

# The Lakeville Journal

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Covering The News In Connecticut's Northwest Corner And Its Environs Since 1897



PHOTO BY RILEY KLEIN

## Looking back on 2025

Another chapter settles into memory in the Northwest Corner. Begin 2026 by revisiting the stories, people and everyday moments that defined the past year in this issue of The Lakeville Journal.

## HVA awards spotlight ‘once-in-a-generation’ land conservation effort anchored in Salisbury

By Debra A. Aleksinas

SALISBURY — From the wooded heights of Tom’s Hill, overlooking East Twin Lake, the long view across Salisbury now includes a rare certainty: the nearly 300-acre landscape will remain forever wild — a milestone that reflects years of quiet local organizing, donor support and regional collaboration.

That assurance — and the broader conservation momentum it represents — was at the heart of the Housatonic Valley Association’s (HVA) 2025 environmental awards, presented in mid-December at the organization’s annual meeting and holiday party at The Silo in New Milford.

Salisbury conservation advocate Grant Bogle, who serves as president of the Twin Lakes Association (TLA), was among those honored, recognized for his pivotal role in helping secure Tom’s Hill and the adjacent Miles Mountain as part of a sweeping, multi-state land protection effort.

He was honored with The Louis and Elaine Hecht Follow the Forest Award, named for longtime conservation leaders Lou and Elaine Hecht. The award celebrates individuals who advance a collaborative vision for protecting connected



PHOTO BY LAURA BECKIUS / HVA

Grant Bogle, center, poses with his Louis and Elaine Hecht Follow the Forest Award with Julia Rogers, left, and Tim Abbott, during HVA’s 2025 Annual Meeting and Holiday Party.

wildlife habitat across the Housatonic Valley and beyond.

“I think it is tremendous for Salisbury and for the watershed,” Bogle said. “There’s a lot more that we are thinking about and able to do now, and it wouldn’t have happened without the Sheffield Land Trust and HVA.”

**A ‘once-in-a-generation’ success**

The annual award highlighted the work of the Cooper Hill Conservation Alliance, a partnership of eight conservation organizations, a realtor and a local farming family

that together conserved more than 1,200 acres in Ashley Falls, Mass., and Salisbury.

“This is a once-in-a-generation environmental success,” said Julia Rogers, HVA’s conservation director, noting that the scale of the project — and the speed with which it came together — depended on trust, persistence and cooperation among many partners.

Kathy Orlando, executive director of the Sheffield Land Trust, was recognized for her leadership

See HVA, Page A8

## Hiker begins year with 1,000th summit of Bear Mountain

By Steve Barlow

SALISBURY — The celebration was brief, just long enough for a congratulatory hug and a handful of photos before the winter wind could blow them off the mountaintop.

Instead of champagne, Joel Blumert and his hiking companions feted Jan. 1 with Entenmann’s doughnuts. And it wasn’t the new year they were toasting, but Blumert’s 1,000th ascent of the state’s tallest peak.

The 76-year-old Salisbury resident has been hiking Bear Mountain twice a week, with only sporadic lapses, for nearly a dozen years. On New Year’s Day, Blumert reached the goal he set a few years ago of 1,000 climbs.

He has hiked it in the wintry cold and the summer heat, amid



PHOTO BY STEVE BARLOW

Salisbury’s Joel Blumert, center, is flanked by Linda Huebner, of Halifax, Vermont, left, and Trish Walter, of Collinsville, atop the summit of Bear Mountain on New Year’s Day. It was Blumert’s 1,000th climb of the state’s tallest peak. The Twin Lakes can be seen in the background.

the splendor of the autumn foliage and even in the middle of a daunting tornado.

“It’s just been one step at a time and one climb at a time,” said Blumert, a musician who performs mostly at area nursing homes.

Blumert and his wife, Theresa Carroll, moved to Sharon in 1985 and to Salisbury in 1987, in part for the outdoor recreation the Tri-State region offers. But after their two daughters, Shayna and Denali, were born in the 1990s, Blumert’s exercise regimen started to lag.

In 2000, his doctor reported he had “ridiculously high blood pressure.”

“I decided if I was going to die of a stroke, it was better to die in the woods than sitting around the house,” Blumert said.

He began hiking again and rebuilt his endurance. In March 2014, he summited Bear Mountain, which at 2,316 feet is the highest peak in Connecticut. (The state’s highest point at 2,380 feet

See HIKER, Page A8

## The Hydrilla Menace

### 2025 marked a turning point in the fight against hydrilla

By Debra A. Aleksinas

SALISBURY — After three years of mounting frustration, costly emergency responses and relentless community effort, 2025 closed with the first sustained signs that hydrilla — the aggressive, non-native aquatic plant that was discovered in East Twin Lake in the summer of 2023 — has been pushed back through a coordinated treatment program.

The Twin Lakes Association (TLA) and its coalition of local, state and federal scientific partners say a shift in strategy — including earlier, whole-bay treatments in 2025 paired with carefully calibrated, sustained herbicide applications — yielded results not seen since hydrilla was first identified in the lake.

**The arc of the problem**

The Connecticut River strain of hydrilla at East Twin Lake, first de-

tected near O’Hara’s Landing Marina, is an unusually robust variant that quickly triggered emergency removals, diver searches and spot treatments as TLA officials scrambled to contain fragments capable of rapidly sprouting into new beds.

By 2024, the cost of fighting the invader had grown significantly, straining both community and association budgets as managers moved from isolated spot treatments to serial applications and broader planning efforts. Monitoring and repeated partial treatments that year helped prevent larger outbreaks, but failed to eliminate the plant.

“It became pretty clear that the Whack-a-Mole strategy wasn’t going to work,” said George Knoecklein of Northeast Aquatic Research, the TLA’s limnologist.

See HYDRILLA, Page A8



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In The Journal this week

OUR TOWNS..... A2-4

LEGALS..... A4

OBITUARIES..... A5,7

OPINION.....A6

OUR TOWNS .....A7

COMPASS ..... B1-3

CALENDAR.....B3

OUR TOWNS.....B4

SPORTS .....B5

CLASSIFIEDS ..... B5-6

Online This Week

**Year in review: Norfolk**  
The past year saw the election of a new first selectman, the groundbreaking for a new fire house and rich community engagement.  
More at lakevillejournal.com

POLICE BLOTTER: TROOP B

*The following information was provided by the Connecticut State Police at Troop B. All suspects are considered innocent until proven guilty in a court of law.*

**Freezing rain causes accident**  
At approximately 1 a.m. on Dec. 29, Kayla Archiere, 20, of Kent was driving south on Route 7 in Cornwall, near the Kent town line. Archiere lost control of the Mazda 3 she was driving due to icy conditions caused by freezing rain, sliding off the road and becoming lodged in brush and snow. As there was no cellular service, Archiere was unable to make a call but managed to flag a passing motorist who alerted a tow service. Archiere was uninjured, but she was issued a warning for traveling too fast for conditions and operating without insurance.

**New Year’s slide out**  
After 10 p.m. on New Year’s Eve, Emma Hostetter, 22, of Stanfordsville, New York, was traveling west on Route 44 in Lakeville when the Volvo 850 she was driving slid off the roadway and into a snowbank. She stated she wasn’t sure what had happened, though troopers assessed the scene and determined she had slid on the snowy road, overcorrected, then slid into the snowbank. She sustained minor injuries in the form of cuts to her face and hand, and was transported to Sharon Hospital for evaluation. Hostetter was issued a written warning for traveling too fast for conditions.

**Drunken disturbance yields active warrant arrest**  
On Jan. 1, troopers were dispatched to Belden Street in Falls Village on the report of an intoxicated individual causing a disturbance. While investigating, troopers discovered that the offender, Joshua Duplessis, 53, of Falls Village, had an active warrant out for his arrest. Duplessis was taken into custody and processed for first degree failure to appear. He was unable to post the court-set \$10,000 bond and was scheduled to appear the next day at Torrington Superior Court for his arraignment.

‘Ice in’ early

LAKEVILLE — Don Mayland has called “ice in” at Lake Wononscopomuc.  
Mayland emailed The Lakeville Journal Sunday Jan. 4 with the news.  
“Finally, we have a winter when I can call ‘ice in’ on Lakeville Lake before mid-February. I’m calling it on January 2, 2026.  
“This is the second earliest ‘ice in’ over the last 20 years. The earliest in that time frame was December 30 in 2017.  
“As always, ‘ice in’ does not mean ice is safe!”



PHOTO BY DR. MARK HOCHBERG

**Deer walk across the ice in Lake Wononscopomuc.**

Northwest Connecticut residential real estate performance in 2025						
	Salisbury	Sharon	Cornwall	Falls Village	North Canaan	Kent
2025 median price (single family residence)	\$825,000	\$702,500	\$750,000	\$657,500	\$340,000	\$577,000
% change from 2024	-10%	23%	-33%	3%	16%	25%
Price per square foot	\$423	\$410	\$378	\$335	\$203	\$367
% change from 2024	4%	41%	-13%	-11%	-3%	16%
No. of homes sold	50	34	19	8	29	29
% change from 2024	9%	-15%	0%	-47%	90%	7%
No. of \$1 million+ homes sold	22	9	7	2	1	9
No. of homes sold under \$400,000	6	8	5	0	20	5

CHART BY CHRISTINE BATES

Market data from Matrix Smart MLS and InfoSparks. Compiled by Christine Bates, real estate salesperson with William Pitt Sotheby’s International Realty, Licensed in Connecticut and New York.

2025 real estate trends by town

**By Christine Bates**  
Last year, the Northwest Corner diverged from national housing trends, with performance varying widely by town.  
Nationally, the median sale price for an existing home remained flat at about \$415,000, with a median price per square foot of \$222. Locally, results were far less uniform, with prices declining in Cornwall and Salisbury while rising across the other Region One towns.  
Salisbury remained the region’s most active market in 2025, recording 50 sales, a 9% increase from the prior year. Of those, 22 closings topped \$1 million, while just six sold for \$400,000 or less—nearly the inverse of North Canaan’s market, which saw only one million-dollar sale and 20 homes sell at or below \$400,000.  
In Sharon, overall sales declined, but prices rose sharply. The town posted a 23% increase in median sale price to \$702,500 and a 41% jump in price per square foot, alongside a relatively balanced range of sale prices.  
For detailed, town-by-town data, see the accompanying chart above.

Salisbury property assessments up about 30%

**By Christine Bates**  
SALISBURY — Salisbury’s outside contractor, eQuality, has completed the town’s required five-year revaluation of all properties.  
Proposed assessments were mailed to property owners in mid-December and show a median increase of approximately 30% to 32% across the grand list.  
The assessments are based on 70% of estimated market value as of Oct. 1, 2025. Single-family home values were calculated primarily using home type, condition, size and location.  
Property owners were able to schedule a 15-minute phone appointment with an eQuality representative between Dec. 22 and Dec. 30 to request a review of their proposed assessment. Final assessments and the new grand list were submitted to Salisbury’s assessor on Jan. 1.  
By Feb. 1, updated tax cards will be available to the public at www.equalitycama.com, replacing the previous Vision system (you can also search “Town of Salisbury Connecticut tax cards”). Property owners then have until Feb. 20, 2026, to file a written appeal with the Board of Assessment Appeals if they disagree with their assessment.  
Actual property taxes for next year will not be known until the town adopts its new budget and sets the mill rate, which is based on total spending and the taxable grand list. First Selectman Curtis Rand said the budgeting process for 2025-26 will begin in March. However, if the town’s budget increases are similar to recent years, the mill rate is expected to drop.  
Because of the higher grand list, many property owners are likely to see lower taxes despite higher assessments, as values are brought into line across the town. Salisbury is also expected to continue having one of the lowest property tax rates in Connecticut.

Sharon Housing Trust receives \$250K

SHARON — The Sharon Housing Trust was awarded a multi-year grant from the Low Road Foundation to support the renovation and expansion of its four-building affordable housing campus on North Main Street in Sharon, as well as to provide general operating support once the project is complete.  
The \$250,000 grant moves the Trust significantly closer to its overall fundraising goal for the new campus. The project is also supported by a \$2 million grant from the Connecticut Department of Housing, along with contributions from local individuals, foundations, and businesses.  
The project includes the renovation of three buildings owned by the Trust at 91, 93, and 95 North Main St., which currently house six occupied affordable rental units, most of them with two bedrooms. It also includes converting 99 North Main St.—the former town community center, currently unused—into four new affordable rental units, each with two bedrooms.  
The Trust has leased the community center from the Town of Sharon for 99 years at \$1 per year. Once the work on 91, 93, 95 and 99 North Main St. is substantially complete, the Trust plans to landscape the grounds around all four buildings.  
Renowned landscape designer and Sharon resident Lynden Miller has donated a new landscape plan for the four-building campus.  
In a Dec. 18 statement, Richard Baumann, president of SHT, said, “With the help of the Low Road Foundation, we look forward to providing reasonable housing to those who need it and helping all Sharon residents take pride in what their community can accomplish.”



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Our Towns

Looking back on a successful year in Salisbury

By Patrick L. Sullivan

SALISBURY — Salisbury expanded its affordable housing stock in 2025 with the addition of four new three-bedroom homes developed by the Salisbury Housing Trust. Two of the homes were built at 26 and 28 Undermountain Rd, with another two constructed at the top of Perry Street in Lakeville.

Motorists and students from The Hotchkiss School will soon benefit from a new sidewalk along Sharon Road (Route 41) connecting the school to Lakeville village.

In November, Salisbury was awarded \$800,000 in state funding to construct the sidewalk along the south-bound side of the road, linking it to the existing sidewalk between Main Street and Wells Hill Road.

Residents of Salisbury and Sharon will also see changes to how household waste is handled. On Oct. 29, the governor's office announced that the Salisbury/Sharon Transfer Station had received a state grant to implement a unit-based pricing system — commonly known as “pay as you throw” — and to expand composting operations.

