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FEBRUARY 2023



Bob Thiesfield

FIVE STORIES HIGH—This 120-foot mural is a visual history of the country through its workers—from heart surgeons and steel workers, to athletes, farmers, and firefighters.

American Mural Project:

A Dynamic and Overpowering Portrait of America

A pulsating work in progress after more than 20 years artist Ellen Griesedieck's American Mural Project captivates the viewer. There is no escape, nor should there be. The multi-dimension, multi-story mural mixes many materials from honeycomb aluminum panels and blown glass to clay, spackle and reclaimed wood. Believed to be the largest indoor collaborative artwork in the world, its ongoing work involved more than 15,000 students and adults focused on paying tribute to Americans at work.

BY REYNALDO CRUZ

WINSTED – There is just too much to take in: Eyes travel rapidly from corner to corner, beginning to perceive a few details. An adjustment of perhaps half a minute can be required.

Then, the essence envelops the viewer: the American Mural Project, a five-story 120-foot-long mural, is a tribute to Americans at work.

The project is the manifested vision of Ellen Griesedieck, an artist, photographer, and designer, whose professional career began with Petersen Publishing Company in Los Angeles in the marketing department. She ventured into the freelance world, designing logos for professional athletes and publishing photos in *Sports Illustrated*, *People*, *Road and Track*, *Ladies Home Journal*, *World Tennis* and *Golf*, among others. She also covered major sports events, including NFL games, Wimbledon and the Masters. Then there were the five fights of Muhammad Ali.

At 90 Whiting St., in what had been two vacant mill buildings, the project was actualized by Griesedieck. The idea for American Mural Project was born when she visited a Boeing factory to witness the fabrication of a 747 jet. She had been working on a series of large paintings about what would later become the subject matter.

"You'd think the 747 is big at the airport, but you should see it when it's dismembered in all these different places," Griesedieck said. "It's just a tremendous experience to see the planes being built."

She gained more inspiration from athletes: "If you're sitting right next to Björn Borg or Jimmy

Connors on the tennis court, you are hearing what they're saying, you are hearing what they're thinking, and you are very aware of the greatness of the athlete through his emotional ups and downs. I always wanted to cover that, to do something about it, to photograph it or paint it. So, if you take that one step further of why I started visiting working sites, it was basically the same thing."

This real-life art reporting developed into paintings and then the murals.

Griesedieck used materials including honeycomb aluminum panels, blown glass, clay, reclaimed wood, native indigo, spackle, and marble, creating a difference in texture that gives life to the mural and adds to its 3D effect.

The honeycomb aluminum is the predominant material in all the murals.

The figures depicted in the project are indeed real people, many of whom have already visited and seen themselves in the mural.

The techniques used in it, along with the different materials such as honeycomb aluminum panels, blown glass, clay, reclaimed wood, native indigo, spackle, and marble have created a difference in texture that gives life to the mural and adds to its 3D effect.

Particularly eye catching are the shapes of Edwin Raymond, a sergeant with the NYPD; Melissa Bennett, firefighter from Brooklyn, N.Y.; and the Boeing assembly line.

Images of a steel worker in Manhattan and teacher Kathy Reddy of the Fairfield school system are among those requiring a second, a third and even a fourth look from different angles and heights.

Founded in 2001, this nonprofit organization's main goal is to honor work using art and education as vehicles. Partnerships with schools, other nonprofits, and professionals in a wide range of fields have enabled American Mural Project to engage more than 15,000 students and adults. The project offers workshops for teachers and internships for high school and college students.

Executive Director Amy Wynn said youngsters have practiced glass blowing, clay sculpting and indigo dyeing. They also have made relief sculptures in wet spackle and danced in paint. ■



Ellen Griesedieck

STATE OF THE NEWS

Where Kids Get News

'I don't know any [high school student] who really reads the newspaper'

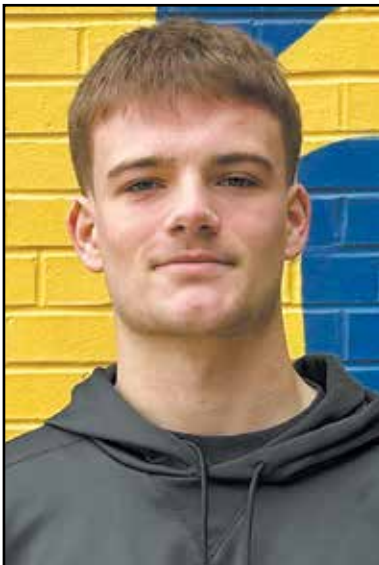
BY KATHY MEGAN

WINSTED – Their grandparents often read a newspaper, their parents rely on television news and for high school kids? It's all about social media.

That's how high school students from the Winsted area see it when asked about how they and the older generations get their news.

"I get most of the news from my phone—social media like Instagram," said Greyson Ursone, a senior at The Gilbert School in Winsted. "I don't really watch the news on TV or read any newspapers."

"I don't know any [high school student] who really reads the newspaper," said Ursone, who's



Greyson Ursone, a senior at The Gilbert School, said he doesn't know any high school student "who really reads the newspaper."

"It probably would be better for me to watch television or be in touch with a newspaper," he said.

Asa Bannerman, a junior at Northwestern Regional High School, also in Winsted, said she gets a lot of her news from social media: Instagram and TikTok.

"There's always stuff that's kind of questionable about whether it's accurate or not," said Bannerman, a member of the Student Council and the National Honor Society. "If I'm really interested, I'll go on my own and google it ..."

"Depending on how serious the subject is, my research goes in depth, but if it's just something I'm wondering about out of curiosity, I just keep it general—I'm not really worried about whether it's fake. And then my friends and I will talk about it and see what they think."

On occasion, she said, she does see television news at her



Fiona Leon, a junior at Northwestern Regional High School, said that at times she has found the news so upsetting, she had to take a break.

been captain of the football and basketball teams for two years in a row.

He said that sometimes he gets a lot of news on his Instagram or Twitter feed, but sometimes he doesn't get any.

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Mad River Market, Delayed by COVID, Renews Drive: Supporters Say Cooperative Model Has Many Benefits

BY LIZ DUPONT-DIEHL

WINSTED – For every dollar spent on food in the United States, its "farm share"—the amount returned to the farmer after purchasing, marketing and other expenses—is at its lowest point in history: 14.5 cents.

That's part of what's driving creation of the Mad River Market, a new food co-op in Winsted. It currently occupies a modest storefront office at 7 Elm St. If the founders have their way... it will soon blossom into a full-fledged co-op grocery store—offering fresh, local produce, good jobs, support for local farm products, and democratic decision making.

While it would appear to shoppers like a typical grocery store, it would be driven by a very different bottom line—not to maximize profits, but by principles of community, solidarity and social responsibility.

Food co-ops operate around the country and the world. They are owned by members and/or workers and governed by a local Board of Directors. Supporters say they boost the local community and economy by retaining the profits, which in larger stores, go to shareholders and far-away corporations.

This co-op drive began in the

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You've Got
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11 "My most enjoyable aspect of coaching is when the athletes leave a practice and say, 'thanks, coach.'"

Venture Capital for Helping Those Who Could Use a Little Kindness

BY KATHY MEGAN

WINSTED – After volunteering at a soup kitchen, Alex Borelli, a Northwestern Regional High School student, wanted to do more to help people who didn’t have enough to eat.

Ella Gannon, a sophomore at the high school, wanted to show her appreciation for the good work of police officers at a time when police brutality is so often in the headlines.

Lucas Oles, a senior, wanted to add to the momentum of his efforts to bring water to an impoverished village in Ecuador.

All three Northwestern Regional High School students became part of the school’s “Kindness in Motion” program—an effort that prompts students to come up with a plan to help others and then awards them with a crisp \$100 bill to carry out that plan or to seed further fundraising efforts.

The program was started by Judith Palmer, superintendent of Region 7, eight years ago when she happened to tune into CBS News on a Sunday morning and caught a feature about a man named Chris Rosati.

Rosati, who lived in Durham, N.C., and had ALS or Lou Gehrig’s disease, was sitting in a diner one day, according to the CBS clip, when he decided to give two young girls \$50 each with a very simple instruction: “Do something kind.”

He didn’t expect to hear back from the girls but then an email from a village in Sierra Leone arrived, thanking him for “spreading kindness.” Rosati learned that the girls had sent the money to the village to provide for a celebratory feast in the wake of an Ebola outbreak.

Rosati, who died in 2017, was so moved by this that he decided



Alex Borelli, a senior at Northwestern, has collected bags of groceries and money for the Friendly Hands Food Bank for the past two years and plans to do it again this year. He is pictured here with his friend, Maddie Adams, on the left, and a food bank volunteer, Tasha Damboise, on the right.

to give mini-grants to students with the hope that kindness might be spread around the world. He talked about the “butterfly effect” and how a small act of kindness might change the world.

