursue a liberal arts education at Wheaton College,” she says. “As a result, I discovered art history as my major, which led me onto a career path I’ve undertaken for the last 25 years.”

She notes that her options to pursue a career as a woman in Korea were somewhat limited and says, “Coming to the



U.S., I was presented with extraordinary opportunities, as long as I remained curious, ambitious, and hardworking.”

Kim acknowledges that it takes both supportive women and men for women to thrive in the art world.

She feels very fortunate to have “amazing female colleagues,” including her deputy director, Michelle Hargrave, who came on board in 2017, and also “incredible men” on her team at NBMAA.

Kim has a crystal-clear vision of where she sees the future of the museum, which she says encompasses “a much more expanded definition of American art – a hemispheric view that includes the U.S., North America, Canada, as well as South America.”

She adds that the museum’s location in New Britain also plays an important role in how she’s developed programs and exhibitions in the last few years.

“Nearly half of New Britain is comprised of Hispanic and Latinx [residents],” she says. “This kind of diversity is indeed part of the conversation about American art and so, too, is the immigrant experience. As an immigrant myself at the helm of an American art museum, I bring both

personally and professionally relevant experience to this conversation.”

Although there are more women these days in high administrative positions, women artists continue to be underrepresented on museum walls, Kim points out, citing that in many permanent U.S. collections, only 23 percent of artists represented are women and only 27 percent of solo exhibitions are devoted to women artists.

Knowing this, and knowing that 2020 celebrates the 100th year of women’s right to vote, Kim is keen to have more women represented in the museum and is committed to showing women artists in all special exhibitions from January through December of 2021. Included will be contemporary American artists Kara Walker, silhouettist; Anni Albers, textile artist; Helen Frankenthaler, abstract expressionist painter; and Yoko Ono, Japanese-American multi-media artist.

“The work we will be exhibiting is by incredibly well-known artists,” Kim says, “showing great diversity of race and ethnicity, as well as in terms of age and medium.” ■



Dr. Kristofer Bagdasarian

Vascular surgery, says Saint Francis Hospital and Medical Center surgeon Kristofer A. Bagdasarian, MD, is a constantly evolving field. “New technologies keep improving our ways of doing things – and our outcomes,” he says.

Dr. Bagdasarian, who has been performing vascular surgery at Saint Francis since 2012, says he was attracted to the field because he liked the intricacy of the procedures and was excited by new endovascular techniques being introduced at the time he was training. “Endovascular surgery is a way of performing surgery through the blood vessels with little catheters, balloons, and stents under the guidance of x-ray,” he explains. “It is a much less invasive way of doing vascular procedures.”

Dr. Bagdasarian says his early exposure to surgery – both his father and his older brother are surgeons here in Connecticut – predisposed him toward that specialty. “I also enjoyed the immediacy of results that surgery offered patients,” he says.

After completing college and medical school at Tufts University in Boston, Dr. Bagdasarian did his general surgery residency in his home state of Connecticut, at the Hospital of St. Raphael/Yale University School of Medicine in New Haven. He then completed a vascular surgery fellowship at the Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital in New Brunswick, New Jersey (Rutgers).

“It feels good to be back and serving the population that I grew up with,” he says.

MANAGING ANEURYSMS

Dr. Bagdasarian treats a wide range of vascular conditions, spending about 80 percent of his time diagnosing, treating and managing conditions affecting the arteries, and about 20 percent on problems affecting the veins. His clinical interests include aneurysm repair, and surgical treatment of carotid artery disease, peripheral artery disease (PAD), and varicose veins.

Most people have heard of brain aneurysms, but an aneurysm – which is an enlargement of an artery – can also occur in other parts of the body, like in the arteries in the legs, or in the aorta, the main artery that carries blood away

from the heart and to the rest of the body. “If an aneurysm gets too large, it can rupture,” says Dr. Bagdasarian. “A ruptured aortic aneurysm is probably the most deadly because it’s the body’s main – and largest – artery.”

Many people have aortic aneurysms, he notes, but vascular surgeons don’t typically fix them until they reach a certain size or become symptomatic. “For every one I fix, I am following 10 people because they have aneurysms that haven’t reached the threshold where they need to be fixed.” On the other hand, some patients come into the hospital with already-ruptured aneurysms. “That’s an absolute emergency,” he says.

Symptoms of a thoracic aortic aneurysm, that is, one that occurs in the upper part of the aorta, might include chest and back pain; patients with an abdominal aortic aneurysm would more likely experience abdominal or low back pain, he says. Risk factors for aneurysms include age (the older you are, the more likely you are to have an aneurysm), family history, high blood pressure, and smoking.

According to Dr. Bagdasarian, about 85 to 90 percent of aortic aneurysms can be fixed with an endovascular stent graft. A stent graft typically consists of an expanding frame that is covered with a flexible polymer material, and in effect, reinforces – and seals – the wall of the vessel.

“Instead of traditional open surgery, where we’d open someone’s chest or abdomen and surgically sew in a new aorta, this is a procedure through a little catheter where we can basically reline the aorta from inside the artery,” he says. “Obviously, this is much less invasive to the patient. You’re basically putting a new graft on the artery from the inside.”

Though Dr. Bagdasarian points out that endovascular aneurysm repair technically dates back to the 1990s, he says that the grafts continue to grow more and more advanced, allowing surgeons to treat complex aneurysms in locations that were previously not amenable to this treatment – like at a juncture where there are branch vessels coming off the aorta.

“I’m doing things now that just a few years ago we couldn’t do,” he says. Fenestrated endovascular repair, for example, allows surgeons to implant custom-built aortic



ALL WELL AND GOOD: Dr. Kristofer A. Bagdasarian's mission is to improve the quality of his patients' lives.

grafts that are manufactured individually to fit a patient's anatomy.

"My partners and I are still very adept at open aneurysm repair when that's needed," adds Dr. Bagdasarian, explaining that sometimes an aneurysm is not amenable to a graft because there are too many anatomical challenges for the current devices."

Dr. Bagdasarian also uses endovascular stent grafts to treat aortic dissections, a tear in the wall of the aorta that results in bleeding between the layers of the blood vessel walls and can eventually lead to an aneurysm.

TREATING CAROTID ARTERY DISEASE; PREVENTING STROKE

The carotid arteries are the two main vessels that carry blood and oxygen to the brain. They are located on either side of the neck. "Carotid artery disease, which refers to the build up of plaque within the carotid arteries, is one of the leading causes of strokes," says Dr. Bagdasarian. "If patients have a severe narrowing in one of these arteries, or if they actually have a stroke, we oftentimes have to operate."

The gold standard for this surgery, according to Dr. Bagdasarian, is still an open surgery called a carotid endarterectomy, in which the surgeon cuts open the vessel, literally cleans out the plaque, and then, instead of just sewing the two pieces of the artery back together, sews in a flexible patch made of bovine heart tissue to widen the vessel. Newer endovascular approaches can be used to put stents in the carotid arteries of patients who are not candidates for open surgery, such as older patients, or people who have had previous neck surgery or radiation to the neck.

Risk factors for carotid artery disease are the same as those for atherosclerosis, or narrowing, of the coronary arteries: age, smoking, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, diabetes, family history, and obesity.

"Just as with aortic aneurysms," says Dr. Bagdasarian, "we manage the majority of these patients medically (i.e. with statins), and only operate when the condition becomes very severe or symptomatic." That is, if a patient has a stroke or a ministroke, also known as a transient ischemic attack, or TIA. Unlike a stroke, where blood flow to the brain is restricted for long enough that an area of brain tissue dies off, a TIA occurs when there is temporarily reduced blood flow, but circulation returns to normal.

PROBLEMS IN THE PERIPHERAL VESSELS

In contrast to carotid artery disease, peripheral artery disease (PAD) occurs when plaque builds up in the arteries leading to the arms and legs. The result: poor circulation to the limbs, which can ultimately lead to ulcers, decomposition, and even amputation. Risk factors

are the same as for carotid artery disease. Diabetics are especially susceptible, and because they often have decreased feeling in their fingers and toes, might not realize that they have poor blood flow or ulcers until the problem is at an advanced stage.

Surgical options for PAD include bypass surgery, which is the traditional open technique, and newer endovascular approaches, in which surgeons can open arteries with a balloon or stent. Dr. Bagdasarian and his partners are currently participating in an international trial comparing endovascular surgery to open surgery in certain PAD patients.

Dr. Bagdasarian also performs surgery to repair varicose veins, enlarged and swollen veins that can cause pain and swelling. "Years ago, doctors did something called vein stripping, where they surgically removed – or stripped – the veins out," he says. "But this has been replaced by a technique called endovenous ablation, a technique where through a series of catheters and small endovascular surgery, we can close the veins off with no incision and no major surgery," he says. "The advantage is that postoperative pain and recuperation is much, much less."

SAVING – AND IMPROVING – LIVES

Other surgical procedures in Dr. Bagdasarian's arsenal include arterial and venous thrombolysis, in which clot-dissolving medication is guided through a catheter using x-ray imaging to the site of a blood clot to eliminate the blockage, and the creation of arteriovenous fistulas in patients with kidney failure, which widens a vein in the arm by connecting it to a nearby artery, improving blood flow and making it easier for doctors to insert a needle for dialysis.

"The most rewarding thing about vascular surgery is being able to do these surgeries that save people's lives or improve their quality of life," says Dr. Bagdasarian, "and the results oftentimes are immediate, so it's very satisfying." The challenging part, he says, is that "despite your best efforts, patients can have bad outcomes, because these are very sick patients, most of whom have heart disease, high blood pressure, and diabetes."

When Dr. Bagdasarian isn't working, he, his wife Jenny, a pediatrician, and their daughter Isabelle enjoy travelling, skiing, swimming, and visiting with nearby family. ■

Lori Miller Kase is a freelance writer living in Simsbury.

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A photograph of a smiling couple standing in front of a blue wall. To the left is a large circular window with a white frame, reflecting an interior space with warm lighting. Above the couple is a colorful sign that reads 'SHALOM YALL' with a star. The man is wearing a blue and red plaid shirt and glasses, and the woman is wearing a green top and glasses. The overall atmosphere is warm and festive.

FAMILY

EMBRACING TRADITION

For interfaith families, the holiday season
brings many reasons to celebrate

By CARA MCDONOUGH / Photography by TONY BACEWICZ

The words that come to mind when we think of the holidays speak to the joy of the season – and the chaos, too. It’s a celebratory, abundant, frantic, merry and, sometimes, stressful time of year.

For people who are religious, the holidays may also serve as a reminder to more deeply reconnect with their faith; there are special services to attend and traditions to honor.

No matter how you mark this time of year, it’s safe to say that it’s a busy time for most. And for interfaith couples, where each individual comes from a different religious background, the holidays can be a little more complicated as they navigate unfamiliar terrain and make sure all those traditions are equally represented. But the experience often makes this an especially meaningful season for those couples and their families.

A JOYFUL KIND OF BUSY

Alli and Adam Schaefer have been married 12 years and have three children aged 7, 4 and 2. He’s Jewish, she’s Christian – a Congregationalist – and they’re raising their children Jewish. However, the Woodbridge couple agreed on something early on when it came to the winter holidays: celebrating both was important.

They revel in Christmas traditions, including presents under the tree and a visit from Santa, and light the menorah candles for each night of Hanukkah. They put a big emphasis on celebrating with family and attend a yearly lessons and carols service with her family at a church in Boston.

“We have these big extended families, so it gets incredibly busy, and every year we think we are going to streamline it and never do,” Alli says. “It’s hard to simplify when you celebrate both. Neither of us is willing to give up our portion of the season. We both want to pass on these things to our kids.”

For this family, though, it’s a joyful kind of busy, and their shared faiths have provided ample opportunities to grow more accepting, open and curious – in faith and beyond.