The state Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) awarded the transfer station \$266,692 through its Sustainable Materials Management grant program. The funds will sup-



The Rev. Heidi Truax retired in June after 16 years leading Trinity Episcopal Church in Lime Rock.

port a gradual, three-phase transition to a pay-per-bag model to replace the current \$150 flat fee paid by households. Both the Salisbury and Sharon selectmen endorsed the application when it was submitted in June.

After a sustained three-year effort, the highly invasive hydrilla plant appears to be gone from East Twin Lake. “The good news is, the hydrilla is pretty much gone. We have not found anything,” George Knoecklein of Northeast Aquatic Research (NEAR), the Twin Lakes Association's limnologist, reported during an Oct. 8 meeting of local, state and federal scientists, environmentalists and stakeholders at O'Hara's Landing Marina.

But the town and the Lake Wononscopomuc Association will keep a ban

on outside boats in effect at Lake Wononscopomuc, also known as Lakeville Lake, for the third year.

The lake has not been affected by hydrilla, and to keep it that way the boat launch is closed to watercraft from elsewhere. To make up for this, the town Grove boat launch has paddle boards, kayaks, canoes and row boats, plus trolling motors for anglers, available for rent. (More on Page A1)

Water also figured prominently in local achievements, as Salisbury's Phoebe Conklin, 14, competed at the YMCA National Long Course Swimming Championships in Ocala, Florida. Conklin qualified for nationals in the 50-meter freestyle, 100-meter freestyle and 100-meter butterfly.

New around town: The



The summer reading program at Scoville Memorial Library wrapped up Aug. 23 with an emphasis on bubbles — lots of bubbles.

Grassland Dessert Cafe and Lakeville Books and Stationery opened for business in Lakeville.

Meanwhile, Craig Davis and Keavy Bedell opened East Mountain House in Lakeville, an end-of-life care facility designed to accommodate up to two guests at a time. The facility welcomed its first guest in mid-September.

In August, Rev. Johan Johnson assumed leadership at St. John's Episcopal Church in Salisbury. Johnson is also the chaplain at Salisbury School.

And in June, Rev. Heidi Truax retired from Trinity Episcopal Church in Lime Rock at the end of June after 16 years.

Before saying farewell, Truax gave the pre-race invocation June 29 when



PHOTOS BY PATRICK L. SULLIVAN

Affordable housing moved forward in 2025, including two homes on Perry Street in Lakeville. Jennifer Krohnholm Clark (with scissors) cuts the ribbon at one of the two affordable homes on Perry Street along with (from left) John Harney, State Representative Maria Horn (D-64) and housing Commissioner Seila Mosquera-Bruno.

NASCAR returned to Lime Rock Park for the first time since 2011. It was billed as the largest event in modern track history with an estimated 20,000 fans attending for the weekend of pro racing.

A few months later, on Saturday, Sept. 20, a small aircraft carrying two people crashed at Lime Rock Park after making an emergency landing due to a reported mechanical failure. The area was closed while officials investigated the incident and contained a small fuel leak.

Lime Rock's Emergency Services team was the first to respond, and director Keith Byrne said the pilot was uninjured while the passenger may have sustained minor injuries.

“It was a huge relief once we saw them getting out the plane with nothing on fire,” Byrne said of arriving on the scene.

Saturday mornings on the town Green near the White Hart have long been the time and place for political activism. This has become supercharged since the start of the second Trump administration, with “No Kings”

protesters turning out in significant numbers.

The Scoville Memorial Library maintained a busy schedule of programs throughout the year, often in partnership with organizations such as the Salisbury Association. A brief and necessarily selective sampling included a June 12 presentation by Michael LaScaleia, a scientist with the Arnold Arboretum in Boston, who guided audiences through the strange and often surprising world of caterpillars and invasive plants.

Meanwhile, the normally placid confines of the Salisbury post office were briefly disrupted when patrons arrived to find the building closed on Monday, March 17, with a notice on the locked door warning of asbestos abatement. Postal customers were directed to the Lakeville post office for their mail.

Salisbury Postmaster Lisa Hoage said the floor of the Salisbury facility had been in poor condition for some time. The matter was dealt with quickly and the post office was back up and running in a matter of days.

Wake Robin saga continues into new year

By Alec Linden

LAKEVILLE — The defining land-use story in Salisbury in 2025 centered on Aradev LLC's renewed effort to expand the Wake Robin Inn, a proposal that ultimately won approval from the Planning and Zoning Commission in October but continues to face legal challenges and sustained neighborhood opposition.

After withdrawing its initial proposal in December 2024 — following a contentious hearing process that drew criticism over the project's size — Aradev returned at the beginning of 2025 with a modified plan.

In January, the developer appeared before the P&Z for a pre-application meeting, signaling the company's intent to rework and resubmit the project.

Anticipating that move, Wells Hill Road residents Angela and William Cruger filed a lawsuit in March challenging a zoning regulation amendment adopted by the commission in 2024 after discussions with Aradev.

The suit alleges that the change, which permits hotel development in the Rural Residential 1 zone where the Wake Robin Inn is located, was enacted illegally and constituted spot zoning.

The commission opposed a restraining order, maintaining that the amendment was intended to address broader zoning nonconformities in town and was not designed to benefit a single property.

As the legal challenge moved forward, Aradev resumed the regulatory process.

In late April, the developer presented its revised plans publicly for the first time, seeking a modification to a wetlands permit previously issued by the Inland Wetlands and Watercourses Commission. The commission approved the request,

and a week later Aradev returned to P&Z with a 644-page application it said reflected significant reductions made in response to public criticism.

The revised proposal eliminated a controversial detached event barn, reduced the number of external cottages, lowered total guest capacity from 158 to 130, and imposed tighter restrictions on events, operating hours and noise. Architectural plans were also revised with the aim of better aligning the Inn with the surrounding rural New England setting.

In June, the Salisbury Water Pollution Control Authority approved the project's sewer specifications, eliminating a major municipal roadblock for the proposal.

Opposition, however, intensified over the summer. In July, residents gathered at the Congregational Church of Salisbury to promote a petition opposing both the Wake Robin expansion and the 2024 zoning amendment,

ultimately collecting more than 500 signatures.

The public hearing process, which spanned seven sessions between August and September, largely resembled the first contentious hearing rounds in 2024, with residents still staunchly opposed to the project, despite the developer's modifications.

“Lakeville is not Ibiza,” said Wells Hill Road resident Aimee Bell, echoing neighbors' concerns about noise and what they described as a shift toward a destination venue.

The comparison to the Spanish party island captured the sentiments of many residents, who said the project would intrude on the peace and quiet of their neighborhood.

After the hearing closed, commissioners spent several meetings deliberating over traffic, noise, auxiliary cottages, and the overall intensity of development.

On Oct. 20, following more than a year and a half of hearings and discussions,

the commission voted 4–1 to approve the special permit, adopting a nine-page resolution with 40 conditions.

Cathy Shyer, the P&Z vice chair at the time, cast the lone dissenting vote, maintaining that the revised proposal remained too large. “The bottom line is this is a big development... It's as big as the last one,” she said during deliberations.

The controversy's impact extended beyond the project itself.

P&Z Chair Michael Klemens, who had served for 15 years, resigned two years before the end of his term. In an Oct. 27 resignation letter, Klemens cited the “vitriol and bigotry” he said he experienced from members of the public during the Wake Robin hearings as a factor in his decision.

As Salisbury enters the new year, the issue remains unresolved. The Crugers' challenge to the 2024 zoning amendment is still awaiting a court decision, and an appeal of the commission's October approval is also pending.

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Our Towns



PHOTO BY RILEY KLEIN

The Cornwall Village Green was the destination for wholesome community fun in the summer of 2025.

Cornwall’s community shined year-round

By Riley Klein

CORNWALL — The past year was one of high spirits and strong connections in Cornwall.

January started on a sweet note with the annual New Year’s Day breakfast at the United Church of Christ’s Parish House. Volunteers served up fresh pancakes, sausage, juice, coffee and real maple syrup.

February brought a focus on housing, as legislators, local officials and affordable housing advocates gathered on a cold morning Feb. 7 on Town Street to celebrate the launch of a regional affordable housing program.

State Rep. Maria Horn, D-64, said, “What better than a cold, windy day to remind you of the importance of having a warm home.”

Two new homes were completed later in the year on Town Street, and the Cornwall Housing Corporation invited the community to an open house celebration.

On the housing front, the Planning and Zoning Commission also worked throughout 2025 to address regulations that may have been restricting new home construction in town.

In March, a heroic effort by bystanders likely saved the life of a driver in a one-car accident on Route 7. The

car had struck a utility pole and was surrounded by live wires when nearby residents rushed to help.

“The woman was pulled from the car with, by my estimate, 90 seconds to spare before the flames would have reached her,” said Kent Volunteer Fire Department Chief Alan Gawel.

Two of the responders, Niya Borst and Emil Urbanowicz, both students at Housatonic Valley Regional High School, were recognized in front of the student body. Borst said she and her aunt used a sledgehammer to break the rear window in an attempt to free the driver.

In April, Cornwall Consolidated School’s 7th graders completed a research project honoring Naomi Freeman, Cornwall’s first Black female landowner. As part of the project, a portion of Great Hollow Road was renamed for Freeman on an honorary basis.

In May, Cornwall held a powerful ceremony to honor local veterans of the Revolutionary War and replaced 10 refurbished grave markers in the cemetery on Route 4.

The Village Green was the destination for summer fun with July Fest, Taste of Cornwall in August and the Agricultural Fair in September.

Full version online at lakevillejournal.com

Kent concludes productive 2025

By Alec Linden

KENT — In 2025, Kent officials and residents spent much of the year navigating zoning disputes, regional policy issues and leadership changes that kept Town Hall at the center of community life.

The year opened with heightened tensions when a local dispute on Stone Fences Lane brought a long-running, home-based pottery studio before the Planning and Zoning Commission.

While some residents raised concerns about increased vehicle traffic associated with the operation, the commission ultimately reaffirmed the town’s support for cottage industries and the local arts community, bringing Alison Palmer Studios into zoning compliance in April through the approval of a conditioned special permit.

In the spring, the town released the results of a



PHOTO BY DAVID CARLEY

An overflow crowd packed Kent Town Hall June 27 for a scheduled vote on a proposed wakesurfing ban on Lake Waramaug, prompting then-First Selectman Marty Lindenmayer to adjourn the meeting without a vote.

community survey on recreational cannabis that had been circulated since December 2024. Sarah Chase, chair of the Cannabis Regulation Subcommittee, said the responses reflected a community that was “cautious but open-minded,” supportive of medical access, respectful of farming traditions, and focused on preserving Kent’s character.

The survey guided both the development of zoning regulations governing

medical cannabis facilities and agricultural uses, and a ballot measure prohibiting the retail sale of recreational cannabis within town limits. Voters approved the ordinance on the Nov. 4 general election ballot.

The warmer months brought Kent into a high-profile regional dispute over wakesurfing on Lake Waramaug. After unprecedented turnout forced the postponement of a June vote, a proposed tri-town ban

involving Kent, Washington, and Warren was approved decisively on July 31.

In Kent, 83% of voters supported the ban, which is scheduled to take effect in February. An opposition group subsequently filed an appeal, which remains under legal review.

In the fall, a discovery shed light on Kent’s past. At Good Hill Cemetery, a weathered headstone bearing a partially faded inscription memorializing two Revolutionary War-era sisters drew historians and puzzle-solvers eager to decipher its message.

Meanwhile, in Emery Park, Parks and Recreation Director Matt Busse partnered with the state archaeologist to survey the area for evidence of historic coal-worker settlements, uncovering a largely undocumented chapter of the park’s rugged history.

Full version online at lakevillejournal.com

A year of quiet change, enduring spirit in Falls Village

By Patrick L. Sullivan

FALLS VILLAGE — The year 2025 saw some new faces in town, starting with Liz and Howie Ives of the Off the Trail Cafe, who took over the town-owned space at 107 Main St., formerly occupied by the Falls Village Cafe.

As the name suggests, the cafe’s owners have made a point of welcoming Appalachian Trail hikers, including by collaborating with the Center on Main next door on an informal, trail-themed art project.

The Center on Main also welcomed a new face in 2025, with Britta Sallik joining the organization as its community connections manager.

Farther up Main Street, the David M. Hunt Library brought on Anna Pattison as its new assistant director and youth programming coordinator.

At the Congregation-

al Church, parishioners marked the end of an era as the Rev. Rich Reifsnnyder presided over his final service on Sunday, Oct. 12. Reifsnnyder, who began his tenure in February 2018, said the position was initially intended to be short-term. “A couple of Sundays here and there,” he said. “Then it sort of developed.”

In 2025, Hunt Library kept its calendar full with a wide range of well-attended programs, many of which spilled outdoors during the warmer months.

Highlights included a cannoli-making workshop with Matthew Yanarella, who wisely took the somewhat messy demonstration outside.

The library also hosted a series of outdoor summer concerts, culminating in an entertaining and unexpected open mic night on Aug. 8.

Vehicles of all sorts filled



PHOTO BY PATRICK L. SULLIVAN

Brooke and Leo Martinez perform at the open mic night at Hunt Library in August, the last of a series of outdoor concerts at the library.

the downtown streets twice over the summer. The Falls Village Car and Motorcycle Show on July 13 attracted more than 600 entries and more spectators than ever, according to organizer Judy Jacobs.

And the vintage race car parade on Aug. 28 wound through Salisbury and

Lakeville before finishing in downtown Falls Village. Featured this year were vintage vehicles from the early 20th century, courtesy of the Rag Time Racers, a California-based group of race car enthusiasts specializing in very early vehicles.

Full version online at lakevillejournal.com

LEGAL NOTICES

**Legal Notice**

The Cornwall Democratic Party will hold a meeting and caucus to elect members of the Cornwall Democratic Town Committee on Sunday, January 11, at 4:00pm at the Cornwall Library, 30 Pine Street, Cornwall, CT.