In the CBS report, Rosati said he planned to give out “hundreds of little butterfly grants to any kid who wants to change the world.”

Palmer wondered what the students in Region 7 might do if given the same chance. She started the program in a small way providing a single \$100 grant out of her own pocket to each grade level in the middle and high schools, but then it soon became clear that many more students wanted to participate.

“I got an overwhelming response so I had to go knocking on doors,” said Palmer. The program is now funded through donations from foundations, businesses, and individuals and a food truck festival held at the school.

About 40 projects are initiated each year, many with multiple students participating. The kick-off date for this year’s program will be in mid-February.

“For me the biggest thing is this idea that the world needs them, that we need people to step up and do this good work,” said Palmer. “They really do become changemakers because they realize their power to take action.”

A few of the students’ efforts last year include: helping the hungry and the homeless; sending Christmas toys to children around the world; helping a street child in Oaxaca, Mexico get an education; and supplying food and personal hygiene items to teens in Torrington.

Alex Borelli, now a senior at Northwestern, said his understanding of hunger problems began when he volunteered at a soup kitchen as a young teen.

“I had always grown up having everything I needed, so I assumed that because that was the case for me, it was the case for everyone,” said Borelli. “I learned that many

people needed help and just how dependent they were on institutions like a soup kitchen or a food bank. It kind of startled me because I didn’t think that anyone, especially that many people, were in so much need.”

For a capstone project his sophomore year, he chose to do a documentary on the Friendly Hands Food Bank in



Ella Gannon, a sophomore at Northwestern Regional High School, packed baskets of snacks for officers in the Avon Police Department, pictured here (including her father, Sargent David Gannon, to the left of Ella), to show her appreciation for all that police officers do.

Torrington.

After watching the documentary, he recalls Palmer coming up to him and telling him that the video was “a really great stepping off point,” and adding, “there’s so much more you could do.”

At Palmer’s suggestion, Borelli applied for the mini-grant through Kindness in Motion and decided to launch a campaign to get food and dollar donations for the Torrington food bank. He put grocery bags in every classroom for a week and provided students with an incentive to donate by using the grant to pay for prizes. Every student who donated got a raffle ticket which made them eligible to win gift cards to local stores, eateries or Amazon.

Now, a senior, this will be the third year that he’s made this effort. Usually, he said he winds up with 12 to 15 grocery bags and about \$200 in donations.

Borelli said he is always amazed at how many students participate in Kindness in Motion. “They do all sorts of wonderful things because our school prompts us and gives us the opportunity,” said Borelli. “That’s all it really takes to

motivate people. Just give them that one chance.”

Palmer said that she and her administrators decided early on to support whatever proposal a student made.

“When I met with our administrators, we decided that we were never going to say no. No matter what the request was: Our answer was yes,” said Palmer. “We were going to remove any barriers that we could see as adults and we weren’t going to let anything get in our way.”

One of the early applications came from a student who was in the Future Farmers of America group, Palmer said, and wanted to bag about 12,000 meals for the hungry and distribute them across the state.

The number sounded daunting, but Palmer said the administrators agreed. “Yes of course, and yes to using the school cafeteria, and yes to everything,” said Palmer. “And

let them [police officers] know we appreciate their work,” the sophomore said.

So she put together large baskets filled with dozens of packages of cookies, candies, goldfish and other snack foods and delivered them to the break room at the Avon Police Department.

She also included small toys such as stuffed bears and bunnies for the officers to take on their calls for any children who might be frightened.

“People don’t understand how much they do for us,” said Gannon. “I just wanted to give them a little something to say thank you ... They are putting their lives on the lines at work to keep us safe.”

Lucas Oles’ project began with a summer trip for teens to Ecuador where he and others did some volunteer work in a small impoverished rural village called Chilcabamba.

He saw quickly that water was an issue. “No matter who you talked to, it was always something about water,” he said, “whether it was drinking water, water for farming.”

While the villagers had had adequate water supplies, Oles said, they didn’t have the infrastructure to transport it to where it needed to be. So many of the villagers had to walk half a mile or more to lug water back to their homes.

He said that because of government and tax issues, it seemed impossible for the village to get the funds needed to help them fix their infrastructure.

“The people more or less became family,” over the course of his trip, Oles said, “so you felt like you should do something for them—that it was your destiny or something along those lines.”

When he returned home, Oles started a Go Fund Me project to raise money to help the residents make the needed repairs.

He also applied to the school’s Kindness in Motion program and received \$100 to put toward the project.

In the end, he raised \$7,500 which went to put in new water lines, fix the roads, and provide a new electrical water pump to the village.

“It just spreads positivity and gets people thinking about how they can do good,” Oles said of the grant program. “There’s a lot of negativity in the world, but this is a positive thing the school does.” ■

The Winsted Citizen

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Let’s keep it simple: We must honor our duty to report without fear or favor.

“Everybody counts or nobody counts,” the motto of Michael Connelly’s fictional detective Harry Bosch, is our motto as well. This means we have to treat you the same way as the next person regardless of whether we have any pre-existing relationships—positive or negative.

As a local community paper, we literally work for you. It’s your paper. That means, as we say on the masthead, you tell us what’s important. We’ll fit in as much community news as we can, each edition.

We will never charge for obituaries, weddings, engagements or births. So send them on. We will edit and work with all those who submit news items to explain our news requirements and decisions. In the pilot edition you will see obituaries submitted by families. They decide what to submit. We decide what to publish, and we strive to exercise our judgment in a manner respectful to families.

We’re also human. We make mistakes. We will admit our mistakes as promptly as possible, apologize and continue working.

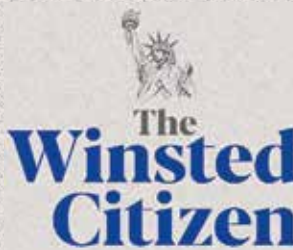
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– Andy Thibault, editor & publisher

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Foner: Originalism is a Political Position, Not a Foundation of Law

BY DOUGLAS P. CLEMENT

COLEBROOK – Eric Foner, the nation’s preeminent historian of the Civil War and Reconstruction, said he is retired from teaching at Columbia University. Yet his voice of authority remains in demand because contemporary hot-button political issues echo those that defined his eras of expertise.

He doesn’t buy arguments that affirmative action is no longer needed, for example, and don’t get him started on the Supreme Court, the Constitution, and the political-judicial theory of originalism.

“Many people find it very persuasive: They wrote this Constitution, let’s just do what the founders intended,” Foner said in describing the basic premise of originalism, which calls for strict adherence to what the founders were saying in the words used in the constitution when it was written.

“Originalism is a political position,” Foner said. “It’s not purely a legal or intellectual position. It’s how you underpin a whole view and it’s part of a long history in the 20th century.”

The concept assigns specific meanings to vague terms such as due process of law, according to Foner, a local, seasonal resident since the 1970s. He pointed out that leaders and ordinary folks in the era when the Constitution was written disagreed not only on the principles being encoded as an inviolate roadmap of democracy but also on the meanings behind how things were written.

Not only does Foner argue that “originalism doesn’t actually make much sense,” he noted that the Supreme Court’s conservative justices are comfortable ignoring the doctrine when political expediency demands it.

“*Bush v. Gore*, 2000, is completely anti-originalist,” Foner said of the case centered on the Florida recount in the 2000 presidential election. “[Justice Antonin] Scalia more or less admitted that in his opinion, saying, ‘Our decision is not setting a precedent.’”

“I write a lot about these legal issues because they come out of slavery and the Reconstruction era and the whole struggle about what it means to be an American citizen,” said Foner, who, in taking on originalism, also focuses on the 13th, 14th and 15th amendments to the Constitution, which outlawed slavery, awarded citizenship to all those born in this country and said the right to vote could not be limited because of race, color, or previous condition of servitude. Together they formed the foundation of civil rights in the nation.

“They all say Congress shall have the power to enforce this amendment,” Foner said. “You can’t freeze the history at the moment those amendments were written. The whole idea that we must be locked into the attitudes and outlooks of people 150 years ago, I think that’s absurd. Even if there were a single original intent, I don’t think we should accept the premise that that is what should govern an essential part of our political and legal system right now ... I’m a believer in what they call the living Constitution.”

Underpinning the debate about originalism is a deeper issue: Despite the real and meaningful progress that has been made, it can feel like nothing has truly changed.

Consider that when the National Public Radio show “Fresh Air” rebroadcast a 2006 Terry Gross interview with Foner in 2020, the teaser said, “After the Civil War, the federal government promised former slaves equality and citizenship. Historian Eric Foner says the failed promises reverberate today.”