“I think when you’re married outside of your faith, you have to be open to experiencing other traditions, and that makes you open to other people’s traditions in general,” Alli says.

While they do employ some tactics to quell the general overabundance (Hanukkah gifts are often small, or might be “experiences” rather than tangible presents) their family focuses more on the benefits of combined faiths than the complexities.

“I think for a lot of people, like our children, it gives them a very interesting and full experience,” says Alli. “They are equally excited about all these traditions. To them, it’s just normal.”

They focus on the “giving” aspect of the holidays, including to charity, and on the fun of gathering with loved ones.

There are some practical benefits to their situation, too. For one thing, they don’t have to decide whose extended family they’re spending Christmas with every year, a decision that other couples might have to make. Plus, they bonded with other family members in similar situations when deciding how to manage the busy season.

“We’re so lucky because in both of our families there were already interfaith couples,” says Alli, referencing aunts and uncles in the same situation. “We had both grown up with some of the holidays that aren’t part of our faith tradition. We’ve benefited from that because we’re not trailblazing in our family and have looked at those couples as role models.”

BRINGING FAMILY TOGETHER

For Steph and Brian Slattery, who live in Hamden, having understanding family members plays a big part in their holiday season as well. And being understanding to other family members is a role they both take seriously.

Steph was raised Jewish and still practices, while Brian was raised Catholic and hasn’t been to church in decades, although the Catholic faith is incredibly important to his parents.

They’re raising their 13-year-old son Jewish, because they agreed that raising him with a faith tradition was important. As far as the holidays are concerned, they celebrate Hanukkah at home, as well as host a Christmas gathering for extended family most years, complete with a Christmas tree.

For the Slatterys, the holidays aren’t about perfection or getting the details just right, but instead about cultivating an appreciation of tradition – and throwing in a few new traditions of their own.

Let’s take that Christmas tree, for instance. “We don’t own any ornaments,” says Steph. “So we grab stuff around the house and put it on the tree.” The makeshift decorations often included crocheted items that she’s crafted.

Like the Schaeferes, they offer small gifts for Hanukkah, making the season a little easier to manage, especially when it and Christmas are close together on the calendar. They don’t do gifts from mom and dad under the Christmas tree, but their son gets plenty from relatives who celebrate.

The situation has given each member of the family opportunities to dive deeper, too, learning more about the two faiths practiced in their immediate and extended families. Brian says he’s enjoyed getting to know more about Judaism, including during Hanukkah, and his parents invite their grandson to church at Christmas every year, although they never push the issue; his parents leave the decision of whether or not to go up to him.

“I love any holiday that has to do with food and family

Steph and Brian Slattery, who have chosen to follow Judaism, stand in a spot on their porch where their “Shalom Y’all” sign hangs.

together,” Steph says. Her husband wholeheartedly agrees, and they both point out that adopting two sets of traditions has never been a burden. Rather, it’s a reason to bring extra meaning to the season.

Brian says that although he’s “far away” from Catholicism from a spiritual standpoint, “it’s easy for me to see that celebrating the holiday in the proper style is really important to the people we’re inviting over, and therefore it’s important to me.”

He finds a lot that’s culturally similar in the two faiths, especially where the holidays are concerned: “It’s about food and getting together, and a shared sense of tradition and heritage that you identify with.”

Steph points out that, for her, embracing Christmas isn’t about “not being Jewish, it’s about being a good host.”

Plus, she has added reason to embrace a day that’s – simply put – a big deal in this country. “What I love is that it’s become a day that’s not religiously meaningful to me, but that I really look forward to,” she says. (She also points out a logistical benefit: as a pediatrician, it’s a day that she can freely offer to be “on call” in her practice, a gesture other Jewish doctors there happily offer as well).

Their son’s situation is, simply put, “awesome,” she says. “He gets to celebrate everything.”

EXPANDING THEIR HORIZONS

Michelle and Jonathan Helitzer, a couple from Simsbury, are Catholic and Jewish, respectively. They too celebrate the Christian and Jewish holidays together as a family, although in their case, family religion involves being members at a local Catholic Church, St. Catherine of Siena.

For their family, “most Jewish holidays are home-based rather than synagogue-centric,” says Michelle about the way the couple and their children adapt to a busy spiritual life, adding that Christmas and Easter “take center stage” when it comes to the Christian holidays.

Keeping with the theme of most interfaith couples, it seems, they, too, emphasize the cultural and food-centric parts of the season, including latkes at Hanukkah and a traditional Passover meal.

“We love being exposed to one another’s heritages and beliefs,” says Michelle. “It’s educational, affirming and enjoyable.”

LEARNING AND SHARING TRADITIONS

Nagu Kent is Hindu and her husband, Philip, is Jewish. For this Hamden-based couple, the winter holidays are a fairly relaxed affair. They celebrate Hanukkah at home and, when they visit her family in New York, do take time to celebrate a low-key Christmas, enjoying time with loved ones and the chance to give a few gifts, despite the fact that it’s not a holiday they are attached to through their faiths.

She says they concentrate on the Jewish and Hindu high holidays – Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur and the Hindu festival of lights, Diwali, which is celebrated each autumn – and that their three sons have been or will be bar mitzvahed. But in general, when it comes to religion, “we just kind of

roll with it,” she says.

They’re in good company: Nagu has two older brothers, one who is married to a Catholic, and one who is married to an Indian woman. So learning and sharing new traditions is natural in this family.

As for the benefits of being an interfaith couple? She laughs, and says her children don’t seem particularly “spiritual,” even with so many faith-based traditions in their lives. They still wish they could get out of attending religious services on the holidays, like most kids.

But learning about one another’s faith is certainly interesting, she says, and she’s happy to live in a community where there are many interfaith couples, so it feels normal for her to attend temple with her husband. “People are very embracing,” she says.

She models that in her own family, too.

“It doesn’t matter what God you pray to,” she tells her children. “God is just there to teach you good things, to give you something to hope for.”

SEEKING SIMILARITIES

Father Michael Whyte, the pastor at St. Catherine of Siena in West Simsbury, says he has interacted with many new and established couples that come from two different faiths. He emphasizes how important it can be to embrace one another’s traditions not only at the holidays, but all throughout the year.

Having children can make this especially important, he says. When parents provide a “legacy of faith” – even when it’s two different faiths – it allows children to choose how they’d like to embrace spirituality in their own lives someday.

This means accepting a dual responsibility, Whyte says: being a proud and passionate representative of your individual faith, while embracing your partner’s fully.

“I’m not saying that you have to accept the beliefs of the other faith, but accept the traditions,” Whyte says.

Because whether it’s family gatherings, putting up a Christmas tree or menorah, or attending church, temple or a mosque, when it comes to religion the truth is, “there are far more similarities than there are differences,” he says. “We all look to a creator. We look to someone who is loving.”

He feels, “We need to focus on our common denominators and move forward from that. We spend so much time on the differences of everything, from the rituals to the theology of our faith, that we forget to see the mortar that puts it all together.”

Celebrating what we all have in common is particularly meaningful during the holidays, he says. It’s a time of year that is – yes – busy and buoyant, but also a period when people tend to look inward, becoming more charitable, generous, empathetic to those around them, and dialed in to what’s most important: “It’s when people try to be really focused on what really matters.” ■



A flooded street in an oceanside community shows the power of Hurricane Sandy, a powerful storm which crashed into the Eastern USA. A porch which has been torn off of a house lies in the flooded street.

Forces of Nature

Connecticut Isn't Immune to Wild Weather

By JOEL SAMBERG

As Connecticut's smartest and most notable conversationalist once said, "It is best to read the weather forecast before we pray for rain."

Mark Twain was simply alluding to the old proverb that what will be, will be. In other words, if nasty weather is on the way, there's not much we can do about it, other than be prepared. Some Connecticut residents take that platitude in stride, simply because our state seems to avoid the massive meteorological and geographical events from which others often suffer, such as gargantuan hurricanes, town-clearing tornadoes, ground-leveling earthquakes, Noah-like floods and unrelenting wildfires.

But if we're to be as wise as that noted raconteur from Farmington Avenue in Hartford, then we should listen carefully to the

experts before we boast about our relatively moderate state of affairs.

What do the experts say? Basically, that since natural and weather-related disasters have happened in the past, they'll most likely happen again.

"We've had some pretty nasty weather that can rival what happens in other parts of the country," notes Bruce DePrest, chief meteorologist for WFSB. DePrest, now in his forty-first year as a weather broadcaster, points to several examples, including blizzards in 1888, 1978 and 2013 that dropped massive amounts of snow, caused widespread damage – and in the case of the 2013 storm, plunged hundreds of thousands of Connecticut residents into darkness for days. There have also been tornadoes (including one in 1979 that killed three people, injured 500 and destroyed many homes and businesses), a number of serious floods, some





Hartford residents glide down Pleasant Street. Photo courtesy of The Connecticut Historical Society.

earthquakes and, if you search the files, a handful of wildfires.

“We live in this powder keg where you get cold air from Canada meeting the warm gulf stream,” DePrest explains. “That provides a tremendous amount of temperature differential, and that’s when ingredients are in place for big weather events to happen veryfast.” Over at WTNH Channel 8, Chief Meteorologist Gil Simmons adds the unknown calendar to the equation. “Time is ticking for a large impact hurricane. Tornadoes are likely, as well. Connecticut’s climate does go through active and quiet periods,” he says, noting how such a realization requires us to stay alert. “In fact, we had a record number of tornadoes in 2018. Every season can offer something tough to deal with. We have to be ready.”

FLOODS

Floods, too, can develop with relative ease and speed because Connecticut has no lack of roads and parking lots, both of which disallow heavy rain and overflowing rivers from draining into the ground. In a video called “Rising Waters: Planning for Flooding in Connecticut,” Diane Ifkovic, the state of Connecticut’s National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) coordinator, declares that flooding is the most prevalent and frequent natural hazard in the state.

In 2017, the Connecticut Institute for Resilience & Climate Adaptation (CIRCA) at the University of Connecticut issued a report warning that local sea levels

are likely to rise as much as 20 inches by 2050. That, in concert with the roads and parking lots, will add to increased flooding. Furthermore, snow melt from Vermont and New Hampshire can swell the Connecticut River, which then engulfs portions of Wethersfield, Cromwell, Rocky Hill and Glastonbury. Even smaller bodies of water, such as the Farmington River, can overflow their banks, turning communities into lakes.

Unfortunately, Connecticut has already experienced severe damage and human devastation from floods. In August 1955, the Great Flood struck 71 of Connecticut’s 169 towns and villages, killing 77 people and leaving hundreds of people homeless. Torrington, Ansonia, Naugatuck, Winsted, Putnam and the Unionville section of Farmington were among the most drastically affected but some 20,000 families across the state suffered some flood damage, and cleanup and repair costs soared into the millions. There are also more recent examples. In 2011, Nod Road in Simsbury became a virtual tributary of the river, as did Folly Farm at the base of Talcott Mountain.

VOLCANOES AND EARTHQUAKES

Talcott (also known as Avon Mountain) is one of several ranges in the state. Although they don’t rival those of many other states, their mere existence underscores the fact that geologic activity from eons ago may have left a shadow or a specter of what’s to come. Hamden, for example, is situated between two formations known as “trap rock,” and geologists speculate that the ridges of these formations

resulted from massive volcanic eruptions more than 170 million years ago. In the 16th Century, indigenous people in that area reported what they called “earthshaking” events. Moodus, a Haddam village, is a Native American word loosely translated as “a place of noise.”

While there is no evidence that ancient volcanoes under Connecticut are planning a comeback any time soon, seismologists report that a volcano is indeed forming under a large swath of the northeastern United States. Vadim Levin, a geophysicist and professor in the Department of Earth and Planetary Sciences at Rutgers University, coauthored a paper for the journal *Geology* in which he and his team report there are ongoing seismic forces at work. His team assessed data from the National Science Foundation, which used thousands of scientific instruments to monitor volcanic and earthquake data.