01-08-26

**LEGAL NOTICE TOWN OF KENT**

The second installment of the Real Estate and Personal Property tax for the Grand List of 2024 is due and payable January 1, 2026. The Motor Vehicle Supplemental tax for the Grand List of 2024 is due and payable on January 1, 2026. The second installment of the Real Estate, Personal Property and the Motor Vehicle Supplemental tax for the Grand List of 2024 will become delinquent on Tuesday, February 3, 2026.

As soon as the tax becomes delinquent, it shall be subject to interest at the rate of 1.5% per month from January 1, 2026 until the same is paid.

Bills may be viewed and paid online by going to the Tax Collector’s page on the Town of Kent website at [www.townofkentct.gov](http://www.townofkentct.gov).

The Tax Collector’s office will be open from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday.

There is a red drop box next to the front door of the Town Hall for payments.

Payments are also welcome through the mail at P. O. Box 311, Kent, Connecticut 06757.

Deborah Devaux CCMC Tax Collector

12-18-25  
01-08-26  
01-22-26

**NOTICE OF DEMOCRATIC CAUCUS**

To enrolled members of the Democratic Party of the Town of North Canaan, CT.

Pursuant to the Rules of the Democratic Party and State election laws, you are hereby notified that a caucus will be held on: January 12th at 6:30 pm at North Canaan Town Hall to endorse candidates for the North Canaan Democratic Town Committee and to transact other business as may be proper to come before said Caucus. Dated at: North Canaan, CT. Date: December 31, 2025

North Canaan Democratic Town Committee Chair: Chris Jacques

01-08-26

**NOTICE TO CREDITORS ESTATE OF T. MERRILL PRENTICE Late of West Cornwall (25-00508)**

The Hon. Jordan M. Richards, Judge of the Court of Probate, District of Litchfield Hills Probate Court, by decree dated December 18, 2025, ordered that all claims must be

presented to the fiduciary at the address below. Failure to promptly present any such claim may result in the loss of rights to recover on such claim.

The fiduciary is: Serena Lansing, CFTA c/o Mary M Ackerly Harris Beach Murtha Cullina PLLC, 782 Bantam Road, P.O. Box 815, Bantam, CT 06750

Megan M. Foley Clerk

01-08-26

**NOTICE TO CREDITORS ESTATE OF ROBERT A. REED Late of Falls Village (25-00394)**

The Hon. Jordan M. Richards, Judge of the Court of Probate, District of Litchfield Hills Probate Court, by decree dated December 16, 2025, ordered that all claims must be presented to the fiduciary at the address below. Failure to promptly present any such claim may result in the loss of rights to recover on such claim.

The fiduciary is: Melissa Reed c/o Kevin F Nelligan The Law Offices of Kevin F. Nelligan, LLC, 194 Ashley Fls Rd, PO Box 776, Canaan, CT 06018

Megan M. Foley Clerk

01-08-26

**NOTICE TO CREDITORS ESTATE OF LISA M. KELLER Late of Salisbury (25-00468)**

The Hon. Jordan M. Richards, Judge of the Court of Probate, District of Litchfield Hills Probate Court, by decree dated December 2, 2025, ordered that all claims must be presented to the fiduciary at the address below. Failure to promptly present any such claim may result in the loss of rights to recover on such claim.

The fiduciary is: Robert Keller c/o Michael Downes Lynch

Law Office of Michael D. Lynch, 106 Upper Main Street, P.O. Box 1776, Sharon, CT 06069

Megan M. Foley Clerk

01-08-26

**NOTICE TO CREDITORS ESTATE OF MARY C. NEGRI Late of North Canaan (25-00449)**

The Hon. Jordan M. Richards, Judge of the Court of Probate, District of Litchfield Hills Probate Court, by decree dated December 2, 2025, ordered that all claims must be presented to the fiduciary at the address below. Failure to promptly present any such claim may result in the loss

of rights to recover on such claim.

The fiduciary is: Mary Ellen Negri c./o Linda M Patz Drury, Patz & Citrin, LLP 7 Church Street, P.O. Box 101 Canaan, CT 06018

Megan M Foley Clerk

01-08-26

**REPUBLICAN CAUCUS TUESDAY, JANUARY 13th**

Notice is hereby given to all enrolled Republican electors of the Town of Salisbury that a Caucus will be held in the Salisbury Town Hall lower conference room TUESDAY, Jan. 13, 2026 at 4:00 PM.

The purpose being to allow electors to vote to endorse candidates for membership to the Salisbury Republican Town Committee (SRTC) for a two-year term of office from March 2026 to March 2028 and to act on such other matters as may properly come before the Caucus.

All Salisbury registered Republicans are welcome to attend and vote to endorse candidates.

Thomas Morrison SRTC Chair

01-08-26

**TAX COLLECTOR TOWN OF SALISBURY CT LEGAL NOTICE**

Pursuant to Sec 12-145 of the Connecticut State Statutes, the taxpayers of the Town of Salisbury are hereby notified the third installment of the Grand List October 1, 2024 is due and payable January 1, 2026. Pursuant to Section 12-71b of the Connecticut State Statutes, the Supplemental Motor Vehicle tax is due on January 1, 2026. Payments must be received or postmarked by February 2, 2026. If said Real Estate, Personal Property and Supplemental Motor Vehicle taxes are not paid on or before February 2, 2026, interest at the rate of 1 % (18% per year) will be added for each month from the time when such tax becomes due and payable until paid. Minimum interest \$2.00.

Mail to: Tax Collector, P.O. Box 338, Salisbury, CT 06068 or at Town Hall, 27 Main Street, Monday, Wednesday, Friday, 9am-4pm (Closed for lunch 12:30-1:30) or use the drop box located in the vestibule of the Town Hall or on side of building by parking area. Pay online [www.salisburyct.us](http://www.salisburyct.us). Click blue tab View/Pay Taxes. A fee is charged.

Dated at Salisbury CT this 3rd day of December 2025.

Jean F. Bell, CCMC Tax Collector

Salisbury CT 06068

12-18-25  
01-08-26  
01-22-26



# OBITUARIES

## Francis J. Schell

FALLS VILLAGE — Francis J. “Bosco” Schell of Falls Village passed away peacefully on Dec. 20, at East Mountain House in Lakeville surrounded by members of his family.

Born in Kosice, Slovakia, in 1934 to a family of land-owners in their ancestral home, he came to the United States in 1947 following the wreckage of the Second World War.

He gained full scholarships to the Montclair Academy in New Jersey and to Williams College in Massachusetts before serving in the US Army in Germany.

Soon after his return to New York City he began work at the Reader's Digest where he would stay for his entire professional career, starting in Paris at the International Edition, and returning to the US to create Families, and then on to leading the non-US editions of the magazine, the International and global Condensed Books.

He married Natalia Gortchacow in 1962, who predeceased him in 1992, and Page Dickey in 2000. He was devoted to his family and children, and to the huge cohort of friends he kept, who shared his relentless joie de vivre, his love of gardens, music, parties, dancing and drama.

Bosco was deeply involved in charity work, becoming by family tradition a member of the Catholic Sovereign Order of Malta, where he reached the rank of Knight Grand Cross of Honor and Devotion. He worked tirelessly to channel funds and medical equipment to his beloved Hungarians writhing under the Soviet yoke and then in aid of their successful quest for economic and political freedom. He headed the

Hungarian Association of the Knights of Malta in Exile which led to the re-creation of the Hungarian Delegation in Hungary.

In his later years, he chaired the board of the David M. Hunt Library in Falls Village where he could be found raising funds by selling cuttings from his own greenhouse along with his legendary home-made jam.

Bosco's two lifelong passions were gardening and music. Always an enthusiastic dabbler, retirement enabled him to attend the Brooklyn Botanical Gardens where he earned his degree in horticulture in 1997 before settling down with Page in her published garden at Duck Hill in North Salem, NY. They eventually moved to Falls Village in 2015 where they established Church House and its garden. He took great pride in its opening to the public and last gave a virtual tour of his greenhouse in 2021 to benefit charity.

He is remembered by his loving wife Page, his two children Peter Schell and Marie-Elizabeth Offierski and their spouses Blandine and Stefan, his four step-children Keith Dickey, Kim Dickey Ambrose, Scott Dickey and Jean Dickey Quaintance and their spouses Ally, Kirk, Ilia and Don, by his eight grandchildren Irène, Valentine, Anastasia, Paul, Frederic, Conrad, Gregor, and Olga and his six step-grand-children Claire, Helen, Freddy, Charlie, Alex and Keala.

A funeral mass was held at 11:00 a.m. on Jan. 5, 2026, at St. Martin of Tours Church of St. Mary in Lakeville. Burial followed at Sleep Hollow Cemetery in Tarrytown, New York.



## Joan Marie Wilbur

SHARON — Joan Marie Wilbur, 83, a seventy-two year resident of Sharon, died peacefully on Monday evening, Dec. 22, 2025, at Sharon Hospital in Sharon. Mrs. Wilbur had a forty-year career as a licensed practical nurse in Sharon, she began at Sharon Hospital and subsequently worked for Dr. Brewer, Dr. Gott, Sharon Pediatrics, Dr. Rashkoff and ultimately finished her career caring for patients at Sharon Health Care Center.

Born Jan. 2, 1942, in Colchester, Vermont, she was the daughter of the late Jerome and Catherine (Casey) Bushey. On Sept. 14, 1963, in Lakeville, Connecticut-she married the love of her life, Edward Howard Wilbur, and their loving marriage spanned for over six decades. Mr. Wilbur survives at home in Sharon. Mrs. Wilbur enjoyed playing golf, bowling, dancing, horses and caring for their beloved pets. She especially enjoyed spending time with her children and grandchildren, great grandchildren and friends. She will be dearly missed by all.

In addition to her husband, Ed, Joan is survived by two children, Mark Wilbur of Deer Park, Texas and

Michele Pastre and her husband Scott of Sharon; three grandchildren, Benjamin Wilbur and his wife Janie of Deer Park, Texas, Colby Pastre and his wife Caroline of Washington, D.C. and Brittney Pastre and her husband Greg of Barrington, New Hampshire; three great grandchildren, Ila Rae Wilbur of Deer Park, Texas and Isabella and Ivy Godfrey of Barrington, New Hampshire; her brother, Jerry Bushey of North Canaan, and her sister, Mary Kruse and her husband Bob of Florida, and two nephews, Chris Goddard of Florida and Paul Goddard of Massachusetts.

There will be no public funeral service. Interment in the family niche at Hillside Cemetery in Sharon, will take place privately in the spring of 2026. Arrangements have been entrusted to the Scott D. Conklin Funeral Home, 37 Park Avenue, Millerton, NY 12546. Memorial contributions may be made to St. Jude Children's Research Hospital, 501 St. Jude Place, Memphis, TN 38105. To send an online condolence to the family, flowers to the family or to plant a tree in Joan's memory, please visit [www.conklinfuneralhome.com](http://www.conklinfuneralhome.com)

CORNWALL — A good man has passed. Gerald “Jerry” Blakey, 89, of Cornwall, passed on Dec. 20, 2025.

He was predeceased by his parents Ernestine L. Blakey and Burt Blakey of West Cornwall, his brother Tom Blakey of Falls Village, and his daughter Karen B. Fisher of Cornwall.

He leaves his wife of 70 years, Patricia “Pat” Blakey of Cornwall, his son David M. Blakey of Cornwall Bridge, his daughter Lori B. Welles and her husband David Welles of West Cornwall, his granddaughter Melissa B. Root of Terryville, great granddaughter Devyn Root of Terryville, and his niece Pam B. Hart and her husband Doug of Belencia, California, and brother James Blakey of Florida.

Jerry graduated from

HVRHS in 1954. He started dating Patricia “Pat” Blakey in high school, and they were married on Sept. 3, 1955.

Their first challenge as newlyweds was hearing their new furniture had washed away in the flood of 55!

After high school, Jerry began working at Housatonic Valley Rug Shop in Cornwall Bridge.

In 1979 he bought HVRHS with his partner Ed Kennistons. He retired in 2006.

Early on in his adult life he began getting involved in all things Cornwall. A member of the UCC in Cornwall, he served on numerous boards and committees there. Always ready to fix or fabricate, clean or repair whatever was needed. He served on the town's P&Z committee, building committees and more, he was elected tax col-

## Austin Howard Barney

SHARON — Austin Howard Barney—known simply as “Barney” to many, of Sharon, age 87, died on Dec. 23, after his heroic battle with the black breath, hanahaki disease, cooties, simian flu and feline leukemia finally came to an end.

Austin was born on July 26, 1938, son of Sylvester and Iva Barney.

He leaves behind an overwhelming amount of junk—sorry, treasures. If you've ever dreamed of owning a console TV roughly the size of a Buick, a soot-encrusted coffee pot that hasn't been properly cleaned since the Reagan administration or creatively bent hangers that he had hanging in his living room windows to dry clothes on, give us a call. Please wait for the appropriate, respectful amount of time. Tomorrow should be fine.

Austin was frugal to the extreme; some may have called him “cheap,” but he preferred to think of himself as a pioneer in recycling—decades before it was cool. His kitchen was home to a vast collection of cool whip and country crock containers. The biggest challenge was finding actual cool whip or butter in his refrigerator with all the containers of leftovers that looked the same. “Open at your own risk” was our motto.

He leaves behind a wonderfully dysfunctional family—a group he tolerated, loved and occasionally avoided.

Austin was world-renowned for his lack of patience, grossly excessive extreme sarcasm, not holding back his opinion and knack for telling you exactly how wrong you were. One of his favorite quotes was, “I was only wrong once in my life. I thought I made a mistake.”

He always preferred his own cooking to anyone else's—and to be fair, it was actually pretty good.

Austin served proudly with the 6th Marines in the United States Marine Corps from Feb. 10, 1958, through Feb. 9, 1962. Semper Fi!