The intro to the show went on to cite Foner’s 2006 book “Forever Free: The Story of Emancipation and Reconstruction,” about the opposition in the South to the 13th, 14th and 15th amendments,

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Eric Foner

COLEBROOK – Eric Foner and his wife, fellow historian Lynn Garafola, divide their time between the Upper West Side of Manhattan and a country house in town.

Foner arrived in Northwest Connecticut in 1974 with his first wife, Naomi, a screenwriter and film director who won a best original screenplay Golden Globe award for “Running on Empty.” She and Foner subsequently divorced and Naomi married director Stephen Gyllenhaal in 1977. Actors Maggie and Jake Gyllenhaal are the couple’s children.

“It’s a lovely place,” said Foner, who turns 80 on Feb. 7.

Foner noted that Colebrook voted twice for Donald Trump, but said he appreciates how the close-knit community is one of those places where residents can interact as neighbors and friends without politics and partisanship causing divisiveness.

Still, newcomers don’t become locals overnight.

“It took a long time for our house to be known as the Foner house,” he said.

Foner takes delight in the fact that Colebrook was also a haven for fellow distinguished historians William McNeill and his son, John.

The senior McNeill, who died in Torrington in 2016, was most famous for his 1963 book “The Rise of the West” and his theory that European civilization ascended to preeminent status because its instability engendered a dynamism that spurred advancements. John McNeill teaches world history, environmental history and international history at Georgetown University.

Like Foner, both McNeills have served as president of the American Historical Association, occasioning a Jeopardy-style trivia question: Which tiny U.S. town can claim the highest concentration of scholars who have led the nation’s most prestigious professional organization for historians?

“It’s a very scholarly community in that sense,” Foner said of Colebrook.

—Douglas P. Clement

No Service in Winsted: United Methodist Church Merges with Pleasant Valley

COVID Cited as Factor in Demise

BY REYNALDO CRUZ

WINSTED – There are no services or congregating at the Winsted United Methodist Church. The future of the building on Main Street is uncertain.

Dedicated on Dec. 8, 1904 during the pastorate of Reverend Benjamin Kidder, the structure is the work of architect George W. Kramer and builder E.B. Parsons. Torrington granite was used for the façade of the structure, oak for the furnishings, and the cost rose to \$60,000, according to information provided by Beardsley Library. The stained-glass windows were made by Benjamin Sellers, a highly-regarded artisan also commissioned by churches in Newtown and Manhattan.

For years, the Winsted United Methodist Church supported the community with food banks and AA meetings.

“That’s the reason why I loved them, even though I was not part of the congregation,” said Larry Henriksen, a local donor who was not a member of the church.

About five months ago, Sunday services

moved to the Masonic Hall at 27 Wheeler St. Subsequently, the church announced it merged with the Pleasant Valley United Methodist Church.

“The congregation was starting to get smaller and older,” Henriksen said.

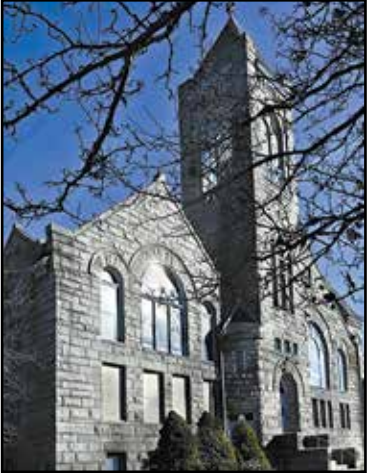
He said he became worried when the checks he sent to the church were returned to him.

Pastor Adeline Hazzard refused to say why the congregation moved. Hazzard acknowledged the building is property of the Trustees of the New York Conference of the United Methodist Church.

The congregation is led now by Barbara B. Schaffer, pastor of the Pleasant Valley United Methodist Church.

Schaffer said the Winsted United Methodist Church could not sustain itself financially. Upon learning of the demise, she invited the flock to join her church.

“Lots of folks left during COVID,” she said. “At the same time, many of them died, and others who survived simply stopped attending the service. It happened to a lot of churches, mainly because we were forced to close during the difficult times of Covid.”



Bob Thiesfield

EDITORIAL & OPINION

We Need Local News

Local News Needs Us

BY MICHELLE MANAFY

We have ready access to more information than ever before. But are we better informed? Given the proliferation of disinformation and misinformation, the answer might well be no.

Disinformation and misinformation are not new problems. For better and for worse, digital communication has enabled extraordinary reach for facts and falsehoods alike.

We find news far removed from useful context about the source and quality of our news as we consume it in feeds, via fleeting headlines, or through reaction videos and commentary. Yes, that YouTube video might look and feel like expert advice, or that website might look like it is affiliated with a news brand—but it can be hard to tell whether the information purveyed can actually be trusted.



Once upon a time, though, people knew who they could trust: the local paper. America’s tradition of local newspapers traces back to 1690, when Benjamin Harris published *Publick Occurrences Both Forreign and Domestik*. Just about three hundred years later, *The Columbus Dispatch* was the first newspaper to go online (followed soon after by *The Washington Post*, *New York Times*, and several others). These papers are still going strong. Unfortunately, the vast majority of newspapers have not fared so well.

Newspapers are vanishing at an alarming rate. An average of more than two a week are disappearing, according to Northwestern’s Medill School of Journalism. Since 2005, the country has lost more than a fourth of its newspapers—2,500—and is on track to lose another third by 2025. Digital alternatives are also scarce. Over the past two years, the number of new digital-only state and local news sites—64—only slightly exceeded the number of sites that went dark.

In 2022, there were 545 digital-only state and local sites and most employed six or fewer full-time reporters.

The reasons behind the collapse of local media are many. In large part, they can be reduced to the decision media organizations made to offer news at no charge online with the assumption that advertising would support the industry. The digital advertising ecosystem does not support local news, however, because local ad dollars are almost completely consumed by Facebook and Google. Today, we see a resurgence of subscriptions and an increasing number philanthropic and non-profit models. While promising, it has not even begun to stem the tide of closures.

The simple fact that local newspapers are dying out is not what’s most important. Seventy million residents—a fifth of the population—live in communities without easy and affordable access to critical and credible local news, according to Medill.

This is a crisis. Without a local paper, civic engagement declines, corruption flourishes, and polarization increases. “When a local newspaper dies, evidence shows civic engagement decreases, elected officials are less accountable, corruption is more pervasive and voter participation drops and becomes more polarized,” according to an analysis from the Pew Research Center.

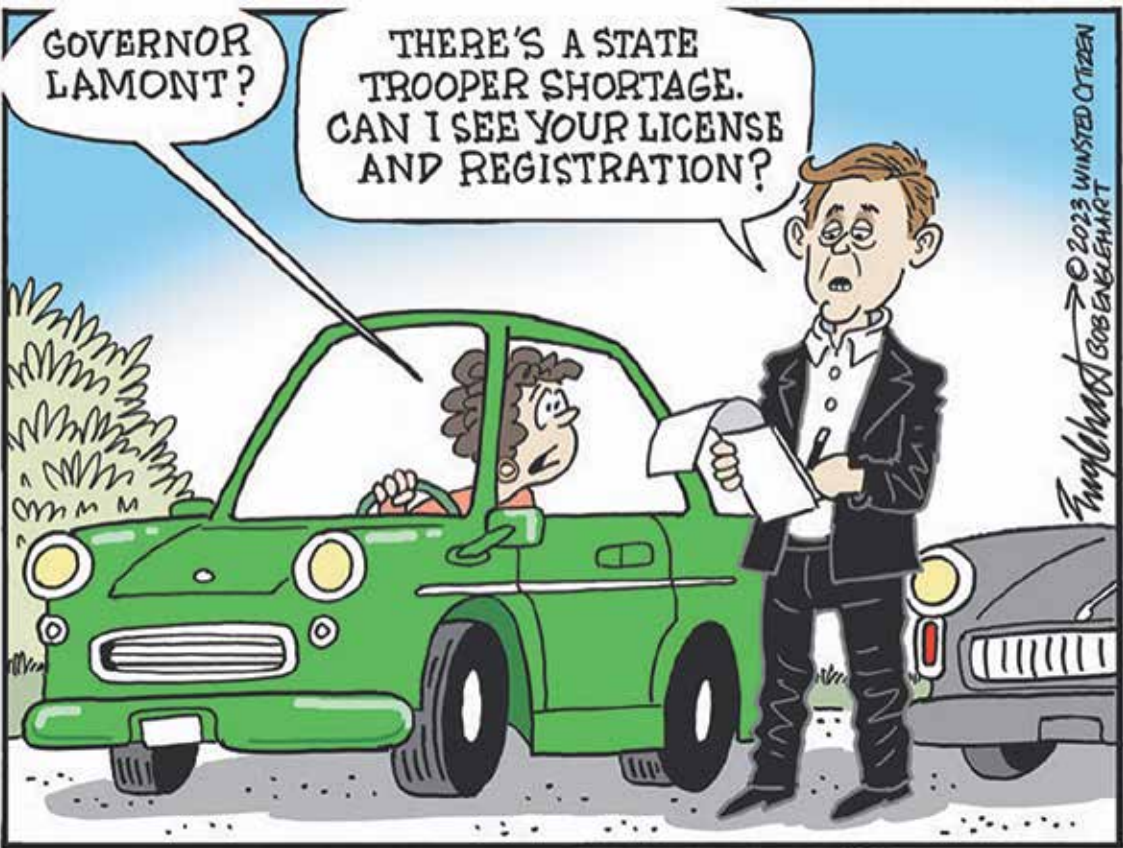
Certainly, civic engagement and accountability makes the need for local news clear. The stakes are high. But they are also highly personal.