“It is not Yellowstone-like, but it’s a distant relative in the sense that something relatively small – no more than a couple hundred miles across – is happening,” Levin wrote in the report. But for such a small state, a couple of hundred miles could one day be a big deal; on average, our state is a little more than 100 miles long and 70 miles wide.

“Furthermore,” adds Bruce DePrest, “in New England, the rock under the surface is older and more rigid, which means that there can be an earthquake up in Quebec and we’ll feel it here in Connecticut.” That happened in 1925. A 1944 earthquake centered in Massena, New York and a 2011 quake near Richmond, Virginia also shook violently in our state. Between October 2014 and July 2015, a swarm of more than 100 small earthquakes shook the ground at Wauregan, part of Plainfield, including a magnitude 3.1 earthquake on January 12, 2015.

WILDFIRES

While we don’t have many earthquakes, we do sometimes have a lack of rain and excessive heat. Both are known to spark other kinds of events, one of which is not often associated with Connecticut: wildfires.

As one of the smaller states, we have less uninterrupted acreage than others to burn during a wildfire sparked either naturally or through human intervention. Also, those same roads and parking lots that exacerbate flooding act as barriers to wildfires. But wildfires can, and have, occurred.

“We had a fire in Cornwall which went to 400 acres,” recalls Richard Schenk, fire control officer at the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection. “It posed no real threat, had good containment lines, and wasn’t going anywhere else – but it was smoldering on the ground for months.” The 2016 fire started in mid-September and firefighters were still finding hotspots in January.

“Any fire that’s 500 acres or more in Connecticut becomes very complex because of the density and the fact that homeowners and local governments aren’t used to dealing with them,” says Schenk, who is quick to add that Connecticut fire departments are well trained. He has fought fires all over the country, including Alaska, as well

as in Canada, and does not discount the fact that even in Connecticut, with the right conditions, a wide-ranging, long-lasting fire episode is entirely possible.

Several decades ago, there were far more major fires in Connecticut when the farmland that had dotted the landscape prior to World War II was ignored and became more susceptible to fire. But even though old farmland is now less of a problem, other issues that can increase the possibility of wildfires have taken its place, such as gypsy moth defoliation, increased leaf debris and more dumping of wood ash into gardens.

“What’s more,” Schenk adds, “if it’s a dry winter and spring, our own houses can become part of the fuel chain that feeds a major fire event – even here in Connecticut.”

So are we ready for any weather catastrophe or natural disaster?

If history is any guide, the answer is that no one really knows. That’s because Connecticut residents have reacted to different events in different ways at different times. The middle of 1816, for example, was known as one of the coldest summers in Connecticut history, and resulted in widespread crop failures. According to state historian Walter Woodward (who is also an associate professor of history at UConn), residents reacted “by throwing in the towel and migrating to places like western New York and the Ohio Western Reserve to seek better opportunities.”

By contrast, he says, after a major flood in 1936 and a destructive hurricane in 1938, residents worked together to implement full-scale, multi-year recovery efforts. Even though there’s a world of difference between 1816 and 1938, sometimes human emotions are unable to tell time. Woodward notes that there is now a larger tendency to rely on federal, state and local resources for help, and that alone can cause some residents to be less than diligent. Then the question becomes whether or not the government is ready on our behalf.

According to Regina Rush-Kittle, deputy commissioner at the Connecticut Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection, Division of Emergency Management and Homeland Security, “The state is well-positioned to handle any disaster or emergency.” Connecticut, she explains, is divided into five emergency planning regions, each with a full team of representatives from local communities who can skillfully provide support functions that include, among other things, evacuation assistance and mass injury care.


Twain once jested that we must never put off till tomorrow what can be done just as well the day after tomorrow. Back then, people knew far less about hurricanes, earthquakes, volcanoes, floods and wildfires, and how they can all happen even in a fairly quiet state like Connecticut.

But the earth is a complicated place, with tricks up its sleeve that won’t amuse us. There’s nothing we can do about it except be ready. After all, as Twain also said, “The world owes us nothing. It was here first.” ■



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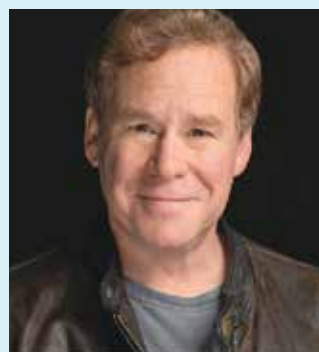
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Nine-year-old Daniel Hillman is a musical prodigy on Long Island. He knows that he'll be the first preteen in history to write, arrange and perform his own hit album. But what Daniel does not know is that life can get in the way. Parents. Fallen heroes. Broken dreams. Vietnam. Jealousy. Anger. Desire. Fate.



Joel Samberg

"Blowin' in the Wind," a novel narrated by his sister Lori, follows Daniel and his family through the remarkable 1960s, from the assassination of President Kennedy to the Vietnam War to the moon landing and beyond. The latest release by

Avon, CT author and journalist Joel Samberg, the book is based in part on his own life experiences.

"In a way," says Joel, "this book has been in the making for more than 50 years, since I was Daniel's age when the story begins. That's when a classmate insulted me at a school talent contest. Following that, I received a rejection letter from MGM about a screenplay I wrote when I was 12, not dissimilar to the note that Daniel gets from MGM about his own screenplay – although he doesn't take the disappointment nearly as well as I did."

Dr. Gibbs Williams, author of "Demystifying Meaningful Coincidences," says the book has shades of Proust and Joyce, and is an entertaining take on "the ever-hovering role that chance, luck and coincidence play in creating who we are."

"Blowin' in the Wind" is available at Amazon.com.

UConn HEALTH Emergency!

UConn Health's ED provides rapid, state-of-the-art lifesaving care

Photography by **CONNECTICUT HEADSHOTS**

When the Emergency Department (ED) at John Dempsey Hospital's new hospital tower opened in 2016, it significantly transformed the patient care experience, raising the bar to an even higher level. Thanks to a thoughtful redesign aimed at providing the most expeditious and effective care possible, patients who arrive at UConn Health's ED in serious condition – or who present with potentially life-threatening symptoms – are even more likely to walk out of the hospital with no lasting ill effects.

The new ED includes more than 40 private patient rooms and five patient-care zones, sorted by care for everything from minor emergencies to advanced trauma – along with specialized care teams poised to begin providing advanced medical care at a moment's notice.

For patients exhibiting symptoms of heart attack or stroke, where every minute counts, that state-of-the-art expertise could not be more critical, since the danger of death or permanent disability is very real if a heart attack or stroke patient is not treated in time.

Thankfully, the care provided by the UConn ED team begins even before the patient arrives at the hospital, says EMS Coordinator Peter Canning, an RN and paramedic.

"UConn Health's care really starts when the paramedic arrives at the patient's side," he says. "For instance, if somebody's having chest pain, the paramedics put on a 12-lead EKG and if it shows a certain tracing, they can recognize that it's a possible ST-Elevation Myocardial Infarction, or STEMI, a very serious type of heart attack in which a major artery in the

patient's heart is blocked."

The paramedics call from wherever the patient is located to send a STEMI alert to the ED team, and transfer the patient's electrocardiogram, or EKG, reading. Then an emergency medicine physician leader comes on the line and the paramedic describes what's going on.

All of this takes place with clockwork precision.

"The physician will activate the cardiac cath lab while the patient's still in their house," Canning explains. "While the patient receives care on the way to the hospital, all of the mechanisms here are being put into place so that our Calhoun Cardiology Center's cardiac interventionalist is on hand by the time the patient arrives. The end result is that we save heart muscle. The patient's artery gets opened up much more quickly. We do a similar thing with stroke."

UConn Health's Medical Director of Emergency Medicine Dr. Alise Frallicciardi says a STEMI or stroke alert sets off a chain reaction, quickly pulling all members of the team together to deal with the incoming emergency. And whether the patient arrives by ambulance or comes to the ED on their own, "our doctors and staff are amazing at identifying that stroke, or that heart attack, or any condition that is bothering you. Our door-to-balloon time for heart attack care is quite low. We'll have a doctor at your bedside quickly, so I think that's a huge draw when people are [deciding where to go for their care]. We have doctors to see all of those patients quite rapidly, and we also have all of the resources of the stroke team and our cardiology team at our disposal. We rapidly triage our patients for care and try to keep our waiting room empty."

Canning notes that in addition to its ED, which is open around the clock, UConn Health has seven satellite care locations, including two urgent cares – one in Canton and one in Storrs. "For example, at UConn Health Canton, in addition to primary and specialty care, we have a great walk-in urgent care clinic. People have had situations where they're experiencing symptoms that could be consistent with a heart attack but are not sure if those symptoms are serious. They might think, 'I'm





Signs of Heart Attack

If you have any of these signs, call 9-1-1 and get to a hospital right away. Women's heart attack symptoms can be different from men's, so lack of chest pain doesn't mean it's not a heart attack.

- Uncomfortable pressure, squeezing, fullness or pain in the center of your chest. It lasts more than a few minutes or goes away and comes back.
- Pain or discomfort in one or both arms, the back, neck, jaw or stomach.
- Shortness of breath, with or without chest discomfort.
- Other signs such as breaking out in a cold sweat, nausea, feelings of indigestion or lightheadedness.

As with men, women's most common heart attack symptom is chest pain or discomfort. But women are more likely than men to experience the other common symptoms – shortness of breath, nausea/vomiting and back or jaw pain.

Signs of Stroke

Think **B.E. F.A.S.T.**:

- **Balance** – Watch for sudden loss of balance.
- **Eyes** – Check for vision loss.
- **Face drooping** – Does one side of the face droop or feel numb? If the person smiles, is it uneven or lopsided?
- **Arm weakness** – Is one arm weak or numb? When the person raises both arms, does one arm drift downward?
- **Speech** – Is speech slurred? Is the person able to speak and be understood? Can they repeat a simple sentence?
- **Time to call 911** – If someone shows any of these symptoms, even if they go away, call 911 and get them to the hospital immediately.

Other signs of stroke:

- Sudden numbness, especially on one side of the body.
- Sudden confusion, trouble speaking or understanding.
- Sudden trouble seeing in one or both eyes.
- Sudden trouble walking, with dizziness, loss of balance or coordination.
- Sudden severe headache with no known cause.

Source: UConn Health and American Heart Association

ALL FOR ONE: UConn Health's ED team includes, from left, Stroke Program Director Dr. Sanjay Mittal; EMS Coordinator Peter Canning, RN and paramedic; Medical Director of Emergency Medicine Dr. Alise Frallicciardi; Emergency Medicine Department Chair and Chief of Service, Dr. Robert Fuller; and Emergency Medicine Physician Leader Dr. Richard Kamin.

not feeling so well. I'm a little nauseous,' and they'll go to urgent care," he says.

"Our medical staff there will assess them, and if they do an EKG and realize that this person is having a STEMI, they'll call 911 for an ambulance to transport the patient, then they'll call the ED and send over the EKG results, so the cath lab is ready even before the ambulance arrives. And the person walks out of the hospital two days later with no major heart damage."

Dr. Frallicciardi explains that UConn's urgent care facilities actually function as part the health center's ED. "All of us work out of the urgent cares as well, so when you go to one of our urgent care centers, there is a direct link. No matter what illness you have, if it requires a higher level of care, if the patient needs an emergency room, the urgent care will call us to help care for you as quickly as possible."

Stroke Program Director Dr. Sanjay Mittal says in order to achieve the best possible outcome for each patient, the medical team at UConn Health's ED makes the most of every minute, from the second the patient arrives. "We closely monitor the time, from when the patient was brought in, to the time the patient received care or clot-busting medications," he says. "Our best timing, a couple of weeks ago, was 16 minutes. We are all coming to a point where we're able to deliver care in the fastest way possible, and the safest way possible. I think one reason for that is that we are in an academic medical center. We use the latest available medical knowledge and technology, and personalize each patient's care, and take care of the patient in a very comprehensive, effective manner."