He was also a volunteer fireman for several years, until he realized that sprinting in the opposite direction from fire was more aligned with his personal survival goals.

A natural mountain man, he ate things from the swamp that most people avoid and cooked on a wood stove for many years. He was an avid bird watcher and found joy in feeding all the animals that frequented his property.

He was predeceased by his brothers, Sylvester Barney, Louis Barney and his sister Shirley MacDougall.

He is survived by his daughters Darlene Hardzog, Margaret Gdovin (Mike); his son, Austin Barney Jr (Kate); his grandchildren, Savannah Hardzog, Jordan Gdovin, Violet Barney, Amethyst Barney and Austin Barney III; and his sister Anita Baird along with various other relatives. You know who you are. He will be greatly missed.

There will be no viewing, as his children refused to comply with his request to be taxidermied and propped in the corner with a beer or a glass of scotch in his hand so guests could admire him in his natural state.

Services are pending and details will be shared at a later date.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to the American Red Cross in his memory.

Austin Barney has approved this message. Approval notwithstanding, it would have read the same.



## Realtor® at Large

A wonderful way to get a sense of the history of Salisbury is to explore the oral transcripts that are available on the website of the Salisbury Association. They have taken the time to interview many people to preserve the town's culture and their experiences in living here. I started with David C. Brazee, Lester (Oogie) Hoysradt, George Kiefer and Rod Lankler, and I found out all sorts of things that I never knew even growing up here. To start your exploration of what all these remarkable people have done to make the Town what it is today, please visit: [salisburyassociation.org/oral-history-project2/](http://salisburyassociation.org/oral-history-project2/).

**JOHN HARNEY**  
Associate Broker with William Pitt Sotheby's International Realty  
**Office:** 19 Main Street, Salisbury, CT 06068  
**Email:** [jharney@wpsir.com](mailto:jharney@wpsir.com)  
**Cell:** 860-921-7910  
**Instagram:** @johnharneyjr

ADVERTISEMENT

## Gerald Blakey

lector. He was proud to serve in the Cornwall Fire Dept. Where there was a need, he found solutions.

Pat and Jerry volunteered at the Soup Kitchen in Torrington and slept in the shelter for Operation Overflow, also in Torrington. Together they started the medical equipment loan program out of the UCC. Volunteering 100s of hours and traveling 100s of miles delivering and picking up medical equipment for those in need.

Jerry and Pat opened their garage after the tornado of '89 and started the Blakey Family Restaurant to feed the town's people and volunteers as the clean up continued. Jerry organized blood drives, built houses in Mexico through the La Casa Project, hosted tornado anniversary parties and so much more.

Jerry amassed numerous awards, citations and recognitions for all he did. Each was carefully put away, not to be displayed, because it never was about those. As one friend said, Jerry didn't know he did extraordinary things, it's just what you're supposed to do. He was tal-

ented, humble and generous. He loved the community and the people and always was there to help. He was a family man, caring for them up to the end.

Among the many awards he was particularly proud of his Public Service award from the State of Connecticut in 2001, The Connecticut Conference, UCC Living Waters Award in 2015 and an honoree with Pat on The HVRHS Alumni Wall of Honors 2023.

Anyone who ever met Jerry would know that he was a man of many words and always a man of his word, he will be missed.

The family would like to thank his Smilow Cancer Hospital team in Torrington, Connecticut.

Services will be held on Jan. 10, 2026, at 1 p.m. at the UCC, Bolton Hill Road, in Cornwall.

In lieu of flowers, donations can be made to Cornwall Volunteer Fire Dept. and EMS, American Cancer Society, or the UCC Cornwall capital improvement fund.

The Kenny Funeral Home has care of arrangements.

For more obituaries, see Page A7

## Worship Services

Week of January 11, 2026

<p><b>Christ Church Episcopal in Sharon</b> 9 South Main, Sharon CT Sunday Holy Eucharist at 9:00 A.M. <i>Transitioning through prayer</i> All welcome to join us 860-364-5260 <a href="http://www.christchurchsharon.org">www.christchurchsharon.org</a></p>	<p><b>The Congregational Church of Salisbury, U.C.C.</b> 30 Main Street, Salisbury, CT Whoever you are, wherever you are on life's journey, you are welcome here! Worship, Sundays at 10 am, in-person and streaming <a href="http://www.salisburyucc.org">www.salisburyucc.org</a> Sharing God's <i>shalom</i>: Wholeness, harmony, justice, and joy! (860) 435-2442</p>
<p><b>Trinity Episcopal Church</b> 484 Lime Rock Rd. Lakeville <i>Offering companionship along the Way</i> Sundays at 8 and 10:30 a.m. Livestream at 10:30 found at <a href="http://www.trinitylimerock.org">www.trinitylimerock.org</a> <a href="mailto:trinity@trinitylimerock.org">trinity@trinitylimerock.org</a> (860) 435-2627</p>	<p><b>St. John's Episcopal Church</b> 12 Main Street, Salisbury, CT <b>SUNDAY SERVICE</b> 10:00 a.m. Eucharist with music (Rite II) Rev. Dr. Johan Johnson, Priest-in-Charge <i>In-Person and on YouTube</i> <a href="http://www.stjohnssalisbury.org">www.stjohnssalisbury.org</a></p>
<p><b>North Canaan Congregational Church, UCC</b> <i>Joyfully opening our hearts and doors to all God's people</i> 172 Lower Rd./Rt. 44, East Canaan CT Worship services Sundays at 10 am <a href="http://www.Facebook.com/northcanaancongregational">www.Facebook.com/northcanaancongregational</a> 860-824-7232</p> <p><b>FISHES &amp; LOAVES FOOD PANTRY, A MISSION OF OUR CHURCH</b> is at Pilgrim House, 30 Granite Ave., Canaan Tuesday 4-6 pm &amp; Thursday 12-2 pm <a href="http://www.fishesandloavesnorthcanaan.org">www.fishesandloavesnorthcanaan.org</a></p>	<p><b>Unitarian Fellowship of NW CT</b> <i>Cobble Living Room, Noble Horizons</i> Sunday, January 11 at 10:30 a.m. For information, contact Jo Loi at <a href="mailto:jokialoi@gmail.com">jokialoi@gmail.com</a> All are Welcome</p>
	<p><b>ST. MARTIN OF TOURS PARISH</b> <i>Immaculate Conception, 4 North Street, Norfolk</i> St. Joseph, 4 Main Street, Canaan St. Mary, 76 Sharon Road, Lakeville <b>MASS SCHEDULE</b> Saturday Vigil 4 pm, St. Joseph Church Sunday 9 am, Church of St. Mary Sunday 11 a.m., Immaculate Conception Church <b>DAILY MASS SCHEDULE</b> <b>Wednesday 6pm</b> St. Joseph Chapel or Church <b>Thursday 8am</b> Immaculate Conception Church <b>Friday 8am</b> Church of St. Mary ALL ARE WELCOME! For information, please call 860-824-7078</p>
<p><b>The Lakeville United Methodist Church</b> 319 Main St., Lakeville, CT 06039 9:15 a.m. Worship Service 9:15 a.m. Sunday School <i>"Open Hearts - Open Minds - Open Doors"</i> The Rev. Dr. Anna C. Camphouse 860-435-9496 <a href="mailto:Lakevillemethodist@snet.net">Lakevillemethodist@snet.net</a></p>	<p><b>UCC in CORNWALL</b> <b>Cornwall Village Meeting House</b> Worship Sunday, 10 am Outstanding Church School (10 am) Mission Opportunities Warm Fellowship following Worship 860-672-6840 <a href="http://www.uccincornwall.org">www.uccincornwall.org</a> Rev. Micki Nunn-Miller, Minister <i>Welcoming all - including the LGBTQ Community</i></p>
<p><b>Falls Village Congregational Church</b> 16 Beebe Hill Road, Falls Village 10:00 a.m. Family Worship Coffee Hour <i>A Friendly Church with a warm welcome to all!!</i> 860-824-0194</p>	<p><b>The Chapel of All Saints, Cornwall</b> Holy Eucharist: Sundays at 9 a.m. Trinity Retreat Center Chapel Lower River Road, West Cornwall in person and on zoom Warm fellowship following service All Are Welcome! <a href="http://www.allsaintscornwall.org">www.allsaintscornwall.org</a> Rev. Mary Gates!</p>
<p><b>The Sharon United Methodist Church</b> 112 Upper Main Street, North End of Sharon Green <i>Touching Lives - Lifting Spirits</i> 10:30 a.m. Worship Service, Nursery Care No Sunday School in Summer The Rev. Dr. Anna C. Camphouse 860-364-5634 <a href="mailto:sharonumc5634@att.net">sharonumc5634@att.net</a></p>	<p><b>St. Thomas Episcopal Church</b> 40 Leedsville Road Amenia Union, NY <b>SUNDAY WORSHIP at 10:30</b> <b>IN-PERSON AND ONLINE</b> Visit our website for links 845-373-9161 <a href="http://www.stthomasamenia.com">www.stthomasamenia.com</a> <i>A Community of Radical Hospitality</i></p>
<p><b>The Smithfield Presbyterian Church</b> 656 Smithfield Valley Rd. Route 83, Amenia, NY Services every Sunday 10 a.m. <a href="http://www.thsmithfieldchurch.org">www.thsmithfieldchurch.org</a> 21st Century Theology in an Historic Building</p>	<p><b>Promised Land Baptist Church</b> 29 Granite Ave., Canaan, CT <i>Where you will find: A Warm Welcome! Helpful Bible Messages, A Place to Grow!</i> Sunday School - 10am Sunday Worship - 11am Wednesday Bible Study and Prayer Meeting - 7PM (860) 824-5685 <b>VISITORS WELCOME!</b> <a href="http://www.promisedlandbaptist.org">www.promisedlandbaptist.org</a></p>
<p><b>All Saints of America Orthodox Christian Church</b> 313 Twin Lakes Rd., Salisbury, CT Vespers Saturday at 5:00 P.M. Divine Liturgy Sunday at 9:30 A.M. Special Services Online Rev. John Kreta 860-824-1340   <a href="mailto:allsaintsofamerica.us">allsaintsofamerica.us</a></p>	<p><b>Canaan United Methodist Church</b> 2 Church St., Rte 44, Canaan, CT 8:00AM - Worship Service 2nd &amp; 4th Sunday <i>"Open Hearts - Open Minds - Open Doors"</i> The Rev. Dr. Anna C. Camphouse 860-824-5534 <a href="mailto:canaanctumc@gmail.com">canaanctumc@gmail.com</a> <i>We hope you will join us!</i></p>



EDITORIAL

North Canaan faces a turning point

North Canaan needs to turn the page. The town entered a new chapter in November, not only with the election of a new first selectman, but with significant changes across Town Hall. Several key positions are now held by new faces, and the Town Clerk's office is showing stability after a lengthy period of disruption.

For a small town, such turnover matters — and it helps explain why the handoff into the new year hasn't been seamless.

Jesse Bunce took office after a razor-thin election and a challenging transition, marked by technology issues, operational delays, and a disrupted payroll. These issues were real, but they've been addressed. With those behind them, the town is now looking ahead to the work that remains.

Bunce brings a background in infrastructure, equipment and cost estimation, honed through years running a local excavation business. His practical experience aligns with many of North Canaan's most pressing needs. In a town with a limited tax base, deferred maintenance and aging public assets are not abstract policy concerns — they are real issues that require careful planning and disciplined spending.

He emphasizes a straightforward governing approach: prioritizing what's best for the town and encouraging collaboration over division. If he can successfully implement this approach, it could provide a solid foundation for the work ahead.

Former First Selectman Brian Ohler, who remains on the Board of Selectmen after his narrow defeat, has shown grace and a clear willingness to contribute to the town's future. His commitment to collaboration and professionalism sets an important example as the town transitions. Ohler's work over the years has laid a foundation of service, and his willingness to work alongside Bunce offers a model for positive, unified governance.

Turning the page doesn't mean ignoring problems or lowering expectations. Residents deserve reliable operations, functional systems, and accountability from Town Hall.

But it does mean recognizing that progress will depend on cooperation and goodwill — not just from elected officials, but from staff, volunteers and residents alike.

The challenges ahead are ones the community faces together: improving roads and bridges, addressing deteriorating town assets, supporting children and working families and managing costs to keep North Canaan affordable.

The town has experienced a period of change. The next two years should be defined not by transition issues, but by measurable progress.

TURNING BACK THE PAGES

NORMA BOSWORTH

**125 years ago — January 1901**  
CHAPINVILLE — Mr. Charles Kilmer and family are moving this week to East Canaan in Mrs. Brinton's house. He will work for Mr. Canfield.

The new directories of the Sharon Telephone Company have been issued.

The Holley M'f'g factory started up work Wednesday morning after a week's shut down for inventory and vacation.

**100 years ago — January 1926**  
A telephone has been installed at the home of George Doty on the Factory Street road.

It is understood that the New York Central railroad has made an offer to the New York, New Haven and Hartford railroad for some of its lines and among those included is the Central New England division with its branches.

The cold snap of this morning has rendered the ice excellent for skating and the new rink of the skating club will be illuminated by electric lights for the first time tonight.

**50 years ago — January 1976**  
Several hundred mallard ducks died on or near Lake

Wononscopomuc in Lakeville Saturday or Sunday as the result of eating moldy grain or bread.

Northwest Corner towns are doing the right thing in banding together to share solid waste disposal facilities and possibly to seek a temporary regional landfill, Connecticut Resources Recovery Authority President Richard Chase asserted this week.

Lake Wononscopomuc in Lakeville officially froze over Monday morning, according to George Milmine, who has kept records of the "ice-in" on the lake for many years.

**25 years ago — January 2001**

The first baby to be born at Sharon Hospital in 2001 is Avery Harshberger, who made her appearance at 8:21 a.m. Jan. 2. Weighing in at 8 lbs. 13 oz. she is the daughter of Emily and Jonah Harshberger of Great Barrington, Mass.

