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Stepping Forward
UPDATE

Grant Resources Doubled

Through The Community Foundation's 2021 annual responsive grant program, nearly $4 million was awarded to 72 local nonprofits . This unprecedented total is far beyond what has been done in the past and reflects new spending and new priorities around racial equity and COVID recovery. In addition to increasing grant resources, The Foundation modified its application process to increase accessibility, resulting in a quarter of the grant awards going to organizations that are new to The Foundation.

New Grant Programs and Partnerships

During a time of increased food insecurity, the newly established Basic Needs Fund granted $160,000 for the distribution of meals, groceries and personal hygiene items to area residents in need. Ten organizations were selected by an advisory committee for the Fund's inaugural round of grantmaking.

Under Stepping Forward, a Racial Equity and Creative Healing grant program was developed in partnership with The Arts Council of Greater New Haven. The program is aimed at promoting community healing and racial justice. Sixteen local artists and art projects, including a Black film festival, neighborhood jazz workshops, youth podcasting and a platform for local hip-hop artists were selected by a panel of peers to receive $583,000 over the summer.

A second new grant program created in partnership with the University of Connecticut is expanding leadership and career development opportunities for ten professionals currently employed at area nonprofits. The BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and Persons of Color) Cohort for Nonprofit Leadership starts training in the Fall. The program lasts for 2 years and offers undergraduate or graduate credit and a $1,000 scholarship toward future studies at UConn.



2021 Cohort for Nonprofit Leadership members. (L-R) Top row: Jahnice Cajigas, Antonio Coles, Frankie Douglass, Chanelle Goldson and Christian Aviles; Bottom row: Victoria Massey, Ala Ochumare, Landon Osborn, Nicole Sanclemente and Kimani Sioux Williams. Photo credit: Dexter Atlas Photographer.

Visit cfgnh.org/steppingforward for up-to-date information about **Stepping Forward** and The Foundation's progress toward helping to address the impact of COVID-19 and advancing racial equity.

The COMMUNITY Foundation *for* Greater New Haven

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Seasons' Greetings



Mary Hawkins

Welcome to the winter issue of *Seasons Magazines!*

In this issue, we're inspired by holiday traditions past and present, chilly days spent entertaining family and friends, and the rich history that our incredible state has to offer.

We take you on a journey back in time to experience time-honored Christmas celebrations from 100 years ago. We're also giving you a lesson in putting together a gorgeous and appetizing charcuterie board for your holiday parties, and we take a look at the various movies and TV shows that have used Connecticut as their setting and backdrop. Plus, we're sharing the story of the highly-anticipated film musical, *Cyrano*, which has roots in a small town in Connecticut.

The residents of Connecticut have so much pride for this state, especially sports fans who still root for the Hartford Whalers to this day. We take a look at just how important this beloved team was during their heyday and how fans continue to be devoted to them. In addition, we're sharing the inspiring story of some amazing dogs who are working with the police department to break down barriers and spread peace, comfort, and joy.

We'd love for you to connect with us on social media and let us know what you think. You can find us on Facebook and Twitter.

Happy reading, and Happy Holidays!

Mary

Mary Hawkins
Editor
Seasons Magazines

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

SEASONS MEDIA

SEASONS *of New Haven*®

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Chelsea Groton: So Much More Than a Bank

By **JAMES BATTAGLIO**

The long and often ugly tentacles spread around the world by COVID-19 have wrapped themselves around small retailers, who are fearful of the negative impact the virus has had on businesses reliant on street traffic. These businesses are also sometimes without the benefit of technology.

As a result, local retailers have sought the advice and assistance of Chelsea Groton Bank and its 14 branches throughout New London County and Loan Production Office in Hartford County.

And true to its long and proud history, the 167-year-old community bank has not only met the sometimes great, unexpected, and definitely complex needs of its business community, but continues to meet those needs by offering its customers helpful methods of successfully operating during uncertain times.

"Our customers need much more technical advice these days than in the pre-COVID times," says Senior Vice President Carolyn Welch, director of Commercial Lending for Chelsea Groton. "The pandemic has absolutely inflated client needs, due to the unknowns." Welch describes some customers as reluctant to make significant changes for fear of the unknown. She said that in some instances, the pandemic has "paralyzed customers."

She and her colleagues have witnessed things that have been forced upon their clients, due to COVID, including "those who were disrupted and therefore had to look for alternative ways of doing business."

It's no surprise that many businesses are absolutely having a hard time finding people to fill positions, coming up with alternative ways of doing business, or preparing for potential supply chain issues. For these clients, the bank advises them to remain in touch with their inner circle of bankers, lenders, attorneys, accountants, etc. This type of network will provide them the support, tools and resources they need to make decisions about the prosperity of their business, especially during uncertain times.

In order to meet their customers' needs, the bank has gone far beyond the traditional services—deposits, withdrawals, and loans—normally associated with lending institutions. During these difficult financial times, Chelsea Groton has proven itself to live up to its moniker of "being more than a bank."

Take, for example, the supply chain issue, which has made a tremendous amount of nationwide news over recent weeks. It, too, has had a large impact on Chelsea Groton's customers.

"The supply chain and delivery channel have had a deep impact on our borrowers," said Rich Balestracci, a Chelsea Groton vice president and Commercial Loan officer. "Both issues—getting raw materials and delivering products and services to customers—have presented great challenges to our borrowers. I've had restaurants tell me they couldn't get lettuce and builders say they can't get lumber," he said, pointing out the diversity of the problem. "The (supply chain) problem is really across the board."

Balestracci said the bank has taken a consultative approach with those affected by the supply chain. He's been "extremely impressed with business owners' responses and the creative ways they've been able to overcome these challenges, adding "it's been inspiring to see how business owners have pivoted." To address the issue of delivery channels with its clients, Chelsea Groton uses various tools aimed at helping them meet the challenges surrounding labor shortages.

For example, according to Alexis Kahn, a Chelsea Groton vice president and sales manager for the Cash Management Services Division, clients experiencing labor shortages and difficulty in attracting employees are invited to attend educational classes offered through the Bank's community education program, Chelsea University. One recent class topic was digital marketing. During the class, "we layered on the benefits of using additional marketing strategies to help attract talent."

She said that as a community bank, Chelsea Groton has always taken a consultative approach with its clients, offering well-established, successful educational forums; all of which have been expanded during the corona crisis. Problems presented to the bank are met with a multitude of resources she described as "creative approaches."

Executive Vice President, Lori Dufficy, who serves as Chief Experience and Engagement officer, said more people "are very proactive in sharing their concerns. There were clients who called and said, 'I'm making my mortgage payment, but if I lose my job, what happens then?'" She said people turned towards as many creative resources as possible, resulting in the Chelsea Groton community "being much better for it," in terms of "coming out of this part of COVID."

Dufficy said the bank's Collections Department "does amazing work" when it comes to assisting those concerned about the prospect of losing their job.

"The bank counsels clients and goes so far as to leverage resources with Vice President Barb Curto's Marketing Department," she said. Clients are offered budgeting classes, along with assistance with redoing their budget and reprioritizing the way funds are allocated. In some instances, the bank helps restructure loans in partnership with the Commercial Lending Department. "Assisting these clients was a one-on-one effort, not a 'one solution fits all' approach," said Dufficy.

Under Curto's marketing program, educational programming adjusted during the early stages of Covid and during the present Covid era.

"When Covid hit, we were very mindful of people's situations, so our Community Education Officer, Miria Gray, adjusted our services by offering guidance on topics such as budgeting during COVID, or those topics that met with the circumstances our clients faced," Curto said. "We saw the need for businesses to be online and not just rely on having their doors open."

"You don't have to be an expert in all things digital or have a huge marketing budget," Curto said, adding "we frequently offer classes like 'Facebook for Business' or 'Linked In for Business.' These are free resources that smaller businesses can use." Curto called these online approaches "small steps," aimed at assisting those merchants faced with less foot traffic. "Little reminders for merchants, like ensuring they can be found online, and their phone number or email address is visible have also been shared," she said.

Curto said small businesses continue to rely on the bank's ongoing programming to learn about new tools or acquire new skills, including content on a range of topics offered during frequent Lunch and Learns and a Small Business Boot Camp offered twice a year.



In terms of retailers increasing their online banking activities, here again, Chelsea Groton has seen an uptick in activity, according to Welch. Whereas before, some customers once relied on visits to the bank, they now have learned to move money and pay bills online.

"Our team did a fantastic job in walking people through online banking over the phone or video-conferencing, via a step-by-step approach to get people comfortable with leveraging the security tools related to this type of banking," said Dufficy.

Among the more surprising creative steps Chelsea Groton suggests to its business community—and even within the bank itself—is the hiring of people from other industries.

According to Dufficy, "retail banking is the bank's largest department. As such (and is common within the industry), retail banking becomes the trainee function. We hire for attitude and train for skill. Everybody in the bank is a leader; a leader of self, a leader of others, or a leader of leaders. Everyone has a professional development plan. We look for people with a technology background, for example, who may wish to work in the banking industry. People in the hospitality industry frequently have a charismatic way about them and love working face-to-face with other people. We have nurses, educators, and people from the retail industry, such as cell phone store employees who can teach others how to use (technology) tools."

It is this approach—looking to other talents to incorporate into one's business—the bank has suggested to those clients who have a need for more help. Coupled with its now-quarterly career fairs, clients have eagerly taken creative approaches in seeking new talent.

"Healthcare workers, for example, are recognized as caring about people, and enjoy helping when and where they can, which are two of the biggest traits you can't really teach people," said Balestracci. "We sometimes serve as a sounding board for our clients, helping them to talk through different scenarios." He said this approach has proven valuable to the bank's clients, "whereas there are very few industries that are immune to the (current) labor shortage."

A substantial increase in online cash management services is responsible for a speedup in the community business' supply chain, according to Kahn. While virtual cash management services were available before the pandemic, these services have become increasingly popular among the bank's business clients over the past 18 months. She said services ranging from remote deposit capture and mobile check deposit, are presenting "a wave of the future." While all Chelsea Groton branches are available to clients, for those who are short-staffed and would prefer less time doing banking, online cash management services have proven to be a tremendous service.

Kahn said many customers who, in the past, may have had reservations about online banking have become believers in the systems' benefits, including no longer giving account information when issuing a physical paper check. The bank is assisting its customers with a program called Positive Pay, a fraud detection service that helps safeguard business accounts against check and ACH fraud.

The service has proven itself incredibly valuable to those using it. In some instances, clients have reported that Positive Pay captured would-be scam attempts to divert tens of thousands of dollars in business checks to fraudulent accounts, thereby negating the need for merchants to close existing accounts and secure new account numbers.

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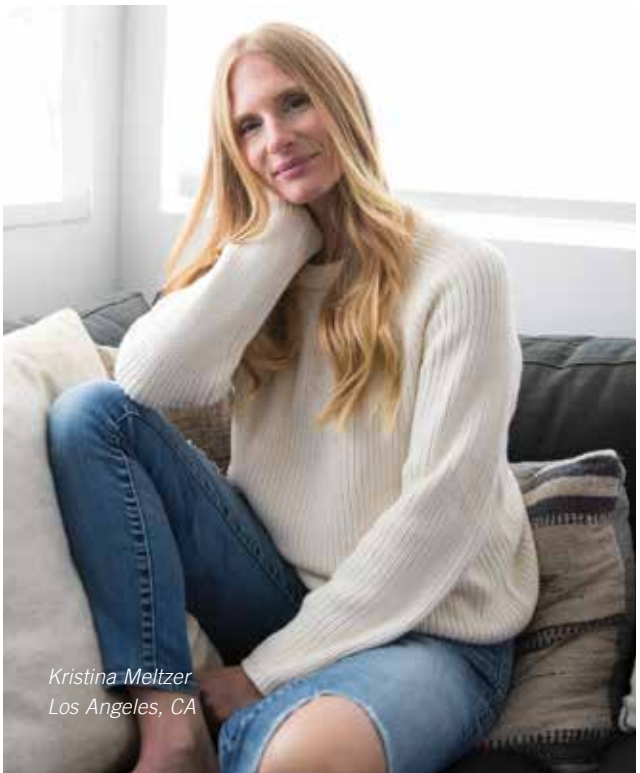
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A New Chapter

Diane M. Arnold Is Developing the Next Group of Essex Savings Bank Leaders

If you ask Diane M. Arnold to account for her incredible accomplishments over two decades, she modestly sums it up in one word: "lucky."

Diane, of Ivoryton, CT, is Essex Savings Bank's newly announced president and CEO, as of August.

A 19-year seasoned executive within the Connecticut banking industry, Diane's appointment makes her only one of five female bank presidents in the state, following the retirement of her good friend and former mentor, Greg Shook, the bank's CEO who recently retired after 22 years in office.



Diane M. Arnold, Essex Savings Bank newly announced president and CEO

"I'm very lucky to have had the career path I've had," Diane says, reflecting on a call she got from Shook 19 years ago, shortly after her college graduation, encouraging her to take a management course offered by Essex Savings. It was that fortuitous decision that led to a career that eventfully elevated her to the position of Essex Bank's senior vice president and chief lending officer.

"Greg and I are good friends," she reflects. "I worked for him at a different bank, prior to working at Essex Savings. After I graduated college, I worked for Blue Cross and Blue Shield for a few months before joining Greg in the banking industry, and we have remained colleagues and friends ever since."

Diane's appointment is only one of a series of honors she's earned over two decades. Not only is she the head of this Middlesex County financial institution and its six branches—two in Essex and one each in Old Lyme, Old Saybrook, Madison, and Chester—but her appointment comes as Essex Savings celebrates its 170th year serving the county, overseeing assets of $3.4 billion and a trust department with 22 financial advisors.

"We're a community bank with a very proud history," Diane says enthusiastically. "We fit into the description of a community bank with a feature called a community investment program, which we founded in 1996. We give 10% of our net profits after taxes back to local non-profit programs in our market area."

Over the past 25 years, Essex Savings has given more than $5 million back to its community. Coupled with the number of staff serving on various nonprofit boards and committees, the bank has every reason to feel proud of its contributions.

"I still enjoy the diversity of knowledge required within a smaller institution and community bank," she says proudly.

And the bank's commitment to its patrons and to Middlesex County doesn't, and won't, end there, she pledges.

"We absolutely think there is a strong place for us in the market as a local community bank. And because I was chosen internally, and because I've been part of the bank's culture for the past 19-plus years, my hope (and plan) is to carry on the legacy of the board and the prior administration and continue as a strong and important piece of our community," she said.

She's quick to add that she does not see significant changes coming as a result of her promotion, unlike some larger banks that experience major culture shifts that can come with a change of administration, such as mergers. "We have no plans to sell or merge the bank at all."

Diane's accomplishments stretch back to her earlier years when she served as senior class valedictorian at Quinnipiac College, prior to also graduating from the CT School of Finance and Management, run by the Connecticut Banker's Association. (Essex savings continues to send candidates through this program.)

In addition to her advancement as bank president, as recently as four years ago, Diane was awarded the Woman of FIRE Award; an honor, created nine years ago by The Commercial Record, recognizing outstanding professional women in the fields of Finance, Insurance, and Real Estate.

Reflecting on the changes she's witnessed within the banking industry, Diane quickly identifies the Covid pandemic as being responsible for financial services becoming more and more electronic.

"We've all had to adapt to the things the pandemic threw at us; a lot of which was the closing of all our lobbies for 14 months and doing all our business through drive-through services, in an effort to protect our employees and staff. Our clients adjusted to this as they relied more and more on mobile banking, digital wallets, and contact-less debit card programs," she said.

The pandemic forced Essex Savings to quickly implement some staff services from the home, although "much of our staff actually worked in segregated pods within the bank's back offices shortly after closing our lobbies." She said the bank, recognizing that technology is, and will be, a way of the world "continues to look at products and services our banking customers are looking for."

Beyond the technological advances within the banking industry is the phenomenon facing the industry's mortgage market, which "absolutely skyrocketed during the pandemic," Diane points out.

"Between low interest rates and the housing boom, there's a lot of activity…people selling, people buying, coupled with

an influx of people leaving big cities in neighboring states and moving to Connecticut. Essex Savings experienced its busiest year in history, in terms of mortgage production," she said. "Our online mortgage application was a digital channel that helped us during the pandemic, enabling us to handle mortgage demands virtually."

While she expects that demand will slow down "a little bit," because most of those who wanted to take advantage of the low interest rates have done so, that doesn't mean Diane predicts a rise in interest rates: "I don't see them popping up too soon."

What she does hope to see decline is the trend whereby perspective homebuyers have consistently been outbid in their attempts to acquire a new home. Over the last eight months, within 24-48 hours of a home going up for sale, wannabe buyers have been outbid, sometimes more than once.

"We've seen a very slight decline in this trend. Where once houses took three hours to go under contract, we're now starting to see them take three weeks before this happens," Diane said. "We don't really know where the housing market is going to go. Some financial articles call it a bubble that will undoubtedly pop, while others say that Connecticut's housing market has been fairly stagnant since the great recession, and, therefore, we weren't seeing the same appreciation (other states may have seen). Do I think prices will go back down? Probably. Do I think they'll go all the way down? I'm not so sure."

While the home mortgage department is currently Essex's busiest department, commercial loans, too, have been extremely active, particularly due to the Paycheck Protection Program, known as PPP Loans. This $953 billion business loan program was established by the federal government in 2020 through the Coronavirus Aid Relief and Economic Security Act.

Diane explained that last year, when the PPP program was introduced, many commercial loans focused on them.

"A lot of businesses, in an attempt to preserve capital, wanted to see what was going to happen to the economy in general before borrowing money," she said, expressing some concern that because the pandemic appears to be "flaring up a bit, business owners are now hesitant to get extended, not knowing exactly what's going to happen."

What is her biggest concern for the banking industry? For community banks, one of their greatest challenges is keeping up with the regulatory environment. While Diane doesn't downplay or diminish the need for regulations—"they're necessary to protect consumers, which is our first priority"—she's quick to point out that governance consumes a lot of the industry's time. Plus, despite the size of a bank, even community banks are held to the same standard as their largest competitors, thereby draining a fair amount of resources.

"Community banks know their neighbors. They're our friends and practically our family," she points out, "much different from large commercial banks, which probably don't know the people for whom their processing mortgages."

The biggest professional change in her life since her appointment is no longer being totally involved in the commercial lending side of the institution, which Diane admits "is a hard adjustment to make and one that I'll never completely take my hand out of. I have some commercial accounts that I've held on to for years, and I'll continue to do so."

Diane's promotion will also benefit many of Essex Saving's younger female employees, she explains. She sees the fact that she's always worked in a male-dominated industry as a benefit of sorts, whereas she hopes and plans to serve as a role model to young women within her industry.

"I can show the younger females that there is no more glass ceiling," she said. "One can achieve whatever one wants to achieve. It doesn't matter if you're male or female."

"My first order of business is developing the next group of leaders in the bank. We have a fairly young staff, so one of the things I want to focus on is training growth among the next generation so that when those of us are ready for retirement, we have the next level of management ready for these roles" she says. "I'm going to be looking into the prospects of developing a future leaders'arm within the bank, providing training and mentoring over a long period of time. It's not too early to start. I've had wonderful mentors throughout my career so I see the value in this.