Emergency Medicine Department Chair and Chief of Service Dr. Robert Fuller says in situations where the patient's health or life is at risk, effective teamwork is essential. "When somebody comes into the ED very sick, they need the support of the entire UConn Health academic medical center system - that extends beyond what I can do alone. I need experts like Dr. Sanjay Mittal, director of our stroke program. I need experts like the neurosurgeons led by Dr. Ketan Bulsara. I need my cardiologists, providers in the ICUs, nurses, etc., to provide really skilled, specialized care so that, ultimately, patients can leave this place walking out intact with the best possible outcomes and able to have the best quality of life."

Dr. Fuller adds, "Our objective is to get patients the intervention they need in the most efficient and easiest way possible."

That also relies on optimal access to the tools and resources needed to expedite care. UConn Health's Emergency Medicine Physician Leader, Dr. Richard Kamin, says the department's new design includes a CT scanner and an x-ray suite within the ED. As a result, "our patients don't have to be moved to another part of the hospital. They stay safely within arm's reach of the critical care and emergency medicine staff while the specialists are collaborating to take care of the patient," he says.

"For example, you have to do a CT scan to help decide whether or not it's appropriate to give clot-busting medicine to a stroke patient. When the EMS providers call us from the field, we actually put a hold on the CT scanner. The neurologist meets us, and they walk with us to the CT scanner. We go right to the scan table to help the neurologist decide, in conjunction with the exam, whether this patient should receive that medicine, so we're doing a lot in that short window of time."

Just importantly, all members of the ED team know exactly what to do when a patient suffers a medical crisis, like a stroke.

"When our stroke center team reaches the ED, we always have our nurses and doctors there, immediately taking care of the ABCs - airway, breathing, and circulation, along with vitals. Diagnostic

imaging tests and clot-busting medications have to be delivered rapidly to save a patient's life or prevent permanent injury deficits to their brain and body's mobility," Dr. Mittal says.

"Stroke happens because there is a clot in the brain, and when there is a clot in the brain, a certain part of the brain will stop receiving blood. Blood carries oxygen. If your brain does not get oxygen for more than three minutes, those brain cells start to die. The faster we remove the clot, or bust the clot, the higher the chances are of a meaningful recovery. By the time the patient comes to us, they have already been experiencing their symptoms for some time, so the providers get a really short window in which to capture all of the history, and the physical and patient details, and deliver clot-busting medications."

He says in order to respond in an optimal way, "Stroke care in our ED is heavily protocol-driven, and the protocol demands many people all at once by the patient's side, because the labs have to be drawn; the nurses do the initial evaluation; the physicians also are there. We all have to interface with the ED physicians and the EMS, and the whole thing has cascaded through a process called 'stroke alert.'"

Dr. Fuller notes that while time is of the essence when treating a stroke, a person experiencing one typically doesn't feel any pain, "so patients might let the clock tick for a while" before seeking medical care. "Pain brings people to the ED very quickly. With a stroke, you might not be as motivated to come in, so we lose time because patients aren't aware of the signs and symptoms of stroke and may not know that they should come to the ED very quickly."

Fortunately, says Dr. Kamin, when a patient does arrive at the ED with a clinical suspicion for stroke, "there is an opportunity to have expeditious imaging that tells us exactly where that clot is and whether or not this patient is an appropriate candidate to have medicine to clear it, or even needs an urgent, lifesaving interventional procedure, with our experienced neurosurgery team, to surgically remove the clot from their brain. And, if so, we activate the neurosurgeons quickly who do this brain surgery intervention. The patient is then taken swiftly to our high-tech, specialized hybrid operating room at UConn's John Dempsey Hospital."

Dr. Mittal says in addition to three neurologists who provide full neurological coverage 24/7, the ED team has all of the cutting-edge technology and expertise to deal with virtually any situation. "It could be the patient has such a big stroke that the brain has swollen and needs surgery. We can do that here, but more importantly, just like in the heart cases, we can use a wire that goes in and opens up the arteries, through a fairly new process called a thrombectomy," he explains. "Nowadays, our surgeons can actually put in a wire through the groin and get to the clot, deliver a little bit of clot-busting medication at that point, and open that artery."

In fact, UConn Health is one of only three hospitals in the state with the expertise to perform these mechanical thrombectomies, "which means that by coming to us first, you don't have to be transferred to another hospital. We provide comprehensive stroke care."

He notes that stroke treatment does not end with delivering clot-busting medication or surgery, and treatment for a heart attack does not end when the immediate crisis is over. To increase the chances of a complete recovery, these conditions also require in-depth follow-up care, including physical therapy. And all of the post-ED treatment that is required by a stroke or heart attack patient can be accessed through UConn Health, making it a one-stop shop for care. ■



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Brunch Basics

**Treat your guests – and yourself –
to a laid-back, festive gathering**

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



Oh, brunch.

There's so much to love about you. Your clever portmanteau label. Your wide array of delightful foods. Your juicy, meant-for-day-drinking cocktails. So special, so entirely bougie that you are reserved only for the weekend.

Breakfast or lunch? You don't make me choose. With you, anything goes. I can eat anything, from eggs to prime rib to seafood to dessert, in any order I choose. Your buffet tables groan with variety – breads and pastries, salads and sides, eggs made my way, meat carving stations, puddings and cakes and pies (oh my!).

Your best offerings, in my entirely biased opinion, are true to your character and mash up both breakfast and lunch foods. Steak and eggs. Chicken and waffles. Sweet salads. Savory desserts. You are so satisfying with your unexpected intermingling of flavors. And have I mentioned that you have perfect timing? Neither too early nor too late in the day. Your existence lends itself to relaxed gatherings of friends and family. You are perfection on a plate (or several). You are my favorite of all meals.

My love for brunch is real, and in addition to my little love letter above, my job here is to convince you that winter brunches are the best of all. Brunch brings a beautiful respite to a stress-filled season of heavy meals and late-night parties. Here are some tips and tricks alongside a few recipes to help you host a successful seasonal brunch with as little effort as possible.

Most importantly, be mindful with your menu. Consider keeping it light. 'Tis the season of overindulgence, so ask yourself whether your guests actually need that bacon or sausage. Stick to dishes that can be prepped the night before. Sure, everyone loves omelets cooked to order but if you're tied to your stove, you're not able to visit with your guests. Save those for the restaurant brunches and instead choose a couple of dishes that can be made in advance and will feed several guests. Baked French toast casserole. A quiche or frittata. Try this award-winning tart of mine that was once featured in an Ikea ad campaign that ran in *O! The Oprah Magazine*. I'm not ashamed to admit I make my work here even easier by using frozen pie crust on this one. (The folks at Oprah didn't seem to mind.) Another great thing about this tart is that it tastes wonderful served at room temperature. Pair it with a salad or fruit, or, like I've done here, a fruity salad featuring some of the beautiful citrus that peaks during winter.

Now to my next tip – don't go crazy trying to re-create the latest Pinterest-pretty baked goods. Do you have a dough laminator? Yeah, me neither. Purchase those croissants. Order some pastries. Grab a dozen bagels. Connecticut is home to some amazing independent bakeries. Support your local neighbors by buying their gorgeous products and making them look pretty on a nice platter instead of spending your day baking. Unless that's your particular jam.

And speaking of platters, and jam for that

matter, my third tip is that you gather your serving dishes, plates, glasses, coffee mugs, silverware, linens and condiments all in one place the night before your brunch. Don't forget sugar and cream for coffee, as well as butter, jam or jelly, salt and pepper. That way, all you have to do is set your table before your guests arrive. Or, don't even do that. Just buffet all the way!

Which brings us to the best part of brunch and my final tip. Set up a drinks bar so you're not playing bartender as well as host. There must be coffee; a selection of teas is also a nice touch. But let's be real here – brunch means mimosas. And while a traditional mimosa is simply orange juice with champagne, I challenge you to go beyond the basics and create your own mimosa bar. Set out carafes of different juices (cranberry, grapefruit, pomegranate, apple, orange) along with like-flavored liqueurs or vodkas and several bottles of your favorite sparkling wine. I like prosecco, champagne's much cheaper Italian cousin, or cava, which is similar but from Spain. Line up some mix-and-match champagne flutes and small bowls filled with pretty garnishes like citrus twists or sugared berries. Encourage guests to try different combinations; you'll find some of my favorites below.

To sum up, give yourself some low-stress brunch love this winter by remembering these tips: choose the right dishes, don't be afraid to serve something store-bought, and prepare as much ahead of time as you can. But most importantly, sit back with a mimosa and enjoy the time with your guests. That's what this season is all about. 🍷

Amy S. White is a teacher, food writer, and line cook in eastern Connecticut. While she wishes she could invite all of her readers to brunch at her place, this column will have to suffice. For more about Amy, go to amyswhite.com.



CARAMELIZED ONION AND FARMER'S CHEESE TART


Makes four to six servings; can be made ahead and heated or served room temperature

Ingredients:

- 2 Tbsp olive oil
- 2 large onions, diced
- 1 tsp sugar
- 1 tsp kosher salt
- 1 Tbsp balsamic vinegar
- 1 frozen 9-inch deep dish pie crust (I prefer Mrs. Smith's)
- 8 ounces farmer's cheese
- ½ cup whole milk
- 3 large egg yolks
- 2 large eggs
- Freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 2 Tbsp chopped fresh chives
- 1 Tbsp (about 5 leaves) chopped fresh sage
- Optional garnish: fry whole sage leaves (one per slice) in hot oil until crisp

Preparation:

Heat oven to 350F. Heat olive oil in a large skillet. Add the diced onions, sugar and salt, and cook over medium-high heat, stirring often, until the onions just start to turn brown. Be patient, as this takes time. Add the balsamic vinegar and continue to cook until onions are nicely caramelized. Spread the caramelized onions in an even layer into the bottom of the pie crust. Dollop half of the cheese on top of the onions. Whisk together the milk, egg yolks, eggs, pepper, chives and sage. Pour this into the pie over the cheese and onions. Dollop the remaining cheese into the mixture and place the whole pie on a baking sheet. Bake at 350F for 35-40 minutes, until the center is firm and springy. Cut into slices and serve each slice garnished with a fried sage leaf.



WINTER CITRUS SALAD WITH ROSEMARY SYRUP

Makes four to six servings

Make this salad your own by incorporating a wider variety of winter citrus like blood oranges, satsumas, and pomelos. You can get more servings out of it by adding baby arugula as well.

Ingredients:

- 1 cup water**
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup sugar**
- 1 large sprig rosemary**
- 2 grapefruits, peeled and cut into segments**
- 6 clementines, peeled and cut into segments**
- 2 Asian pears, cut into "batonnets" (like a carrot stick)**
- 1 cup pomegranate seeds**

Preparation:

Prepare the syrup by bringing water, sugar and rosemary sprig to a boil. Turn down heat and allow to simmer until liquid is reduced by half and mixture is syrupy. Gently fold together the fruits until well combined. Drizzle with the rosemary syrup.

BEYOND-THE-BASIC-MIMOSA

Recipe per serving:

- ½ ounce liqueur
- 2 ounces juice of the same flavor as the liqueur
- 1 ounce sparkling wine
- Garnish

Pour liqueur and juice into a glass. Top with sparkling wine and your favorite garnish.

Cranberry:

Wild Moon Cranberry Liqueur, cranberry juice, and sparkling wine garnished with a sugared cranberry.

To make sugared cranberries: bring cranberries to a boil in a mixture of ½ cup water and ½ cup sugar. Allow to soak for an hour. Remove and roll in sugar.

Citrus:

Your favorite citrus-flavored vodka, orange or grapefruit juice, and sparkling wine garnished with a citrus twist.