It's all water under the bridge at Housatonic Valley Regional High School where problems with a well kept the school closed for two days prior to the winter vacation.

*These items were taken from The Lakeville Journal archives at Salisbury's Scoville Memorial Library, keeping the original wording intact as possible.*



The views expressed here are not necessarily those of The Lakeville Journal and the Journal does not support or oppose candidates for public office.

We accept gifts, grants and sponsorships from individuals and organizations for the general support of our activities, but our news judgments are made independently and not on the basis of donor support.

Send to publisher@lakevillejournal.com Include name, town and phone number. Keep letters to 500 words or less.

The deadline for letters to the editor is 10 a.m. each Monday. You may email letters to publisher@lakevillejournal.com.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Sharon Hospital addresses ambulance services

Recent public discussion regarding paramedic services in the Sharon community has understandably raised concerns. As such, we welcome the opportunity to clarify the facts and, more importantly, to reassure residents that emergency medical services in Sharon are not only continuing but strengthening.

Sharon Hospital is now part of Northwell Health, the largest health system in the Northeast, with extensive emergency transport and EMS capabilities across western Connecticut and the Hudson Valley. As part of this system, Sharon Hospital is supported by a licensed and experienced paramedic program already operating in the Danbury and New Milford region, with the ability to extend those services to appropriately support the Sharon community.

Effective Jan. 1, 2026, Sharon Hospital will ensure 24/7 emergency medical coverage for the community. This includes support for emergency response, interfacility transport and critical care needs, backed by the depth, redundancy, and clinical oversight of a larger health system. These capabilities are not theoretical — they are already in place and functioning successfully across our region.

Some commentary has focused on the hospital's decision not to continue sponsoring Northern Dutchess Paramedics (NDP). It is important to note that NDP was acquired in October by Empress Ambulance Service, a private, for-profit, out-of-state organization. We recognize that the change in sponsorship may disrupt NDP's business interests in the Sharon community, yet it does not represent a loss of emergency medical services for residents who rely on us for care.

We want to be clear: no EMS services are being eliminated, and no gaps in coverage are anticipated. Our responsibility is to ensure safe, reliable, and compliant emergency care for our patients and our community, and our current plan does exactly that.

Change can bring uncertainty, and we recognize the importance of open communication. Sharon Hospital remains committed to transparency, collaboration with local EMS partners, and continued engagement with community leaders and residents. We invite you to a Town Hall on Thursday, Jan. 8 from 5 to 6 p.m. in the cafeteria at Sharon Hospital to answer any questions you may

have. Please RSVP to Griffin. Cooper@nuvancehealth.org.

Our focus remains where it belongs: on delivering high-quality, dependable emergency medical care to

the people of Sharon and surrounding towns, today and into the future.

**Christina McCulloch**  
President, Sharon Hospital Sharon

Reality contrasts with the spirit of the season

This time of year is nostalgic and beautiful with the Christmas lights and decorations. The cold reality of what is going on in our country brings all those feelings to an abrupt halt.

Now King Trump is publicly stating that Somalians are ruining our country and have been for years. There are not enough Somalian people in the United States to ruin anything. I wonder if he was thinking about that during his "Great Gatsby" party? Or if he thought about how many people would go hungry without their SNAP benefits? His answer is to any criticism is to post a picture of himself with a crown on his head, in a plane, dropping fecal bombs on the American people That says exactly what Teflon Don thinks of our country.

Donnie is making millions building his hotels all over the world and defending (lying for) the Saudi Arabian leader Mohammed bin Salman, who approved the

murder of Jamal Khashoggi. What does he get in return? An arms deal, building Trump hotels, maybe oil, all of the above and probably things we don't know about.

Why is everyone surprised about Trump's reluctance to release the Epstein files? Or that Ghislaine Maxwell was moved to a better facility — a child predator, as evil as her partner Jeffrey Epstein. I don't think there is any person who doesn't know about Trump's friendship with the lovely couple. Trump's infamous reputation with women speaks for itself.

King Trump's policies, or lack thereof, are dangerous, debilitating, self-promoting, and corrupt. His sycophants, also known as his cabinet are as incompetent, mercenary and narcissistic as he is.

We still have a long way to go before King Trump is out of office so to all I say "Merry Christmas" and God help us!

**Gretchen Gordon**  
Sharon

THE LAKEVILLE JOURNAL

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OUR TOWNS



PHOTO BY RUTH EPSTEIN

Local officials join Richard Baumann, far left, president of the Sharon Housing Trust, as they break ground in October at 99 North Main St., the former community center that will be converted into four new affordable rental units.

Housing, healthcare, conservation took center stage in Sharon last year

By Alec Linden

SHARON — Housing remained at the center of Sharon’s public discourse throughout the year. The year began with the Sharon Housing Trust announcing the acquisition of a parcel in the Silver Lake Shores neighborhood to be developed as a new affordable homeownership opportunity. Later in January, in a separate initiative, the trust revealed it had secured a \$1 million preliminary funding commitment from the state Department of Housing to advance plans for an affordable housing “campus” on Gay Street.

That commitment was later doubled by the state, allowing the trust to break ground in September on a project that will renovate the long-defunct Community Center — once a Masonic Temple — into four additional affordable units. Those apartments will join six already occupied units in adjacent buildings, creating a unified, 10-unit development. The project cleared its final local hurdle in November, receiving approvals from both the Zoning Commission and the Historic District Commission. Alongside those efforts, a more contentious proposal dominated Planning and Zoning Commission agen-

das during the first half of the year. A condominium development proposed near Sharon Hospital drew support from residents who favor a more diverse housing mix, while neighbors raised concerns about potential impacts on property values and quality of life. The project, proposed by Gold Dog LLC, a private development company, was approved in August following months of heated public hearings. That decision, however, has since been appealed by opponents, ensuring that housing will remain an ongoing issue. Full version online at lakevillejournal.com

Community, change shaped North Canaan in 2025

By Riley Klein

NORTH CANAAN — Last year was marked by several significant news events in North Canaan. In January, the town honored Bunny McGuire for her decades of service to the community with the naming of a park in her honor. Part of Lawrence Field, the pavilion, playground and dog park on Main Street later received new signage to designate the area Bunny McGuire Park. In February, Town Clerk Jean Jacquier stopped reporting to work amid a legal dispute, triggering months of uncertainty at Town Hall. Her prolonged absence became the focus of multiple court cases, heightened political tensions in town, and fueled debate in the lead-up to the municipal election. Following the election, Jacquier returned to her position and served through the remainder of her duly elected term. In April, North Canaan Elementary School marked the 35th anniversary of its Arbor Day celebration, alongside the 55th anniversary of Earth Day, with the planting of a chinkapin oak as the newest addition to the school’s arboretum. In May, the Becton, Dickinson and Company facility in North Canaan was evacuated after a hazmat scare. An employee identified a suspicious package, which resulted in a lock down and about 300 employees entered decontamination protocol, requiring them to leave clothing behind and shower before going home. The



PHOTO BY RILEY KLEIN

**Bunny McGuire cuts the ribbon on the park that bears her name, surrounded by loved ones.** FBI transported the package from the facility to the state laboratory in Rocky Hill and all testing for active agents came back negative. Memorial Day brought the community into town for a day of remembrance. The parade marched from Town Hall to the Doughboy statue, where residents gathered to pay respects to fallen members of the armed services. Town commissions approved the construction of a new Dunkin’ location across from the Stop & Shop plaza on Main Street. The proposal calls for a roughly 2,000-square-foot rectangular building with 16 parking spaces and a drive-thru. Once the new site opens, the existing Dunkin’ inside the nearby gas station will close. Railroad Days rolled into North Canaan in a new format this year. Full version online at lakevillejournal.com

OBITUARIES

Lana Audrey Anguin

AMENIA — Lana Audrey Anguin, 80, a lifelong area resident, died peacefully on Sunday, Dec. 28, 2025, at St. Vincent’s Medical Center in Bridgeport. Lana dedicated nearly twenty-five years of her life to the Town of Amenia where she was the secretary and administrative assistant to the Amenia Town Supervisor from 1988 to 2012. She also worked closely with the Town of Amenia Planning Board and the Zoning Board of Appeals overseeing project administration for many years. Lana also worked at the Wassaic Developmental Center in the late 60’s and early 70’s in the recreation department and she worked part time for the Red Hen Sign Co. in Amenia. Born Nov. 16, 1945, in Sharon, she was the daughter of the late Stanley and Edith (Brothers) Anguin. Lana was a graduate of Webutuck High School and attended Dutchess Community College. On Dec. 1, 1973, in Sharon, she married Heyward “Woody” Cary Cohen. Mr.

Cohen died on Aug. 1, 2014. For many years Lana was a Girl Scout Leader for Troop 19 in Amenia and taught arts and crafts during summer recess. She was a devoted caregiver to her mother and father for many years and was an avid animal lover. She adored cats and dogs and was a proud supporter of the Pet & Wildlife Fund. In her spare time, she enjoyed traveling abroad, theater performances, cooking and baking and watching television, a good cup of coffee, going out to restaurants and watching movies at The Moviehouse in Millerton with her daughter. She will be dearly missed by her loving family and many friends. Lana is survived by her daughter, Rebecca Anguin-Cohen and her companion George Kormendi of New York, New York and her sister, Donna Bavis of Rhinebeck, New York. Lana will be lovingly remembered by her niece, Jennifer Segelken and her husband Michael of Millerton, New York, her nieces



Elaine Whalen and Audrey Bavis and her nephew, Peter Bavis and her great nephews, Christopher and Tyler Segelken, and great nieces, Kirsten Mitchell and Emily Whalen. In addition to her parents and husband, Lana was also predeceased by her sister, Elaine Gahn of East Corinth, Vermont. Calling hours will be held on Friday, Jan. 9, 2026, from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. at the Scott D. Conklin Funeral Home, 37 Park Avenue, Millerton, NY 12546. A time of sharing memories and reflections of Lana’s life will begin at 6:30 p.m. at the funeral home. Pastor William Mayhew will officiate. Burial will take place privately on Saturday, Jan. 10, 2026, at Evergreen Cemetery in Pine Plains, NY. Arrangements have been entrusted to the Scott D. Conklin Funeral Home, 37 Park Avenue, Millerton, NY. Memorial contributions may be made to Dutchess County SPCA, 636 Violet Ave., Hyde Park, NY, 12538. To send a condolence to the family, flowers to the service or to plant a tree in Lana’s memory, please visit www.conklinfuneralhome.com

Charles Henry Staats

FALLS VILLAGE — Charles Henry Staats, of Falls Village, Connecticut, passed away on Dec. 22, 2025, at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center in New York City, with his beloved wife and children by his side. Charlie was born on May 16, 1939, in Ghent, New York, to Henry and Julia Staats. The eldest of six children, he naturally became someone others leaned on. He carried a quiet strength, steadiness, and calm that defined him throughout his life. Charlie devoted 32 years of his career to the State of Connecticut Department of Transportation, where he was known to most “Chuck”, before retiring and beginning a second chapter as a consulting engineer, working on road and bridge construction projects. Falls Village was his home for more than 50 years, and he cared deeply about the town and its people. He served as First Selectman and was a proud member of the Falls Village Volunteer Fire Department. His commitment to his community was further exemplified through his service in the Connecticut Army National Guard, where he earned the rank of Staff Sergeant. A quiet man with strong principles, Charlie’s integrity spoke louder than words. He treasured time with his family and close friends, finding his greatest happiness in the simple joy of being together on his back deck. He was generous in ways both seen and unseen, quietly helping others and putting their needs before his own. He approached everything he did with care, humility, and a strong sense of responsibility. Charlie is survived by his wife of 40 years, Carol Staats, his partner in life and love. He leaves behind his daughter, Catherine (Cady) Stone, her husband, Peter, and their children, Luke, Grace, and Nicholas, of Bronxville, New York; and his son, Major Charles (Chip) Staats, his wife, Christian, and their children, Charles (Owen) and Margaret (Maggie), of Auburn, Alabama. Being called Grandpa and Papa was one of Charlie’s greatest joys, and his love for his grandchildren was boundless. He is also survived by his sister, Nancy DeYoe, and her husband, Wayne; his sister, Judith Gregory; and his brother, John Staats, and his wife, Paula, along with many nieces and nephews. He was predeceased by his parents and by his sisters, Kathy Kennedy and Joan LeBrecque. Calling hours will be held on Friday, Jan. 9, 2026, from 4 to 8 p.m. at Newkirk-Palmer Funeral Home in North Canaan, Connecticut. Funeral services will take place on Saturday, Jan. 10, 2026, at 11 a.m. at St. Mary’s Catholic Church in Lakeville, Connecticut. Memorial contributions may be made in his memory to All Falls Village (allfallsvillage.org), P.O. Box 61, Falls Village, CT 06031, or TradesUp.org, P.O. Box 846, Kent, CT 06757. Charlie will be remembered for his kindness, unwavering integrity, and for always being there when it mattered most. His presence will be deeply missed, and his legacy will live on in the lives he touched every day.



BRIEFS

TLC offers winter courses

LAKEVILLE — Winter classes begin Jan. 12 at Taconic Learning Center, a nonprofit membership organization providing lifelong learning opportunities in the Northwest Corner. Annual membership dues of \$60 per person are fully tax-deductible. There are no other set fees. Individuals may sign up for any number of courses. Classes lasting two hours are held once a week at one of three venues. Full class list with days, times and instructors available online at lakevillejournal.com. Visit taconiclearningcenter.org for more info.