If there's anyone capable of spreading "luck," it's President Diane Arnold.

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Written by **Alix Boyle**
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How UroLift Improves BPH Without the Side Effects of Medication

As they get older, most men will experience benign prostatic hyperplasia (BPH), also known as an enlarged prostate. It's an extremely common condition after age 50. The prostate gland obstructs the prostatic urethra, and as the channel becomes more and more compressed, it can cause problems, such as a weak urinary stream or irritative frequency of voiding.

Some men have very mild symptoms – difficulty urinating, incomplete emptying, and frequent urination, to name a few. Others have severe symptoms that disrupt their sleep and interfere with their quality of life. It's important to treat BPH because it can lead to poor kidney and bladder function.

"You don't have to have a large prostate to be symptomatic from it," says Dr. Timothy C. Siegrist, a urologist and urologic surgeon at Middlesex Health, who offers a minimally invasive procedure called UroLift.

UroLift offers relief from BPH without the side effects that may be caused by medication, including sexual disfunction, dizziness, or fatigue. During the UroLift procedure, the surgeon puts a camera into the urethra and then places the UroLift device through the urethra. The device places tiny clips to lift and hold the prostate tissue away from the urethra. The surgeon uses a suture to pull the lobes of the prostate apart, like opening curtains. The UroLift device is then removed, leaving the clips in place.

"The downtime is minimal," Siegrist notes. "There might be blood in the urine, and a little bit of burning for a few weeks. But there are no incisions and no hospital stay involved. I have taken care of men who have worked the next day after this procedure. Bear in mind, people are working from home, so that makes it easier. I do encourage people to take a few days off afterward."

The procedure is generally covered by insurance. In a recent interview, Siegrist discussed the advantages of UroLift.

Q. What makes the UroLift procedure so beneficial?

A. There are a lot of procedures out there for BPH management. The most attractive aspect of this one is that our patients don't need a catheter afterwards, or maybe just overnight. Unlike some other procedures, there are no sexual side effects. The UroLift could be done in the doctor's office, but my preference is to do it under anesthesia. I think it's more comfortable for the patient. UroLift is at least as good as medication, without side effects.

Q. What are the clips made of?

A. The clips are metal, which can have implications for patients who require MRI imaging. Patients are issued an implant safety card to present if MRI imaging is required after the procedure.



Q. Is any man with BPH a candidate for UroLift?

A. Not all men are candidates for the UroLift. There are some tests that are required in the office to evaluate prostate size and shape to determine a patient's eligibility before the procedure can be done.

Q. What are some other surgeries for BPH?

A. There are many procedures available to treat BPH, some old and some new. The classic procedure is the TURP, which stands for trans urethral resection of the prostate, the "Roto Rooter" surgery. The surgeon places a camera in the urethra and scrapes away part of the prostate. It requires a hospital stay and does require a catheter. There is also a laser prostatectomy, in which we use an energy form to vaporize some of the prostate tissue. That still requires a catheter, and there is a risk some of sexual side effects. If the UroLift doesn't work, if symptoms don't improve as much as the patient would like, they can have the TURP later on.

Q. What about medication to treat BPH?

A. It's not always preferable. Most men are offered medication first. If they don't like the medications, they can always stop it. The disadvantage is the side effects: there can be sexual side effects and light headedness. A lot of men just don't like taking meds or forget to take them. The advantage of the UroLift is that there are none of these side effects. Some men take a plant extract called Saw Palmetto, in fact they swear by it. If guys take it and they are happy with it, I encourage them to continue to do so.

Q. Is it possible to avoid an enlarged prostate altogether?

A. You are subject to your genetics. It's not something you can prevent. There's no screening test for BPH. If your father had it, there is a good chance you are going to have it as well.

There are behavior modifications you can make to limit your symptoms. For example, if you get up a lot at night, you can limit your fluid intake or avoid beverages like coffee or alcohol that will irritate your bladder.

There are behavior modifications you can make to limit your symptoms. For example, if you get up a lot at night, you can limit your fluid intake or avoid beverages like coffee or alcohol that will irritate your bladder. In men who are overweight, weight loss can improve symptoms. If someone is diabetic and poorly controlled, they urinate a lot and that can wake them up at night. Waking up at night can also be due to sleep apnea.

Q. How can men be proactive about prostate health?

A. They should try to maintain a healthy weight, limit consumptions of bladder irritants like caffeine and alcohol and consider restricting evening fluid intake to minimize the impacts of BPH.

Alix Boyle writes about health and home and real estate from her home on the Connecticut shoreline. The natural beauty of the shoreline makes her feel like she's on vacation every day.



Lose weight. Gain memories.

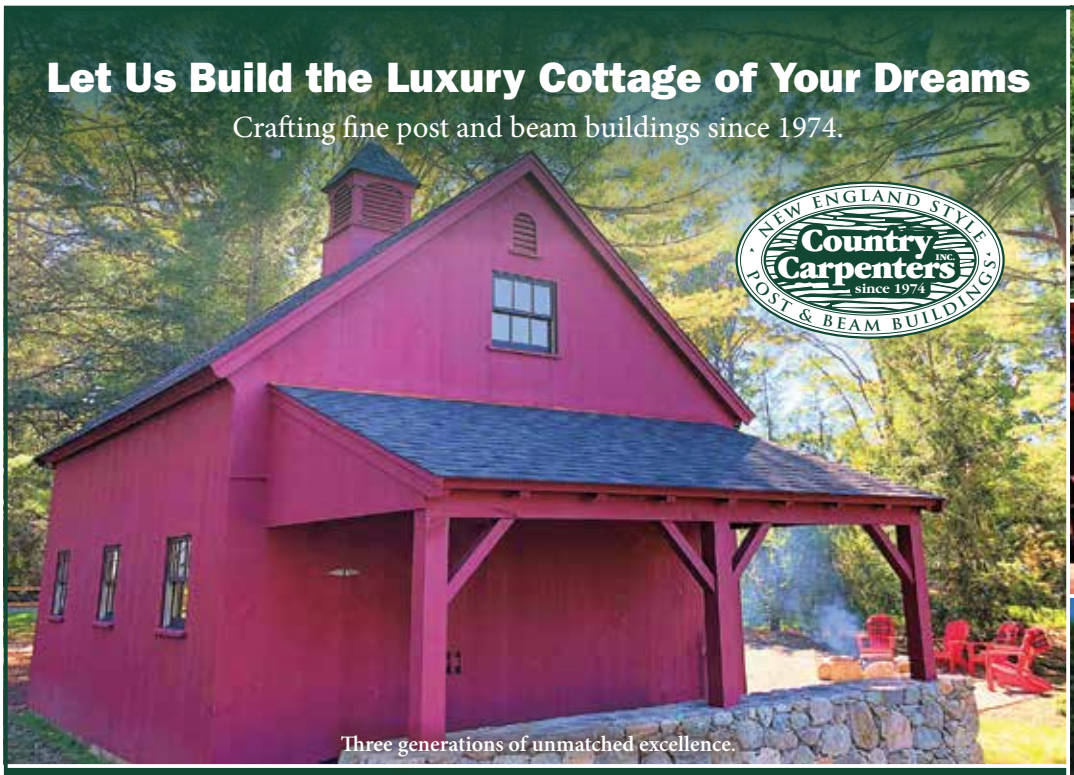
We turned Robbie Johnson's aching feet into active feet. Thanks to surgical weight loss options that weren't around just a few years ago.

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CHRISTMAS IN CONNECTICUT

A Centennial Perspective Then and Now

Written by **ANNA ZUCKERMAN-VDOVENKO**

Artwork by **Ekaterina Glazkova**

Christmas in Connecticut! It has a ring to it, doesn't it? As sweet as the jingle of a century's old sleigh bell. From the moment that Barbara Stanwyck and Dennis Morgan romanced their way into the hearts of the American public in the 1943 film classic Christmas in Connecticut, the very idea of a snowy New England Christmas in our state etched a place in our dreams. Those of us lucky to live here know the glories of just that reverie, which includes white Christmases, fires roaring in the hearth, charming homes with frosted roofs, and candles in every window. We are a state that moves forward as we cling to our history and traditions. Last year, Christmas joy was overshadowed by the pandemic. But this situation is not unique. We were under similar duress one hundred years ago. Maybe now is a good time to reflect and become time travelers going back to that era of our predecessors. If others could get through coping with such challenges, perhaps, so can we.

ONE CONNECTICUT BOY'S MEMOIR

Don Carson, in 1921, was a handsome, rosy-cheeked 15 year-old boy. That Christmas season, he trudged along the driveway heading toward his home, an estate in Farmington Village. Big flakes floated down upon the powdery drifts. A gentle coral alpenglow cast light on the foothills off in the distance where the scudding clouds briefly revealed a glimpse of sun. Don could hear the jingle of sleigh bells pulled by horses trotting through the center of town like in a scene from Currier and Ives. Sleighs and horses were still very practical transport in the villages of Connecticut back then. Donald and his friends had been skating on a frozen pond, flirting with charming girls who exchanged confidences and chattered of their plans for holiday visits.

Donald's foster mother, heiress and philanthropist Theodate Pope, would be welcoming 200 children from the village later that day. Her chauffeur was to don his classic Santa Claus outfit replete with paper-maché mask and beard to greet the cheerful throngs. It was a



Melanie Barbeau Museum Curator of Hillstead shows original Santa Costume worn in 1921 by Theodate Pope's Chauffeur for Christmas events

custom for high society ladies like Theodate throw themselves into caring for those less fortunate, especially at Christmas. Don and his brother Paul felt mortifyingly shy when his mother marched them into the living room to greet the village kids. Yet he knew somehow in his heart she insisted on introducing him because she was so proud to call him her son.

Theodate, even with her great wealth, always had kept a modest household at Christmas. There were wreaths on first floor windows and a Christmas tree. Gifts for her family were gloves, hats, books, writing tablets, and crayons. But that week, Theodate had lovingly hand-wrapped presents for all the Farmington children and unloaded crates filled with the most exciting gift–fresh oranges shipped in from the south.

Donald's recorded memories serve as beautiful window into Christmas in Connecticut 100 years ago. At first glance, Donald's childhood appears quite elite. After all, he grew up in what is now known as Hillstead Museum, a rambling estate filled to the brim with impressionist masterpieces. But life for Donald had not always been so cheerful. In 1921, just like now, society had been haunted by pandemics. During that era, Spanish Influenza, Polio, and Tuberculosis had been stalking the world.

After Donald's father died, his mother also became very ill. He and his siblings drew straws; Don pulled out the shortest one, which meant he'd be separated from his family and sent into foster care. A female "Daddy Warbucks" of sorts, Theodate took Don into her home, welcoming him with love and dedication. According to Melanie Bourbeau, curator of the Hillstead, people visit the Museum throughout the year, especially during the December holiday season to enjoy the tasteful décor, the events, and works of art.

DECKING THE HALLS ONE CENTURY AGO

Christmas trees were so popular in 1921 that the Courant mentioned a serious Christmas tree shortage in shops. Others that year still happily went into the woods and cut down their own. Trees had a specific shape in the 20s–wide and stout, with tops lopped off so that just the broadest portion remained. Their large girths were elaborately decorated, the fatter the better. The tree was a riotous affair full of decorations haphazardly hung, draped with an array of popcorn and cranberry garlands. Silvery leaded tinsel hung from each branch along with scads of homemade ornaments. Martha Stewart would likely not approve, but to those of that era, it was vintage chic. Candles on the boughs had once been common, although, around that time, they were being phased out in lieu of new-fangled electric lights.

People were not used to large amounts of presents under the tree as they are today. Instead, they compensated for that by creating miniature villages with little trains circling the whole affair. Nowadays, when folks want decorative Christmas villages, they simply get on Amazon and order away, but one hundred years back, much of what one found under the tree was handmade. Classic Lionel Trains from the local hobby shop made the rounds--perfect replicas of real trains and every boy's dream. According to those in the know, red bells of honeycombed tissue paper hanging from the ceiling were an additional new craze, the finishing touch on a welcoming home. Postcard greetings were the norm. Some of these vintage cards have survived and can be found in antique stores throughout the state. Christmas Seals that decorated the postcards of 1921 were dedicated to fund research for the eradication of TB.



Christmas tree of the 1920s.

CHRISTMAS PAST

Just as we now wish for COVID to come under control, people 100 years ago were hopeful for Spanish Influenza to be vanquished forever. Relief from the flu allowed for groups to gather at parties and crowded events. Wounded









Christmas cards of the 1920s.



Christmas Cheer in the Litchfield Hills, Photo: John Vose/JerichoHillsPhotography.com

Veterans from World War I had just returned to a hero's welcome. They were highly esteemed for their service, taking center stage in the concerns of the public. It wasn't easy for many to restart their lives afresh, but at least in Connecticut's Christmas of 1921, they made a valiant effort.

Back then, organizations focused on those in need during Christmas, just like today. In downtown Hartford, the Salvation Army hosted 500 kids that year in a large hall where they all sang Christmas carols and folk songs at the top of their lungs. Some had to wait outside in the cold just to feel a part of the thrilling venue. By the end of such parties, Santa managed to greet every child and present them with nuts, candy and those delightful oranges. Funded by charities, these heart-warming events made a great difference for many in our state. Farmers, blue-collar workers, and returning service members also could rely on the kindness of those more fortunate who brought them gift baskets stuffed with all kinds of food and simple gifts. In the Hartford Armory that year, Veterans were hosted to Vermont turkey dinners with all the trimmings and invited for second helpings at a large Christmas Day event.

Every social affair in Connecticut's high society of 1921 was filled with the spirit of the Christmas. Glee Clubs at colleges performed well-attended programs themed to the season. People were enthused about afternoon holiday teas, upcoming evening parties, and the latest couture. The Flapper Era was just beginning, as freshly emboldened women had just begun to exercise their right to vote. Wealthy families from old money and the nouveau riche in thriving businesses planned their Christmas dinner visits with friends. Oddly, these social engagements were proudly announced in the 1921 Hartford Courant. Large insurance companies published declarations that they would gift life insurance policies to their employees for Christmas. Newspapers were the social media of yesteryear with anything, and everything posted, published, and celebrated. The spirit was bright that December, even as people escaping tragedy from war and illness were processing their loss. Churches filled up with loyal followers, searching for post war comfort as well as inspiration. Ministers, famous for their oratorical skills, knew just how captivate their parishioners with sermons that were sometimes published. Around that time, Hartford's First Church of Christ's Minister Rockwell Harmon Potter reminded his parishioners to keep in mind: "Christmas comes not to stir man's wonder, but to enkindle his thought… not to dazzle the eyes, but to warm the heart. Worthy are the ceremonies and worthy is the meaning of it all to gather out of it the truth which may be borne away and kept in the heart for ministry to life."

CHRISTMAS PRESENT

As far as present day Christmases go, Connecticut epitomizes much of how the rest of the country visualizes the holiday season–Colonial style homes lit from within, farmhouses swathed in powdery snow, red berries dusted with a fresh snowfall, holly wreathes on the door, and deer loping through the evergreen forests blanketed in white glitter. The truth is that driving down many of our streets in December, one is

bound to behold scenery that looks just like a Hallmark card. Aren't we lucky? And yet, it takes some effort on the part of our populace to get well into the Christmas groove for which we are so highly thought of.

Those of you who live in Connecticut know the holiday drill. It all actually begins with Thanksgiving Day. First, family and friends gather for a turkey dinner and eat their hearts out. While nursing those Alka-Seltzer laden stomachs, our populace strips off the corn stalks from the lamp posts, stuffs the faded mums into the trash barrel, and tosses away the last of the pumpkins in lieu of something even more compelling–the ubiquitous effort aimed at Christmas curb appeal. Here, that includes tastefully placed simple electric candles in the windows and painstakingly hung red beribboned wreathes on doors and windows. Connecticutians are passionate about winter holiday aesthetic—lights and wreathes must be in their proper places to create decorative symmetry. The New England tradition of candles in the windows can be traced back to Irish immigrants. They lit up their streets with window candles for their priest walking home in the dark after his last mass on Christmas Eve. The candles also represent love and faith shining out to neighbors in the spirit of the season.

Procuring a Christmas tree is also a major preoccupation. During the long Thanksgiving weekend, some begin to speculate if they should saw down a tree from a local Christmas tree farm. Others dash to the Christmas tree lot to browse through the pines trucked in from the northwest. No matter where you go, soon the choicest selection will surely be gone. At the same time, much like everywhere else in the country, droves are heading to Home Depot and Michael's to replace old lights so they can begin the process of emblazoning their houses. Some can't resist fabric blow up Santas, snowmen and reindeer for the lawn. Black Friday beckons those who have kids, inveigling them to face the long lines at Wal-Mart and Best Buy in search of the perfect gifts. Others go straight into denial about Christmas shopping and in Zen-like fashion, content themselves with leftovers, football on TV, and board games at home with the family members who aren't out shopping.

JOYS OF THE SEASON

Although COVID put a damper on many personal gatherings last year, it seems plans are being made for in person events in December of 2021. The Essex Steam Train annually converts into "The North Pole Express," treating pajama clad kids and their parents to a magical journey. Each coach becomes a stage for a live musical performance of "The Night Before Christmas," with costumed actors portraying elves. As the pièce de résistance, Santa presents each child with a sleigh bell crafted by the legendary Bevin Bell Factory; a six-generation family run business dating back to the 1832 out of East Hampton, CT.

Mystic Seaport Village welcomes visitors for evening historical walks with lantern bearing hosts who guide small groups past historical ships throughout the decorated village. In Historical Wethersfield, the Webb-Deane-Stevens Museum showcases traditional homes decorated for the holidays in various times periods that includes colonial and well as early 20th century displays. Christmas shops specializing in ornaments and unique décor like The Christmas Barn at the historical Lambert House in Wilton and the Pink Sleigh in Madison are never busier. The Wadsworth Atheneum in Hartford boasts scads of gorgeous Christmas trees and wreaths celebrating the holidays decorated by community members, artists, and organizations. All items are for sale and help support the museum's special exhibitions, educational programs, and operating expenses. Although this year Hartford Stage will take a hiatus from its staple: *A Christmas Carol,* instead they will be presenting *It's A Wonderful Life: A Live Radio Play*–a 1940's story, with special references to Hartford Stage and Hartford history. Churches are busy with Christmas craft markets and bake sales, not to mention full houses during services where, caroling, hymns and music retell the Christmas story. Capping off the holiday season, The Annual Boar's Head and Yule Log Festival at Asylum Hill Congregational Church plans to return in early 2022 with music, costumed pageantry, and live animals. Like so many beautiful, active churches in our state, Asylum features classical music and bold performances throughout the season due to the leadership of legendary music director Jack Pott.