Apple:

Wild Moon Chai-Spice Liqueur or apple brandy, apple cider, and sparkling wine garnished with an apple slice.

Pomegranate:

Pama pomegranate liqueur, pomegranate juice, and sparkling wine garnished with fresh pomegranate seeds.



PERFECT PAIRINGS

Mix It Up!

By SCOTT CLARK

Without booze, it's just breakfast. Make brunch a little more special by serving beverages with fruity flavors that will enhance your brunch with friends.

One of the keys to pairings for this midmorning meal is to choose a cocktail that complements the style of food being served. For example, a mimosa is a wonderful match for a fresh fruit brunch, while a Bloody Mary works well with heartier foods.

A classic mimosa uses orange juice as the base, with the addition of champagne bubbles to lighten it up. For a twist, add wheat beer and make a heftier version. Other fruit-based brunch cocktails include:

GINGER BEER MARGARITAS: Imagine your favorite margarita recipe meets the tingly sweet fizz of ginger beer.

PEAR VANILLA COCONUT COOLER: When pear nectar meets coconut vodka, what's not to love? A bit of coconut sugar pretties up the rim and reinforces the tropical note.

APPLE BEE'S KNEES COCKTAIL: The Bee's Knees is a prohibition-era cocktail made of honey syrup, fresh lemon, and gin that really stands the taste test of time.

The tomato flavor of the Bloody Mary is another excellent choice for brunch, and is wonderful with casseroles, pancakes, and the like. The Bloody Mary often serves as a favorite if you're planning a day of football, basketball, or some other sporting event.

SPICY BACON BLOODY MARY: Seriously, you can't go wrong with bacon! This recipe calls for a homemade Bloody Mary mix, featuring horseradish, sriracha, and a rim of creole spices. Garnish it with a strip of bacon, olive, onion and cocktail shrimp.

Scott Clark is the general manager of Liquor Depot Inc.

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CROWNING GLORY: Bob Finch of Custom House in East Haddam created this spectacular home theater, fit for royalty.



A Vision for Entertainment

Home owners take “going to the movies” to a whole new level

By JOHN TORSIELLO / Photography courtesy of BOB FINCH

Home theaters have come a long way since the term “home theater” was first coined in the mid-1970s.

In its early days, a home theater was a dedicated room in someone’s home, typically in the basement. Front projection units made by Barco, Sony, NEC and other manufacturers were extremely popular. These behemoth electronic units, some weighing in at close to 200 pounds, would be hung from a ceiling, projecting an image anywhere from 100 inches all the way up to 250 inches. Price tags in excess of \$10,000 were the norm. High quality screens were mounted in the ceiling, and with the flip of a switch, would lower to receive the projected image.

Other components such as an AV receiver, a pre-amp, high power amplifiers, laser disc players, VCRs and high-end audio speakers were required for movie theater quality sound. Dolby Digital 5.1 sound systems were popular “back in the day,” with front, center, rear and subwoofers all necessary gear. But constant tweaking by the homeowner or a trained professional was required to align the red, blue and green CRT tubes for a razor-sharp image. BNC cables were the norm, as HDMI cables had yet to be invented.

Fast forward to the edge of dawn for the millennium’s third decade. The quality of ultra high definition big screen

televisions and surround sound for in-home enjoyment has vastly improved. VCRs and disc players have given way to streaming by such entities as Amazon Prime, Roku and Apple. Even Blu-ray, considered state-of-the-art only a few years ago, may be phased out. Audio, when handled by a skilled technician, is flawless. And LED lighting can create fantastic effects, all of this controlled by a hand-held device. Homeowners willing to shell out considerable cash to bring it all together actually are in a theater – one of their own.

Bob Finch, president and owner of Custom House in East Haddam, customizes the entertainment experience for homeowners in Connecticut and elsewhere, with some of his home theaters costing upwards of a quarter of a million dollars.

“Sometimes what I create in a home theater is a statement for the homeowner. Other times, it is done for someone who just really enjoys a quality home theater with the best of everything, including the television, sound, lighting, seating and whatever else they want included in the space. I usually get handed a set of keys and design the room for them.”

Finch, who works alongside his son, Benjamin, says they have designed everything from woodwork to lighting, and built more than 450 home theaters costing a quarter of a million dollars and more.



A FIRM FOUNDATION: Custom home installations are hand built from the bottom up.

According to Finch, home theaters are “trending up” at present. “We saw things drop off in 2008, rebound some in 2014, and go into a lull prior to this year. But people have more disposable income now, and they want to spend it.”

He installed a system for Southbury’s Gary Wronker that the homeowner enjoys pretty much every night of the week.

“I love movies and am addicted to television,” says Wronker. “I always liked things big. Bob installed a 133-inch projector screen in our living room that has now become also our theater room. Because we have a condo and limited space, we had all the speakers hidden. And the screen is also recessed and encased in a special housing that can be lowered to view movies and streamed television.” The speakers are located throughout the home, for enjoyment of music as well.

Finch even installed a small television screen behind the Wronkers’ bathroom mirror that, with a press of a button, comes to life. The television is not seen when turned off, and the mirror is, well, a mirror.

Bob Serio, owner of Perfect Vision and Sound in Avon, is another wizard who makes auditory and visual dreams come true. He has also created home theaters for well-heeled clients throughout the state, especially in the greater Hartford area. “There is no doubt that movie nights have become popular again for some people. It’s a time to gather the family around after a hectic day or week, pop some popcorn, get your pajamas on, stream a movie and relax.”

Serio says one of the key elements of a home theater is, of course, its sound – not only in the room itself but preventing it from reverberating through the remainder of the home. “You have to have the proper insulation, maybe spray foam or lead-lined Sheetrock, that will help insulate the theater and keep the sound in the room.”

Serio just completed a super sports room theater for a client that cost upwards of \$100,000. “We actually took the top of the garage off, created a home theater space, and put in the best of everything: flat screens, stadium seating, carpeting, nice woodwork, and a bar. There’s a 110-inch screen flanked by a 55-inch curved screen, another 55-inch screen over the bar, and 18 speakers in all.” And everything is remotely controlled, including automated window shades and light dimmers.

“To me, synergy is most important when it comes to home theaters, where one plus one is three. You want a certain television with a certain speaker to get the perfect



HAVE A SEAT: Leather recliners add to the room’s ambiance.



GAME ON: What luxe home theater would be complete without an upscale pool table, foosball and a massive screen?

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balance of visual and audio.”

Serio's company does about 12 installations a week. “In this area, we have a lot of different types of homes. Some are from the 1700s and the 1800s, and others are new. You have to work with the construction of the home when you design a theater, and it has to fit.”

Mark Grossi of Torrington's SoundWorks & Security believes the home theater market is being fueled by changes in society. “People are working more, the kids are [involved in] so many things, and they only have so much time to relax and enjoy their home. I don't see as many man caves as I once did. It's more of a family thing.”

Carl Mazzotta, owner of Eastern Video Service in East Hartford, calls his customers “cord cutters” – homeowners who are getting rid of cable and satellite feeds, and streaming their content. “Disney is even rolling out an inventory of movies that can be accessed for a flat fee,” he says.

He listens to what the customer wants when designing and installing a home theater. “It's a great screen, high-end surround sound audio, hidden wireless speakers, seating, and recessed lighting.”

Gary Rounseville of Glastonbury is a movie buff. He's been that way for a long time. At the age of 70, he revels in his home theater, replete with a massive 13-foot-long, seven-foot high screen that comes alive thanks to a projector system Mazzotta installed for him and his family.

“I used to go to the movies a lot and now I stay home and stream them, taping many and watching them later,” says Rounseville. “I began with big screen television and always wanted the biggest screen I could get. Carl put in a 4K projector for me to upgrade the quality from a 1080p, which I had for years. We turned what was basically a family room into a television room with a bank of couches on one wall, far enough from the screen so that it was a pleasant viewing experience. I would say we use it five nights a week and I can now even watch old black and white movies so much more enjoyably than back in the old days.”

While many clients choose all the bells and whistles and money is no object, a “home theater” in a family room or a modest dedicated space in a basement is within the reach of most homeowners. A very good audio-visual system can be had for \$10,000 to \$20,000. What you do with the rest of the room is up to you and your wallet.

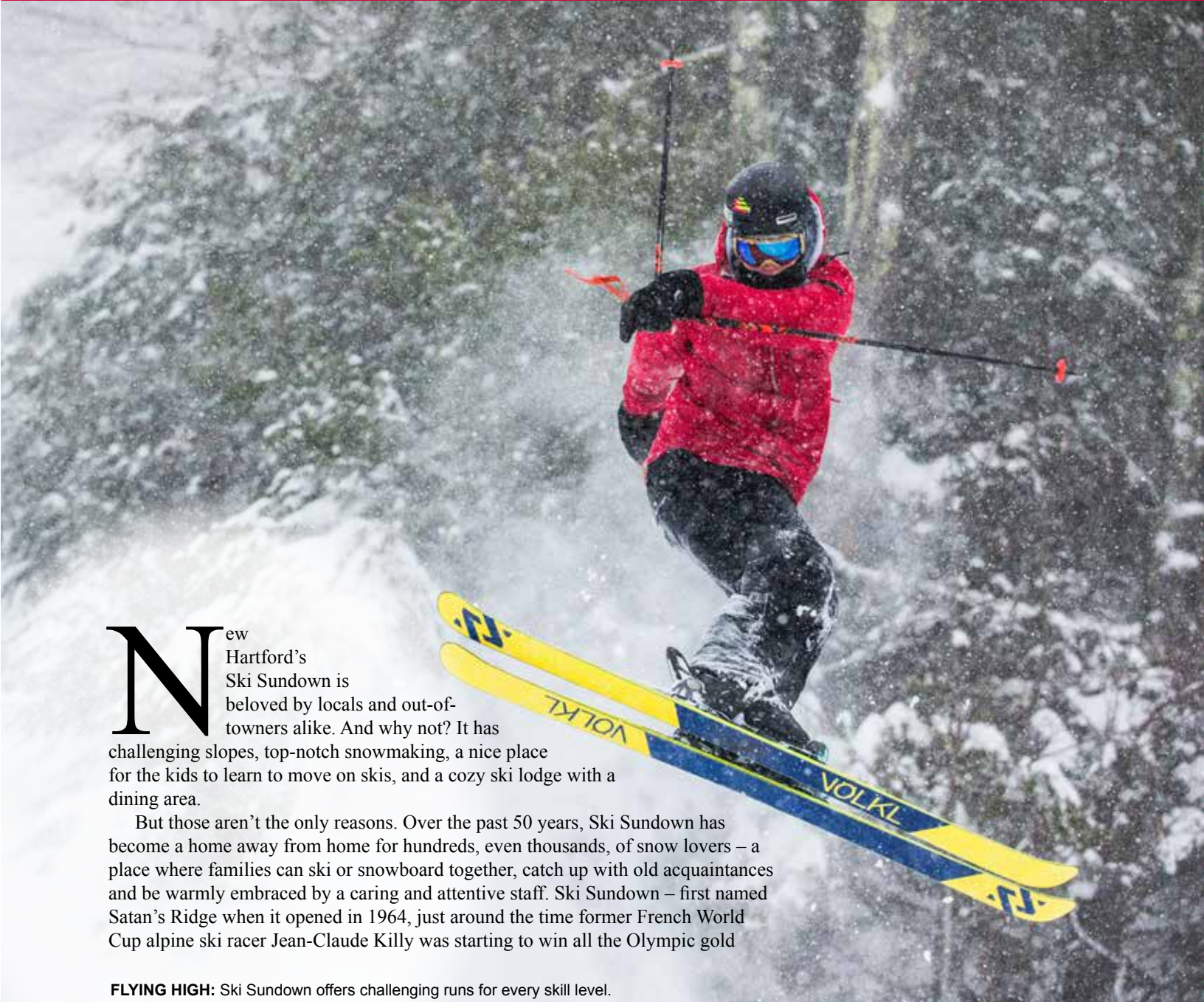
Movie nights are seemingly back in vogue and these days, there is no need to get in the car and drive to a brick and mortar theater. You can have it all right in the comfort of your own home. ■

John Torsiello is a writer and editor living in Torrington. He enjoys writing about and watching sports, especially golf, and is hoping to find a 13-foot screen under (or alongside) the Christmas tree.