For more obituaries, see Page A5

AN ART CONTEST AND EXHIBIT AT INDIAN MOUNTAIN SCHOOL

Connection

SUBMISSIONS: Due by February 13, 2026 artshow@indianmountain.org 860.435.0871 x 185

RECEPTION: Friday, April 3, 2026, 6:00-8:00 PM IMS Student Center 211 Indian Mountain Rd., Lakeville, CT

www.Indianmountain.org/home/events

INVITATION TO BID: Sharon Housing Trust Single-Family Residence

160 Silver Lake Shore Rd Sharon, CT 06069

DESCRIPTION: The Sharon Housing Trust, an organization dedicated to increasing the availability of affordable housing in Sharon, CT, is soliciting bids to construct a new single-family residence at 160 Silver Lake Shore Rd. The scope of work includes: Demolition of an existing cottage Construction of the new building Drilling a well and connecting to existing septic tank Installation of a gravel driveway and parking area Grading the site for drainage

The proposed house is an approximately 1,350 square-foot, 2-story stick-framed structure with truss roof and poured concrete crawl-space foundation. The house site is a pre-existing, nonconforming lot in the RR zone, but building in the existing footprint will be allowed; the lot is located in the Wetlands Upland Review area.

Budget is an important consideration for this project. The attached scope of work describes materials and systems that have been selected to keep construction straightforward and cost-effective, and to avoid delays during construction.

We are hoping to begin construction by April 1, 2026, with an estimated completion date of December 31, 2026. We are accepting bids that are fixed price, with limited allowance for time and materials. Information on the full scope of work is available. We look forward to reviewing your proposal.

SITE VISITS: January 12-19, 2026 QUESTIONS DUE: January 19, 2026 BID DUE: February 13, 2026 ANTICIPATED START DATE: April 1, 2026 ITB CONTACT: Christine Gray, AIA christine@cgarch.com

ADVERTISEMENT



HVA

Continued from Page A1

in helping form the alliance and for seeing an opportunity to expand the protection of Massachusetts farmland by including two large, ecologically significant parcels just over the state line in Connecticut.

Orlando was quick to deflect praise.

“This is about all the volunteers and the committees of those eight organizations,” she said. “There is no way that I could have done what I did without these partners. It is really everybody’s time, energy and effort — and their networking — that makes all of this possible.”

Bogle and the Salisbury parcels

Equally essential to the project’s success, HVA leaders said, was the work of Bogle, who helped bring together private donors and shepherd critical land deals in Salisbury at a pivotal moment.

Bogle was honored for his role in securing 560 acres of vulnerable and highly visible properties — Tom’s Hill and Miles Mountain — that anchor the Connecticut side of the Cooper Hill landscape.

Leaders of the Salisbury Association Land Trust said Bogle’s behind-the-scenes work helped make the project feasible at a critical mo-

Tom’s Hill, nearly 300 acres overlooking East Twin Lake, is now permanently protected. Miles Mountain, another key parcel, is slated for conservation ownership in 2026.

ment, as development pressure mounted and funding timelines tightened.

“Grant understood both the urgency and the opportunity,” said Lisa Pastore, executive director of the Salisbury Association Land Trust, which helped secure public and private funding for the Tom’s Hill acquisition. “By bringing private donors to the table early, he helped create the momentum that allowed public and philanthropic funding to follow,” she said.

Working alongside two groups of private donors, Bogle helped assemble pledges and negotiate purchases while the Salisbury Association Land Trust pursued state, federal and additional private funding.

Tom’s Hill, nearly 300 acres overlooking East Twin Lake, is now permanently protected. Miles Mountain, another key parcel, is slated for conservation ownership in 2026.

For Bogle, the impact goes well beyond individual properties.

“What makes Tom’s Hill and Miles Mountain so important is how visible they are to the community,” Bogle said. “When people look up and know that land is protected — not just for today, but permanently — it changes how you think about Salisbury and its future.”

“I think it is tremendous for the watershed,” he said. “There’s a lot more that we are thinking about and able to do now, and it wouldn’t have happened without the Shef-

field Land Trust and HVA.”

HVA Executive Director Tim Abbott said Bogle’s work exemplified the spirit of the Follow the Forest initiative, which seeks to protect a continuous woodland corridor stretching from the Housatonic Valley through eastern New York and north to Vermont and Canada.

“Although HVA is defined by a watershed, we are not limited by it,” Abbott said. “We are also interested in all the organizations we work with who care deeply about helping achieve great, lasting conservation.”

The Follow the Forest collaborative now includes more than 50 organizations working across municipal

and state boundaries — an approach that HVA leaders say is increasingly critical as development pressure and climate change reshape the region.

Honoring a lifetime of leadership

Also recognized during the evening was Rebecca Neary, president of the Warren Land Trust and a longtime HVA board member, who received the Charles Downing Lay Environmental Leadership Award.

Named for HVA’s founder, the award honors an individual whose influence on conservation in the region is both broad and enduring.

“It’s a lifetime achievement superhero award,”

Abbott said, “and Rebecca Neary, an indomitable champion of community-based and strategic land conservation, embodies that spirit and depth of impact.”

Neary said HVA’s emphasis on collaboration has reshaped how local land trusts approach their work.

“HVA has been instrumental in getting all of us to think more collaboratively with one another because we are in service of the same mission,” she said. “That is HVA’s overarching vision, and what it works diligently with its incredible team to achieve. It’s my great honor to be a part of that organization and to serve this incredible cause.”

HYDRILLA

Continued from Page A1

A strategic pivot in 2025: earlier, sustained, whole-bay dosing

Drawing on lessons from earlier seasons, TLA leaders and limnologists adjusted their approach in 2025. Instead of reactive, site-by-site responses, the association began the season with a planned, sustained dosing of the northeast cove of East Twin Lake and the lake’s full littoral zone beginning in late May, maintaining low, permitted concentrations of the systemic herbicide fluoridone throughout the growing season.

Operationally the work involved close tracking of application tracks, repeated water sampling to confirm target concentrations, and diver-assisted surveys in deeper water to find any remaining pockets.

The payoff: hydrilla faded in 2025

By mid-summer and into early August, field surveys and association updates reported a dramatic decline in visible hydrilla within the lake.

At the TLA’s annual August meeting, association leaders described the season as “the first good news we’ve had in three years,” while cautioning that the victory is fragile and requires continued monitoring and rapid response to any new fragments or regrowth.

At the annual meeting, it was announced that the final two planned applications of the herbicide Sonar would not be needed. The slow-release pellets currently in the water are expected to remain effective, reaching the target duration of 120 days.

TLA officials reported that East Twin Lake is closer than ever to achieving a functional eradication of the invasive plant infestations.

They emphasized, how-



PHOTO BY DEBRA A. ALEKSINAS

A boater positioned his boat as he prepared to launch from O’Hara’s Landing at East Twin Lake this past summer in the area where hydrilla was first discovered in 2023.

ever, that this progress has been made possible through continued funding, permitting, and close coordination with state partners. The success of this effort could also provide valuable insights for addressing similar challenges in other lakes affected by the Connecticut River strain.

Why this year’s approach mattered

Several elements distinguished the 2025 season: an earlier start to herbicide applications, sustained low-level dosing, frequent monitoring, and data-driven coordination among the TLA, its limnologist, state and federal agencies, and contractors.

The payoff came at a price: three years of repeated interventions had driven lake management expenses sharply higher, and the 2025 season required continued fundraising and justification to town and state stakeholders.

The wider use of herbicides in waterways remains controversial in some quarters, and TLA officials stressed that the treatments used in East Twin were done under state permits with scientific oversight — and that results would be shared cautiously as case studies for other affected lakes.

What comes next

TLA and partners made clear the 2025 results are cause for cautious optimism, not celebration.

The next steps include diver-assisted surveys of deepwater areas to check for any surviving turions or isolated plants; continued low-level surveillance and rapid spot treatment to snuff out any reappearance and sharing methodologies, and monitoring data with neighboring lake groups and state programs to refine best practices for tackling the Connecticut River strain.

The lake association’s Fall newsletter reported that while treatment costs are expected to be moderate in 2026, “the heightened level of surveillance will continue.” The TLA predicted \$400,000 will be spent on lake management next year.

By the end of 2025, what began as an emergency discovery in East Twin in 2023 had evolved into a test case for a new, more intentional treatment model. The TLA and its partners achieved the first season in which hydrilla substantially receded in the lake — a breakthrough that shows the combination of early action, sustained dosing and disciplined monitoring can work against this particularly aggressive strain.

That success, however, comes with an explicit rider: vigilance, funding and science-backed management must continue if the Twin Lakes are to remain hydrilla-free.

Timeline: The path to hydrilla’s downfall

2023

Suspicious aquatic growth is observed in East Twin near the marina. Samples are taken and sent for analysis amid growing concern from lake users.

Hydrilla is formally confirmed in East Twin Lake and identified as the aggressive Connecticut River strain. Emergency response begins: diver surveys, hand harvesting, fragment barriers and initial herbicide treatments.

Officials warn eradication will require a multi-year effort.

2024

Continued monitoring and spot treatment limits spread but fails to eliminate hydrilla. The plant reappears in patches deeper into the lake, driving up management costs and reinforcing concerns that piecemeal treatments are insufficient.

2025

Twin Lakes Association adopts a new strategy: early season, sustained fluoridone treatment of the lake. Herbicide levels are carefully maintained within state approved limits throughout the growing season.

Surveys show dramatic reduction in hydrilla – the first year the invasive plant fails to rebound since its discovery.

HIKER

Continued from Page A1

lies on the south slope of Mount Frissell at the border with Massachusetts.)

It was Blumert’s first hike up Bear in several years. As he gazed at the Twin Lakes shimmering below, he said to himself, “I love this mountain. I’m going to do this once a week.”

He grew to love the hike so much that after a year he doubled it to twice a week. Since then, Blumert has stuck to his weekly ritual with only occasional pauses for out-of-state trips or illness, along with one 13-week stretch when a pulled ligament in his pelvis planted him on the couch.

He knows the 2.9-mile route intimately, from the Undermountain trailhead off Route 41 to the intersection with the Appalachian Trail and on to the summit. In his sojourns, he has seen porcupines, deer, a timber rattler, a pair of copulating copperheads (“Or maybe they were milk snakes; I didn’t interrupt them to find out”), owls and redtail hawks — yet not a single bear.

Soon after he began hiking Bear regularly, Blumert made another vow: He would be cheerful and friendly to every hiker he met on the mountain. “I’ve developed trail friendships with 20 to 30 people,” he said.

One of them is Collinsville resident Trish Walter, who became a regular hiking

buddy and has now climbed the mountain with Blumert about 70 times over the past five years.

Walter and her friend, Linda Huebner, of Halifax, Vermont, joined Blumert for his milestone hike on New Year’s Day. With 4 inches of snow having fallen the night before, they set off shortly after noon and reached the top just before 3 p.m. The trek back down took half that time.

Aside from the blustery wind approaching the summit, they enjoyed a spectacular day of bright sunshine and blue skies.

The weather hasn’t always been so cooperative. Blumert was once nearly struck by lightning on the upper ridge. And in September, he hiked down in what he described as a tornado.

“It came right down Undermountain Trail,” he noted. “Trees were swishing back and forth. Branches were flying everywhere. There was grape-sized hail. It was scary.”

Now that he has reached his goal, Blumert plans to cut back to one hike of Bear each week. That will free time for other climbs in the area, a recumbent bicycle he has bought, and yet another mountaineering goal.

“I want to complete the 4,000-footers in New Hampshire,” Blumert said. “There are 48 of them, and I’ve done 23.”

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wassaicproject.org

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# COMPASS

Your Guide to Tri-State Arts, Entertainment & Lifestyle

2025 RECAP: NATALIA ZUKERMAN

## Art and entertainment in 2025

In 2025, the pages of Compass tracked the steady hum of creativity across the Northwest Corner. Here's a look at some of the highlights that shaped the year.

### ART

The Hotchkiss School marked 50 years of co-education with The Art of Joy Brown, a sweeping retrospective honoring the internationally celebrated sculptor. Opening Feb. 22 in the Tremaine Art Gallery, the exhibition traced Brown's five-decade journey from her early pottery training in Japan to the large-scale bronze figures now installed around the world — and newly on the Hotchkiss campus.

Millbrook School hosted the first-ever Firefly student artist showcase in February, bringing together young artists and bird enthusiasts from schools across New York and Connecticut.

The David M. Hunt Library's Art Wall continued to feature local artists, including Jon Kopita, who displayed a decade of his meticulous, repetitive hand-let-tering exploring order and identity.

A collaboration between The Nutmeg Fudge Company, artist Gerald Incandela, and Saint John Paul the Great Academy resulted in a vibrant student-designed mural in Torrington.

Great Barrington marked a major milestone this year with the unveiling of a life-sized bronze sculpture of W.E.B. Du Bois in front of the Mason Public Library. Created by National Sculpture Society honoree Richard Blake, the piece anchors a redesigned public plaza.

The Wassaic Project received a \$100,000 multi-year operating



PHOTO BY ALY MORRISSEY

The cast of 'Once Upon a Mattress' at Sharon Playhouse.



PHOTO BY CHRISTINE BATES

Martha Stewart at Trade Secrets.



PHOTO PROVIDED

Sculptor Richard Blake in his studio at work on his sculpture of W.E.B. Du Bois.

grant from Foundations for Community Health and Amy Wynn stepped down Oct. 31 as the first executive director of the American Mural Project (AMP) in Winsted.

### BOOKS

We welcomed new freelance writers Laurie Fendrich and Olivia Prager who covered the region's robust literary scene. Highlights included Ann Temkin at Cornwall Library; Ruth Franklin at Congregation Beth David; Elias Weiss Friedman (AKA "The Dogist") at Troutbeck; Gwen Strauss at the White Hart Speaker Series; and the return of the Haystack Book Festival in Norfolk. Books & Blooms celebrated its tenth anniversary in June with a two-day celebration of gardens, art and the rural beauty of Cornwall.