Despite the proliferation of social media and seemingly infinite connections, we find ourselves in what mental health experts are calling a “loneliness epidemic.” Even before the pandemic, the United States surgeon general, Vivek Murthy, said the country was experiencing an “epidemic of loneliness,” driven by the accelerated pace of life and the spread of technology into all of our social interactions.

A local paper offers us a front row seat at the high school game, a ticket to the latest art exhibit, a chat with the filmmaker who lives just down the road. With its roots tangled deep in the community, a local paper better connects us to what’s happening, to what matters—and to each other.

We need the local paper. But remember: the local paper also needs us. If the community embraces *The Winsted Citizen* as a trusted ally, let us hope that it also helps support it through subscriptions, donations, and advertising. Quality, trustworthy news is not free, but it needs to be freely available. Together, we can make that happen. ■

Michelle Manafy is a reporter for The Winsted Citizen who also works for a not-for-profit representing 60 media companies. This frequent writer and speaker on the digital media industry lives in New Preston, CT.



How To Keep the Community

In Our Community College System

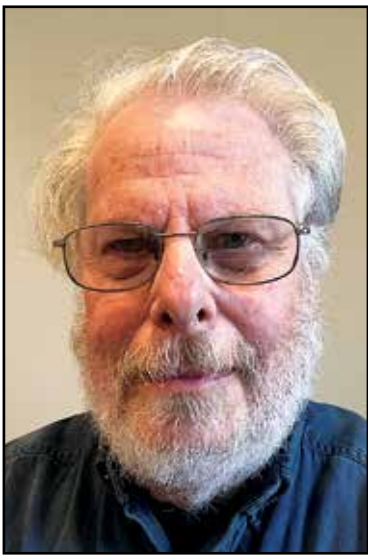
Consolidation Challenges and Prospects

BY DAVID BLITZ

The situation of Connecticut’s 12 community colleges, including Northwest Community College in Winsted, is about to undergo a major change.

The 12 community colleges are to be merged in July into a single statewide entity. Faculty and staff, through their elected representative bodies and advisory committee, have expressed grave concern that the proposed structure is over-centralized and de-localized, putting in doubt its ability to achieve its stated goals of cost savings, institutional efficiency and student services.

Under the slogan of “Students First” initiated in 2017 under the leadership of then system president Mark Ojakian, concerns of faculty concerning curriculum and finances were systematically rejected. A new leadership since 2021, under Terrence Cheng has inherited this mandate to consolidate. It remains to be seen whether this can be accomplished as advertised. The future of our community college depends on the outcome of that consolidation.



Public higher education in Connecticut faces a number of serious problems, including a declining college and university age population, declining state funding as a percentage of overall expenses, and a continuing achievement gap between minority and majority students. Add to this student concerns about employment post graduation and the debt load they will carry, and prospects seem dim, or at least clouded.

The issue at hand is how best to address these very real problems. Solutions in higher education are always complicated by the fact of shared governance between faculty and administration, which presupposes a willingness on both parts to cooperate. Unlike a private corporation the chief executive officer cannot simply decree how changes should occur; other stake holders, first and foremost the faculty who design programs and teach courses, have to be considered as partners in decision making and implementation.

The immediate background to the crisis now facing the community colleges was the merger in 2011 by the Dan Malloy administration of the 12 college community colleges, the four regional universities—exclusive of UConn—and the Charter Oak distance learning state college into a single umbrella system. It is called the Connecticut State College and University System. This was supposed to facilitate transfer from colleges to the universities and save expenses

through economies of scale.

Through a series of mismanaged efforts no fewer than five presidents—two of them interim—were unable to achieve their stated goals. The only tangible result was an increase in the size of the system office bureaucracy and sizeable contracts to outside consultants for failed plans.

The real problem was a unilateral focus on top-down management and a near total disregard for shared governance. The end result was a stalemate, with the New England Commission of Higher Education (NECHE) whose final approval is needed asking for more and more documentation concerning the prospects of success of the transition. At the same time the number of levels of administration increased from two to four and the cost of the central administration increased by tens of millions. Transfer articulation from colleges to universities, which was proceeding apace before Students First, was left to simmer on a back burner.

This was the situation faced by a new CSCU leadership team that has been named since 2020. These include for the first time a president of the CSCU system with experience as both a faculty member and an administrator in public higher education in our state—Cheng, formerly a professor of English and director of the Stamford campus of UConn. Along with him a new Chair of the Board of Regents for CSCU was named—Joanne Ryan—who has years of experience in the region as President and CEO of the Northwest Connecticut Chamber of Commerce. A new president of the still not accredited Connecticut State College was also named, John Maduko. A new provost of the CSCU system, Rai Kathuria, brings new eyes to the overall situation.

The advisory committee to the board which I have co-chaired for the last two years has formulated some guiding principles:

- 1) Respect the distinct missions of the colleges and universities, especially with respect to varying requirements on teaching, research and service at different levels;
- 2) Respect the integrity and autonomy of the constituent institutions so that initiative and innovation can develop at the local level;
- 3) Respect shared governance, with real participation of elected faculty and staff in

continued on Page 11

My Senses Were Dialed to 11: Mushroom Trip Sensations Explored

BY ANONYMOUS

Editor’s Note: We offer this commentary as a window into how some young people view alternative and burgeoning treatments for depression. This is neither an endorsement nor a condemnation, just one person’s viewpoint. The author is a student at a university in the Northeast.



The American view of mind-expanding drugs is itself rapidly expanding. Last month Connecticut became the 21st state to legalize recreational marijuana, and 37 states allow medical marijuana.

Meanwhile, the medical establishment has begun to recognize the potential mental-health value of psilocybin. In a recent book, *How to Change Your Mind*, noted journalist and author Michael

Pollan argues that psychedelic drugs like LSD and psilocybin can be therapeutic for people facing addiction, depression, or death.

A naturally occurring psychedelic compound, psilocybin—aka “magic mushrooms”—has been decriminalized

in Oregon and Colorado, as well as in Canada and a number of U.S. municipalities. Right now it remains illegal in most places but available in many, especially if you have access to, say, a head shop in San Francisco or a smoke shop in New York City. Or one right here in Connecticut, which is where I used a connection to get mine.

I have always been curious to know if any of the drugs I did recreationally had any type of health benefit. For about five years I’ve been experimenting with THC. Whether it’s bud, oil, daps or edibles, cannabis has helped me cushion depression, anxiety, and body pain, while assisting me in relaxing, sleeping and even tolerating people and situations that normally would cause discomfort. So I decided to take the magic mushrooms. I

wanted to see if they had any effects like the THC.

In addition to actual mushrooms, psilocybin comes in several edible and drinkable forms, and I decided to go with a chocolate bar, which I shared with a friend. Serving suggestions reflect three different levels, starting with micro-dosing—one to three pieces of the chocolate—which a typical vendor describes as designed to “Stimulate the Mind.” The moderate or therapeutic dose is four to nine pieces (“Mindful and Elevated”), followed by mega-dosing or “God mode,” which is 10 to 15 pieces (“Walls Might Melt”).

I didn’t know what to expect, and was skeptical at first about its likely effect,

continued on Page 11



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1920s Highland Lake Bridge Repair Set

BY MIKE PATRICK

WINCHESTER – A century-old bridge near Highland Lake is set for a \$900,000 reconstruction this spring, a town official said.

The deteriorating bridge over Taylor Brook on West Wakefield Boulevard serves as a gateway to the lake area, as well as to the remnants of a former state recreation property that’s still a popular destination for some, said Jim Rollins, Winchester director of public works.

“The railings on the side of the bridge... have rusted away and flown off and gone missing over the years,” Rollins said. “Structurally, it’s just deteriorated from old age. The concrete is fatigued. There’s a little bit of scour underneath the abutment.”

The bridge was built around 1920 and was last refurbished sometime in the 1980s, he said.

Because the bridge’s shoulders are above the pavement, they trap water on the pavement, which leads to cracking along the edges. In addition, a “deep drainage trench” along the road is considered a hazard, a town information sheet about the bridge project indicates, according to town records.