It's All Downhill From Here...

Except for Ski Sundown's future prospects,
which have never been brighter

By JOHN TORSIELLO / Photography courtesy of Ski Sundown



New Hartford's Ski Sundown is beloved by locals and out-of-towners alike. And why not? It has challenging slopes, top-notch snowmaking, a nice place for the kids to learn to move on skis, and a cozy ski lodge with a dining area.

But those aren't the only reasons. Over the past 50 years, Ski Sundown has become a home away from home for hundreds, even thousands, of snow lovers – a place where families can ski or snowboard together, catch up with old acquaintances and be warmly embraced by a caring and attentive staff. Ski Sundown – first named Satan's Ridge when it opened in 1964, just around the time former French World Cup alpine ski racer Jean-Claude Killy was starting to win all the Olympic gold

FLYING HIGH: Ski Sundown offers challenging runs for every skill level.



HAPPY HAVEN: The lodge at Ski Sundown offers a cozy place to come in from the cold.

medals – has become a way of life during the winter.

Oh, things have changed, to be sure. There’s better snowmaking equipment and new snow guns throughout the winter wonderland, new trails cut, impressive additions to the indoor amenities and spaces, and in 2014, the addition of a new expert trail, Satan’s Stairway, claimed to be the steepest trail in Connecticut and arguably one of the toughest mogul runs in southern New England.

Ski Sundown has 16 trails – 15 lit up for night skiing – spread out over 65 acres of skiable terrain for skiers and snowboarders to enjoy. Skiers can access trails via three triple chairlifts, one double, and a conveyor. Incidentally, part of the facility is in the town of Canton.

Some ski resorts in northern New England may have more of a wow factor than Ski Sundown, which has opened as early as Thanksgiving Day weekend, but none beat it for the fun factor.

“The challenge has always been to provide as much fun

as we can so that people can come here and enjoy what precious spare time they have these days,” says current owner Robert Switzgable, who purchased the facility from longtime owner Rick Carter in December 2002. Switzgable didn’t just helicopter in and take over; he was an employee of the facility for 19 years and at the time of the purchase, was its general manager. He has worked diligently to enhance Ski Sundown’s terrain, amenities and programs, all the while maintaining the “small mountain” ambiance that draws skiers and snowboarders from as far away as New York City.

“I never want to get away from the fact that we are a ski area, first and foremost,” says Switzgable. “We do other events off season, but we dedicate most of our resources, time and effort to making it the best wintertime sports area it can be. We stress customer service, and we have the best French fries around,” he adds with a laugh. “We have a good bar, good food, and always a good mood.”

Former owner Carter believes that for many residents of New Hartford and surrounding communities, there is a positive sense of connection to Ski Sundown, either because someone in a household skis, or wants to start skiing, or perhaps individuals are associated with the area in another capacity, either working or volunteering during the winter season.

“Sundown is valued for its positive impact on the local community and I always sensed support for what we were doing, or trying to do,” he says. “Over the years, the ski area earned a reputation for providing a quality skiing experience – even during unfavorable weather conditions – became a dependable venue for winter fun, and added to the value of living nearby.”

The ski resort began modestly when Frank S. Linnell and Russell J. Smith opened Satan’s Ridge ski area in 1964, with three slopes, a one-mile long trail and two lifts, a chair



FAMILY FUN: Snow enthusiasts of every age can learn to ski.

A lot has changed at Ski Sundown in 50 years. But it remains the friendly, hometown facility it has always been. And that may be its biggest draw.

lift, and a tow rope. Five years later, the owners sold it to Channing Murdock, who renamed it Ski Sundown. It was subsequently sold to Carter, then general manager, in 1978. Snowmaking and night lighting were added in the 1970s, as was the first triple chairlift in the state, and trails were improved and widened. The first terrain park was installed in 2003 and a 300-foot “magic carpet” conveyor lift was installed in 2013 to improve the beginner experience in the area’s “Sunnyside Learning” area.

Emphasis is placed on getting children involved in the skiing and snowboarding, which not only breeds future adult skiers but also allows mom and dad to enjoy a day or evening on the slopes knowing their children are safe and having fun close by. There are a number of programs for children and several schools use the mountain to train and compete.

“The lodge is kind of like the kids’ clubhouse,” says

at Ski Sundown for almost 30 years.

“I think what makes Ski Sundown successful is location, location, location,” Johnson says. “It’s in a great area where we can draw from Litchfield County and into Hartford County and there are a lot of schools in the area that use the slopes. Our snowmaking has really improved. Ski Sundown is very important to the local economy. Besides the full-time staff, there are many part-timers who work at Ski Sundown during the winter season.” Two of Johnson’s sons moved from working at Ski Sundown to take on jobs at other mountains; Shane teaches snowboarding at Mount Snow and Korey worked at Mount Hood ski area in Oregon last winter.

“As far our main slope goes, it is one of the steepest in the area racing circuit,” says Johnson. “I’ve raced some top hills in Massachusetts and Vermont, and our hill is one of the best anywhere for racing because of its pitch.” The drop



BLAST FROM THE PAST: Ski Sundown has been delighting winter sports fans for five decades.

Betsy van Gemeren of Canton. “The whole family can enjoy Ski Sundown. And coming here during the winter has been passed down from generation to generation.”

The area has a vibrant ski patrol that numbers over 100 individuals, and has hosted the state Special Olympics winter games and Ski Sundown Senior Winter Games. It also hosts one of the biggest ski swaps in southern New England every fall.

Carter says that in addition to enormous growth over the past 50 years, Ski Sundown has kept up with the demands and expectations of today’s skiers, which have changed significantly over the years. “There is more variety on the mountain than there ever was,” he says. “There is a growing and strong media presence which hardly existed when I was there, but at the same time, there is the same comfortable, relaxed and friendly atmosphere around the facility, which makes for an enjoyable visit.”

Torrington’s Kurt Johnson first came to Ski Sundown around the age of 12. He hasn’t left – well, figuratively at least. He is the race director at Ski Sundown and head coach of The Taft School ski team. He’s been skiing and coaching

of the main slope is around 660 feet and the mountain tops off around 1,150 feet.

More changes are coming, says Switzgable. An agreement is under way with the Metropolitan District Commission to allow Ski Sundown to draw water from a nearby reservoir, which will increase the area’s capacity to make snow when it is needed and when weather conditions are ripe.

“It’s going to be a big step up for us and further allow us to increase our skiable terrain and ensure consistent conditions,” Switzgable says.

“Ski Sundown has a bright future,” adds Carter. “It has a very strong snowmaking capacity, so there will always be snow on the trails. There are abundant skiers in the immediate area who value what the area has to offer, and the ownership is very capable and dedicated to providing the experience that its customers expect and appreciate.”

Sure, a lot has changed at Ski Sundown in 50 years. But it remains the friendly, hometown facility it has always been. And that may be its biggest draw. ■

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THE ART OF PUPPETRY: Professor Bart Roccoberton, Jr., director of the Puppet Arts program at the University of Connecticut, chats with students.

Major (and Minor) Ambitions

Colleges and universities are offering students some unusual programs of studies

By **JOEL SAMBERG**

Imagine there were no moral or ethical restrictions against making up the name of a college major or minor to put on your resume. Some graduates might like that idea, simply as a way to impress prospective employers.

Let's say you want to work for a company known for its broad portfolio with more than two dozen individual manufacturing processes and marketing plans. Wouldn't it be great if you could list a complexity degree under the education banner on your resume? Doesn't complexity seem to be what a company like that is all about? (If you listed your degree in romance languages, it might not have the same effect.)

In Connecticut, more college students these days don't have to make anything up. That's because there are distinctive major and minor courses of study – and the

degrees that go with them – that help keep many resumes at the top of the candidate pile. Complexity, a minor at the University of Hartford in West Hartford, happens to be one of them. So are puppetry at the University of Connecticut, drone applications at Southern Connecticut State University in New Haven, and equine studies at Post University in Waterbury.

UHart established the van Rooy Center for Complexity and Conflict Analysis a decade ago, through an endowment from university regent Jean-Pierre van Rooy and his wife, Marie-Claire. It was a topic in which van Rooy was very interested. In 2018, the school began to offer complexity as a minor.

“Our most recent graduate was an economics major who told me that with every job interview he went on, he



WHITE RHINO: Ana Craciun-Lambru is a Romanian puppeteer, actress and director who earned her Master of Fine Arts degree in the Puppet Arts Program at UConn through a Fulbright Scholarship. Photo by **Richard Termine**

was asked about his minor in complexity, and every time he explained it, the interviewer said that it was a field of study that would come in very handy for the job,” says Jane Horvath, Ph.D., associate professor of economics and director of the van Rooy Center.

“We have complexity minors who major in computer science, health science, political science, psychology, economics, and much more. Knowing how systems work and how they can be adapted to work better and in a changing environment is an extremely useful skill.”

The official explanation used by the university is that complexity is the study of the behavior of multiple interactions – including how crowds turn into mobs or how birds flock. Horvath’s view of its interdisciplinary value mirrors what professors at other colleges say about their

own unique major and minor degrees.

Even puppetry.

“We’ve had majors who have gone on to get teaching degrees and then successfully use puppetry in their classrooms as a teaching aid,” reports Professor Bart Roccoberton, Jr., director of the Puppet Arts program at the University of Connecticut, which offers master of fine arts, master of arts and bachelor of fine arts degrees in puppetry. The program came to life 54 years ago, when a set designer and technical director named Frank Ballard began to teach one puppetry class. It became so popular that the university had to limit the number of students who could enroll.

“We’ve had engineering students, art students, and even future attorneys in our classes,” Roccoberton shares. With his tongue only partially in his cheek (par for the course in

puppetry), he says that lawyers often have to manipulate the people they cross-examine – and puppetry is all about manipulation. But that’s more than just a quip, for there’s truth to the sentiment, too: a solid background in the artistic and technical techniques and the emotional and persuasive effects of puppetry have proven as useful for puppeteers as it has for professionals in dozens of other fields.



Celia Stangarone

“Ultimately, when a company interviews someone for a job, what they really care about are the candidate’s skills, relevant work or internship experiences, and referrals from certified professionals,” notes Celia Stangarone, a career coach and transition specialist from Wethersfield who has worked as a consultant for HR departments at many large companies throughout Connecticut. “On the other

hand, if a college major or minor that you list on your resume helps spark a discussion about those very skills and experiences, then its distinctiveness can actually be an asset.”

The only time a distinctive major or minor on a resume may not work so well is if no logical connection at all can be made between the major or the minor and the job being sought. That, Stangarone says, would be like looking for a job in amusement park management by talking up your degree in inorganic chemistry.

But there are many courses of study that should be talked up, even when the connection isn’t immediately apparent.



Scott Graves at SCSU. Photo by Isabelle Chenowith

Take drone applications, for instance.