### FILM

The Triplex in Great Barrington hosted screenings, festivals and conversations throughout the year, from a Bob

Dylan biopic talkback with Seth Rogovoy to student screenings of "Selma," benefit events and the launch of the Queer Cinema Club. The Stissing Center expanded film programming with a new projector and a short-film festival featuring local artists and the Moviehouse in Millerton continued its incredible programming.

Legendary civil rights activist Dolores Huerta sat down with The Journal in October in advance of the screening of "Dolores" in Norfolk, the documentary by Peter Bratt and executive producer Carlos Santana that presents an unflinching portrait of a woman whose voice, body and will shaped the political terrain of the United States.

### MUSIC

From brass bands and local musicians at street fairs and green spaces to classical and chamber

music series presented by organizations from Music Mountain to Tanglewood, music was a staple of the Compass calendar.

The Twelve Moons Coffeehouse in Falls Village continues its once-a-month series that consists of a robust open mic followed by a featured performer.

The American Mural Project's live music and Happy Hour Piano Series was also a monthly anchor that featured a multitude of styles of music.

The Indigo Room, a new performance space connected to The Mahaiwe in Great Barrington, opened in the beautifully

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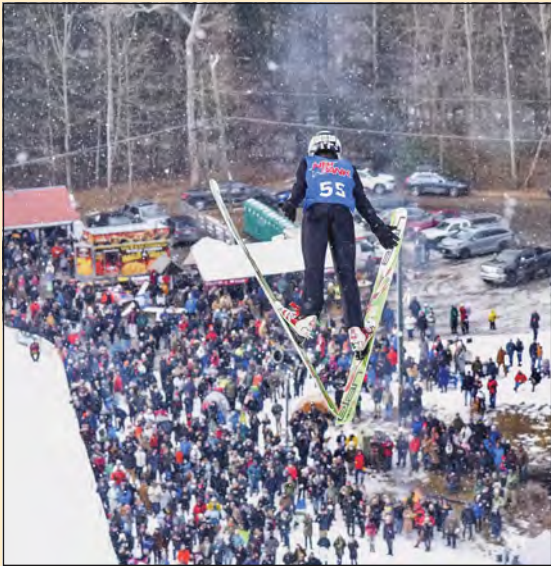


PHOTO BY LANS CHRISTENSEN

Jumpfest 2025

COMMUNITY:  
NATALIA ZUKERMAN

## Eat your way to Jumpfest's 100th anniversary

There's just one month until Jumpfest's 100th anniversary weekend of ski jumping in February, and the celebration is already underway. For the first time, Jumpfest organizers have launched a community restaurant month as part of the milestone event, running from Jan. 4 through Feb. 4, inviting locals and visitors alike to dine around town in the lead-up to the historic jumps.

The inaugural promotion includes 42 participating restaurants across the Northwest Corner, ranging from cafés to pubs. Participating spots include The White Hart Inn, Black Rabbit Bar & Grille, Roma's Pizza, Sweet William's Coffee Shop, The Boathouse, and The Woodland, among many others.

Diners can take part by downloading an entry form at [jumpfest.org/100/one-month-to-the-jumps](http://jumpfest.org/100/one-month-to-the-jumps) or picking one up at participating eateries. To be eligible to win, participants must visit as many participating restaurants as possible during the month-long promotion. The five diners who visit the most restaurants will each receive a free ticket to Jumpfest 2026, celebrating the event's 100th year of ski jumping. Completed entry forms must be submitted by 4 p.m. on Feb. 4 at the Salisbury General Store on Main Street, with winners announced the following day.

The all-volunteer Salisbury Winter Sports Association (SWSA) has hosted ski jumping on Satre Hill in Salisbury since the 1920s, keeping alive one of the few Eastern U.S. ski jump venues and introducing generations to the sport.

So grab your appetite and eat your way to the jumps — no skis required.



## SPRING 2026 CLASSES

youth classes begin January 12th

ages 3-18 and adult

- BALLET
- JAZZ
- TAP
- CONTEMPORARY
- MUSICAL THEATER
- NINJA MOVES
- ADULT CLASSES

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Serving North Canaan, CT, Sheffield and South County, MA







COMPASS



PHOTO BY DEE SALOMON

The unmistakable V-shape of a beaver-hewn tree trunk.

# Why beavers matter

Long before we moved to Litchfield County, there had been a flood on the property caused by the breakup of a beaver dam miles away from the house, near the top of the state forest on Sharon Mountain. There, beavers have a pond whose dam usually slows the run of a stream that journeys down the mountain, under Route 7, through our property and empties into the Housatonic River. Who knows what other damage the water did on its way down from the broken dam, but the resulting flooding left a watermark about knee-high on the inside of our old cottage, now painted over.

What do beavers have to do with ungardening? At its core, ungardening is about restoring native habitats and increasing the diversity of native plants and animals in an ecosystem — aka biodiversity — which we must accomplish because, frankly, our lives depend on it.

For all their practical nuisance to humans, beavers are central to maintaining ecosystems across a large portion of the U.S. They are considered a keystone species: As with the keystone in an arch, an ecosystem will fall apart without its support. In the 18th and 19th centuries, beavers were killed nearly to extinction by trappers who sold their fur. Their return is helping to repair the areas surrounding their habitats. The homes they cleverly engineer filter pollutants, boost plant and animal biodiversity and create resilience to climate change — and they do this quickly.

Most negative human experiences with beavers result from blocked culverts and dammed streams that create the beavers' ideal pool-like environment. This causes flooding upstream of the blockage and drought downstream.

"We need to find ways to live with beavers," said Sandy Carlson, a teacher and poet who recently completed the Beaver Institute's BeaverCorps Wetland Professional



training in Southampton, Massachusetts.

"When beavers hear the trickle of water flowing out from a pond or stream, it triggers their instinct to block this release by building a dam. This insight led to a rather low-tech innovation that has allowed beavers and humans to more happily coexist. Cleverly called the Beaver Deceiver, the device lowers the water level of the pond without triggering the beavers' water-trickle instinct."

The Beaver Deceiver is a 6-foot-diameter wire mesh cage protecting one open side of a PVC pipe. It is installed in the deepest part of the pond, with the pipe running over the beaver dam — where it can be camouflaged — and into the water on the other side. Water is drawn out of the pond, lowering the water level upstream while maintaining flow downstream.

Carlson has apprenticed with Diane Honer of Beaver & Wildlife Solutions, based in Chester, Connecticut, performing site assessments and installing pond-leveler devices so beavers and humans can coexist. "People are happy because the water level is low, and the beaver thinks the water level is fine," she said.

Last year, a family of beavers moved in nearby, building a low-profile home against the side of a large tree trunk that had fallen into a rela-

tively deep part of the Housatonic. This created a small, pond-like area on the downriver side of the trunk.

I wasn't aware of these creatures until one day, while walking along the river, I stopped in my tracks. Like one of those puzzles where you're meant to spot the differences between two images, something was missing. A weeping willow we had planted a decade earlier, flourishing on the riverbank, had disappeared from view. Up close, the unmistakable V-shape of a beaver-hewn trunk was almost cartoonlike — yet not at all funny. That tree was one of the few non-native species we planted, and I had imagined it fulfilling the romantic "leaf cascade over the water" look willows do so well.

My son told me beavers seek out willow for its salicylic acid content — the active ingredient in aspirin. I imagine they had a drug-addled willow fest at our expense.

The solution to this particular beaver problem is even more low-tech than the Beaver Deceiver: installing wire mesh or a plastic cage around trees you want to protect from beaver teeth. It also helps to know which woods beavers prefer. Their favorites include aspen, poplar, willow, alder, birch and maple. Protect those first, before hardwoods and conifers.

Let's welcome the beaver and its ecosystem-restoration superpowers.

Dee Salomon 'ungardens' in Litchfield County.

# TRI-CORNER CALENDAR

Items are printed as space permits. Submit calendar items to editor@lakevillejournal.com

## JANUARY 9

### The Color of Growth

Millbrook Library, 3 Friendly Lane, Millbrook, N.Y.

Jan. 9 to Feb. 28.

An exhibition featuring Irja Bodén, JoAnne Lobotsky, Patrick Neal and Colin O'Con, exploring nature and landscape as sites of ongoing transformation through color, abstraction and memory.

Opening reception: Friday, Jan. 9, 6 to 8 p.m.

Artist talk: Saturday, Feb. 21, 2 p.m.

## JANUARY 10

### Hart Preserve Hike

Hart Preserve, towards the end of Cherry Hill Road, Cornwall, Conn.

Cornwall Conservation Trust will host a hike of Hart Preserve Saturday, Jan. 10, at 10 a.m. led by Matt Petrillo and Terry Burke. This is a 0.75 mile walk through fields, meadows and woods with a moderate incline to stunning view of the Housatonic River Valley. Possible critter tracking ID included.

### Family Day with White Memorial Conservation Center

American Mural Project, 90 Whiting St., Winsted, Conn.

11 a.m. to 2 p.m., Cost: Free.

AMP's monthly Family Day offers hands-on activities for children of all ages, including games, story time, art projects and interactive learning. Highlights include story time and crafts with Carol Parent of Beardsley Library and a Sensational Study program with White Memorial Conservation Center, featuring a barred owl and a Honduran milk snake. Teen Art Studio runs concurrently.

### Staged Reading: Roman Fever

Ghent Playhouse, 6 Town Hall Place, Ghent, N.Y.

Jan. 10 at 4 p.m.; Jan. 11 at 2 p.m.

Tickets: \$25; proceeds benefit Columbia County EMS/Education

The Ghent Playhouse presents a staged reading of Edith Wharton's short story "Roman Fever," exploring friendship, rivalry and long-held secrets. Performances are followed by a cocoa and cookie buffet. Advance tickets suggested at ghentplayhouse.org.

## Smoke Signals in Sunlight

Kenise Barnes Fine Art, 7 Fulling Lane, Kent, Conn.

Hours: Thurs. to Sat. 11 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., Sun. noon to 4 p.m. and by appoint.

Kenise Barnes Fine Art is pleased to announce Smoke Signals in Sunlight, a two-person exhibition featuring new work by Hudson Valley-based artists Susan English and Laura Moriarty. The exhibition brings together two artists whose practices are deeply rooted in material exploration, natural processes, and the poetics of landscape—each approaching abstraction through distinct yet resonant vocabularies.

Public reception with the artists Jan. 10 from 4 to 6 p.m. Exhibit runs through Feb. 8.

### Book Signing with Author Laurel Karsyn

Whistle Pig Books, 62 Main St., North Canaan, Conn.

Whistle Pig Books welcomes fantasy author Laurel Karsyn for a book signing on Saturday, Jan. 10, 2026, from noon to 3 p.m. at 62 Main St., North Canaan. Karsyn will be signing copies of her novel *The Witching Hour*, a paranormal romance about a young man who uncovers a hidden line of witches in the mysterious town of Ember Falls. Copies of the book will be available for purchase. For more information, visit [whistlepigbooks.com](http://whistlepigbooks.com).

### Current Fiction Book Group with Claudia Cayne

Scoville Memorial Library, 38 Main St., Salisbury, Conn. [scovillelibrary.org](http://scovillelibrary.org)

Join Claudia Cayne on Saturday, Jan. 10, 4 to 5 p.m., for a lively and informal discussion of PEARL by Sian Hughes: "an exceptional debut novel," "gorgeous," "a ghost story, a folk story, a story of loss." All are welcome. Registration is not required. Copies of PEARL are available for loan at the Scoville Library. Learn more at [scovillelibrary.libcal.com/event/15140698](http://scovillelibrary.libcal.com/event/15140698).

## JANUARY 11

### Author Talk: Women of 18th-Century Sheffield

Community Room, Bushnell-Sage Library, 48 Main St., Sheffield, Mass.

2:30 p.m. Free.

The Friends of the Bushnell-Sage Library present a lecture by journalist, author and historian Dr. Carole

Owens, the first in a four-part series marking the 250th anniversary of the American Revolution. Owens will discuss notable 18th-century women of Sheffield, including Lavina Rigby Dean Fisk.

## JANUARY 15

### Monotype Printing Workshop

David M. Hunt Library, 63 Main St., Falls Village, Conn. [huntlibrary.org](http://huntlibrary.org)

2 to 4 p.m.

The David M. Hunt Library will host a Monotype Printing Workshop with Gail O'Donnell & Rika Laser.

Participants will experiment with a variety of materials and printmaking techniques to create unique prints on paper by hand and using a small etching press. You will learn to use various printmaking plates by applying water-based inks, crayons and stencils to build rich textures and layers. All levels welcome! This workshop is limited to 10 participants. Please register here: [forms.gle/VFEqa4fJWr9EJb36](https://forms.gle/VFEqa4fJWr9EJb36)

### Genre Fiction Book Club

Scoville Memorial Library, 38 Main St., Salisbury, Conn. [scovillelibrary.org](http://scovillelibrary.org)

Come join us on Thursday, Jan. 15, 6:30 to 7:30 p.m., if you enjoy reading and discussing fantasy / romantasy / romance / mystery / thrillers / YA / sci-fi. This new book club offers a chance to enjoy conversations, snacks, and book recommendations. This month's book is "HEARTWOOD" by Amity Gaige. Registration is appreciated. Learn more at [www.scovillelibrary.org/event/genre-fiction-book-club-384](http://www.scovillelibrary.org/event/genre-fiction-book-club-384)

## JANUARY 16

### Opening Reception for the Salisbury Association Exhibit SWSA's First 100 Years

Academy Building, Main St., Salisbury, Conn.

Exhibit hours Tuesdays-Saturdays (Jan. 17- Feb 5) 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. with extended hours during Jumpfest posted on [Salisburyassociation.org](http://Salisburyassociation.org).

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Our Towns

Eric Epstein steps into first selectman role in Kent

By Christian Murray

KENT — Eric Epstein, a lifelong Kent resident and veteran volunteer firefighter, was elected unopposed this fall as the town's first selectman, stepping into the role for the first time with deep local roots.