Among other issues detailed on a town information sheet: The bridge is “too narrow to allow pedestrians to safely cross with traffic on the road.”

The reconstruction will include replacing the bridge with a pre-cast concrete box culvert, paving the road and reworking the shoulders to allow pedestrians to pass over the bridge behind the guiderails, according to town documents.

Half of the \$900,000 cost of the project is being



Savage Frieze

Taylor Brook Bridge

paid by the state Department of Transportation Local Bridge Program, which, since 1984, has provided state grants to municipalities for the removal, replacement, reconstruction or rehabilitation of local bridges. The remaining \$450,000 will be paid by the town.

Rollins said the work will require the closure of that bridge, but dates for the road closure have not yet been determined.

The Watertown-based Dayton Construction Co. submitted the lowest bid and is expected to start work by mid-April.

Rollins said because of animal life in Taylor Brook, the state Department of Energy and Environmental Protection requires the project begin no sooner than April 15 and be completed no later than June 15. He said he is confident the work can be finished within that timeframe.

The project is part of the nearly \$25 million Infrastructure Improvement Plan voters approved at the May 2022 referendum. That plan includes further roadway repairs, as well as improvements to sidewalks and schools. ■

Water Rates Going Up, One Way or Another

BY KATHY MEGAN

WINCHESTER – Voters don’t have to worry about an increase in water rates as a result of their endorsement last month of an additional \$2.3 million to supplement a \$6.2 million water improvement project.

But that doesn’t mean water rates won’t go up in the next fiscal year, starting in July.

Jim Rollins, director of public works, said the improvement project for Winsted Water Works was carefully planned far in advance to start soon after previous capital loans were paid off.

“That’s kind of the way it should be done,” Rollins said. “You finish off paying for one capital project, you roll into another one... We knew this is what we wanted to do so we were able to pull it off.”

The money that was spent on paying off the previous loan will now be redirected into paying off the new one so residents won’t have to cover it with an increase in their water rates.

“If we take on other significant capital projects, we will have to raise the rates, but not for this one,” Rollins said. “This was planned out so far in advance.”

However, Rollins said the sharp increase in electricity and other costs is likely to mean higher water and sewer charges in the new fiscal year starting July 1. If rates are increased, he said, customers could expect to see the higher rates or a utility surcharge reflected in their November bills.

The cost of electricity for the sewer plant has jumped from \$15,000 a month to \$40,000, Rollins said. “It’s been creeping up over the past year and a half, but that big spike that they just did in January is what really kicked us in the gut,” he said.

He said he’s working on next year’s budget now and hopes to have it done in May. He said it will be up to the Water and Sewer Commission to decide whether to increase rates.

In early 2021, plans were approved granting the Winsted Water Works the authority to borrow \$6.2 million to cover replacement of water lines on five streets and the addition of a water storage tank at

the Crystal Lake Water Treatment Plant and the replacement of the Wallens Hill storage tank.

However, Rollins said the cost estimates for the project were based on data that is now several years old and did not reflect the massive increase in construction costs that have occurred since the pandemic began in early 2020.

“Now with all the supply chain issues and the amount of construction work going on, it’s just driven all the prices up—around 40 percent is what we’re seeing,” he said. “Almost everything has increased by around 40 percent from supplies and materials, to fuel, electricity, contracting.”

Josh Kelly, town manager, concurred saying the financial landscape is “wildly different” now compared to pre-pandemic times. “A very real amount of inflation has occurred,” Kelly said. “If you think that eggs are going up in stores—in the construction industry, particularly, those prices have increased at even faster rates in a lot of cases.”

Had the town voted against allowing the Winsted Water Works to borrow an additional \$2.3 million, Rollins said the plans for the Crystal Lake tank could not have gone forward. “We would have had to wait and do it at a later time,” he said. “That just didn’t make a lot of sense. You’re in the process, you’ve done all your engineering. You’ve got your bids ...”

Kelly said it’s a good time to carry out the project because of funds available through the federal American Rescue Plan Act Fund and other grants. “We’re trying to capitalize on this moment to get all infrastructure work done because there’s never going to be a time when more money’s going to be reimbursable.”

The borrowed funds will come from the Drinking Water State Revolving Fund. Kelly said the fund is reimbursing at a rate of about 50 percent. While \$8.5 million will be borrowed for the project, Kelly said, “about half of that is going to be forgiven so that the town is really only paying back \$4.25 million.”

On Jan. 7, voters approved the referendum with 209 voting in favor and 170 against. ■



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Today’s Poets

The Gift

BY KATE RUSHIN

Marian Anderson:
Portland, Oregon, 1993

Our voice was a gift from God.
At first, we didn’t see it, but how
fitting that the 1939 Easter Sunday concert,
was presented at The Lincoln Memorial
before 75 thousand souls
(another 6 million at their radios)
under the great God’s great sky.

By and by, *The Daughters of*
The American Revolution reversed
their *White-Artists-Only* ban.
Years later, we began our farewell
tour at Constitution Hall.
We had no wish to benefit from the
misfortune of the D. A. R.



We had learned, over time, to take good care
having been appointed steward of the gift.
What we had was singing.

Our mother Anna was steadfast in her faith.
A way was made, a way was found.
As the old Spiritual promised:
We can choose our seat and set down.

He’s got the whole world in His hands.
He’s got you and me, Sister, in His hands
He’s got everybody here, in His hands.

My Lord, what a morning!
He’s got everybody here, right in his hands!

Note: This is a section from a longer poem, “My Lord, What a Morning,” inspired by the life and work of the contralto Marian Anderson who owned a home in Danbury for over 50 years. The Marian Anderson Studio, designed by her husband, Orpheus “King” Fisher, is housed on the grounds of the Danbury Historical Society.

Kate Rushin is the author of *The Black Back-Ups: Poetry* and “The Bridge Poem.”She has taught Poetry Out Loud in high schools throughout the state for the CT Office of the Arts, as well as African American Literature and poetry at Wesleyan University and Connecticut College in New London, where she is currently Poet in Residence and Professor of English.

I Wish I Was My Wife So I Could Be Married To Me

BY FRANZ DOUSKEY

Part I

Much in marriage is subliminally surreal.
for example, take my inlaws.
The less said the better. brother-in-law
on the sofa turning pages. his dutiful wife
mopping the floor, an antideluvial apparition.
Still, they are happy as a breeze of tropical
air blowing from the hairdresser’s next door.



Everywhere, so many people happy. The war is
going well. A lot of the enemy and few of us dying.
Just what the president prayed for. And so many
beautiful women whose source of happiness
is blue fingernails with gold crescent moons.

And people still wanting to have babies to beat
and throw out windows. Their thug boyfriends
in handcuffs complaining with twisted mouths
that the little bastards kids just wouldn’t shut up.

But me, I’m easy. I practice invisibility. Silence.
Even when I’m there, I’m either someone
or somewhere else. What do I have to add
to the conversation about homeland security?
I’ve had all my shots, except for distemper.

I say let’s close the borders to future terrorists.
Off with their towelheads. I’m just a poet with a
crocodile smile waiting for the next terrible moment, who knows
nothing about freedom of speech, just the long, terrible
silence that follows.

Part II

I’m easy. If you want to sleep, sleep. I will hold you
through the night
nothing could make me happier than your happiness.

you can come and go as you wish. no questions, no answers.
hire a housekeeper and someone not too bright to take care of the grounds,
someone whose head hums long after he’s turned off the lawn mower.

don’t worry about dinner. I love to cook. I have studied
with the best and have had dinners prepared for me by Emeril,
with photos to prove it,
that is, if, after all that we’ve meant to each other,
proof is still necessary.

and the laundry. I love the caress of effervescent suds.
I love the Latin rhythms of our washer and dryer pulsating side by side.

shopping? please. don’t trouble yourself. nothing gives me
comfort as the late night vibrant, flourecent aisles
of super markets as vast as landing fields.

I love it all. come home to find you asleep. what could be better?

the bed warm. the doors locked and lights out. and I wait
for a murmer, a sign, a hint of possible passion,
a break in the sonorous deep breaths,

I lie in the dark and remember the intense propensities
that brought me to this point at the edge of endless night,
to think of all the things real and imagined in disrepair.

Franz Douskey is author of *Sinatra and Me: The Very Good Years*, with Tony Consiglio, and *Elvis is OUT There*. His work has appeared in Rolling Stone, The New Yorker, Cavalier, The Nation, USA Today and more. He also is the author of poetry collections including *Rowing Across the Dark* and co-author with Louis The Coin Colavecchio and Andy Thibault of *YOU THOUGHT IT WAS MORE – Adventures of the World’s Greatest Counterfeiter*. Many have asked, and, yes, he is still married.

Today’s Poets is inspired by the late Poet Laureate of Connecticut Leo Connellan aka El Bardo The Legend, who published a column under that banner with the *Register Citizen of Torrington* 1994-95.