Christmas in Connecticut had always been a time for reflection and good will, not having changed all that much in the last 100 years. In smaller towns during Christmas one century







North Pole Express Actor Josh Karam/Photo: Anna Vdovenko; Mystic Seaport Lantern Walk; Bud Beach portrays Santa/Photo: Anna Vdovenko

ago, the wealthy would bring food, supplies, and gifts to local town folk. Now, Toys for Tots and Stuff a Cruiser drives are magnets all over the state for those who feel that same need to give. Their aim is to create Christmas magic for children no matter what their circumstance. Some people sign up to bell-ring for the Salvation Army collection while other volunteer groups charge into action. Lions Clubs, Rotary Clubs, and Aging and Disability Commissions arrange holiday parties for adults and kids with special needs. Bud Beach, an ordained minister and author (who bears an uncanny resemblance to Ole St. Nick) often portrays a magical Santa Claus for some of these Connecticut venues. He whole-heartedly represents a Santa who speaks with extreme sensitivity and kindness to those kids and their families that have very difficult challenges. Bud is an unsung hometown hero who is gifted with the ability to connect deeply with young people and even infants. Those that attend "Sensory Santa" for kids and adults with special needs find moments of joy in time spent with him. Bud reminds his fellow Connecticutians: "It is not just at Christmas time that we need to think about loving our neighbors, it really should be every day of our lives. We need to share our hearts with others and give them our blessings."

CHRISTMAS WAS ONCE ILLEGAL IN CONNECTICUT

In light of all that zest for the holidays both then and now, you may blink and ask yourself, how could it be that Christmas was once against the law here? Let's face it; many people in Connecticut have become a kind of gleeful cheering squad for the holiday. Yet the early Puritans frowned heavily upon Christmas both here and in Massachusetts, viewing it as a marriage between paganism and Catholicism. Their objective was to stamp it out completely. In the mid-1600s, Christmas was made illegal in Connecticut and subject to large fines if caught celebrating.

How did Christmas get reinstated here? Certain seminal literary events turned the tide in favor of New Englanders becoming great aficionados of a decorative Christmas featuring Santa as a new key personage.

A Biblical scholar from New York, Clement Clarke Moore, had no idea when he sat down to pen a Christmas poem for his children that his view of the holiday would spread across New England to light up the Santa craze once and for all. What would ultimately be known as: *"Twas the Night Before Christmas"* describes Moore's vision of a snowy Christmas Eve visit from St. Nicholas. When you think about it, his description seems just exactly like how it might have looked at a modest Connecticut farmhouse on the snow laden fields at full moon. A guest at the party where Moore first read the work out loud to his kids felt so inspired that she published his poem anonymously an 1823 Troy newspaper. His words spread like wildfire, the public was galvanized and soon notions shifted. Charmed, the American populace traded in the more dour representations of St. Nicholas of antiquated times in lieu of a jolly, rotund, rosy-cheeked, white bearded elfin-like fellow that occupies our imagination to this day.

As if to clinch the deal, Charles Dickens later went on tour in the 1860s to read "A Christmas Carol" in places like Boston and Hartford, and it is said that even Dickens himself was reportedly swiping tears from his eyes during the more poignant moments of his oratory. Dickens' dramatic readings contributed to the New Englanders associating Christmas with Old England style themes of good will, traditions, family gatherings, festive meals, caroling, and charity. Finishing up the job, illustrators like Normal Rockwell painted many engaging depictions of Santa that made it onto the covers of popular magazines in the 1920s, like the Saturday Evening Post. Rockwell's works informed our modern day notions of Santa Claus in countless ways. His marvelous paintings are all on view at the Norman Rockwell Museum in Stockbridge, MA.

Whether Christmas past or Christmas present, it is clear that Connecticut will continue to inspire the joys of the season in many Christmases yet to come. *Seasons Magazines* wishes readers a healthy, happy holiday season, or better yet said in the immortal words of Dickens' character Tiny Tim: "God bless us, everyone!"

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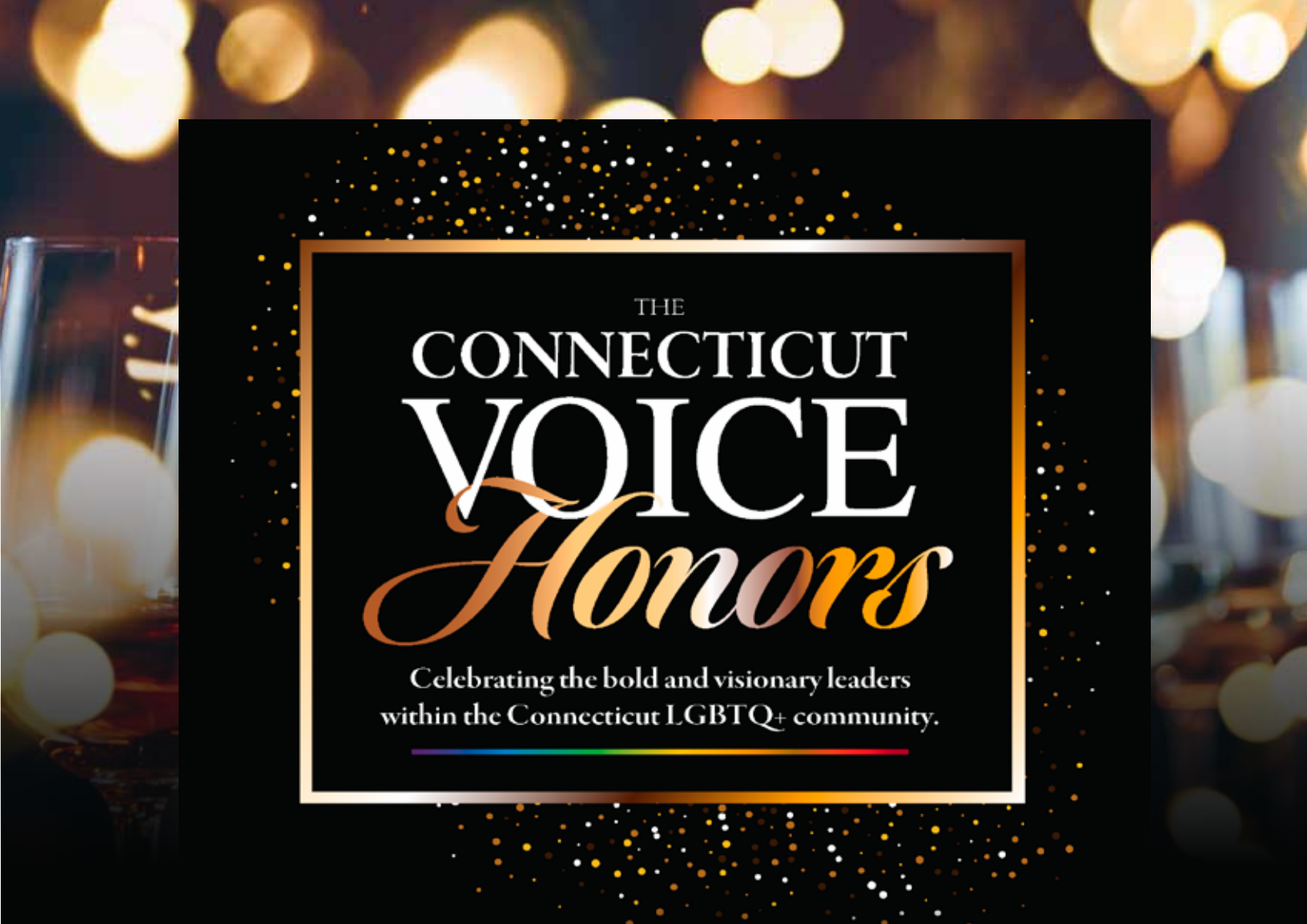
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On May 21, 2022, the inaugural Connecticut VOICE Honors will take place at Foxwoods Resort Casino. This gala evening has been designed to pay tribute to the individuals, organizations and companies whose commitment to inclusion, diversity and advocacy for our LGBTQ+ communities has established Connecticut as a leader in the United States and one of the most positive and affirming places to live and work for the amazing and diverse people who identify as LGBTQ+.

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TODAY'S SENIOR LIFESTYLES:

A New Chapter Where Seniors Can Truly Thrive

Written by **MARY HAWKINS**

Whether it's a decision someone has to make for themself or an adult child overseeing decisions for a parent, the question of how and where one is going to age and live out the latter years of their life is inevitable. Decades ago, the main choices for older adults were either living with their adult children or other family members, or going into a nursing home, but it's safe to say that the landscape for senior living has changed dramatically, especially in the past 10 years or so. And when it comes to modern-day senior living communities? They're a far cry from the places our grandparents wound up in! If you didn't know any better, you actually might think you were walking into an all-inclusive resort as opposed to a retirement community when visiting one of them.

We'll take you on a journey of just how much the times have changed for the better for older adults, and we'll showcase the new face of senior living. Today's seniors are so fortunate to be presented with more options and choices, and also to have the opportunity to age on their own terms.



Seabury in Bloomfield

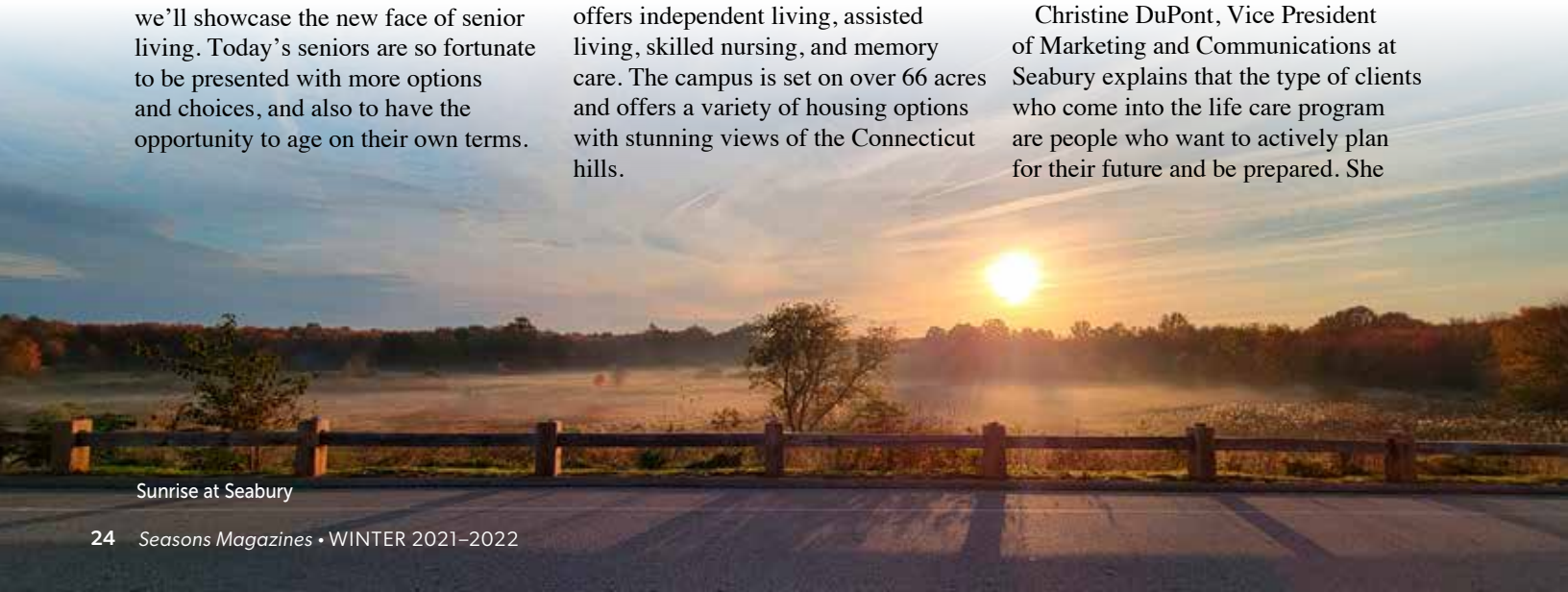
TODAY'S SENIOR LIVING COMMUNITIES ARE A FAR CRY FROM THOSE OF YEARS PAST

SEABURY

Seabury in Bloomfield is a life plan community for adults 50 and over that offers independent living, assisted living, skilled nursing, and memory care. The campus is set on over 66 acres and offers a variety of housing options with stunning views of the Connecticut hills.

One of the things that truly sets Seabury apart is it's "life care" membership program, which has a structured contract with an entrance fee and a membership fee, and where residents first come into independent living and then can progress through the other stages of care that are available at Seabury as needed.

Christine DuPont, Vice President of Marketing and Communications at Seabury explains that the type of clients who come into the life care program are people who want to actively plan for their future and be prepared. She


Sunrise at Seabury



notes, "This is a model where the cost proposition is more affordable because you can budget it in rather than being subject to the market rate when you arrive."

Another thing that differentiates Seabury from other senior living communities is their "Seabury at Home" program. Marketing Counselor Danielle Needle explains, "This is a life care program at home, which is wonderful because a lot of people in their 50s or 60s are not really thinking of moving into an assisted living community at the current time, but they want to have the security of knowing that they're going to be covered in the future for their long-term care costs. It's similar to long-term care insurance, but it's a lot better because we have personal care coordinators who are assigned to individuals as their health care navigators for the rest of their life." With Seabury at Home, people can have the peace of mind knowing that they have in-home care and facility-based care down the road when it's needed.

DuPont adds that the program has been a game-changer and says, "We launched it in 2008, and at the time, we were the fifth in the country for this type of program, and we were the first in our state."

Walking through the halls of Seabury makes you feel like you're in a luxury hotel rather than a senior living community. Residents enjoy countless social activities, including exploring the campus' walking trails, group exercise classes, a spacious indoor pool, various clubs and committees where they can interact with residents who have similar interests, fine dining with gorgeous views, and there's even a salon and day spa where they can indulge in a little pampering to look and feel their best.

Even upon pulling down the driveway of Seabury, there are residents out enjoying the fresh air while walking their dogs, as other residents stop to say hello and chat. Needle notes, "It's just



Residents enjoy an active and fun lifestyle at Duncaster.

such an active, vibrant community with so much going on. This is the farthest thing from someone going into "a [retirement] home." Our residents are so active."

DUNCASTER

Duncaster is another senior life plan community in Bloomfield that offers independent living, assisted living, long-term Care, rehabilitation, and memory care. Lisa Greene, Vice President of Sales and Marketing for Duncaster explains that life plan communities used to be called continuing care communities and notes, "They're really communities where people can go and live actively and know that there is the safety net of additional care when the time comes."

She explains, "Residents live in independent apartments, that are their own homes. They bring everything and make it their own home, and they live there independently. So they can come and go, but there are many activities here on campus, and they don't have to worry about dealing with maintenance of a house. There are many enriching activities here like speakers and healthcare, exercise classes, a swimming pool, and art classes. It's a community, and there are many people who have similar interests and passions. It's a place where friendships can be formed at a time when many people who live at home begin to feel isolated. It's such a different concept than what our parents and grandparents lived through."

Greene explains what sets Duncaster apart saying, "I think one of the things that makes Duncaster special and unique in the community is we are fully independent, not for profit, and unaffiliated. So we don't answer to a higher order in terms of faith or anything else. We have a mix of backgrounds, and we celebrate that not just in our residents, but in our staff as well."

MCLEAN

McLean in Simsbury is another life plan community that offers assisted living, memory care, independent living, and also short-term skilled nursing rehab for post-acute rehab services, long-term skilled nursing, and a home care agency and hospice. The memory care program is one of the things that truly sets it apart from other communities. Carlene Rhea, the Director of Assisted Living and Resident Services at McLean, says, "One service that we're so proud of is our memory care option in assisted living. McLean, early on, recognized the need to help those in the community that were struggling with memory loss, and we created an entire neighborhood just dedicated to memory care. In 2020, we were so honored to be awarded the first purple flag for dementia care in the state of Connecticut. This was from the Alzheimer's Association and the

Connecticut assisted living Association. And it holds us to provide the highest standards of memory care."

McLean also gets involved in the local community to help those who are aging, as Ann Pavano, Campus Liason and Volunteer Coordinator explains, "We support our community at large with many needed programs that serve those still living at home some of the programs that we offer, like our community cafe. We offer caregiver support groups, and dementia support groups, as well as a social model day program. So these are all important programs for people in the community at large."

McLean strives to create a community of inclusion for all. Rhea notes, "We really believe everybody's story is unique. Everybody coming through our door has a concern of one kind or another. And we have a resident-centered philosophy of care, and we provide residents and family and staff with person-centered care. We are mindful of a person's body, mind, and spirit."

HARBORCHASE AT EVERGREEN WALK

"This isn't your grandmother's assisted living." That's what Hollis Hartman, Director of Sales at HarborChase at Evergreen Walk in South Windsor says. Today's communities are vibrant, luxurious, and many of them offer amenities and activities that you'd expect to find at a five-star resort.

HarborChase offers assisted living and memory care services in an environment that Hartman describes as "very resident-oriented." She notes that the community even strives to provide an atmosphere where families can have a pleasant experience visiting loved ones, saying, "We have several dining venues, and one even has a full bar. It really caters to adult children. It's very comfortable and they can visit with their loved ones and have wings and a beer. We also offer a fine dining restaurant that's open Thursday through Saturday called "The Grill Room," where residents and families can get a 4-course meal with land, sea, and air choices with wine pairings.

One thing that truly sets HarborChase apart is that it offers 24/7 Registered Nurse or Licensed Practical Nurse coverage. Many communities only have a Certified Nurse's Assistant on duty in the middle of the night.



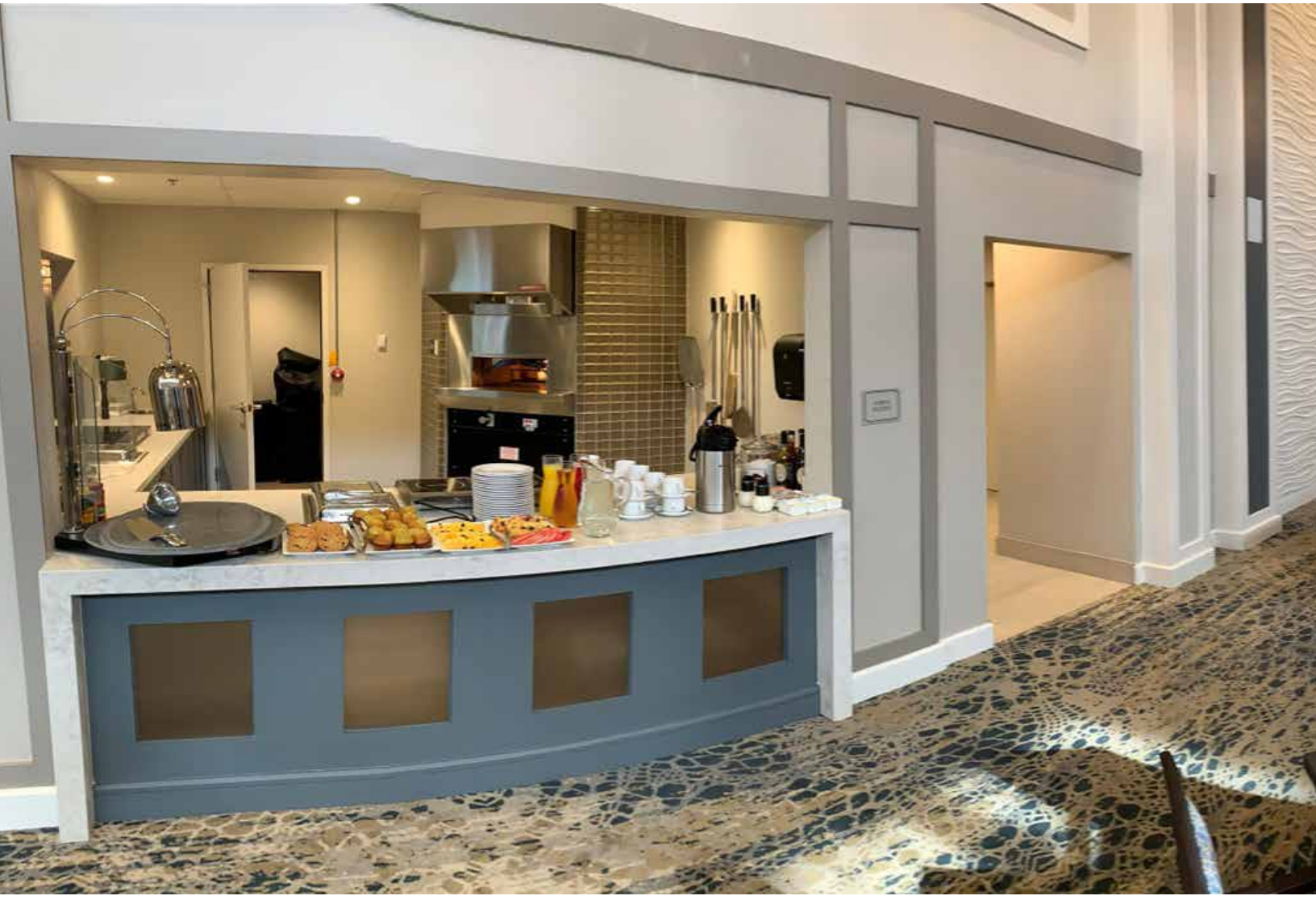
At McLean, residents express themselves and indulge their interests with fun activities.