Epstein, a 51-year-old Democrat, took over from Marty Lindenmayer in November, after Lindenmayer chose not to seek re-election after being in office for just one term.

Born and raised in Kent, Epstein attended Kent Center School and Housatonic Valley Regional High School before earning an associate degree in business administration from SUNY Cobleskill.



After college, he returned to Kent to begin a career in sales — first at the local Chevrolet dealership, then briefly in New Milford — before joining Gowans-Knight Company, a Watertown-based fire apparatus manufacturer. Epstein continues to work part-time in sales for the company.

Public service, Epstein said, “is in my blood.” He joined the Kent Volunteer Fire Department at age 18 and has served for more than 30 years, including two stints as chief totaling 13 years. He remains an active volunteer firefighter. He has also served the town in emergency management, a volunteer position responsible for coordinating municipal responses to large-scale emergencies.

Epstein’s family history in town government and local affairs runs deep. His mother, Ruth Epstein, served two terms as Kent’s first selectman, and his father was principal of Kent Center School for three decades. Today, Epstein and his wife, MaryEllen, are raising their children, Ella, 11, and Evan, 9, in Kent; both attend Kent Center School.

Although new to elected office, Epstein is not new to municipal operations. His years working with town officials through the fire department and emergency management has provided him with regular exposure to budgeting, coordination and intergovernmental planning.

When the Democratic Town Committee approached him this summer

about running for first selectman, he said the timing finally felt right.

“I care deeply about this community and believe in its potential,” Epstein said. “We face real challenges, and I want to bring thoughtful, transparent leadership that puts people first.”

Among those challenges, Epstein points first to affordability. With housing costs rising, he said, young families and workers are increasingly priced out, contributing to declining school enrollment. He supports the Kent Affordable Housing initiative’s newly approved 13-unit rental project and said expanding housing options will be critical to the town’s long-term vitality.

Epstein takes office ahead of budget season, which involves capital planning and a fiscal year budget to be finalized ahead of a May town vote. He said the learning curve is steep, but emphasized that close collaboration with the Board of Finance and department heads will be essential.

Other priorities include addressing the future of the town-owned Swift House—an unused, non-ADA-compliant historic property; rehabilitating the town’s spring-fed swimming pond; advancing road and sidewalk projects; and expanding waste-reduction efforts at the transfer station. Kent recently received a state grant to install an on-site composter, allowing food scraps to be processed locally and the finished compost returned to residents for gardens.

Epstein is also working with state officials on river access and safety issues that surfaced last summer, and with neighboring towns on regional concerns ranging from emergency medical services to waste management. He said early meetings with other Northwest Corner first selectmen have been helpful in sharing strategies on common problems.

Although he ran unopposed, Epstein said he views the office as a significant responsibility and does not take the mandate lightly.

“I’ll listen closely to residents’ concerns, learn from their experiences, and engage in open, respectful dialogue,” he said, prior to taking office.

By Christian Murray

NORTH CANAAN — Jesse Bunce’s victory for first selectman was as narrow as elections get in town politics: a two-vote margin that required a recount and ushered in a transition period that, by Bunce’s own description, “has not been perfect.”

Bunce, 38, assumed the town’s top job after only a few years in local government and following a period of friction on the Board of Selectmen, where he served alongside former First Selectman Brian Ohler, whom he narrowly defeated and who remains on the board.

Asked whether he was surprised he beat Ohler, Bunce said he expected a close finish. “I put in a lot of work in the campaign, so I did think the numbers were going to be close,” he said. “I didn’t know where it was gonna go, though, honestly.” He added that the result wasn’t really an upset because “it was just so close.”

Now, Bunce is framing his first term as a reset — a push to reduce divisions, rebuild trust and keep the town focused on practical needs.

“That’s my hope,” he said when asked about North Canaan’s next chapter, adding that working together is essential in a town with limited resources.

“We don’t have the tax base like some of our surrounding towns, but we do have a lot of people willing to volunteer, come together and get things done,” he said. “And I feel that’s our key to success.”

Bunce grew up in North Canaan and went through local schools before attending Oliver Wolcott Technical High School in Torrington. He lives in town with his wife, Kim, and two young boys. A third child is due in late January.

He began working for an electrical company while still in high school and stayed in the trade after graduating, shifting careers after the 2008 economic downturn.

“I had an excavation landscape business that I would do on the weekends and at night. So I just went on to that,” he said.

The excavation business dates back to his grandfather, who moved to North Canaan from Massachusetts. “My grandfather actually started it in 1964,” Bunce said, noting

ing that he later bought out his father.

Bunce said that experience will help him fulfill his priorities at Town Hall, particularly improving infrastructure, maintaining and pricing equipment, and estimating costs for grant applications.

“That’s definitely one of my strong suits coming in [as first selectman] — with road work, infrastructure and equipment,” he said.

His path into politics began with town boards, starting as a zoning alternate after navigating the process himself. “I came and had to go through a few meetings, so I saw the process of it and wanted to get involved,” he said.

Bunce was elected to the Board of Selectmen for the first time a little over two years ago with the endorsement of the Democratic Town Committee, despite being a Republican. He said he had established a strong working relationship with the committee prior to its backing and emphasized that party labels matter little in the day-to-day work of local government.

The DTC also supported him in the first selectman

race.

“We need to think what’s best for the town [not party affiliation] and try and move forward with that.”

That message of what’s best for the town was tested early, with a bumpy transition that included technology problems and operational delays, including disruptions tied to the town’s online tools and a delayed payroll at the elementary school.

At his first Board of Selectmen meeting as first selectman in December, Bunce acknowledged “early bumps,” telling residents, “This process has not been perfect. We are working through it all.”

Ohler, who sat along side him at the meeting, pledged cooperation. “You have my assurance. I will give you my full support when it is of benefit to the town,” he said, adding that discussions “will be professional” and “based on substance, not rhetoric.”

Bunce said steady communication with staff, department heads and residents will be key. He plans to be in Town Hall frequently, aiming for Mondays in the office “all day” and shorter visits throughout the week.

Asked how he would mea-

sure success when his term ends in two years, Bunce said, “If the town is flowing well, if we can achieve some of these grants... if our board is working well together.”

His policy priorities focus on improving town assets and maintaining existing infrastructure.

He said the town pool is “in really bad shape” and described plans to seek a state STEAP (Small Town Economic Assistance Program) grant to refurbish the pool house, improve accessibility and refresh athletic facilities, with construction possible in “summer of 2026.”

He also cited road and bridge repairs, saying “a lot of our roads have been neglected over the years,” and pointed to needed work on West Main Street.

Beyond infrastructure, Bunce said he wants to explore more programs for children and working families, including expanded after-school athletics.

He said property taxes are high and affordability is a concern, reinforcing his goal of keeping costs down and reducing long-term expenses.

Bunce said progress will depend on collective effort.

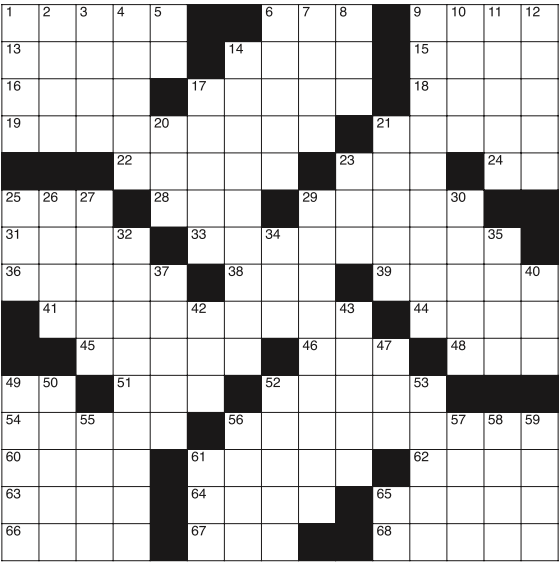
“I think everybody wants to be a part of making the town better,” he said.



Brain Teasers

CLUES ACROSS

- 1. Lakes
- 6. Electromotive force
- 9. Invests in little enterprises
- 13. Longtime Utah Jazz coach
- 14. Small sailboat
- 15. Actor Idris
- 16. Mild yellow Dutch cheese made in balls
- 17. System that detects objects under water
- 18. Harsh, grating noise
- 19. Steward
- 21. A fencing sword
- 22. Infections
- 23. Actress Ryan
- 24. Sodium
- 25. Swedish castle
- 28. A lump of slime
- 29. African antelope
- 31. Insurance providers
- 33. Choosy
- 36. Ringworm
- 38. Unpolished
- 39. Drenches
- 41. Pant style
- 44. Son of Noah
- 45. Spiritual being
- 46. Upton Sinclair novel
- 48. Journalist Tarbell
- 49. Popular sports highlight show
- 51. Born of
- 52. Rich tapestry
- 54. S. China seaport
- 56. State of being unclothed
- 60. Surrounded by
- 61. Residue
- 62. Away from wind
- 63. Dried-up
- 64. Visionary
- 65. A very large body of water
- 66. Garden tools
- 67. Screen type
- 68. Ancient Scandinavian poet



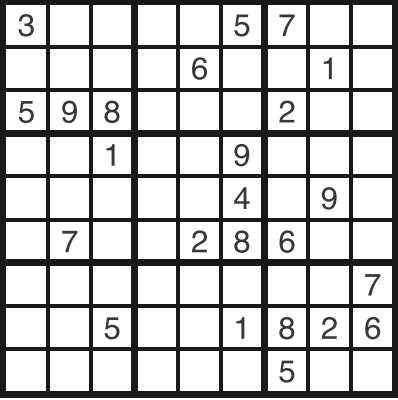
- 12. “It’s a Wonderful Life” director
- 14. Poisonous perennial plant
- 17. 18-year astronomical period
- 20. Clothes
- 21. Places to sit
- 23. Family of regulator genes
- 25. New York ballplayer
- 26. Impressive in size or scope
- 27. Jacques \_\_, French biologist
- 29. One from the Big Apple
- 30. Genus of woolly lemurs
- 32. Songs to one’s beloved
- 34. Indigenous person of N.E. Thailand
- 35. Supplemented with difficulty
- 37. Farewell
- 40. Investment account (abbr.)
- 42. One from Utah
- 43. Begets
- 47. A male child

- 49. Break apart
- 50. Brief appearance
- 52. Partner to “oohed”
- 53. A light informal meal
- 55. Fabric with smooth, shiny surface
- 56. One billionth of a second
- 57. Ancient Italian-Greek colony
- 58. Close tightly
- 59. Mail out

December 25 Solution

U	L	A	N	C	O	C	O	S	U	M	B	O
N	A	R	A	W	R	A	P	S	L	O	O	P
A	R	A	M	M	A	N	E	T	N	A	N	A
U	D	D	E	R	T	O	R	C	A	B	A	L
M	A	S	E	R	E	N	A	D	E	S		
M	A	S	D	A	D	T	A	O	C	A	P	
U	N	I	T	E	D	S	I	B	B	O	G	
L	I	R	A	S	M	A	C	S	O	L	A	R
C	L	U	B	G	E	E	C	A	B	A	N	A
T	S	P	C	U	D	F	L	U	G	S	A	N
U	S	N	E	A	C	O	L	S	A	B	E	R
G	H	E	G	C	A	R	A	T	I	B	A	R
L	E	N	O	I	R	A	T	E	I	B	I	S
I	D	E	S	D	E	L	E	D	N	E	C	K

Sudoku



December 25 Solution

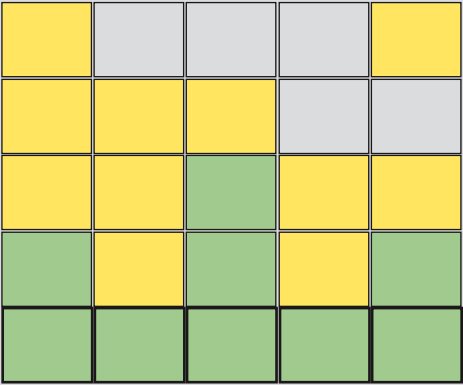
2	9	8	5	7	3	4	6	1
5	1	3	4	6	8	7	2	9
7	6	4	9	1	2	3	5	8
9	8	2	1	3	6	5	7	4
1	4	7	2	8	5	6	9	3
6	3	5	7	9	4	1	8	2
4	5	6	8	2	1	9	3	7
3	2	9	6	4	7	8	1	5
8	7	1	3	5	9	2	4	6

Last week's WotW

C	H	A	I	R
S	P	E	A	K
S	A	L	O	N
S	A	U	N	A
S	A	N	T	A

Word of the Week

Hints relate to adjacent five-letter words. Solve to reveal correct letters. Green tiles indicate correctly placed letters in the Word of the Week. Yellow tiles indicate a correct letter in the wrong place. Uncolored tiles indicate letters that do not appear in the WotW.



- 1. Blacksmith's striking block
- 2. Running total, score marks
- 3. Opposite of “most”
- 4. Day-old bagels
- 5. 2026 brings a clean \_\_\_\_\_



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Sports



PHOTOS BY RILEY KLEIN

Above, Housatonic Valley Regional High School's girls lacrosse team poses with the runner-up trophy following the league championship game against Watertown High School. Below, from left, Lainey Diorio plays soccer, Patrick Money competes in long jump, Nick Crodelle plays basketball and Manny Matsudaira plays tennis.



HVRHS athletes thrived in 2025

By Riley Klein

FALLS VILLAGE — From breakthrough victories to record-shattering feats, the past year brimmed with moments that Housatonic Valley Regional High School athletes will never forget. Read the full story with highlights from each season online at lakevillejournal.com



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Classifieds

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AUCTIONS, ESTATE SALES

**WHOLE HOUSE AND GARAGE ESTATE SALE:** January 16, 17, 18. 9:00 AM to 4:00 PM daily. 11 Deerfield Rd., Lakeville, CT. Email John with questions at sulli@ntplx.net.

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