Connellan modeled his offering after that of Marcia Lee Masters, poetry editor of the *Chicago Tribune*. She was the daughter of “Spoon River Anthology” author Edgar Lee Masters, the trailblazing Midwesterner who also shared a law office with Clarence Darrow. “Let’s run a poetry column like Marcia Lee Masters,” Connellan said. “We’ll get lots of readers.”

Connellan compiled original works by acclaimed poets and new voices from throughout the nation. The big hitters included *New York Quarterly* Editor William Packard, Bollingen Prize winner Fred Chappell, *Negative Capability* Editor Sue Walker and Fulbright Scholars David B. Axelrod and Diana Der-Hovanessian, as well as Connecticut’s own Marilyn Nelson, Franz Douskey, Vivian Shipley and Richard Telford. Promising college and high school students also saw their works published by Connellan.

Today’s Poets are Franz Douskey, Kate Rushin and Jon Andersen.

Compiled by Andy Thibault for the Pilot Edition of The Winsted Citizen.

Let All That Breathe Partake

BY JONATHAN ANDERSEN

Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction.
– 13th Amendment to the Constitution

In Texas, prisoners escape the killer big house air by signing up for a special work gang in a trailer lot off grounds. Out there, they thrill to the squeal of bicycle brakes and hearty shouts from just beyond the fences. They must thank God for the caress of breeze under so much sky and rules that grant them the freedom to move:

1) only two prisoners allowed in a trailer at the same time and 2) every body not yet zipped up in a bag and still breathing must wear his mask. And so—light with chainless limbs—they bend to lift and stack and count the COVID dead.

from Paterson Literary Review, Fall 2022

Jonathan Andersen’s most recent book of poems, *Augur* (Red Dragonfly Press, 2018), was the recipient of the David Martinson-Meadowhawk Prize and a finalist for the Connecticut Book Award in poetry. His poems have appeared in *Exposition Review*, *North American Review*, *The Progressive*, *Rattle*, and elsewhere. He is a professor of English at Quinebaug Valley Community College in Danielson and Willimantic, Connecticut.



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OBITUARIES

John Richard Ursone
United States Navy
March 8, 1944 - January 13, 2023

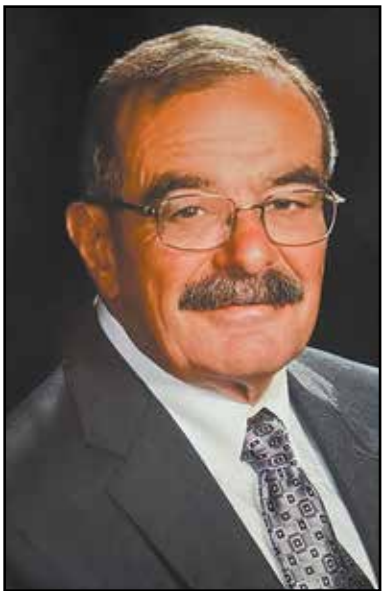
John Richard Ursone, 78, of Redington Shores, FL, and formerly of Winsted, Conn., passed away peacefully with his family by his side on January 13, 2023, in Clearwater, FL, after a brief illness. He was born March 8, 1944, to the late Frank D. Ursone, M.D., and Clementina (D'Angelo) Ursone. He was the husband of Sanda (Dalzell) Ursone for 54 years. They met in college 58 years ago and he never looked back; they were truly the love of each other's lives.

John grew up in Norfolk, Conn. He maintained close relationships with many childhood friends, and enjoyed taking his family on drives through town, recounting fond and humorous memories of his youth. He graduated from Cushing Academy, and then Rollins College in Winter Park, FL, with a B.A. in sociology and a M.A. in teaching. While he never formally worked as an educator, countless family members, friends, and coworkers talk of how much he taught them.

After graduate school, John enlisted in the U.S. Navy, serving four years that included a tour on the U.S.S. Little Rock. He was a lifelong member of the U.S.S. Little Rock Association and a very proud veteran.

John began his 37-year career in banking as a loan officer with Connecticut Bank & Trust in Winsted, Torrington, and Avon, Conn. He then worked as Senior Vice President and Commercial Loan Officer at Advest Bank in Hartford until he joined Winsted Savings Bank (later named Northwest Community Bank) in 1994 as Senior Vice President and Senior Loan Officer. He believed strongly in the spirit of our local community and the value a community bank could add to it. He was instrumental in establishing the Connecticut Mutual Holding Company, an umbrella that allowed Northwest Community Bank and Litchfield Bancorp—and later, Collinsville Savings Society—to be collectively stronger and more efficient. He rose to Chief Lending Officer, then Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer, and in 2006 was named President and CEO of Northwest Community Bank, from which he retired in 2009.

Throughout his career he served on multiple boards, often as treasurer, including Bankers Bank NE, the Beardsley & Memorial Library,



the NW CT Community College Foundation, the NW CT Community Foundation, Rollins College Alumni Board, St. Anthony's School, the Warner Theatre, the William C. Barclay Fund, and the Winsted Playground Association.

John led an active and social life together with Sanda, keeping a home where friends knew they were always welcome to visit. John was an avid motorcyclist and car enthusiast, spending many weekends riding his Harley alongside Sanda on hers, or tooling around in one of several convertibles he owned throughout his life. It was common to find him tinkering around in the garage, wearing a beret when the weather turned. For years he commuted the one mile to work in a shirt and tie on his Vespa, with his briefcase secured to the rear by a bungee cord. After his retirement, John and Sanda made Florida their home, building many friendships with their neighbors at Shore Mariner Condominium.

In addition to his parents, John was predeceased by his siblings, Maria U. Stewart, Frank D. Ursone, and Paula U. Lombardi, as well as two nephews, Ken Lombardi and Norman T. Stewart, Jr., and a niece, Laura (Lombardi) Riley. He leaves Sanda, their children Dom (Gigette) Ursone and Ruth (Antonio) Napoleone, and five fantastic grandchildren, Greyson, Brailey and Marella Ursone, and Marco and Riker Napoleone, all of Winsted. He considered his children and grandchildren his and Sanda's greatest legacy, instilling in them the values of hard work, honesty, philanthropy, and having fun. He also leaves four nieces and one nephew: Maria Ann Moscaritolo, John Stewart, Tracey Stewart, Lisa Glen, and Paula Krol.

Forever a man with foresight, he purchased a house on Highland Lake in Winsted over a decade ago to create a home base where he and Sanda, their

children, and grandchildren, along with many friends and extended family members, spent the summer months swimming, boating, eating, laughing, and enjoying everyday moments together.

The family extends their heartfelt appreciation to the team at Morton Plant Hospital for their care and compassion.

Calling hours will be held February 8, 4-7pm at Montano-Shea Funeral Home, 922 Main Street, Winsted. A Mass of Christian burial will be held February 9, 2023 at 11am at St. Martin of Tours Parish, formerly Immaculate Conception Church, 4 North Street, Norfolk. A private burial with military honors will be held in the spring.

In lieu of flowers, please consider a donation in John's memory to the American Mural Project, PO Box 538, Winsted, CT 06098, or St. Joseph Church, 31 Oak Street, Winsted, CT 06098.

*Submitted by
the Ursone family*



Francis X. McGuire, 74,
Gilbert Grad, Army Vet
Dec. 20, 1948 - Jan. 16, 2023

Francis (Frank) McGuire was born Dec. 20, 1948, to Francis and Marian McGuire in Newark, NJ. The family moved to Winsted, where Mr. McGuire graduated from The Gilbert School.

He joined the Army in 1969 and served in Vietnam as a radio operator. After the Army, he lived in California and Florida before moving back to Winsted in 2000.

Mr. McGuire is survived by his sisters, Donna McGuire of Torrington, Karen Welcome of Winsted and Kathy Casey-Ryan of New Hartford, brothers-in-law Robert Welcome and Ted Ryan, and many nieces and nephews.

Mr. McGuire died Jan. 16 at Litchfield Woods in Torrington, Conn. A private burial will be held in the spring.

*Submitted by
Kathy Casey-Ryan*

Sgt. Kevin Kinahan Named Interim Chief

WINCHESTER – Effective at 4:30 p.m. on Feb. 1, Town Manager Josh Kelly appointed Sgt. Kevin Kinahan of Winchester as interim police chief. Kinahan has served as interim chief multiple times and did not apply for the top job.

Police Chief William T. Fitzgerald announced his retirement in late 2022. A search

is under way to select a new chief.

Kinahan joined the department as a sworn officer in 1989. He was promoted to sergeant in 1999 and held the position of sergeant detective in the department from 2002 to 2022. He returned to the Patrol Division in late 2022.