Drones, those small machines that dart about in the sky and hover like overgrown hummingbirds, are increasingly used by journalists, farmers, police officers, firefighters, miners, real estate agents, and dozens of other professionals. Drone applications, a minor at SCSU, can be traced to



HOVER CRAFT: A drone from the Southern Connecticut State University Drone Academy offers a bird’s eye view. Photos by **Scott Graves**

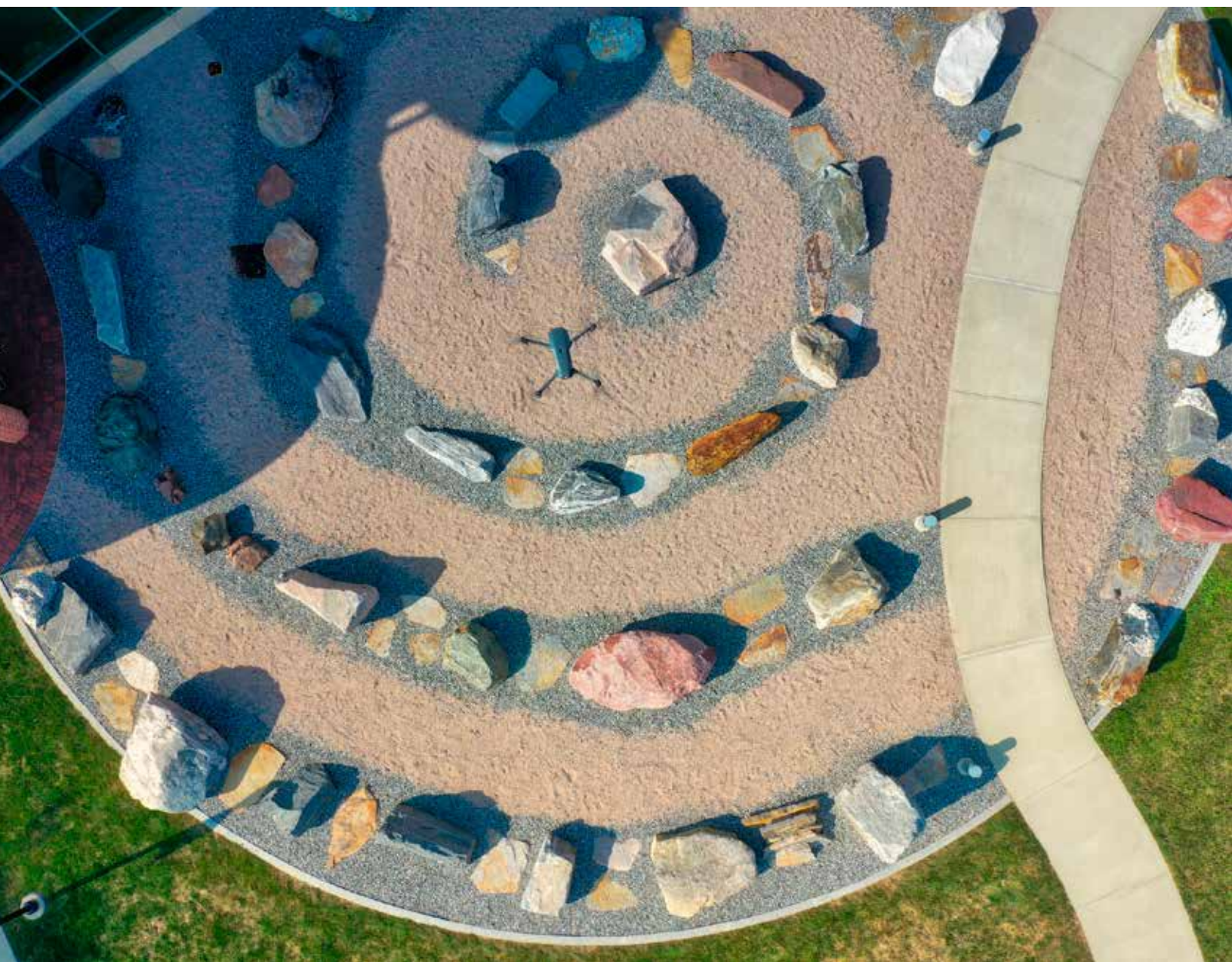


Photo by **Scott Graves**

the interests of Scott Graves, an environment, geography, and marine sciences professor at the school who traces his own curiosity to the Deepwater Horizon oil spill in 2010. Although that happened before the drone industry took off, many civilians used makeshift drones (cameras on balloons or kites, for example) to track the extent of the oil spill along the shoreline. Graves started that way too – but soon graduated to real drones.

“I began collaborating with a journalism professor. He was using drones for storytelling and I was using it for mapping. Together we realized that drones were going to change a lot of industries,” Graves says. Students who major in science, engineering, creative arts, journalism, and several other disciplines in SCSU’s College of Arts

& Sciences can work toward a drone applications minor. Despite the fact that flying drones often has the aura of amusement, the minor covers such weighty topics as FAA regulations, privacy issues and legal ramifications. It’s certainly not all fun and games.

If an expertise in flying drones can turn an architect into a better urban planner, can knowing how a horse prefers to eat make you a better environmental scientist?

Absolutely – because the more you know about the animal kingdom, the stronger foundation you’ll have with respect to the needs and challenges of effective environmental stewardship. In a program at Post University that goes back to the 1970s, students can earn a bachelor of science in equine studies that covers horse anatomy,



HORSING AROUND: Members of the Equine Studies program and the Equine Club try to bring horses to campus for petting and pony rides a couple of times per year.

physiology, nutrition, wellness, safe barn and stable practices, and historical and contemporary equine business needs and challenges.

“Students enter the program with the idea that they just want to work with horses. Then, once the program is underway, they learn that they are getting a far broader education,” says Abigail Nemeč, the equine studies program chair at Post. “Some of our students go into psychology, biology, natural resource management and other fields. Over the course of four years, their ideas evolve about the world. They discover other things that are important to them. The nice thing about equine studies is that it allows them to do something they’re passionate about while also getting an education that will help them in whatever careers they select.”

Post doesn’t own any horses or stables of its own, but leases animals and facilities from other local operations. That, Nemeč says, is a win on many levels: students learn about horses in real-life environments, and the barn and stable operators have the benefit of skilled equine care from Post students. “It’s an excellent partnership,” she says.

In Connecticut, students can also major or minor in histology at Goodwin College (that’s the study of the microscopic anatomy of cells and tissues), Caribbean culture at Wesleyan, formal organizations at Trinity, computer game design at Manchester Community College, and dispute resolution at Quinnipiac.

Still, not every student knows what field he or she wants to enter after college graduation – and even drones and horses may not help them decide. That was true for Celia

Stangarone, the career coach and transition expert from Wethersfield. She had no idea when she attended UConn what career to pursue. Her degree was in general studies and she figured it out after she graduated. It’s who you are on the inside that’s important, she says, not necessarily what ends up listed on your resume as a major or minor degree.

Nevertheless, several good things happen when students pick distinctive majors and minors. For one thing, it often opens doors. For another, students connect with equally unique classmates who may help their careers later on.

“I tell my puppetry students that their first networking meeting happens right here in class,” says UConn’s Roccober-ton. His department’s puppetry graduates have been out in the field for decades now, involved with the Muppets, “Little Shop of Horrors,” “The Wizard of Oz,” “Avenue Q,” television shows such as “Between the Lions,” and in classrooms, museums and theaters all over the world. Working for four years toward a degree in puppetry is a great thing, Roccober-ton says – but having 50 years’ worth of successful alumni who are eager to help the younger generation is an even greater thing. Sometimes it makes life much less complex. 🐾



SHOE SENSE: Abigail Nemeč teaches at the anvil



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FOR THE LOVE OF THE GAME

Foundation Honors the Legacy
and Values of Walter Camp

By JOHN TORSIELLO / Photography COURTESY OF
THE WALTER CAMP FOOTBALL FOUNDATION



INSPIRATIONAL: Jake Jake Olson accepts the 2018 Walter Camp Football Foundation Award of Perseverance at the foundation's annual black-tie dinner in January 2019.



A LIVING LEGEND: Former NFL player Archie Manning - father of Eli and Peyton Manning - receives the 2018 Walter Camp Distinguished American Award at the January 2019 awards dinner.

Walter Camp was many things: a star athlete, Yale University's first football coach, a community leader, an early member of venerable New Haven Country Club, and an innovator who changed the way football was played.

But perhaps beyond all else, Camp was a man who embodied the spirit of sportsmanship, commitment to community and the welfare of others. A photo of a young, handsome, mustachioed Camp shows eyes that seem to gaze into the future – to a time when the Walter Camp Football Foundation (WCFF) would affect so many lives in a positive manner.

The foundation's community impact is evident throughout the year, but its profile is highest during the annual Walter Camp Weekend, which takes place each January. It's then when the foundation transforms New Haven into the college football capital of the world, with various events throughout the weekend intended to

shine a spotlight on players and former players, while also connecting them with the local community.

Over the years, the weekend has drawn many big-name players to the Elm City – including Heisman Trophy winners Eddie George, Tim Brown, Herschel Walker, Tony Dorsett and Baker Mayfield, just to name a few. At the weekend's cornerstone event – a black-tie National Awards Dinner that draws roughly 1,000 attendees – the foundation honors a Walter Camp All-America team, as well as a player of year and coach of the year.

"I am so proud of our foundation's many accomplishments," says the foundation's president, Mario Coppola. "The Walter Camp Football Foundation has both a local and national reputation. Our All-America team is the oldest and most prestigious in the nation. Every sport in every NCAA division has an All-American team and the concept started with the Walter Camp All-America team. During this, the 150th year of college football, we will be honoring the 130th Walter



Heisman Trophy winner Herschel Walker



Camp All-America team. Our Player of the Year award is considered second only in stature to the Heisman Trophy.”

The foundation’s Player of the Year award is the fourth-oldest college football award in the nation, he adds.

The 2020 Walter Camp Weekend will kick off Jan. 16 with the Stay in School Rally, sponsored by KeyBank. Typically, more than 2,000 middle school children from area communities participate in the special program, which takes place in the Floyd Little Athletic Center at New Haven’s James Hillhouse High School. During the event, well-known players and former players anchor a high-energy program to encourage, motivate and inspire the children. The weekend concludes on Jan. 18 with the annual National Awards Dinner.

So, who exactly was Walter Camp? He left a lasting imprint on football and the way it is played. He is credited with several key developments that transformed football from its origins into the fast-paced game it is today: the play from scrimmage, the numerical assessment of goals and tries, the restriction of play to 11 men per side, set plays, sequences, and other strategy features. He is also credited with choosing the first All-America team, served on the American Intercollegiate Football Rules Committee from his college days until his death in 1925, and helped establish the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA).

Back in 1906, it was a momentous and troubling time for American football. The game was under fire as detractors said it had a certain brutality, in which physical force was all-important and skill seemed to play a small role. As the leader of the American Intercollegiate Football Rules Committee, Camp played a crucial role in the adoption of significant changes that “opened up” the game, including introduction of the forward pass, that brought about a revolutionary change in the pattern of play. That not only added to the game’s popularity, but also saved it from some lawmakers’ efforts to ban the sport.

“Without him, the game of football, as we know it today, would not be the same,” says the foundation’s past president, Mike Madera.

These days, football is one of the most popular sports in America and the Walter Camp Football Foundation strives to honor the legacy and values of its namesake. While the foundation does draw celebrity athletes to the Elm City, its mission goes far beyond that.

Many charitable organizations benefit from the foundation, says Madera. The organization is a yearly sponsor of Special Olympics Connecticut and supports various organizations throughout the year with charitable donations.

FATHER OF FOOTBALL: Walter Camp served on the American Intercollegiate Football Rules Committee from his college days until his death in 1925.

“The Walter Camp Football Foundation and its members make a positive and powerful impact on the lives of our athletes through their generous financial contributions and hours spent volunteering at our Summer Games every year,” says Special Olympics Connecticut President Beau Doherty. “As these great friends with the [foundation] know and demonstrate through their involvement with our athletes, sport has the power to bring out the greatness in people of all abilities and to inspire inclusion through teamwork. We are most grateful for all the support we receive from our friends with the Walter Camp Foundation and the opportunities and joy they bring to our athletes.”

The foundation also holds events throughout the year, including a golf tournament, a pig roast, and a Yale football tailgate party with a charitable component.