Staying fit is easy in Duncaster's on-site gym.

COMMUNITIES OFFER A NEW BEGINNING

Rhea explains just how much moving to a senior living community can bring peace of mind to families. "Children no longer have to worry about maintaining a home, providing care, and going to doctor's appointments, and all of a sudden, they have peace of mind that their family members are safe, secure, and well taken care of. We make it really easy at McLean. We bring in as many services here as possible. So on site, a person can access podiatry care, dental care, and certainly their primary medical care. Our nursing team takes care of all their medications. Our entire care team oversees nutrition, personal care. But the real magic, the real special part is socialization for your mom or dad



Residents enjoy fine dining at HarborChase.

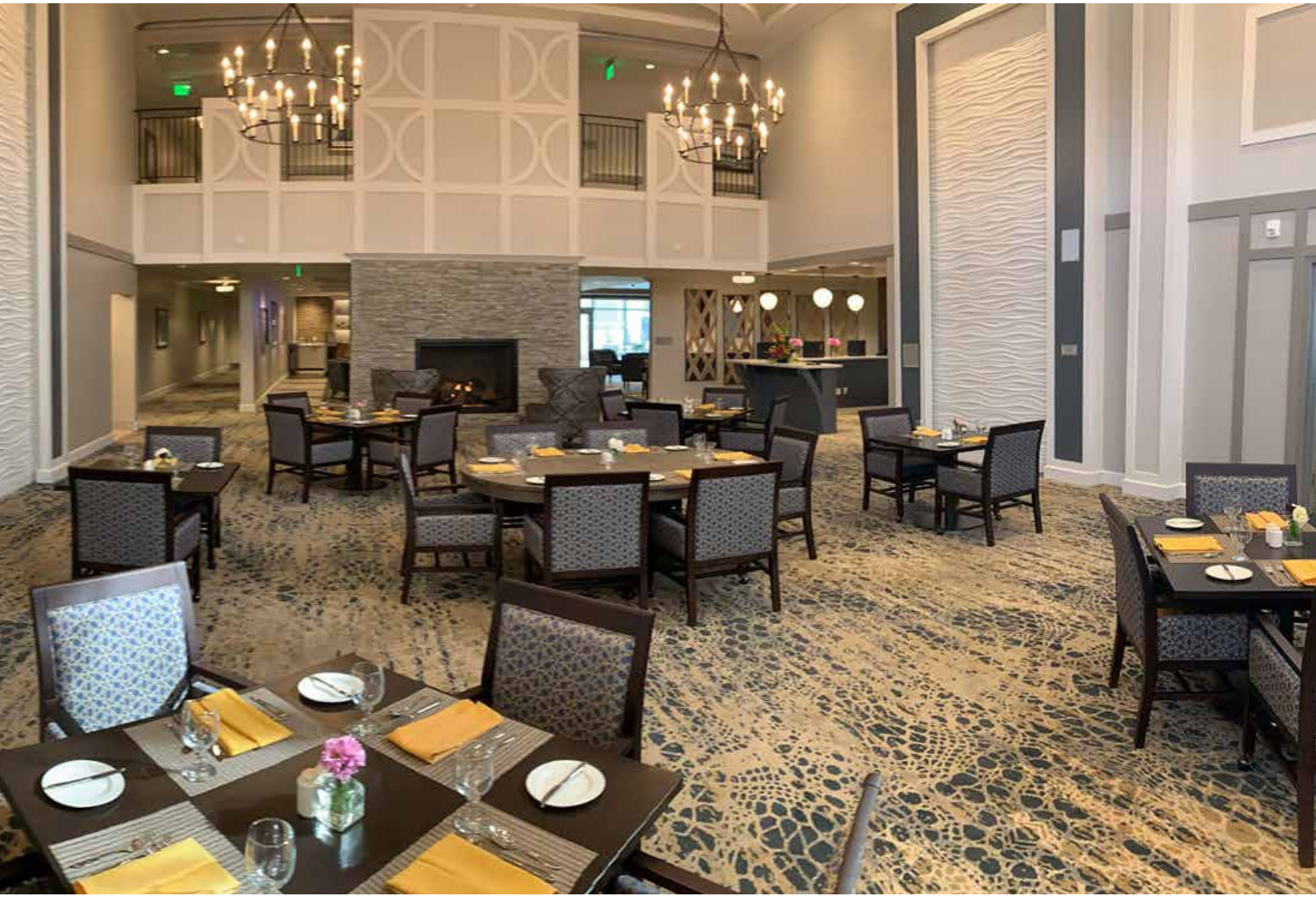
-- they're not sitting home alone anymore."

While the nursing homes of our grandparents' days may have seemed like an ending, moving to a senior living community can be a new, exciting chapter. Greene notes, "What makes senior living different today than 30 years ago is recognizing that people want to learn and grow all throughout their lives, and Duncaster is a community. Moving to a retirement community is not a place to go away. It's a place to go and grow, and "starting" happens at all stages of life. It's what keeps us vibrant and young."

Hartman notes that while residents may be reluctant before moving to HarborChase, they go from being totally depressed to loving their



HarborChase at Evergreen Walk.





Friends enjoying a lobster dinner at Duncaster.

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new adventure, and they wind up saying, "Why didn't I do this sooner?" She adds that their adult children can also have peace of mind that they are thriving, saying, "They have a village watching their loved one as opposed to a single person. They're with residents their own age and make friends. They get stronger because of exercise and nutrition. In a new community, bonds are formed. Everybody's in the same boat."

Needle notes that there are many benefits to coming to live on a community's campus as opposed to remaining at home, particularly for someone who has lost a spouse and is alone for the first time in many years. Speaking about the range of activities at Seabury, she explains, "We have committees galore -- everything from an arts committee to the trails committee to a woodshop committee. It runs the gamut, and it's all run by our residents. We even have a thrift store here where all the proceeds are used to support the resident committees." She adds, "When you come here, you are really living your best life."

YOU DON'T HAVE TO GO IT ALONE

Choosing how and where you want to age or making that decision on behalf of a loved one can be extremely overwhelming, as most people aren't quite sure where to begin when it comes to researching different options. The good news is that you don't have to go it alone, and there are people out there who are ready and willing to help to ensure that you select the right choice.

Liz Cornish, owner of New Season in Life, which offers guidance about Independent Living, Assisted Living,

Memory Care, In-Home Care and Senior Support Services. After spending over 30 years as a Physical Therapist, Cornish decided to start New Season in Life as a means of helping people navigate the overwhelming landscape of senior living options. If you aren't sure where to start when it comes to research, turning to someone like Cornish can be such a welcome relief.

She explains, "I have a network of people that want to age in place and stay at home. I have skilled resources and non-skilled resources, elder care attorneys, and of all different types of, of other companies to refer people to so that we can provide them with exactly what they need."

Justin Michaud is the Director of M.R. Home Care Inc., an elder care company that has been providing quality care in Connecticut for over 30 years. He explains, "Our motto is to keep you in your home as long as possible, in a safe, clean, non-judgmental environment, where you can keep your routine."

He notes that when it comes to caregiving, finding the ideal individual to come into a person's home is crucial, saying, "Caregiving is an inclusive system, and you have to find the right person. We take pride in finding the right caregiver for the community as a whole."

Cornish also emphasizes that the conversation of how someone wants to age should happen long before they're in a position where they need to make a decision, saying, "I try to tell people, ideally, to start to have the conversation before you're even thinking of it {making a move}. Say, 'Hey, Mom, I know we're not ready now. But just looking ahead, how do you want to age, and what are your thought processes as you age?'"



New Season in Life owner Liz Cornish



Director of M.R. Home Care Inc. Justin Michaud

She notes that it's important to reassure an aging parent that they aren't making a move right away, but if they start to forget medications, there are changes in hygiene, or bills aren't being paid, there needs to be a plan in place for what those next steps might be.

Rhea from McLean also says, "I think the right time to talk to families is the sooner the better, and often, so as to include their loved one in the conversation. So you could find out what mom or dad really wants or needs in a community. I think the bottom line is to talk to them sooner than later, before an event happens, before it's more of an emergent situation that you have to address."

She advises that another key factor in knowing when it's the right time to make a move is whether a loved one is making poor judgment with financial or safety issues, or if they suddenly are having confusion of space and time. Rhea also adds that caregiver fatigue is another issue that is very real and should be taken into consideration.

SENIOR LIVING IS NOT ONE SIZE FITS ALL

Making the choice of how and where to age is a personal decision and it looks different for everyone. Perhaps the best way people can help their loved ones be prepared for what comes down the road is to start the conversations early and to keep them going as time progresses and the need for care approaches. Rhea explains, "It's good to remember that a discussion is a process and not an event."

Whether it's remaining at home and relying on home care services, or entering into a senior living community and starting a new chapter, everyone deserves to live out the latter years of their lives in an environment that feels comfortable, safe, secure, and like... home.



The "Grover" apartment at Seabury is just one of many beautiful living options.

Creating a Culture of Safety and Quality for Mothers and Babies

By **IRA MORRISON** / *Photography courtesy of UConn Health*

There has been a quiet evolution taking place in the obstetric (OB) world involving UConn Health, but it's about to get much noisier as new practitioners get settled and word gets out in the medical and patient communities reasserting UConn Health's reputation as the preeminent hospital and regional resource for prenatal care, labor and delivery, and postpartum services.

Molly A. Brewer, DVM, MD, MS, and chair of the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology at UConn Health, has been guiding the department's growth and transition toward creating a comprehensive center of excellence for women's health, embracing the triad of quality patient care, education and research.

"Our mission is to ensure extraordinary, quality- and safety-focused patient care, with a wide range of services that are performed efficiently, seamlessly and cost effectively," explains Brewer. "Our focus is on enhancing safe delivery for mother and child, educating our various constituencies, reducing or mitigating emergencies, and ensuring that we can make a difference in our patient's health and wellbeing throughout their lives."

That challenge includes ensuring an array of preventative and best-practice OB/GYN services, with particular focus on labor and delivery quality, and emphasis on postpartum care, an area where America lags.



Dr. Richard Wagner performs an ultrasound at UConn Health's Women's Center, which offers both OB-GYN and maternal-fetal medicine services. (Photo by Tina Encarnacion)

ADDRESSING MATERNAL MORBIDITY IN THE UNITED STATES

The maternal mortality numbers in the United States tell a sobering story: As a nation, we rank near the top of the industrialized world in maternal mortality ratio, at approximately 18 per 100,000 pregnancies, representing 800 deaths annually.

Nationally, Black and American Indian/Alaska Native women are about three times as likely to die from a pregnancy-related cause as white women. The maternal death ratio for Black women (37.1 per 100,000 pregnancies) is 2.5 times the ratio for white women (14.7) and three times the ratio for Hispanic women (11.8).

Causes of death vary widely, with death from hemorrhage most likely during pregnancy and at the time of birth, and deaths from heart conditions and mental health-related conditions (including substance use and suicide) most common in the postpartum period. Typical mortality causes include cardiovascular conditions, infection or sepsis, cardiomyopathy, hemorrhage, thrombotic pulmonary or other embolism, and cerebrovascular accidents.

But issues also driving maternal mortality include racial disparities in quality of care, lack of education for pregnant women and their partners, limited or inconsistent access to providers, cultural barriers, misinformation and a dearth of appropriate postpartum care.

REDUCING MATERNAL MORTALITY THROUGH RESEARCH, EDUCATION AND ACTION

The Obstetrics, Labor and Delivery (L&D) and Maternal Fetal Medicine (MFM) teams at UConn Health work side-by-side to care for the obstetric patients in the ambulatory and inpatient setting.

Kathleen M. Zacherl, MD, maternal medical director for Labor and Delivery and assistant professor in obstetrics



UConn Health's maternal-fetal medicine practice includes (from left) Dr. Andrea Shields, Dr. Nicole Gavin, Dr. Anne-Marie Prabulos, Dr. Richard Wagner, Dr. Garry Turner and Dr. Shontreal Cooper. (Photo by Tina Encarnacion)

and gynecology, completed her residency at the UConn School of Medicine and joined the UConn Health faculty six years ago.

"I recognized the opportunity to help prepare our team and students for any contingency – our goal was, and remains, working toward achieving best-possible outcomes for every patient," Zacherl says. "Molly [Brewer] was incredibly supportive and shared my commitment to strengthening our program, adhering to national standards, and creating a reputation as the best hospital in the region for having your baby and for maternal care."

Zacherl and the L&D team have implemented new quality and safety protocols, including a protocol for women at risk of postpartum hemorrhage. Changes include faster access to blood supplies, medications and instruments, and multiple simulations involving the full array of providers needed in an emergency.

Other programs now in place include hypertension training to prevent or limit potential seizures and strokes, cardio-vascular interventions, and COVID-19 protocols. A major focus also has been reducing emergency or planned cesarean sections (C-sections), an area where UConn has seen tremendous success. The UConn John Dempsey Hospital has received high marks from The Joint Commission, a U.S.-based international medical accrediting organization serving more than 22,000 health care organizations, for reducing C-sections.

Additionally, the Leapfrog Group, a national nonprofit organization that reports on the safety and quality performance of U.S. health care facilities, in partnership with Newsweek magazine, creates a list of top-performing maternity hospitals. UConn's John Dempsey Hospital was one of only three maternity hospitals in Connecticut to make the list.

According to Carrie Ferrindino, Labor and Delivery nurse manager, the current cesarean rate at UConn Health in 2020 was 19.75%, well below the national target set by



Dr. Shannon DeGroff sees a patient in the UConn Health Women's Center OB-GYN practice. (Photo by Paul Horton)

the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. That, she adds, bests the most recent national average of 24.5% that was reported to the Leapfrog Group from participating hospitals.

FOCUS ON OPERATIONAL AND ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE, AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH

The MFM team recently added three new physicians, greatly expanding and strengthening community outreach, operational services and academic training capabilities. Andrea D. Shields, MD, MS, and Richard K. Wagner, MD, worked together at Baylor College of Medicine in San Antonio and come from military backgrounds – Shields was in the U.S. Air Force, and Wagner in the U.S. Army. The third new physician, Shontreal M. Cooper, MD, is an active U.S. Army member.

Shields and Wagner met in San Antonio in 2016 through a mutual mentor, where they established their MFM practice and worked together to build a successful OB/GYN department with 22 physicians and genetic counselors. In Farmington, Shields is focusing on academics and research, and Wagner on strengthening UConn's operational foundation and patient services.

"I knew UConn's clinical and academic reputation; the opportunity to help develop and direct the School of Medicine's MFM fellowship program was a really attractive proposition," Shields says. "I talked Rich (Wagner) into joining me – he's an operational powerhouse, and we work well together. We knew we could help craft and operationalize a modern academic and clinical MFM program, working with Dr. Stephanie Bowers, the division chief for obstetric services at UConn Health, and her OB team in the ambulatory setting."

Shields, who earned her master's degree in clinical investigation and transactional science, is running the MFM fellowship and boosting research in maternal quality and safety, strengthening their research program by improving dissemination of their work at regional and national meetings, and through manuscript publications.

Additionally, she is hoping to attract more funded research. As the principal investigator for an Agency of Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) $1.9 million grant, Shields and a team of national experts are creating a multi-disciplinary simulation course, Obstetric Life Support (OBLS), to teach first responders the correct techniques to use when responding to maternal cardiac arrest. The UConn John Dempsey Hospital will be the first hospital in the country to study this simulation program in a randomized trial.

Wagner echoes Shields's philosophy of filling the gap that currently exists in full-service MFM health care, and the need to reduce MFM-related mortality. His charge, he says, is operational expansion, getting better known in local communities, providing support and educational opportunities for smaller hospitals serving more rural patients, and building UConn Health's reputation as a regional destination for maternal quality and safety.

"We need to be known for having strong clinical functions for high-risk patients and excellent customer experiences to attract new clients and get the attention of referring physicians," Wagner explains. "We are a resource for community providers and their patients, and want to be recognized for ease of access, prompt delivery of care, and efficient, fully integrated documentation processes."

COMMUNITY OUTREACH AND EDUCATION ARE CRITICAL MFM COMPONENTS

Another essential component for helping pregnant women and reducing maternal and infant mortality is reaching out to communities of color and penetrating cultural, racial, socio-economic and educational barriers, says Cooper, who completed her MFM fellowship at UConn Health. Her personal goal is to focus on health equity, and to help close the "trust gap" between the community and physicians.

A strong social media advocate, she currently has more than 130,000 TikTok followers, works with the Connecticut Department of Public Health, and is involved in a reproductive justice program at Yale University. Utilizing social media tools, she explains, is a powerful way to navigate the mistrust and misinformation that exists in the community, and to provide accurate data and direction through a medium that people turn to regularly, even though much of the content they read is wrong, misleading or anecdotal at best.

Cooper also is spearheading an effort to train interested medical students as doulas, professionals who provide continuous physical, emotional and informational support to a mother before, during and shortly after childbirth. The first cohort of UConn medical students as doulas will be in place in 2022.

"We want to be seen by patients and referring physicians as the 'go-to' full-service maternal-fetal medicine center for ambulatory and inpatient needs," Shields observes. "Connecticut already has one of the lowest MFM mortality rates in the country, and we are viewed as one of the top L&D hospitals. We are committed to making ourselves the safest place to deliver in Connecticut; the best way to do that is to become an integral player in the patients' continuum of care, from pre-conception to postpartum. We see ourselves as the 'orchestral conductors' for specialized, high-risk delivery."