"The Town of Winchester is fortunate to have dedicated

officers and leaders like Sgt. Kinahan ready and willing to take on additional responsibilities when duty requires," said Kelly. "Sgt. Kinahan has my full faith and trust, and I believe that he will be a stalwart steward of the department between now and the swearing in of the next chief of police."

The application window for chief closed Jan. 12. At least 15 candidates applied. A new chief could be appointed this month.

February Events at the Beekley Community Library:

- Singer-songwriter James Maddock will be performing on Feb. 11 at 7:30 p.m.
- Local author Leigh Grant will be giving a book talk about her latest book, *Mask of Dreams*, on Feb. 18 at 1:00 p.m.
- On February 25, there will be a tree-tapping/maple sugaring demonstration at 10:30 a.m.

For all events, and to stay up to date on what is happening at the library, visit beekleylibrary.org.



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Where Kids Get News

continued from Page 1

grandparents’ home. And, she said, “They always have old newspapers lying around the house, so we can take a peek and see what we missed.”

“I find for myself, I kind of live in this bubble,” Bannerman said. “I don’t really realize what going on, I’m not up to date on what’s happening around me.”

Ben Crone, a junior at Northwestern said he relies on TikTok and Instagram but sees it more as entertainment.

“They have crazy things that happen like with the government or with a sports team, if somebody breaks a record, I’ll hear about it on TikTok,” he said. “It’s something that I really didn’t need to know, but I think it’s cool to hear.”

While most of the students said their parents watch television to get the news, Crone said his father does read a newspaper. Crone, who is an alternate captain on the hockey team, said he gets a lot of his news from talking with his parents, who also watch television news.

Danica Poirier, a junior at Gilbert, said she gets her news on Instagram and Twitter, but if her mother has television news on and it looks interesting, she might stay to watch.

She gets all the news she needs from Instagram and Twitter, she said, and she particularly likes that there’s a lot of news about music and artists.

“I feel like obviously you can’t believe everything you see,” she said. “If I see it’s from a source that I literally don’t know anything about, I’m not going to believe that until I see



Natalie Brodnitzki, a senior at Northwestern, learned to keep up with the news through a class called “Contemporary Issues.”



Danica Poirier, a junior at The Gilbert School, said that when she’s retired, she might have the time to read newspapers.



Arkell Roberts, a freshman at Gilbert, said he thinks it’s important for students “to know what’s happening with our government ... instead of just focusing on what celebrities are doing.”



Asa Bannerman, a junior at Northwestern, said she gets a lot of her news from Instagram and TikTok. Often it’s questionable, she said, so if she’s really interested, she researches it.



Ben Crone, is a junior at Northwestern Regional High School, says TikTok has news he “really didn’t need to know, but I think it’s cool to hear.”

it somewhere reliable.”

Poirier, who is on the student council and plays softball, said she doesn’t think parents with children at home have time to read newspapers. “I feel like once I’m retired, I’ll read the newspaper.”

Whether print newspapers will exist when Poirier retires, is anyone’s guess. Just last month, the Hearst Connecticut Media Group announced plans to print a single weekly edition of *The Register Citizen* in Torrington. That’s down from print editions seven days a week. A memo to Hearst staff said the paper had only a “few hundred subscribers.”

Poirier said she thought students might be interested in *The Winsted Citizen* if it covers, as the founders say is planned, very local news, including high school news and sports.

“That would definitely intrigue kids more than like what’s actually happening in the world,” she added.

The world news “doesn’t matter to most kids, because they think it doesn’t affect them,” said Poirier, “and like if it’s a different country, then why bother reading it?”

Arkell Roberts, a freshman at Gilbert, said he reads Apple News, a news aggregation site,

news outlets to see the contrast.

The class gives her the background to develop opinions on news issues, she said, and discuss them with her parents.

“I’m living in the world. I want to know what happening to the people around me who live in the same world I do,” said Brodnitzki. “Can I do anything to make a difference if something bad is happening, say climate change. Can I start a fundraiser or something?”

Debra Lewis, principal of The Gilbert School, said the school begins teaching students about which websites are credible and how to determine this from the seventh grade on.

“As a lot of [the students] indicated, which made me proud,” Lewis said, “not everything you read on Twitter and Instagram is going to be accurate.”

“As students, they all have phones and whatever is on their phones is at their fingertips,” she said. “They want instant gratification and if the news is there, that’s where they get it.”

Fiona Leon, a junior at Northwestern High School, used to watch the news regularly back in 2020, but then the stories began to work on her.

“A lot of COVID and social justice issue were happening,” said Leon. “It just made me really upset and riled up. I was like, I’m too angry. It’s OK, I don’t need to know.”

Leon, who is a member of the National Honor Society and on the swim team, took a break from the news but then she started to go back to it when there were a series of school shootings.

“I was like, this is also too much,” she said. “I kind of think yeah, you should know what’s going on in general. You don’t need to make yourself sick, but you also shouldn’t be living under a rock.” ■

Mad River Market

continued from Page 1

spring of 2016, when the imminent closure of Winsted’s IGA prompted discussion about keeping the grocery store open by finding a buyer. When those efforts were not successful, the group turned its energy to exploring the co-op model, said Phillip Allen, president of the board of the Mad River Market.

“Our demographics limit our options,” said Bob Geiger, who was Winsted’s Town Manager at the time. He took part in discussions to try to find a for-profit store, and suggested exploring the co-op model when those efforts failed. “Our population is around 11,000. To the larger chain stores, we are not a primary market, not even a secondary market—we are a tertiary market. The larger grocery stores looked at the size of the town and the demographics of the town and weren’t interested. We constantly fought this with retail stores too.”

“We did a market study that indicated the need for a co-op was very real, and we moved into 2017 with a full-speed effort to recruit member-owners,” Allen said. “We closed out 2017 with 100 member-owners, and by the start of 2020 we were up to just over 300.”

And then COVID struck. Recruitment and organizing ground to a halt, as supporters and board members were unable to continue in-person outreach.

“We had very solid momentum, and our goal now is to pick up where we left off,” said Allen. “Our focus is member recruitment, engaging new people with different skill sets and reinvigorating the board.”

How Co-Ops are Different

Co-Ops date back to the 1800s, when weavers, unionists and activists created a community grocery store, offering affordable food based on a business model emphasizing economic democracy, gender equality, and focus on a common good, according to the Neighboring Food Co-ops Association.

Connecticut currently has two other food co-ops: The Willimantic Food Co-Op, which was opened in 1989 by members of two local buying clubs, and Fiddleheads Food Cooperative in New

London, which began as an indoor winter farmers market a decade ago. Both are open to the public, and make healthy, local and sustainable foods a priority.

The Willimantic and New London co-ops are open to the public, and Mad River Market plans to be also. Some co-ops also are owned by their workers, but Mad River Market is planning a broad base of member-owners. Some co-ops require members to contribute labor at the store—Mad River Market will not.

Stopping by the Mad River Market office, Allen, who is there many Saturdays, may give you a copy of Jon Steinman’s book *Grocery Story*, which outlines the history of grocery stores and the economics of food. In addition to providing the Farm Share statistic cited above, Steinman outlines the rise in consolidation of food retailers, the corresponding decrease in diversity and choice at the local level, and the rise and structure of food co-ops.

Mad River Market’s founders have consulted with the Neighboring Food Co-op Association and Food Co-op Initiative, regional and national groups offering technical assistance and support for new initiatives. Launching a food co-op is known to be a daunting and laborious task, with organizing and planning taking several years.

“The argument for a co-op is multifold,” Allen said. They more directly and effectively support local farmers. “And we know that co-ops return much, much more of the money spent there into the community.

“Everyone needs food, and to support our local economy. This is how to do it!”

Mad River Market board member Patty Barnett of Barkhamsted said she appreciates the ability to be part of and contribute to projects such as this that support community. She moved around a lot as a child and feels herself setting down roots here.

“I believe in co-ops and I believe in

community,” she said. “I’d prefer to shop at a co-op. I’d know it’s my neighbors; I’d know who is supplying the food.

“Sometimes, driving around, you come across this flat street with a lot of houses on it, and you realize that it was once farmland. That makes me really sad because the farms are disappearing. Once the farmland is sold it’s not coming back. Some people may see beautiful houses but I see a lost farm. And I like knowing my food comes from someplace close—where there are no massive transportation costs to get it here. Eggs from close by versus from the food corporations.”

Allen agreed: “A large chain store will consider food ‘locally produced’ if it comes from 500 miles away.”

The Future for Mad River Market

Allen and others said they can continue to build support and open the co-op. Response was excellent from in-person events and outreach before COVID. People were receptive to their message and willing to contribute and step up.

“COVID took the wind out of our sails,” Barnett said. “Just prior we had a number of events, and we were getting many new members. When our events were all canceled, we still had interest but it slowed to a trickle. We all got busy, and it’s been hard to regroup. But I am very optimistic.”