The broader community benefits from the foundation’s work as well, Madera says. “The foundation is particularly engaged during our national awards weekend when we work throughout the community, including numerous hospital and school visits,” he says.

Community efforts are the result of financial and “sweat equity” involvement by “extended members” of the foundation, says Past President Ernie Williams. “The



Tua Tagovailoa accepts the 2018 Walter Camp Player of the Year Award.



IN THE SPOTLIGHT: The signature event of Walter Camp Weekend is the Saturday night black-tie national awards dinner, which honors college players, NFL legends and other honorees.



KUDOS: Members of the 2018 Walter Camp All-America team, award winners and honorees attend the foundation's annual awards dinner in January 2019.

hospital visits, the school visits, etc. continue to bring great value to local youth.”

Past President Bill O’Brien recalls when players began visiting patients at area children’s hospitals as part of Walter Camp Weekend. “At the start, we had some athletes who were in town, and they and others visited one hospital,” he says. “Then another hospital contacted us and now, we go out to a number of facilities, signing autographs and footballs for the kids and even bringing a couple of team mascots with us. I believe that is one of our lasting legacies.”

Giving back to the community is a priority for the foundation, which has more than 1,000 paid members, and is run entirely by volunteers, with a core of about 75 people.

“Historically, our primary focus has been working with youth-oriented programs and organizations,” says Williams. “But in recent years, we’ve gotten more involved with worthy adult-focused and military veterans’ programs as well.”

And the foundation keeps extending its reach.

“The [foundation] has expanded its outreach throughout the state. We have been working on growing the foundation’s outreach in other states as well,” says Coppola. “Financially, through the hard work of our sponsorship

committee and our members, we have continued to grow. Being an all-volunteer foundation, it is imperative everyone contributes in helping the foundation attain its goals.”

Madera believes the foundation is highly regarded because of all that it does in the community, “and because of the foundation’s longevity and strong history.”

Walter Camp Weekend itself is full of events. In addition to the Stay-in-School Rally, National Awards Dinner and hospital visits, there’s a Walter Camp All-America Player Party, and an alumni brunch. There’s also the Walter Camp All-America Youth Football Clinic, at which Connecticut high school head coaches team up with select Walter Camp All-Americans and alumni to teach skills to local youths. (See sidebar for schedule of events.)

At the January 2019 National Awards Dinner, Jake Olson received the foundation’s Award for Perseverance for his remarkable efforts with the University of Southern California Trojans. Olson is the player who made national news when he got into a game as the long snapper (center) for an extra point attempt. No big deal, you might say – but Olson is blind and, with the help of the USC coaching staff and teammates, lived out a dream of being on the field at a meaningful moment.

“I was so humbled to receive the award, and I appreciate



REACHING OUT: Among the many events of Walter Camp Weekend are the Walter Camp All-America Youth Clinic (top left photo) and the visits that players and alumni make to area children's hospitals.

the Walter Camp Football Foundation recognizing my journey," Olson says. "The whole weekend was amazing, and I hope to stay involved with the foundation in the years to come."

Gus Lindine, athletic director at Greenwich High School, fondly recalls when his school's football team was honored with the foundation's Joseph W. Kelly Award, which recognizes the top football team in the state.

"The fall of 2018 was quite an exciting time for our school and community. An undefeated season, Fairfield County Interscholastic Athletic Conference and state champions, and for the first time ever, being recognized as the number one football team in Connecticut," he says. "We were extremely proud and honored to be named the Joseph W. Kelly Award winner, [an honor] that was presented to Coach Marinelli and the Greenwich Cardinals Football Team at the [Walter Camp] Breakfast of Champions. I have to send out a very special thanks to the Walter Camp Football Foundation for providing such a wonderful experience for high school football teams, players and coaches."

The foundation resonates strongly with the college players it honors, too.

2020 WALTER CAMP WEEKEND HIGHLIGHTS

THURSDAY, JAN. 16

Welcome Reception and Dinner, where guests can meet and greet the early arrivals for the weekend, including honorees, alumni and many former NFL players. Anthony's Ocean View, 450 Lighthouse Rd., New Haven.

FRIDAY, JAN. 17

Walter Camp All-America Youth Clinic, open to children ages 7 to 14. Pre-registration required. Floyd Little Athletic Center, 480 Sherman Pkwy., New Haven.

All-America Player Party, where guests can mingle with players, alumni and former NFL players. BAR, 254 Crown St., New Haven.

SATURDAY, JAN. 18

Annual National Awards Dinner, a black-tie event honoring the Walter Camp All-America team and award winners. The Lanman Center at Yale University's Payne Whitney Gym, 70 Tower Pkwy., New Haven.

This is a partial list of Walter Camp Weekend events. For a full schedule and more details, visit <https://waltercamp.org/events/the-weekend>.



STARTING SMALL: At the Walter Camp All-America Youth Clinic, children ages 7 to 14 learn skills from some of the top coaches in the region, as well as meeting college and professional football players.

“Walter Camp Weekend continues to be a major happening in the Greater New Haven area and still, appropriately, has the label of making New Haven the ‘Football Capital of the World’ for that particular weekend.”

“The weekend helped me to understand the bigger picture of what the game of football brings to our daily life,” says Hau’oli Kikaha who played for the University of Washington and was a 2014 Walter Camp All-American. “Throughout the weekend, I developed and discovered life-long concepts that I apply to my everyday life.”

Looking ahead, the foundation will continue to change and evolve, says Madera.

“As the times and technology change, the Walter Camp Football Foundation must also change to continue its storied history and success,” he says. “We have already begun this process in different aspects of the foundation, and those changes have proven to be beneficial already.”

Coppola expects the foundation to keep growing its national reputation and prominence through a continued partnership with ESPN and expanded presence on social media.

“We will announce our Player of the Year on SportsCenter, and our All-America team will be announced on the prime-time 2019 Home Depot College Football Awards Show” in December, he says. “For the last 16 years, the foundation has named offensive and defensive Players of

the Week in the Football Bowl Subdivision, which not only gets our name out there across the nation and through our various social media outlets, but is also the longest-running weekly award, and is sponsored by a Connecticut-based company, Generation UCAN.”

Sure, times have changed. Fueled by television contracts, big money – along with big pressure on coaches and players – has worked its way down to the college football level. But Walter Camp’s beliefs and value system, which stressed a commitment to sportsmanship and having football make a positive difference in people’s lives, hasn’t faded. That makes the foundation created in his honor as relevant, and perhaps more vitally important, now than it was more than five decades ago – especially during that annual weekend in January.

“[Walter Camp Weekend] continues to be a major happening in the Greater New Haven area and still, appropriately, has the label of making New Haven the ‘Football Capital of the World’ for that particular weekend,” says Williams. “It remains extremely popular with former Walter Camp All-Americans and guys who have gone onto professional football careers.” 📌

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Fast Forward

The New Year is approaching fast, and it's a big one.

Kind of.

The year 2000 was the definition of a big New Year. It had everything: A change of century. Those two digits that we had all lived with for so long would be no more. Flying cars, interstellar travel, chicken dinner in a pill – and all the other promises made by the science-fiction industry of the 21st Century – were now on our doorstep. The culmination of Prince's classic song 1999. Not to mention the impending collapse of civilization because computer scientists, decades before, left a small date problem for future generations to frantically solve.

The changeover from 2009 to 2010 was admittedly a lot less exciting than the dawn of the 21st century, and decidedly less fraught with peril. But there was one important ramification of that particular New Year: We could finally stop saying that we were living in the aughts. What a stupid way to describe a decade.

Now we stand at the cusp of the 2020s, and I find it almost impossible to believe. I remember sitting in my fifth-grade math class, learning to subtract across multiple zeros by calculating future years and ages, and deciding that the year 2020 would likely be the last year that I would have any fun. I'll be 49 years old next year. Practically dead, at least in the estimation of my

boyhood self.

What an idiot I was.

Today, I teach 10-year-old children. Though they are hardly perfect, they are most certainly smarter than I was at their age.

As we look ahead at the coming decade, it's hard to predict what might happen. Though 2020 implies perfect vision, what we have is anything but a clear sense of the future. One hundred years ago, the 1920s opened with optimism and joy. The Roaring Twenties, complete with a soaring economy, flapper dresses, and a bright future.

Then 1929 hit. The stock market collapsed, and the world descended into the greatest economic collapse since the Black Plague. I'm willing to bet that very few people celebrating

the New Year in 1920 saw that coming.

As we look back at our naïve selves in 2010, looking ahead at the next decade, I'm willing to guess that no one could have predicted some of the events of the last 10 years, either.

The Chicago Cubs won the World Series in 2016, ending an 108-year World Series championship drought. With the Red Sox winning the Series in 2004 (as well as in 2007, 2013 and 2018), the Cubs' victory brought an end to the lovable, cursed losers of baseball. Now, any team that fails to win a championship is poorly run, inadequately financed, or lacking proper analytics. The Curse of the Bambino and The Curse of the Billy Goat were the last vestiges of an innocent time now lost forever.

Here's a few things that seem to have been around forever but actually started in the 2010s:

Selfies. That's right. Selfies became a thing over the course of the last decade, beginning with cameras in our phones and extending to the embarrassment of the selfie stick. Instead of taking photos of things like mountains and dogs and our loved ones, we have turned to taking photos of ourselves. God, we suck.

Memes took hold in the 2010s, too, offering up such artistic classics as Grumpy Cat, Distracted Boyfriend, a small boy on a beach making a fist, and a young girl standing in front of a burning house, smiling with glee.

It's hard to imagine how the world survived before human beings could add short, pithy comments to these universally beloved palettes.

We also experienced some rare moments of collective attention over the course of the past decade. With the continuing fragmentation

What will the 2020s hold for us? There's really no telling. If there was, I'd be in Las Vegas and so would you.



of the media and the decline of collective, unifying moments except for rare instances like the Super Bowl, we found solace in brief, universal firestorms like The Dress.

Remember that? Was it blue and black, or white and gold? The world raged over this important issue for days, but at least we raged together, united under a common banner of fashion stupidity.

Then there was the summer of the ice bucket challenge. Remember that? In lieu of donating money to a good cause, Americans decided that it would be better to embrace their personal narcissism and dump ice water over their heads while filming said action, so they could post something to social media that everyone else was doing so we could all do the same thing at the same time and look both cool and ordinary for doing it.

The 2010s were also the decade of innovation. The iPad was born in the previous decade, which seems remarkable since they are now everywhere. We scoffed at the name when the late Steve Jobs presented it onstage for the first time, complaining that iPad engendered thoughts of feminine

hygiene products, but Jobs knew how stupid we are and how quickly we would accept this name. A decade later, Jobs is now gone but the name seems just fine, and the iPad has infiltrated every aspect of our life. I can't tell you how excited I am to sit down in a restaurant and be handed an iPad rather than an old-fashioned paper menu.

These are the kind of innovations that we've always wanted. Not exactly interstellar travel or chicken dinner in a pill, but now I can see a picture of the food that I will eat and perhaps even play Words with Friends while waiting, rather than conversing with my actual friends sitting across the table from me.

Voice-activated home assistants like Amazon's Echo were also born in the previous decade, and they have been a boon for parents everywhere. Alexa can't change a diaper or empty a dishwasher, but when your child wants to know what planet has the most moons, you no longer need to find an answer for your curious little monster.

"I don't know," you say. "Ask Alexa. Our other parent. The smarter parent."

The answer, by the way, is Saturn. We discovered 20 new moons around the planet this year, allowing it to overtake Jupiter in the moon department. Another important change in the 2010s.

What will the 2020s hold for us? There's really no telling. If there was, I'd be in Las Vegas and so would you. Perhaps this will be the decade when the cure for the common cold is finally discovered. Maybe we'll find a way to get blood out of a white shirt. Maybe we'll find a few more moons orbiting Jupiter, allowing the gas giant to retake the mantle of most moons.

Personally, I'm hoping for chicken dinner in a pill. ❧

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