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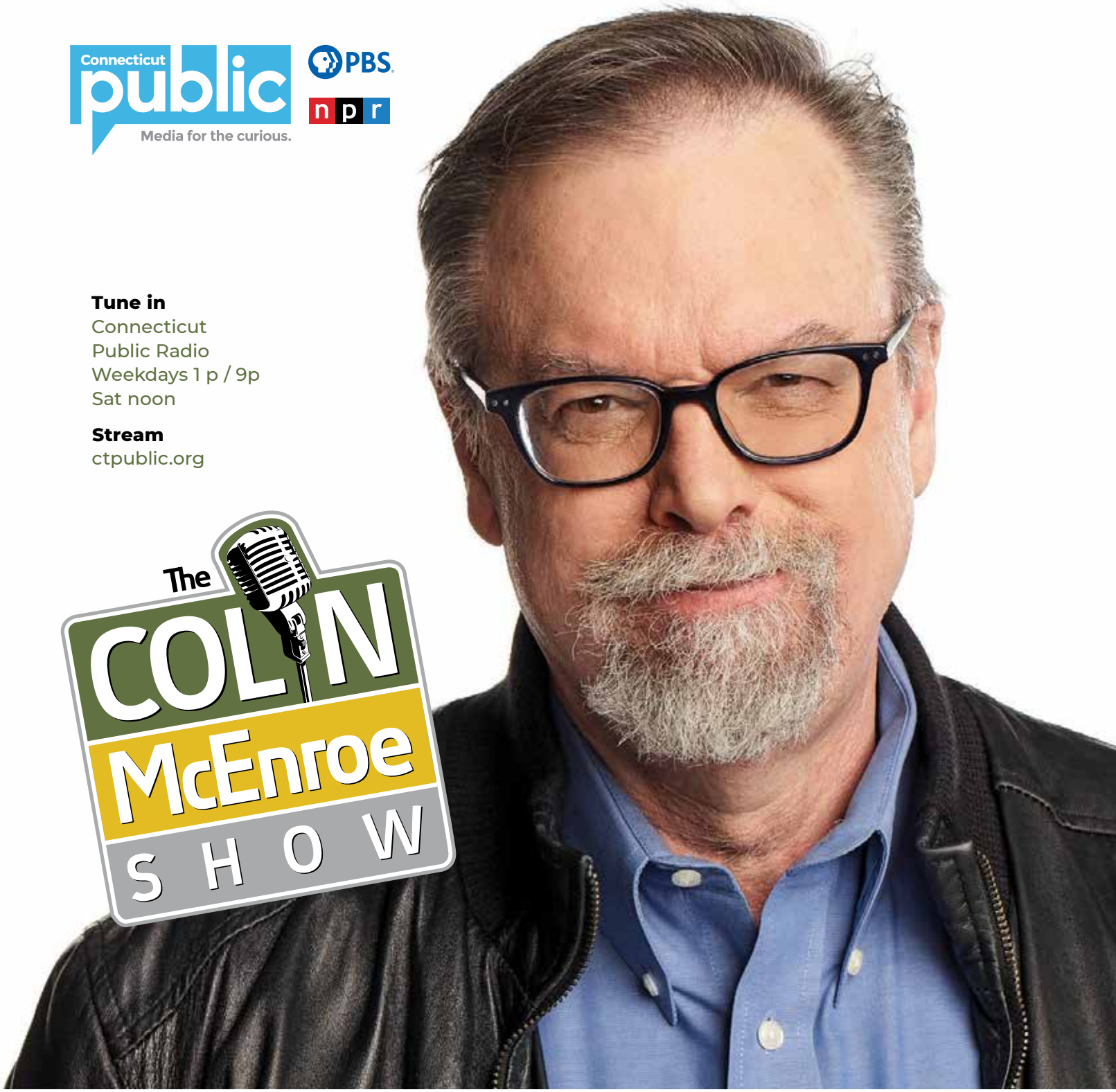
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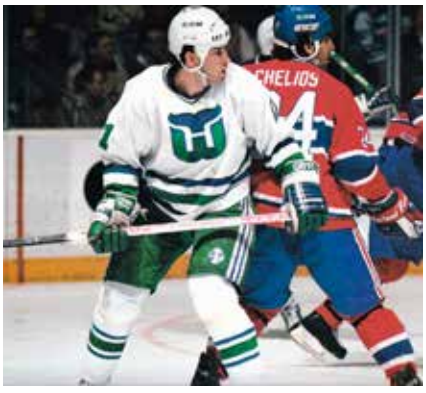
The Beloved HARTFORD WHALERS

A Team That Continues to Inspire To This Day

By **DENNIS HOUSE**

"Hey Dad, what are the Hartford Whalers?" It's a valid question -- though perhaps puzzling to people of a certain age. To put this story into perspective, let this sink in for a moment. A person born on the day of the last Hartford Whalers game at the Civic Center will turn 25 this spring. It is safe to say if you are under the age of 30, you likely have no memory of a team that was on the local TV sportscasts nearly every night and talked about all over the United States and Canada.

It's a strange phenomenon. There is still tremendous love for a NHL team that bolted for the South a quarter century ago. It's not uncommon to see a Whalers shirt on a woman at the supermarket, or that familiar Whalers



logo on a hat on a guy at your child's football game, or on a license plate in traffic in Meriden, Manchester, or beyond.

What is it about the Hartford Whalers and their incredible staying power in our hearts? The team that is now the Carolina Hurricanes still has brisk merchandise sales. According to some estimates, Whalers gear outsells the majority of current NHL teams. Parade of Novelties in the WestFarms Mall is even planning a Whalers Shop within the store to meet the demand. At any given time, the number of Hartford Whalers items on Ebay tops 500. As I was writing this article, the number was 721.

HISTORY OF THE WHALERS

Let's take a little journey into a brief history of this iconic team. The Whalers were born in Boston in 1972 as the New England Whalers, of the now defunct World Hockey Association. A few years later, they moved to the Hartford Civic Center, and in 1979, when the WHA folded into the NHL, they became the Hartford Whalers. Hartford, at the time, was the 21st biggest Nielsen television market in the

nation. It now stands at 33.

The funny thing about the Whalers is, the team was never successful on the ice. There was never a Stanley Cup brought to Connecticut's capital city, but the fans were fiercely loyal and still are to this day. Case in point: after the Whalers made the playoffs in 1986 and lost, the state threw a parade through downtown Hartford that attracted thousands of people.

Despite their popularity, by the 1990s, however, it was widely reported the team was losing money. It was eventually sold by RIchard Gordon to Detroit software magnate Peter Karmanos, who announced in 1997 the team would leave for Raleigh, North Carolina. It came after an intense season ticket drive led by then Lt. Governor Jodi Rell, and negotiations with Karmanos by Governor John Rowland. By all accounts, the state offered a generous deal to keep the team in a refurbished Civic Center, but Karmanos wanted more.

There was anger, sadness, and efforts to persuade the NHL team to put an expansion team in Hartford to replace the beloved Whalers. The pain of losing the Whalers was tempered when the following year, the New England Patriots announced they were moving to Hartford, but the year after that, team owner Robert Kraft announced he was backing out the deal.

In the years that followed, other cities across the country were growing while Connecticut was suffering a population decline. The odds were stacked against a return of the NHL to Hartford.

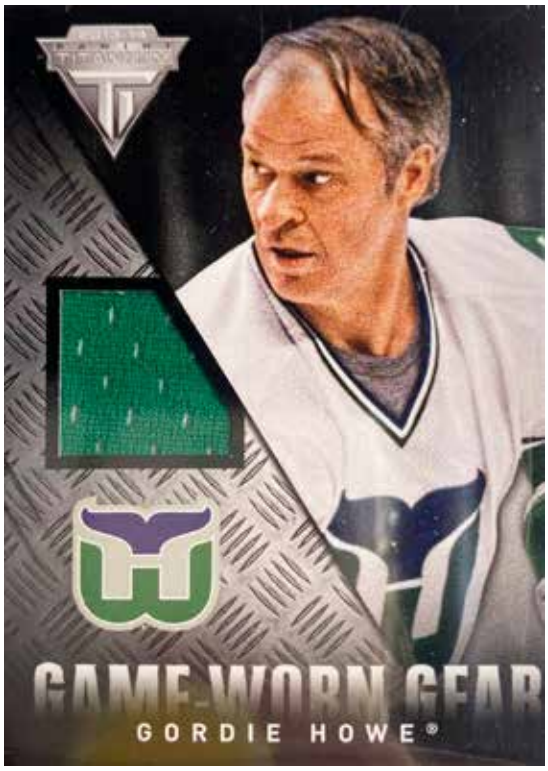
Nevertheless, people started to wear more and more Hartford Whalers merchandise. Some of it was even made on the cheap, but before long, high-class replica jerseys and the like started showing up at sporting goods shops and airports like Bradley, and even TF Green in Providence. People were snapping up the stuff to show their Connecticut pride. Celebrities who had no connection to Hartford were spotted wearing it, showing up in tabloid photos, and a Whalers shirt even made cameos in TV shows and movies, like Adam Sandler's 2010 movie *Grown Ups*.

The green and blue of Peter Goode's very clever logo, with the H intertwined in a W and a whale tail, were becoming ubiquitous. They became the unofficial colors of Connecticut's capital.

THE WHALERS CONTINUE TO INSPIRE

When the Hartford Yard Goats were born, one thing was clear as they pondered the name and marketing scheme: the colors would be green and blue. Team president Tim Restall told me that decision was made before the nickname was chosen. The case was the same for the Hartford Athletic, the soccer team that set up shop here in town. Owner Bruce Mandell told me the colors were a no-brainer. I know some wish the Hartford Wolf Pack felt the same, but the minor league hockey team sticks with the red and blue of the New York Rangers. They were green and blue for a year when they changed their name to the Connecticut Whale, though. That, too, was a very cool logo.

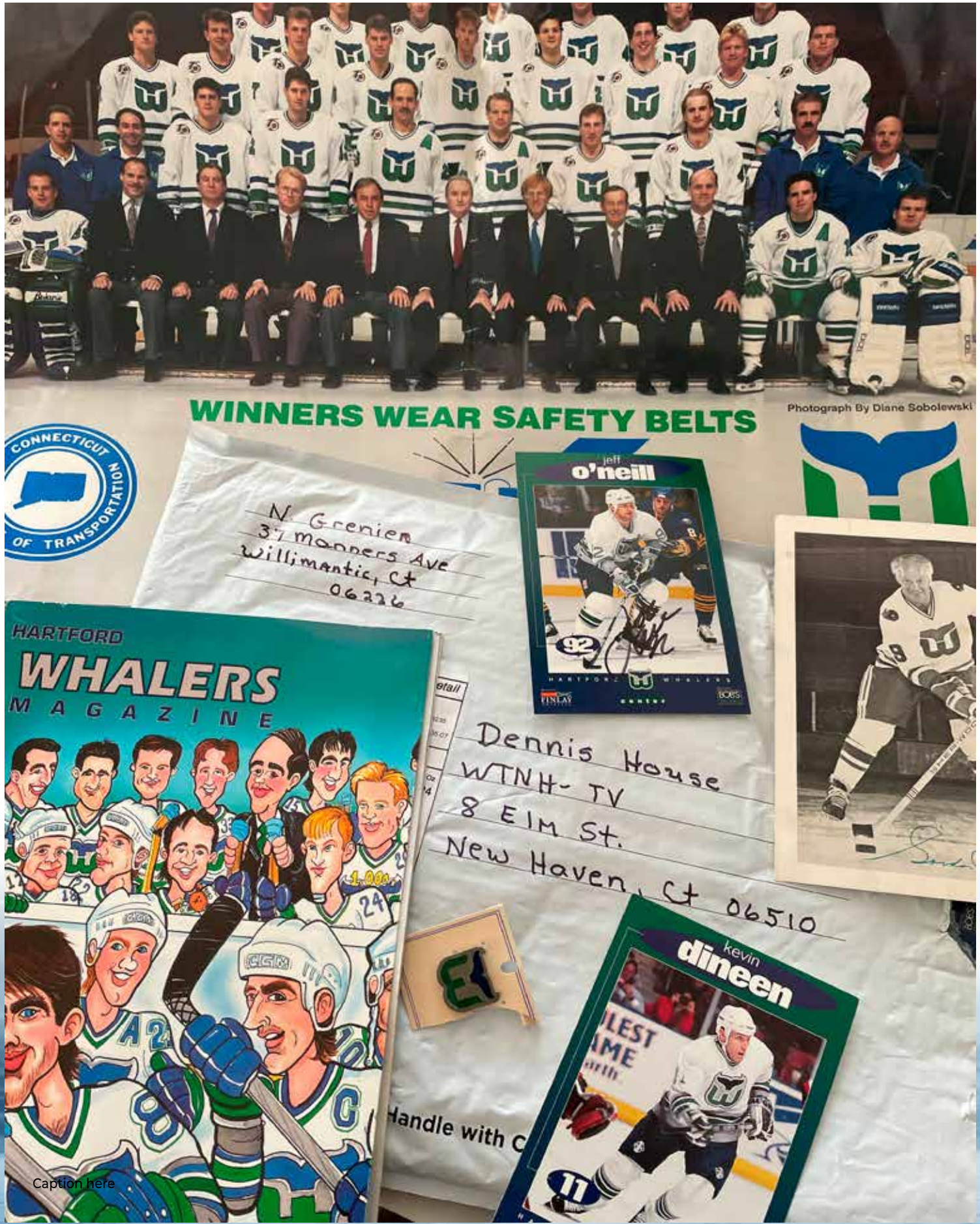
The big question I get asked all the time is, "Will we ever get a team back?" ESPN's Steve Levy explained in depth during our September Seasons Magazines Conversations with Dennis House podcast that the possibility is highly unlikely, and it is a complicated answer. Others have said that first we would need a billionaire to come forward and say, "I want a team in Hartford, and I'll pick up the bills." Second, the state would have to agree to help build a state-



According to one of his trading cards, rather than crashing in a recliner, hockey great Gordie Howe, was "still crashing the boards" at age 51. In 1979-80, Howe scored 41 point for Hartford in is final season.



Hartford Whalers 1982-83 Ron Francis Rookie Card.



Caption here

of-the-art arena to house a team. Also, keep in mind that there are other bigger cities that are also salivating for a team. Owners of the brand new Seattle Kraken expansion team paid the league a $650 million dollar expansion fee just to join the NHL, and there was no arena included in that price.

Twenty years ago, there seemed to be more hunger to get the Whalers back. Memories are fading and the fact is, those who remember going to Whalers games are getting older. The high school hockey players who played on the Civic Center ice and went to Whalers training camp to learn some skills are now middle-aged. It's interesting, in the past two years, I've received gifts from some senior citizens who were downsizing and getting rid of their Whalers memorabilia. They couldn't bear to throw it away, so they reached out and wanted me to have it. I'm grateful for an awesome jacket, a tie, and other Whalers souvenirs bequeathed to me by several people in our great state.

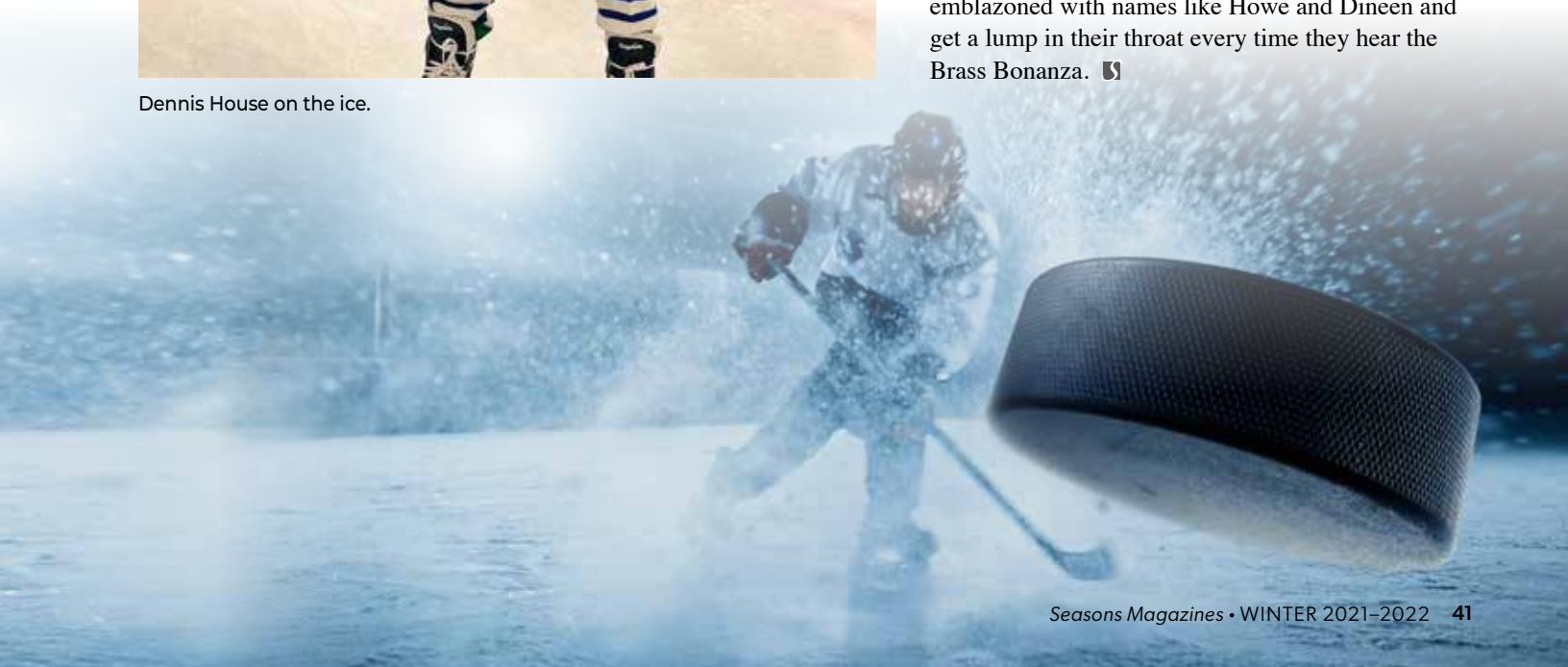


Dennis House on the ice.



While working at Aetna, Todd Fairchild (back row, left) got snagged to be in a Whalers ticket promotional brochure. They let him keep the hat!

There are so many who still dream of the Whalers coming back to their rightful home. Despite the odds, I think if I were governor, I'd create a task force to explore it, if for nothing else than to show the state we have exhausted the possibilities. In the meantime, these fans will wear their shirts emblazoned with names like Howe and Dineen and get a lump in their throat every time they hear the Brass Bonanza.