For now, they are looking to engage new people on the board and as member-owners. The structure is one member, one vote. Membership is a flat \$200, and benefits include a voice in leadership, special sales for owners and bulk buying privilege.

“Once we reach around 1,000 members, we will start a capital campaign, and once we meet those goals, opening will happen relatively quickly,” Allen said. “We are eying several properties on Main Street or visible and accessible from Main Street. We do need adequate parking, and also freight access for food deliveries. There

are a couple of places that would be good options, depending on how soon we can sit down and start negotiating.”

Melissa Bird of Winsted was one of the first member-owners and also is committed to continuing the work.

“This will help our economy, but it’s more than that,” she said. “It will be great to have access to healthy, sustainable food and have a smaller carbon footprint with the food not having to travel as far. I also believe there are food scarcity issues in our community, and this will help. And it will help to grow regional relationships.”

“We still need a local grocery store that is not one of the handful of giant food businesses,” Allen said. “Those leave a whole lot of people behind. It’s not good for farmers who don’t get fair prices.

“We are lucky here in the northwest corner,” he continued. “A lot of older family farms have survived and there are a number of other growers trying to provide healthy, ethically and sustainably raised produce and agricultural products. People seem to understand the quality of what we will get is better.”

“It may not be a cheaper option, but it will be a fresher option,” Geiger said. “There was once a co-op in Great Barrington, and I heard people talking all the time about wanting a grocery store here. Once this co-op and once it’s up and running I believe there will be a lot of support.”

“More of the money the co-op generates will remain in the community because of preferential purchasing and sourcing from local suppliers who patronize and employ local people,” Allen said. “The economic multiplier is much higher with a co-op. We know people who drive to Whole Foods in West Hartford or Danbury to get the food they want. Why do that when you can buy the food you want locally?”

To get involved:

To contact Mad River Market call: (860) 201-6540 or email: info@madrivermarket.coop

Resources:

Mad River Market: www.madrivermarket.coop
Neighboring Food Co-op Association: www://nfca.coop/
Food Co-op Initiative: www://fci.coop/



Phillip Allen

SPORTS

Coach Williams Credits Others for His 900+ Wins



FRED CAMP RISING – Northwestern’s Fred Camp’s 27 points spurred the Highlanders to overcome a strong start by Thomaston for a 64-57 win on Jan. 20 at home. Northwestern had an 8-2 record at press time.

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BY JOHN TORSIELLO

WINSTED – Fred Williams defers credit to others.

“I must say I have been a lucky man to have all the support I have had over the years,” said the longtime coach and athletic coordinator for Northwestern Regional High School. “The administration has been great, all of the assistant coaches that have worked with me as equals were and are awesome, and I’m so fortunate for the hundreds of student-athletes that have played for me over the years. There are many that come back to visit and watch a game or two from all the decades.

“Any sacrifices [my wife] Donna and I have made over the years for all of these student-athletes has been well worth it. I have been blessed with fine athletes.”

Williams, who began his coaching odyssey in 1974, has well over 900 wins combined for the three teams he has mentored. From 1976 to 1998, his boys soccer team posted a 254-110-33 mark, making the state tournament quarterfinals seven times and semifinals four times. Williams’ girls soccer team was 101-56-18 from 1999 to 2008 with three quarterfinal appearances and one semifinal.

Williams is still coaching the Regional 7 girls basketball team, with his teams over the many years posting a record of 682-318 with three quarterfinals, five semifinals, the state championship game twice and one state title, that coming in 1990. The girls basketball team has missed the state tournament only twice during Williams’ tenure. Overall, Williams’ teams have amassed 937 wins, 484 losses and 51 ties. He also at one time coached the Northwestern Connecticut Community College softball team and has been involved in AAU coaching for a number of years.

“Fred means so much to our student-athletes, staff, and school community,” said Northwestern Principal Gary Franklin. “The positive impact he has had over the course of his

career is incredible. He continues to represent Northwestern with class, integrity, and character and he remains a key role model for not only our students, but also our coaches.

“You can really get a sense of the culture he has established with our girls basketball program by seeing the support from his former players when they return from college to see a game. It really is a family and it is a testament to his dedication and commitment to these young women as people, not just players.”

Williams is joined on the Northwestern girls basketball sidelines by daughters, Stacey

when all three of them were playing for me.”

He finds great joy in working with young student-athletes: “Watching them develop from their freshman year to their senior year is very enjoyable. Relationships that develop is wonderful to see, not that all years have been a bundle of joy.”

As for his philosophy of coaching, Williams said: “I remind the players it is not just about winning but how you play the game. When the contest is over you need to be honest with yourself on whether you gave it everything you had. I admire any coach that believes the game is for the athletes and the coach is there to guide the way, win or lose.

“... My most enjoyable aspect of coaching is when the athletes leave a practice and say, ‘thanks, coach.’”

The most difficult aspect of coaching, Williams said, is “Dealing with the variety of personalities a coach has contact with—players, other coaches, officials, fans and parents.”

His hobbies include golf. He has worked at Norfolk Country Club on weekends and summers since 1985: “I have a few yards that I maintain and I continue to coach AAU

basketball. I love going on vacation to Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, and being with the family.”

He recommends coaching to anyone wishing to make the commitment: “It’s about helping young people to develop into better people. Some of our athletes need sports to help them handle other things in their lives. If a person is willing to put in lots of time they themselves will feel great about themselves. In coaching, you will be helping others help themselves.”

Asked how long he intends to continue coaching, Williams responded: “That’s a great question.” He declined to elaborate.

Fred Williams likely will be around for some time patrolling the sidelines at Regional 7 girls basketball games, making his charges better athletes and better people. ■



John Torsello



Zematis and Lindsey Blanchard.

“I was coaching boys when our girls were at Northwestern playing other sports but all three played basketball for me and one year all three were on the court together when Stacey was a senior, Christie a sophomore and Lindsey a freshman,” he said.

Williams said daughter Stacey is head of the health and PE department at Northwestern, Christie is working for the new LIV golf tour as a VP for entertainment and food for the tour, and Lindsey is the mental health coordinator/social worker at Northwestern.

He said coaching his daughters and working with two of them as assistants has been a lot of fun: “Fortunately we have a very good working relationship so it was pretty easy most of the time, even when they were playing ... My favorite time coaching was

Community College

continued from Page 4

decisions and consultations; and in particular;

4) Respect faculty control of curriculum and pedagogy, including the mode of delivery—on ground, online—as faculty are the ones who develop and provide the courses students take.

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conditions of respect outlined above.

For us in the Winsted area, there is one more policy of paramount concern: a guarantee from the CSCU leadership that all 12 campuses—formerly colleges—of the one community college remain open in their current locations for at least the rest of the decade, and that any shortfalls due to costs of consolidation be borne at the central level, not the local one. The Northwest Community College was among the first to open, and it and the other 11 colleges must be protected against any closures due to consolidation or other transitional costs. ■

David Blitz has been a faculty member at Central Connecticut State University in the Department of Philosophy since 1989. He is a resident of Colebrook, moving there in 2010. Since 2020 he has been Chair or Vice-Chair of the Faculty Advisory Committee, a state mandated group of elected faculty and staff to advise and assist the Board of Regents of the Connecticut State Colleges and Universities System.

Senses Dialed To 11

continued from Page 4

being a bigger guy at 6’ and 300 lbs. Still, I didn’t want to be too extreme, so I took a couple of pieces of the mushroom bar and spent an hour waiting. Then, BOOM, it hit.

It was a good high. At one point my friend and I had a minor argument, the high seemed to subside—but afterward, when the argument was over, it came knocking at my door with an Arnold Schwarzenegger accent: “I’m back.” I felt like I was being

hugged.

On my second experience I bought a bar at midday and drove off to hang out with a friend who lives an hour away. Forty-five minutes into the ride to her house, the six pieces I took started to kick in. I decided to take another three pieces. I was taking care not to exceed a safe dose, where I might place others in danger.

The rest of the afternoon was awesome. That second mushroom candy made it clear to me that psilocybin is definitely a different high than the THC.

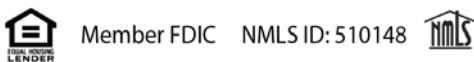
I felt warm, enlightened and wiser. The fact that I was with a good friend helped: the vibes were good, and so was the high.

While magic mushrooms currently occupy a legal limbo, it seems likely they will follow cannabis into the mainstream. I think that would be a good thing. The psilocybin definitely helped me and my overall mood, alleviating anxiety and depression. I felt slow, yet somehow fast and agile at the same time—almost like a deity. And I hadn’t even done God Mode. ■

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There are two grant cycles within a calendar year, and the first 2023 application cycle opens February 15, 2023, with submissions due by April 1, 2023. Guidelines and eligibility information are available on the banks' websites, from branch managers or by email at Foundation@nwcommunitybank.com.