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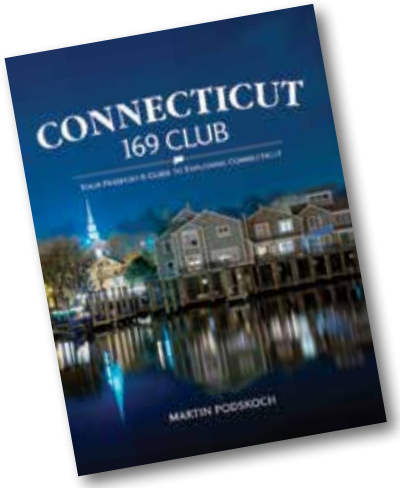
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THE CHARCUTERIE CRAZE:

Entertaining Like a Pro

Written by **ALEX ACQUARULO** / *Photography by* **ASHLEY AMENDOLA**

With the colder weather upon us, the season of holiday gatherings with family and friends is rapidly approaching. What better way to spend our holiday time together than laughing, chatting, and enjoying ourselves over a holiday charcuterie board? Over the past year, you might have noticed the growing craze for all things charcuterie!

Charcuterie is a French term that is derived from the French words flesh (chair) and cooked (cuit). Using these French origins, the word "charcuterie" essentially translates to describe a delicatessen that specializes in cured meats and meat dishes.

In more recent times, charcuterie boards have evolved from not only displaying meat products, but also cheeses, fruits, jams, olives, crackers, nuts, peppers, and pretty much anything you can think of. It's no wonder charcuterie boards have gained popularity: they're easy to create and share, fun to put together, and there is no right or wrong way to make one.

DESIGNING A CHARCUTERIE BOARD

When looking at how to design a charcuterie board, first, you'll need to think about display, taste, and variety. But before diving into putting together your ingredients for a charcuterie board, first, think about the board itself. There are charcuterie boards displayed on just about anything, from massive pieces of wood to individual plastic cups, and even some displayed right out on the countertop. Feel free to use whatever size, shape, and material you want for your individual board. Some find that a square or rectangular shape is the easiest to use, as it allows you to portion out your display and fill in the gaps.

Once you have selected your board, it's time to think about taste. Ashley Amendola is the owner and operator of Coven Catery. Ashley specializes in grazing tables, charcuterie boards, and picnic boxes for events in Connecticut.

Ashley shared her expertise on cheese selection for charcuterie boards. She explains, "I always like to make sure that I include a few different textures. At minimum, I like to include one soft cheese (something that is spreadable and can be used with dips or crackers) such as Brie or Camembert, then one semi-hard cheese, such as Manchego. This is also a nice visual cheese since it's usually sliced in large slender triangles and shows off its edible rind. Lastly, one hard cheese like an Aged Cheddar or Gouda. These can both be broken up with a cheese knife into messy pieces."

Once Ashley has her main cheese on her board, she will then add a crumbly cheese if needed, like a Goat Cheese, Blue Cheese, or something more seasonal like a Cinnamon Toscano.

After you have your cheese selected and placed on your board, it is time to move on to charcuterie. Ashley has great advice for these next steps: "I take the same approach here as I do with the cheese," she notes. "I include an assortment of charcuterie varieties and textures. I always like to include a hard sliceable salami. Right now, my two favorites are Columbus' Salame Secchi, which has an extremely buttery flavor, and Creminelli's Wild Boar Salami, which is extremely rich and flavorful. I also like to add a soft and pliable charcuterie, like a Coppa or Prosciutto de Parma."





THE FINISHING TOUCHES

Once you have your cheese and charcuterie selected and arranged on your board, it's time to add some fruits, vegetables, nuts, jams, and crackers to fill in the gaps. You might want to start with fresh strawberries, grapes, raspberries, and blueberries. Feel free to add any fruit, especially dried. You can add apricots, pineapple, figs, cherries, dates, or even some colorful red plums. For vegetables, consider starting with carrots, artichoke hearts, cucumbers, and cornichon pickles. You can place a lot of these fruits and vegetables directly on your board, or grab some of your favorite mini bowls to hold them and move your board items to surround the bowls.

Once your fruits and vegetables are placed around your charcuterie board, you can add the nuts and jams. With nuts, you can keep it simple with pistachios, almonds, peanuts, walnuts, and even cashews. Nuts are the perfect way to fill in those extra gaps around your boards, and jams will help to do the same. For the best jams to add onto your board, go for an apricot, fig, or spiced jam of some sort. Also, look for jellies or a compote to add a bit of sweetness to those cheeses and charcuterie. You'll love the way the jars of jelly and jam look on a board. Feel free to add honey and a wooden honey dipper, too!

Lastly, finish off your charcuterie board with crackers, and use different varieties of shape and taste, here. Triscuits work quite well, both in the original size crackers and the mini. You can use any flavors that they have, though sea salt always adds an extra hint of flavor. You may also want to add crackers that are round, like Ritz or Carr's







Table Water Crackers. Rectangle crackers work well for stacking, fanning out, or angling. For rectangle crackers, look for Club or Firehook's Rosemary Sea Salt Baked Crackers. If there are still gaps on your board, add dark chocolate pieces, fresh herbs like rosemary and thyme, both green and black olives, and cute cheese knives as well.

ENTERTAINING MADE EASY

Whether you're having a small gathering of family and friends or a larger soiree, everyone is bound to be impressed with your charcuterie board skills, and nobody has to know that these boards are so much simpler to put together than what the visual result indicates.

Here's another pro tip for you: If you don't want your guests hovering over the board for too long, add toothpicks and small serving spoons with more pre-sliced cheese and charcuterie. You can also add little flags to help your guests identify your selection as well.

Charcuterie boards make entertaining easy, fun, and they also bring a little bit of elegance and sophistication to your table. Be warned - you'll be hooked from your first board, and once you get the hang of putting one together, the sky's the limit on where charcuterie can take you.

Alex Acquarulo grew up in North Haven, Connecticut and is the owner and operator of CT FoodGirly, LLC, a social media marketing platform for CT businesses that started in 2017. CT FoodGirly discovers and showcases Connecticut's best restaurants, all while promoting and working with the small businesses in the state. You can follow along with Alex as she travels to restaurants in CT via Instagram (@ctfoodgirly), Facebook (CTFoodGirly) and her website, www.ctfoodgirly.com.

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Where Bowdie Calls Home

Written and photographed by **FRANK RIZZO**



William Berloni poses with a trio of his performing pooches at their animal enclave in Haddam, Ct. Photo by **Frank Rizzo.**



William Berloni cradles Cha Cha as Sonny and Bowdie stroll by at Berloni's home that he shares with several dozen animals he trains and houses. Photo by **Frank Rizzo.**

Driving through the back roads of Haddam on a summer's afternoon, you pass stretch after stretch of quiet meadows and dense woods, of hills both gentle and rugged. For a while, you can almost forget you're just minutes from major highways, train routes, and airports.

You're in great expanses of nature, which may be a pleasant idle for you, but if you're a dog living with Bill and Dorothy Berloni, it's not only home, it's heaven, complete with a field of dreams.

Pull into the long gravel driveway off a secluded road, and in the distance, you'll see a large house with several indoor and outdoor wings located on a raised ridge overlooking vast stretches of meadows, woods, and 90 acres. Your first hint that this is not just any rural Connecticut home is from the sudden chorus of barks, alerting the homeowners that someone is approaching their turf.

This is the home of William Berloni Theatrical Animals (www.theatricalanimals.com), where the residents on this day include 25 dogs, three cats, a macaw, horse, donkey, pig and — from the 2018 Broadway play *The Ferryman* — two geese and a bunny.

As we walk to the main house's entrance, we spot a life-like bronze statue of the dog that started it all — the canine rescued by a then-19-year-old Berloni from a local pound. This dog played Sandy in the world premiere of the musical *Annie* at the Goodspeed 45 years ago — and later when the show transferred to Broadway.

Sandy began Berloni's unexpected career as animal trainer and behaviorist for the stage, film, and television. In 2011, he received a special Tony Award for his work, which includes more than 20 Broadway shows, including *Bullets Over Broadway, The Crucible, A Christmas Story, The Audience,* and countless shows off-Broadway and in regional productions

He's also been the animal go-to guy for TV's *The Leftovers, Billions,*



A statue honors the dog who started it all for William Berloni: the original "Sandy" from the world premiere of the musical *Annie* at Goodspeed Opera House in East Haddam in the mid-'70s. Photo by **Frank Rizzo.**

The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel, Little Voice, Ramy, Mr. Robot, Sesame Street, and a host of others shows and commercials (iRobot, Busch Dog Brew, Rachel Ray Nutrish). His first movie was for 1981's *Neighbors* with John Belushi and Dan Aykroyd, and was followed by many more, including *The Greatest Showman, Charlie Wilson's War* and Julia Robert's latest film, *Ben Is Back*.

HANGING WITH BOWDIE

The sounds of the barking dogs inside their enclosed space gradually die down, and soon, the only sounds we hear are the gentle clinks from wind chimes hanging on the porch and the bounding thumps of a trio of dogs Berloni brought out to socialize.

"The dogs only bark if they're unhappy or if there's someone who's entered the property," says Berloni. "But if they're content, they just hang out."

One of the dogs who gallumps out of the house to enthusiastically greet the new visitors is a major star, Bowdie, (a cross between "a poodle and something large," describes Berloni). Bowdie was featured as Nana in NBC's *Peter Pan Live* (the first dog to play a role on live television and in front of 10 million people) and starred in a memorable episode of HBO's *High Maintenance,* which was entirely told from the pooch's point of view. (The performance was so extraordinary that producers wanted to nominate the dog for an Emmy.) Local audiences know him as the star of the Goodspeed Musical, *Because of Winn Dixie*.

Berloni also brings out Cha Cha, a chihuahua, who he cradles in his arm. She's in the latest generation of *Legally Blonde* dogs. Also, dashing into the brush looking for rabbits was Sonny, who was in the 2012 Broadway revival of *Annie*. "She's close to 13 now," says Berloni. "This is also a retirement home, as well as a rescue home, as well as a training and working dog home."

All the animals get along, says Berloni, but that's because he understands the dynamics of each breed. "They are grouped by size and temperament. So there's the hounds, the terriers, the little dogs, the 'Sandy' dogs, and the 'Toto' dogs.

There's a big, open, cage-free space indoors with air conditioning, resin floors (easy to clean), and Dutch doors, so pack groupings are always within an eyeshot. And yes, in the main house, the Berlonis sleep on their king-sized bed with a few dogs— about five, actually, including 85-pound Bowdie.

"If we have a dog needing high-active training, they get brought into the inner sanctum, but basically, we allow the ones that are the quietest to come in."

There's even a sort of assisted living residence section "for the older ones, once they get to the point when they're medically infirm."

DAILY ROUTINES

The days begin for the Berlonis at 6:30 a.m., when the animals are let outside. After their own breakfast, they begin the two-hour process of feeding everyone else, which ends around 10 a.m. Then there's another outside



One of the holiday cards from William and Dorothy Berloni that features a few of their favorite dogs. Photo courtesy of Bill Berloni.

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recess at noon, 2, and 4 p.m. In the intervals, there's training of the animals for upcoming jobs or training in general.

Berloni's special gift with animals is rooted in the positive connections he makes with them. He doesn't shout, threaten, or give menacing whispers. Understanding the particulars of the breeds, he creates an environment where the animals look forward to the training because of the focused attention he gives them — and the treats, too.

Ah, the treats. What's the secret snack? He simply gives them what he normally feeds them, he says. "If you start with something very tasty for a 'sit,' where do you go from there when you need them to do something special? But just like us, every dog has a palate, and you find out what their most favorite thing is, you save that for the one moment you really need them to focus."

In the end, he says, "It's not really about the treats anyway, but rather they're doing [what we ask them to do] because they want to please us."

The regular meals, however, vary depending on the breed, allergies, and health concerns. "Out of 25 dogs, I probably make 11 different diets."

PANDEMIC CONCERNS

The pandemic took a toll on Berloni's animal enterprise, having to lay off staff and taking on most of the caretaking themselves. Berloni says he's lost multiple filming and theater jobs because of the national shut-down, but being home for such an extended period, Berloni says, "I was just very happy being amongst them."

The dogs also felt the pangs of being unemployed. "Bowdie was going nuts," he says. "Here was a dog who was out working with all sorts of companies, and then suddenly, it was just Dorothy and I.

[When they're not working] they miss all that [outside socialization], so we had to work twice as hard to keep them occupied and engaged."

Professional gigs have started to increase slowly, but hopes to bring *Because of Winn Dixie* to New York are still on hold because of the financial risk during the ever-changing pandemic restrictions. Like many actors who have grown too old to play youthful roles, Bowdie has "aged out" of that starring gig, with another star-in-training when the production restarts. But Bowdie is still very much employable and has just completed a Hallmark television movie, *Sand Dollar Cove*.

Upcoming projects for Berloni include work for the *Sex and the City* follow-up HBO series, *And Just Like That,* and a film based on Sigrid Nunez's best-seller, award-winning novel *The Friend: A Novel,* about an author mourning the suicide of her mentor-friend and inheriting his Great Dane.

Theatrical jobs are still sparse because of the changing COVID levels and restrictions," but our first big stage show is for the Children's Theatre Company of Minneapolis [in November]."

The show? *Annie*.



FEATURE

The Best of the Best in Connecticut

WTNH Anchors Share Their Favorite Spots

Written by **JANE LATUS**

In their line of work, television journalists get to see every part of the state, from the Litchfield Hills to the Long Island Sound, the Metacomet Ridge to the river valleys, and the nearly-New-York-City to the Quiet Corner. And at WTNH, in particular, many of the news staff are also Connecticut natives who already knew their state intimately and have life-long memories here.

So could WTNH's news anchors, if forced, choose one favorite place in Connecticut? As it turns out ,they can! (And readily so in most cases.) Here's where some people who know our state inside and out really love to be.

Darren Kramer
Anchor

"My favorite place is a tiny little beach near my home we walk to every day," says Kramer. By "we" he means himself, his wife Jill, and his Havanese dogs Jack, 13, and Lucy, 12.

They walk to the town of Madison's East Wharf Beach every day, with Jack in a stroller because the half-mile walk has gotten to be too much for him.

"We always dreamed of living someplace in Connecticut where we could walk to the water," Kramer says. They rarely miss a day, walking there to see sunrise or sunset, or sometimes to kayak. Besides the beauty, it's a community. "It's nice – you see the same faces, people having coffee, or chatting on a bench. We've been here for four years, and it still feels very new and special."

Stephanie Simoni
Anchor/Reporter

"One particular spot, in spring, holds a special place in my heart: New Haven's Wooster Square during the Cherry Blossom Festival," says Simoni. "Nothing says spring in Connecticut like seeing those full blossoms and seeing everyone together to welcome spring."

The park is near WTNH, so Simoni enjoys it year round. But come April, the festival has a special meaning. "I went before I was married, then with my fiancé, then with my husband, and then with our daughter." The festival was cancelled the past two years, so she and husband Roger Susanin's 1-year-old son hasn't been. "But we still made it over to look at the blossoms. It wouldn't be spring without the cherry blossoms!"

Simoni thinks that COVID has taught us to enjoy our green spaces more and that Connecticut residents are especially lucky: "You don't have to go far to see a beautiful spot in our state."



Stephanie Simoni



Lisa Carberg
Anchor/Medical Reporter

"My favorite place is anywhere along the Connecticut shoreline. For the past 20 years, I have lived in places where I can drive to a local beach and hear the sound of Amtrak trains whizzing along the shoreline. Part of why that makes an impression on me is because I think of all of those big city residents heading back and forth with their lives or visits to Boston and New York City while I enjoy my small-town life," says Carberg.

"My career took me to Manhattan where I lived for a year. While I absolutely loved it, when I met my husband, we decided to move back to a small, quaint shoreline town to build a home and start a family. My heart has always been on the shoreline. I commuted 65 miles each way daily for 17 years to be able to live on the shoreline during my career. Now, I still feel fortunate to be able to live in a great little town and work at News 8 in New Haven."

Lisa Carberg with her husband Jeff on the Mystic River.



Darren Kramer

Erik Dobratz
Sports Anchor/Reporter

"The beach!" Dobratz says with no hesitation. Specifically, Old Saybrook's Town Beach. He's been going there since his family moved to town when he was in 4th grade. He rode his bike there then; now his kids do.

"It's arguably the best sand in the state – powdery and soft," he says. "Another thing that's great about it is when the tide goes out, it's loaded with sandbars, so you can walk out for hundreds and hundreds of yards."

Dobratz and his wife Denise go there at least three times a week. "It's a popular place in town. Everyone goes there to watch the sunset." They and their daughter, 14, and son, 12, live 14 houses away from where Dobratz grew up, just a few-mile drive (or bike ride) to the Sound.



Eric Dobratz

Rich Coppola
Anchor

New Haven: nowhere tops it for Coppola. "I'm very sentimental about New Haven," he says. He grew up in East Haven back when parents let kids take the bus



Rich Copolla's dad, Frank



Ann Nyberg

into the city. He'd tag along with his older brother, or go with friends to get pizza, go to hockey games, or see shows.

The New Haven Arena was "the place" to go, he says. Famous as the site of Jim Morrison's arrest for public indecency, the Arena closed in 1972 and was demolished three years later.

Coppola's grandfather owned the Empire Sign Painting Company in a building still on East Street. His grandparents lived on Townsend Avenue, and Coppola would sleep overnight there when his parents went out on Saturday nights. "On Sunday, we'd go to church, take my grandmother home, go to the bakery to buy rolls, then check on the store."

Every day that Coppola goes to work, he's reminded of his firefighter father, who worked at the firehouse across the street from WTNH. And now, he and his wife Sue's daughter, Gianna, 23, works as a registered nurse at Yale New Haven Hospital. "I meet her outside and bring her and her fellow nurses cookies or pizza."

Ann Nyberg
Anchor

"Madison, the whole town. We raised our three daughters here. I call it Mayberry-by-the-Sea. I find it to be very kind," says Nyberg.

There's the beach. "I love going down there, having coffee, and watching sunsets. Our daughters grew up playing on the beach, and two of them married on the beach. I now get to see my two grandbabies playing on the same beach my daughters did!" Nyberg's husband Mark walks their Golden Retrievers, Sherman and Trip, on the beach every night. At the town-owned Surf Club, "for $40 a year you get to go and barbecue all you want!"

There's the whole town. "I love everything about it. I would do anything for the town. It's given my kids a wonderful life."

And there's Nyberg's boutique, Annie Mame, that with a clothing shop, jeweler, and Nyberg's daughter Lindsay's hair salon, comprise The Dressing Room. "You can get a gift, an outfit, get your hair done and walk out the door – it's like an old-fashioned department store."



Laura Hutchenson



Keith Kountz



Gil Simmons

Laura Hutchinson
Anchor

Until 2 years ago, Hutchinson's favorite place was the top of Sleeping Giant Mountain. She grew up in Hamden and always loved the climb for the exercise and the view. But times change! "My favorite place is wherever my son is now, because he's exploring life and I'm doing it again through him."

Hutchinson and her husband Dan live in West Hartford with their son Jack, who will be 2 in January, and are expecting their second child in March. The local playground is their most-frequented place. Golden Retriever Benjamin Franklin joins them in walking there.

Other recent favorites of Jack, and therefore, his mom are: the Wolcott Country Fair, holding baby chicks at Flamig Farm in Simsbury, and every playscape they find.

Keith Kountz
Anchor

The Farmington Canal Trail in Hamden: "My wife and I spend a lot of time walking along there." He and his wife Dawn normally walk "a good hour, or hour and 15 minutes" toward New Haven, enjoying the beautiful scenery while discussing family matters from mundane to major.

The couple has discussed the many issues that come up when raising kids (their daughters are now grown) and made decisions about family and work while walking this section of the trail, Simmons says. Their youngest daughter Amber, 28, is an athlete and multiple marathoner, and "did a tremendous amount of running on the trail" when she lived at home.

To Simmons, the trail has sentimental importance. "There are a lot of good memories of the walks my wife and I've had over the years, talking about life."

Gil Simmons
Chief Meteorologist

There's just no narrowing it down for Simmons. "It's tough to choose a specific area, with so much Connecticut offers," he says. Therefore, the entire state is his favorite.

"From the beautiful Litchfield and Windham County hills to Connecticut's sprawling shoreline what's not to love? The views and recreation areas associated with the Connecticut River slicing through the middle of the state pique my interest, too! Amazing for a roughly 100-mile by 50-mile rectangle. Perhaps my love is also driven by how different the weather can be, too!" he says.

Simmons and his wife love getting outside together. "We love the views and vertical challenge of getting to the summit of Sleeping Giant State Park in Hamden. As bird geeks, we also enjoy what Hammonasset State Park in Madison contains for such a variety of feathered friends."

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Cyrano

A Highly-Anticipated Film Musical With Small Town Connecticut Roots

Written by **FRANK RIZZO** / *Photography by* **DIANE SOBOLEWSKI**

Haley Bennett as Roxanne and Blake Jenner in Erica Schmidt's new musical version of "Cyrano" during a 2018 workshop production at Goodspeed Musicals' Norma Terris Theatre in Chester.



Peter Dinklage (foreground) brought his "Game of Thrones" stardom to the production.

When the lavish new film musical *Cyrano* starring *Game of Thrones'* Peter Dinklage opens in late December, few moviegoers will realize that it all began in a small theater in Connecticut.

In 2018, a musical version of Edmund Rostand's 1897 epic play of swordsmanship, poetry, and unrequited love received a workshop production at Goodspeed Musical's' second, smaller venue — the 200-seat Norma Terris Theatre in Chester.

Also in that Connecticut audience for many performances of that run was film director Joe Wright — best known for romantic period films such as *Pride and Prejudice, Anna Karenina,* and *Atonement*. His partner was Haley Bennett, who was playing the role of Roxanne, the musical's female lead— and who would also star in Wright's film.

The idea of a stripped-down version of the show actually began quite a few years earlier, after director-writer Erica Schmidt staged a 2006 production of *Carnival* at New Jersey's Paper Mill Playhouse, where Michael Gennaro was president and chief executive. Gennaro was impressed by Schmidt's artistic vision and planned to work with her again, discussing other ideas she had, including her re-imaging of *Cyrano*. But later that year, Gennaro moved on to become executive director of Trinity Repertory Company in Providence, R.I.



Blake Jenner, who was in the hit series "Glee," plays Christian in "Cyrano."

Patrick Kerr and the cast in the production featured music from artists of the indie band The National.



Haley Bennett and Peter Dinklage, who starred in the Goodspeed workshop, also star in the film version of the musical that will be released in December.



Laith Nakli, Haley Bennett and Damon J. Gillespie in a scene from the show.

Flash forward to 2015 when Gennaro was named executive director at Goodspeed Musicals. "One of the first calls I made was to Erica," says Gennaro.

Foremost in their minds was the *Cyrano* project, which at that time was at its earliest stages of script development. Gennaro commissioned the work and invited Schmidt to Goodspeed's Mercer Grove, the winter retreat where musical theatre artists work on new projects.

Schmidt left the Mercer with a substantial body of work — but there was still no music.

"I remember we were sitting at a restaurant," says Gennaro, "and we were talking about various [musical theatre] composers for the show. Then for whatever reason I said to her, 'Have you ever thought of using a [rock or pop] band?' She thought that was an interesting idea, and a few weeks later, she called me tremendously excited after having just seen The National in concert, and she said, 'I've got the band.'"

Says Donna Lynn Hilton, Goodspeed's producing director at the time and now its new artistic director: "She had us with *Cyrano* starring Peter Dinklage, written by her, with music by The National, who were very hot at the time."

After a New York reading and three weeks of rehearsals there, a full production was set for Goodspeed's second theater in Chester for August 2018. It coincided with the height of *Game of Thrones* frenzy, as the wildly popular series was concluding its record-breaking HBO run.

"Peter wrapped up filming *Game of Thrones,* they packed their things in Europe, and came directly here," says Hilton. "I can't imagine what it was like for either of them to have been through that whole process together, but they came here and lived in company housing with their children."

Though Goodspeed had security plans in place to deal with the possibility of over-enthusiastic fans, Gennaro says there was never a problem, and that people were respectful to the show, his performance, and to his privacy.

Says Hilton: "He was very private and focused — and there were no connections with fans." Nor with journalists who wanted to write about the production.

In the cast besides Bennett — who was relatively new to performing on stage — were Blake Jenner (TV's *Glee*), whose exit from the show for a television series cut the run's extension short.

THE ONLY CONNECTICUT REVIEW

Critics were asked not to review the show, but because of the high interest in Dinklage — Goodspeed never had a star actor at that level of popularity — and the significant boost in ticket prices, I saw that chronicling and assessing the show was a service to Connecticut theatergoers. I also saw it as a variation of an out-of-town tryout prior to a New York run — which took place in the following year.

So, I bought a ticket and wrote an overall highly favorable review of the musical when the run concluded. My purpose was to give – to those who didn't see the show with this amazing actor – a sense of what it was like, and for those who did, so they could



Blake Jenner plays the handsome but inarticulate Christian who is in love with Haley Bennett's Roxanne.



Laith Nakli and Claire Saunders with Charlie Thurston and Tom Riis Farrell in a scene from the show.

compare their impressions with mine.

I became the only critic to publish a newspaper review of the show (for the Shore Newspapers) — as well as for my blog.

And what did I think of the show?

I was stunned by the brilliant performance of Dinklage, impressed by the haunting music and movement, and its lean adaptation. I thought the show had a terrific future. I had some reservations and offered suggestions to what I thought would help the show as it moved forward. (The full review can be found in the review archives at ShowRiz.com.)

THEN ON TO NEW YORK

Following the Goodspeed run, the show moved off-Broadway to a production by The New Group, which also had a personal relationship with Schmidt and Dinklage.

"We have a relationship with Erica and Peter, and they were looking for a New York home for a show," says Scott Elliott, artistic director of The New Group. "When I saw it at Goodspeed and I heard the first song, I started to cry, which is very much not me, but there was something about the emotion in the music."

Bennett did not perform in the New York production — she gave birth that previous December. Taking over the part was Jasmine Cephas Jones ("Hamilton",) who had a stronger singing voice but played the role "with unsettling and unsubtle fierceness," as I wrote in my *Variety* review.

While there were some improvements, there were other changes that were not all for the better, including some cut songs that previously had deepened the character and motivations of the characters. If I had to choose, I preferred the Goodspeed version.

By the time the show opened in New York, Wright was talking about making it into a film.

"Then, last year, all of a sudden they got a green light to go," says Elliott, adding that the movie was filmed under pandemic protocol in Sicily in the fall of 2020, not far from the active volcano Mt. Etna.

Elliott hopes the film will stir new interest in other theaters producing Schmidt's stage version.

Because of the casting of Dinklage, Elliott says "it will open the door for a lot of different, cool actors to step up and show their stuff."

Cyrano On Stage And Film

Since the late 19th century, *Cyrano* has never been long off the stage or screen.

Most widely known perhaps is the 1950 movie starring José Ferrer, who earned an Oscar for the title role, one in which he performed on Broadway before — and after — the film was released. There was a critically acclaimed 1990 French film adaptation starred Gerard Depardieu, who was nominated for an Oscar. Steve Martin did a modern variation of the tale in his 1987 film, *Roxanne*. Jean-Paul Belmondo starred in a 1990 French TV film of the play.

The Schmidt version is not even the first time the play has been adapted to the Broadway musical stage. In 1898, there was a musical parody of the play, which opened the same year the play premiered in the U.S. In 1899, Victor Herbert turned the play into an opera.

Closer to modern times was the short-lived 1973 version that earned Christopher Plummer a Tony Award (with a script and lyrics by "*A Clockwork Orange's* Anthony Burgess), directed by Michael Kidd. In 1993, there was another musical version by Dutch producers, starring Bill Van Dijk, which closed after four months. At regional theater, there was *Calvin Berger,* a 2007 musical which set the tale in an American high school.

Non-singing *Cyrano* over the recent decades on Broadway included Douglas Hodge, Kevin Kline and Derek Jacobi.

FEATURE

Connecticut On the Big and Small Screen

A Peek Into the State's Movie and TV Past

By **JOEL SAMBERG**



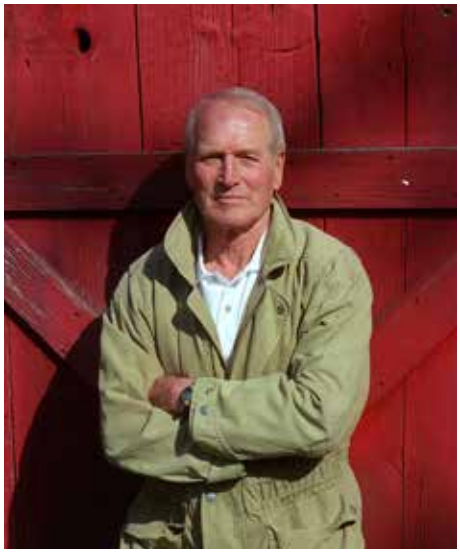
Paul Newman, who was born and raised in Ohio, spent a large part of his adult life in Connecticut as a husband, father, homeowner, charitable businessman, arts patron, and activist. He liked it a lot. In fact, of the five motion pictures he directed, two were shot almost entirely in the state, even though one of them actually takes place on Staten Island. That says quite a bit.

But it also raises more questions than it answers.

Why, for example, do so few of the movies filmed here have so little to do with the heart and soul of Connecticut? And why is it that so many speak to issues and themes we may not be anxious to spotlight?

Of course, there are plenty of motion picture and television productions of which we can be entirely proud, such as Jane Fonda and Robert DeNiro's *Stanley and Iris,* an emotionally touching 1990 film shot in Waterbury, and the 1988 coming-of-age comedy *Mystic Pizza,* filmed in Mystic, Groton, and Stonington.

Still, there's the puzzle of why several movies actually have the name of our state in their titles but no connection to Connecticut whatsoever. Both versions of *Christmas in Connecticut* are among them. The 1945 feature starring Barbara Stanwyck and Dennis Morgan was filmed at the Warner Brothers studio in Burbank, and the 1992 television version with Dyan Cannon and Kris Kristofferson was shot in Wyoming and Altadena, CA. The 2009 supernatural thriller, *A Haunting in Connecticut* with Virginia Madsen wasn't filmed here, either. It was made in Canada.

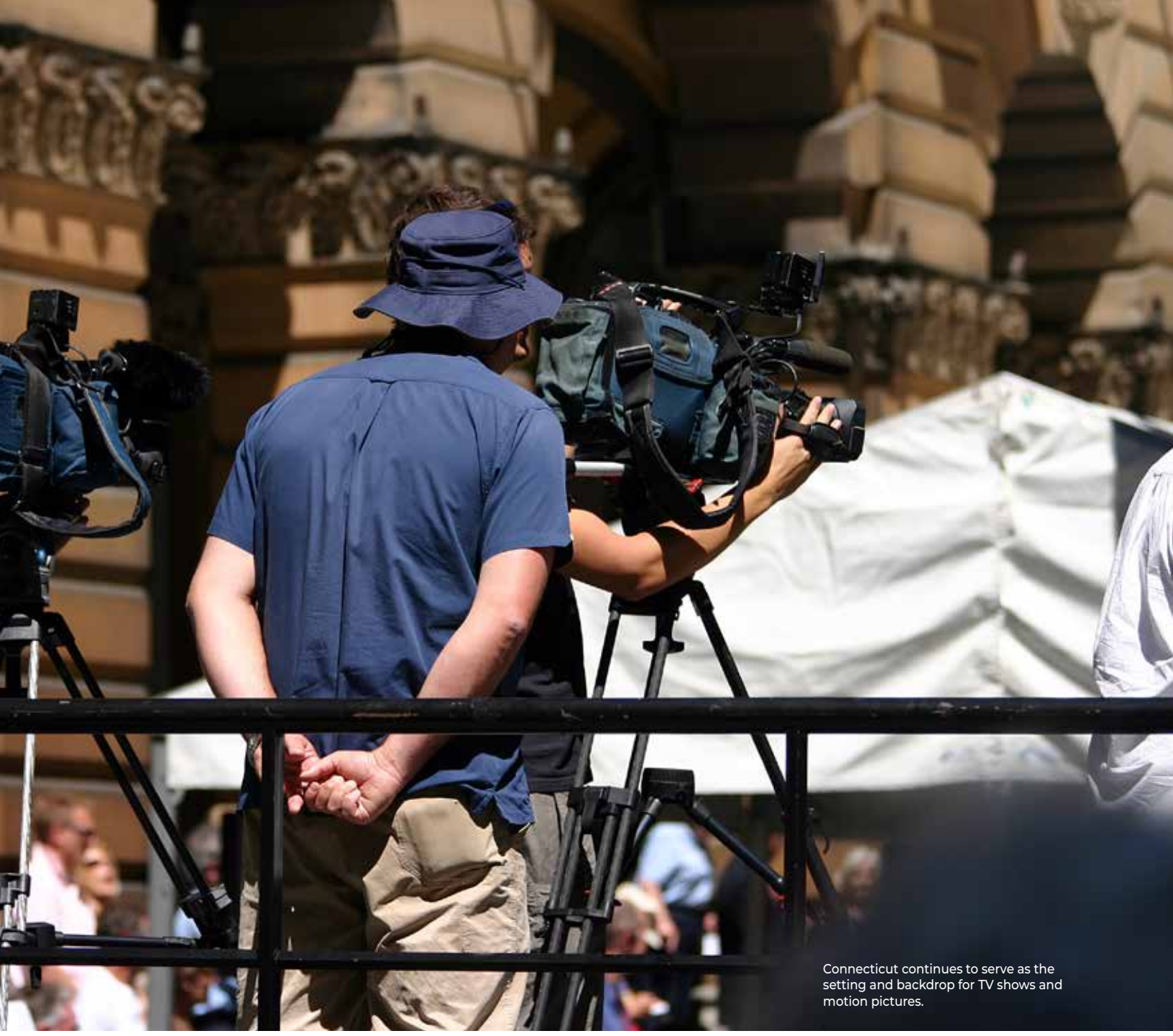


The late Connecticut resident Paul Newman (1925–2008) came to be known as one of the finest actors of his time.

Where does that leave us?

With as much confusion as the ending of *2001: A Space Odyssey*—which incidentally starred longtime Westport resident Keir Dullea. In other words, figuring out just where Connecticut stands in the annals of film and TV production is nothing less than… well… an odyssey! A titanic endeavor.

Speaking of which, both Leonardo DiCaprio and Kate Winslet, the star-crossed lovers from *Titanic,* spent several weeks in Connecticut shooting 2008's *Revolutionary Road,* which is one of those films that explores some darker themes of American life.



Connecticut continues to serve as the setting and backdrop for TV shows and motion pictures.

In the story, Frank and April are a married couple in the mid-1950s with unfilled dreams, unhinged ideas, and an unhappy marriage. The book on which it is based makes it clear that the story takes place in an affluent suburban town in southern Connecticut, and much of the actual filming did occur in Beacon Falls, Darien, Fairfield, Greenwich, and Trumbull. One commentator referred to the story as a sort of death of traditional suburbia.

This is not the kind of advertising slogan our real estate agents would be anxious to use to draw people to Connecticut suburbs.

Three other prominent films, *Gentleman's Agreement* starring Gregory Peck, *The Swimmer,* with Burt Lancaster, and *The Ice Storm,* featuring Toby McGuire, present a similar conundrum.

Gentleman's Agreement, portions of which were shot in Darien, is about a journalist (Peck) who poses as a Jewish man as part of his magazine research into antisemitism in New York City and affluent communities in Connecticut. Despite its tough subject matter—or maybe because of it—the 1947 film was highly lauded and won three Oscars, for Best Picture, Best Supporting Actress (Celeste Holm), and Best Director (Elia Kazan).

The Swimmer was a 1968 film based on a John Cheever short story about a man battling inner turmoil who feels compelled to commute from work by swimming in one built-in pool after another until he gets home. The original story never postulates that it takes place in Connecticut (Cheever was born and raised in Massachusetts), but still, most of the swimming pool scenes were shot in Westport and Fairfield.

The Ice Storm, much like *Revolutionary Road,* has often been referred to as a frigid look at marriage in suburbia. The 1997 film takes place mostly in New Canaan over a Thanksgiving weekend in 1973 and is fraught with adultery, sexual shenanigans, coming-of-age craziness, booze, and drugs—all in the shadow of a winter weather accident. There were news reports at the time that local residents weren't pleased that their town was the epicenter of such a sordid tale.

Where many movies focus on suburban sadness, sitcoms often bring lightness and humor into the mix. Still, many are placed here but not shot here. *Gilmore Girls,* often referred to as a dram-com set in a place of perpetual breeziness, is set in the fictional Litchfield County hamlet of Stars Hollow, but it was filmed mostly in Burbank. *American Housewife,* which placed its comedic family action in Westport, was also a West Coast production. Visually speaking, it wasn't especially obvious that the story took place here, but if the show had kept its original title, that impression may have been much harder to avoid. While in the planning stage, the sitcom was titled *The Second Fattest Housewife in Westport*.

Fortunately, there are a number of romantic movies that not only were filmed here, but that present mature and thoughtful subjects that will embarrass no one. *Hope Springs* is a 2012 Meryl Steep and Tommy Lee Jones picture that actually takes place in Maine but was filmed in Guilford, Stonington, Norwalk, Mystic, and Darien. *And So It Goes,* a 2014 drama with Diane Keaton and Michael Douglas, was shot in Bristol, Bridgeport, Southport, and Greenwich, though the film itself gives no decisive indication that it actually takes place in the Nutmeg State.

So why *were* they shot here?

"Connecticut truly has a variety of excellent filming locations," says George Norfleet, director of the Connecticut Office of Film, TV & Digital Media. "There is practically no location we can't provide, from cityscape to countryside to shoreline. We also have access to a talented crew base and offer an industry-recognized incentive package."

Tax breaks encourage many production companies to shoot in Connecticut, and so does the variety of locations all within easy driving distance, which includes factory towns, affluent hamlets, and suburban communities.

Tax breaks encourage many production companies to shoot in Connecticut, and so does the variety of locations all within easy driving distance which, in addition to what Norfleet mentions, includes factory towns, affluent hamlets, and suburban communities.

And then there's Yale, which lends itself nicely to certain images and impressions intrinsic to many fiction and nonfiction stories. On the other hand, there often seems to be logistical and contractual challenges associated with actually shooting on campus, so of the hundreds of productions that reference the school or even have scenes asserting to take place there, the number that actually set up shop in New Haven is very small.

One of the early features that *did* have a crew roll in was the 1950 Bette Davis melodrama, *All About Eve*. Also, the 2003 drama, *Mona Lisa Smile,* for which Julia Roberts returned to Connecticut, had a few exterior scenes shot at the university (though the story actually takes place at Wellesley and Harvard). For 2008's *Indiana Jones and the Kingdom of the Crystal Skull,* Indie's place of employment, the fictional Marshall College, also used Yale for a scene or two.

Whether or not Harrison Ford himself stopped by is unclear, but director Steven Spielberg did—several times, in fact. In addition to that fourth Indie installment, Spielberg shot scenes from *Amistad* and *War of the Worlds* in the state.

Amistad, with a stellar cast that included Anthony Hopkins and Morgan Freeman, is the 1997 retelling of the actual 1839 revolt of slaves aboard a Spanish ship captured off Long Island, and the legal controversy that ensued. Much of it was filmed in Rhode Island, but some scenes were shot in and around the Mystic Seaport and in Groton.

"I wouldn't want to show favoritism," comments George Norfleet at the Office of Film, TV & Digital Media, "but *Amistad* sticks out in my mind." It's one of his favorites of all the movies that spent at least a little time here in production.

War of the Worlds, Spielberg's 2005 sci-fi thriller starring Tom Cruise and based on the novel by H. G. Wells, has what many regard as one of the eeriest scenes in recent movie memory: dozens of human bodies floating in the Farmington River near Windsor. Gruesome to be sure—but there are many who agree that the excitement of a movie crew nearby and the influx of dollars into local economies are all good things.

That leads us, naturally, to *All Good Things,* a 2010 murder mystery starring Ryan Gossling and Kirsten Dunst, whose producers were looking for tax incentives and scenic locations with an old-time feel. It filmed in Brookfield, Shelton, Bridgeport, Stratford,



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Waterbury, Fairfield University, and Gaylordsville.

The 2012 dramady, *Hello, I Must Be Going,* starring Melanie Lynskey (Rose on *Two and a Half Men*), took place almost entirely in Westport. One motivating factor may have been that the writer, Sarah Koskoff, grew up there. The story is about the emotional consequences of a thirtysomething-year-old woman who moves back into her parents' home after a divorce. Despite yet another broken marriage theme, Westport at least seems as pleasant in the movie as it is in real life.

Which brings us back to Westport's Paul Newman.

His 1968 movie, *Rachel, Rachel,* shot in Danby, Bethel, Georgetown, and Redding, was nominated for Best Picture of the Year, and his wife, Joanne Woodward, was nominated for Best Actress. To top it off, the movie received nominations for Best Supporting Actress (Estelle Parsons) and best screenplay (Stewart Stern). It was Newman's debut as a director.

In it, Woodward plays a lonesome, unhappy, inwardly withdrawn woman in the fictional town of Japonica, where she teaches second grade. She daydreams. And while the withdrawal eventually fades away, what it is replaced with builds quite a drama. It probably could have been shot anywhere, as it is far more about emotions than about Connecticut. But Newman, who had the clout to do what he wanted to do, shot it close to his house in Westport.

That's also what he did for 1972's *The Effect of Gamma Rays on Man-in-the-Moon Marigolds,* filmed primarily in Bridgeport. Based on a Pulitzer Prize-winning play by Paul Zindel, it is about an eccentric woman (Woodward again) and her daughters—one rebellious, the other introspective—as they attempt to get through each day in one piece despite uphill battles revolving around mistakes of the past and the realities of their present-day lives. It had been reported at the time that most of the locations for the film were less than a 20-minute drive from Newman's home.

All told, over the decades, there have been hundreds of movies and TV shows that filmed here, some for hours, some for days, some for weeks (as well as hundreds more that simply take place here). It's a given that diehard movie and TV lovers will rail against the exclusion of their favorite movies and programs in this report. Chances are they can name dozens. It is obviously a topic that will never make everyone happy. That's the truth. Our only hope is that they can handle the truth.

PEACE, COMFORT DOGS, AND JOY!

Written by **RENEE DININO**
Photographed by **CARLA HERNANDEZ TEN EYCK**

You may have seen stories about community policing and working comfort dogs. Working together as amazing K9 duo's breaking down barriers and spreading peace, comfort, and joy.

Here, you'll meet just a few of the many teams already making change in our state. Sergeant Cheney and Officer Tildy from the UConn Public Safety Department, Officer Durette and K9 Indy from the Naugatuck Police Department, Officer Bodell and K9 Bear from the Middletown PD, Officer Simons and Officer Heidi from Yale Public Safety Department, Officer McClelland and Officer Chase from Groton PD, and Officer Yabrosky and K9 Addison from Torrington PD.

The town of Groton is proud to have Community Policing Officer Heather McClelland and her K9 partner, a 2-year-old yellow lab, Officer Chase.

Officer McClelland shares, "Going through training at Bedford Hills Correctional Facility, working with the puppy raisers (inmates) and now working with Chase in the community, has shown me what a great opportunity we have to make a positive impact on people. What might have been a mundane call or interaction, is now so much easier and enjoyable. People light up when they meet Chase, and they actually seek us out in the community."

Officer Chase was trained and donated by Puppies Behind Bars (PBB), which trains prison inmates to raise service dogs not only for law enforcement, but for for wounded war veterans, first responders, and explosive-detection canines.

"Puppies enter prison at the age of 8 weeks and live with their inmate puppy-raisers for approximately 24 months. As the puppies mature into well-loved, well-behaved dogs, their raisers learn what it means to contribute to society rather than take from it." (via PBB).

In fact, Puppies Behind Bars has trained and donated K9 Bear to Officer Bodell, a 2-year-old black lab and sibling to Officer Chase, K9 Indy a 2-year-old black lab to Officer Durette, Officer Heidi a 2.5-year-old yellow lab to Officer Simons, and K9 Addison a 1.5-year-old yellow lab to Officer Hannah Yabrosky.

Patrolman Durette says, "Indy has changed the



Officer Simmons and Officer Heidi of Yale Public Safety.





Sargeant Cheney and Officer Tildy of UConn and Officer Chase of the Groton Police Department.



K9 Bear of the Middletown Police Department.



Goodies at the event.


Service Dog for
First Responders

“Comforting and showing compassion to a victim involved in any form of a traumatic event is just as important as catching the bad guy.”

–Officer Durette
Naugatuck Police Department



Black lab in back: K9 Indy chases a tennis ball while (continue with dogs listed below) From left to right: Officer Heidi, Officer Tildy, UConn, Officer Chase, and K9 strike a pose.

Officer Bodell and K9 Bear from the Middletown Police Department, Sergeant Cheney and Officer Tildy from the UConn Public Safety Department, Officer McClelland and Officer Chase from the Groton Police Department, Officer Simons and Officer Heidi from the Yale Public Safety Department, Officer Yabrosky and K9 Addison from the Torrington Police Department.

way I see my job because he has proven to me that as police officers we serve and protect our communities in many capacities. Comforting and showing compassion to a victim involved in any form of a traumatic event is just as important as catching the bad guy.

Officer Yabrosky from Torrington has the newest addition of pups from Puppies Behind Bars. She says of her new partner, "Having Addison with me on patrol has been a huge asset to not only me, but our entire shift. Addison is a soft, cuddly dog that allows people to relax, even just a little, when they are going through their hardest days. Addison starts many conversations that



Officer Heidi makes new friends with UConn students.

simply would not happen if it wasn't for him."

This new way of policing is also gaining traction at our schools, colleges, and universities. Just ask Sergeant Justin Cheney of the UConn Public Safety Department and Officer Richard Simons from Yale Public Safety.

Sgt. Cheney spends his time on the UConn campus with Officer Tildy, a 5-year-old yellow lab/golden retriever cross breed donated by Canine Companions for Independence.

He says, " Tildy allows me to connect with so many more students, staff, faculty, and various groups on the UConn campuses. She provides our community outreach unit with more opportunities to build trust and support with campus groups, sports teams, and other campus partners."

Officer Simons is paired with 2.5-year-old Officer Heidi for the Yale Public Safety Department, and you can find them not only in and around the campus but all around town and even at Yale New Haven Hospital.

"The inclusion of Heidi as part of the Yale Public Safety/Police Department has changed the way we have been able to reach our Yale community, as well as the broader New Haven community. I am much more focused on community engagement and interaction with Heidi bridging the gap between the police department and the community."

Officer Jay Bodell is hoping to make the same impact with his new partner, K9 Bear in Middletown. Bodell is even bringing his partner into his volunteerism with the Connecticut Special Olympics and the Connecticut Law Enforcement Torch Run. In addition, The Hometown Foundation is helping to fund K9 Bear in his role with Officer Bodell in their community policing role.

K9 Officers are vital to police work in so many ways. The addition of working comfort dogs with officers provides an opportunity for law enforcement individuals to be seen in their community, connect with children and adults in a non-threatening situation, and they are able to educate the public about their jobs, how they help both citizens and even other officers and first responders.

Officer McClelland speaks about Officer Chase within in the Groton PD, "I believe she has made a difference with our officers, dispatchers, and other



first responders. Chase provides an outlet to just unwind, play fetch, do some fun commands, or just get a quick snuggle. I also think she's been a bridge from our department into the community, not just for me, but for my fellow officers."

And Officer Durette offers insight into the role of K9 Indy at the Naugtuck PD and First Responders in town, "Indy has done more to benefit local first responders in the first year we have had him than I could have ever imagined. But he has also been called out by not only our PEER support team to provide comfort and assistance to a first responder, but also requested by other local first responders such as fire, EMS, and communications during their time of need for one of their own."

The Torrington PD is feeling the love too, "I get to watch officers, as well as the public, smile when they see Addison come in the room. He spreads nothing but positivity and happiness wherever he goes," says Officer Yabronsky.

Sergeant Cheney had this to say, "Tildy brings a significant amount of officer wellness within our department. She is very well received by officers and dispatchers and is constantly sought out by them. She is a big contributor to our department's morale and overall image."

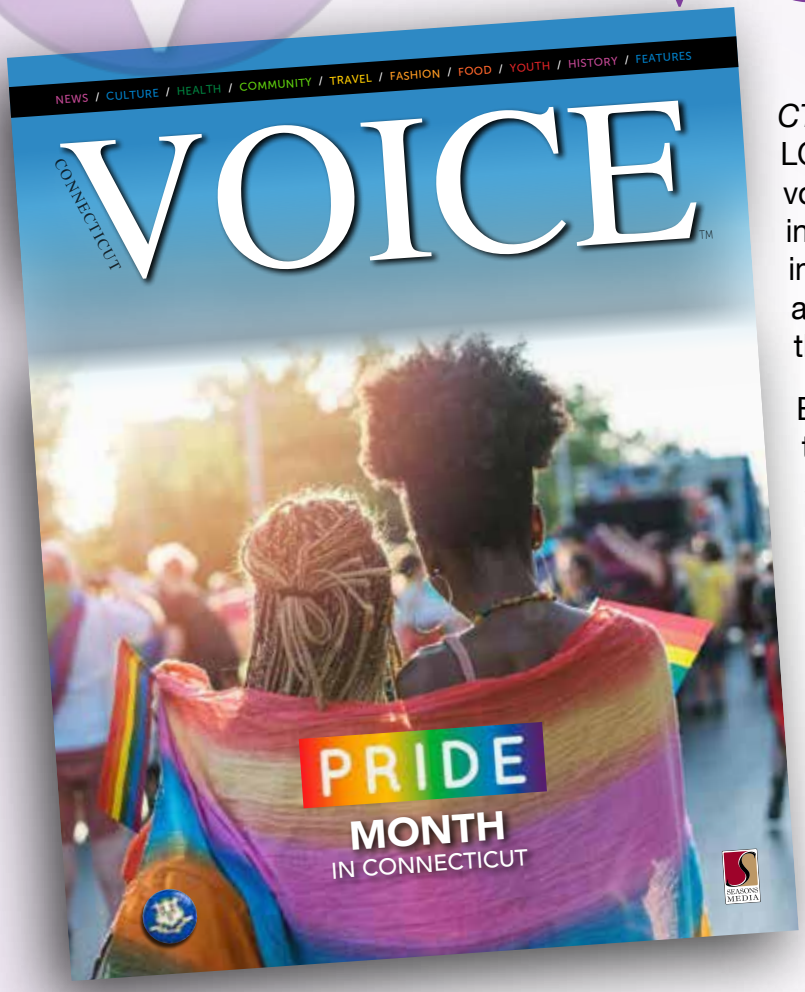
At a recent on campus event at UConn, all the teams in this article gathered for a Mental Health Check In day with students, just one of the many pop up events you will find these teams working together to support each other and community policing.

One of the groups on site, the Jordan Porco Foundation for suicide prevention saw the clear benefit of involvement, and organizers said that the students became comfortable talking about mental health and appreciated being involved with the dogs."

The latest trend in community policing may just be a permanent addition to local and state agencies. Comfort dogs working behind the badge making a 'pawsitive' difference in their communities, one wagging tail at a time.



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Tailgating and the Patriots Game in Winter

A time-honored tradition of watching men play a children's game while we all suffer

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

When I was 19 years-old, the girl of my then dreams – Karen – asked if I would take her to a Patriots game. At the time, I was living in Attleboro, MA, just 15 minutes from Foxboro Stadium. Thanks to a terrible team and their terrible record, tickets were easy to come by. I was thrilled at the prospect of spending the day together.

But when Sunday arrived, it was bitterly cold and windy with frigid temperatures. I called Karen and suggested that we postpone. Though I would still be going to the game, I thought it was a bad idea for her to attend.

"No," she insisted. "I want to go."

"Okay," I said. "But dress warmly. It's going to be bad."

When she arrived at my house, she was wearing a pair of jeans, a jacket, knee high black boots that were clearly fashion over function, and a winter hat.

That's it.

I was wearing nearly everything I owned.

I begged her to stay behind, but she insisted, so we went to that awful stadium of metal benches, open concourses, and concrete despair. By halftime, the Patriots were losing 3-0 to the New York Jets in what was shaping up to be the worst football game I'd ever seen. As the clock clicked down the final seconds of the half, Karen whispered, "Thank God it's over."

"Over?" I said. "It's only halftime."

"Halftime?" she said, shaking like a leaf. "Matt, I can't do another half."

And she was right. She might have actually died if she had stayed in that stadium any longer. It was her own damn fault, but she was right, so I had a decision to make:

Leave with the girl of my dreams or stay and support this terrible football team in a half empty stadium.

So I did the only thing that made sense:

I handed her the keys and told her to wait in the car.

Crazy, I know, but in my heart, I knew that Karen was not going to be my

forever girl. But the Patriots… That terrible football team *would* be with me forever.

When the game ended, I made my way back to the car, half expecting it to be gone. Honestly, I wouldn't have blamed her. But to Karen's credit, it was sitting where I had parked it, warm and ready to go. I climbed in and told Karen the bad news. "We lost 6-3. Can you believe it?"

She didn't say a word to me. For the rest of my life.

I drove her home in silence. I never spoke to her again.

But I was right about the Patriots. They have always been here for me.

Thankfully, my friends and I have gotten much better at tailgating over the past 22 years. That is a very good thing, because had we not gotten better, I might've died, too.

Ten years after the Karen incident, I became a Patriots season ticket holder, joining the Patriot faithful just as Tom Brady was starting his career. One of the first games I attended was in the freezing rain. My friends and I struggled for an hour to erect a tarp to protect ourselves from the rain while we tailgated, but when we four grown-ass men failed to put up a simple tarp, we set up a card table, some chairs, and played poker in the rain.

Granted, we could've sat in the car until game time, but we thought that being outside in the cold rain was better. I was never colder in my life than that game. I don't think I ever truly recovered. A bit of that cold still resides in me to this day.

Things slowly got better over the years, though we continue to stumble from time to time.

There was the time when my friend, Shep, and I arrived too early and couldn't yet enter the stadium, so we sat in the cold and shared a one-pound Recess Peanut Butter Cup.

There was the time we forgot the grill completely and had to trade beer and propane with other tailgaters in order to cook our food.

There was the time Tom Reed Swale left the game early and drove home with the food for the post tailgate festivities, forcing us to scour the parking lot, bartering our excess beer for food. It actually turned out pretty great, with about a dozen other Patriot fans joining our tailgate with food in hand. We spent the evening meeting new people, eating a smorgasbord of random food items, and recording video messages to Tom about how much we hated him.

We essentially build a house in the parking lot, complete with all the amenities, save a clean bathroom.

There was the 2004 playoff game against the Titans that was so cold – 15 degrees below zero – that beer spilled on the table froze instantly and soda purchased inside the stadium froze before it could be consumed.

Two years ago, I took my friend, Scott, to a Cowboys game. It was 30 degrees, raining, with wind gusts reaching 25 miles per hour. Cold rain is the worst. Give me two feet of snow over cold rain any day. I don't think Scott will ever go to a game again.

Today, things are very different. We arrive to the parking lots hours before game time, and in a matter of minutes, we assemble a living room on the dirt. An EZ-Up (or two) with walls to keep out the wind. A propane heater that raises the interior of the EZ-Up to a cozy 72 degrees even when it's subzero outside. A television to watch the early game. We even have tables, chairs, a grill, side tables, and a trash can. We essentially build a house in the parking lot, complete with all the amenities, save a clean bathroom.

I've seen tailgaters bring couches to the game. Recliners. Christmas trees. Track lighting. Fryolators.

For the hours spent in the parking lot, eating and chatting and watching football, it's worth it.

Then, of course, we must decamp, disassembling our glorious outdoor living room and beginning the half-mile trek through cold, rain, and snow to the stadium, trudging across route 1, where police officers brandishing automatic weapons and mounted on horses stop traffic so we can pass. Pushing our way through throngs of fans to the metal detectors and the ticket takers, we finally the climb up a multitude of ramps and stairs to the highest point in the stadium, the upper deck, section 333, row 15, seats 15 and 16.

Exposed to the elements, we don't care. The trek from car to seats will work up a sweat on even the coldest of days, and it will keep us warm well into the second quarter, when the cold and elements will once again catch up to us, slowly working their way through coats and mittens and boots.

By the fourth quarter, our temperature is entirely score dependent. If we're winning, we're warm. If we're losing, we are slowly freezing to death.

All of this to watch men play a children's game for a king's ransom. A game that is also being broadcast in high definition on our televisions at our warm homes, just steps away from a full refrigerator, a bathroom, a bursting pantry, and a soft couch.

What a terrible way that would be to watch a football game.

I like our way a lot better.

Matthew Dicks is an elementary school teacher, bestselling novelist, and a record 51-time Moth Story SLAM champion. His latest books are Twenty-one Truths About Love *and* The Other Mother.

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

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Sean Wang: First Place, Editorial Cartoon

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Matthew Dicks: First Place, Humorous Column

Tony Bacewicz: First Place, Photo Essay

Cara McDonough: Second Place, Education Reporting

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Cindy Simoneau: Third Place, Arts and Entertainment Reporting

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Jane Latus: First Place, Diversity Coverage

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