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A Healthier Community for All



By Russell Barksdale, Ph.D.

The phrase “to whom much is given, much is expected” is one I often hear from friends and colleagues. Yet the original text is far more profound: “To whom much is given, much is required.” That single word—required—carries the weight of obligation. It reminds us that influence and affluence are not rewards but responsibilities. Privilege carries an expectation—not of perfection, but of participation, compassion, and courage.

Our community stands as a model of success in many ways. We are blessed with one of the finest public school systems in

the region, yet many families still seek private or specialized educational programs elsewhere. We are home to remarkable restaurants and renowned chefs, yet our food pantries face record demand for food insecure families. We are surrounded by wealth and generosity, yet more seniors than ever rely on charity care to assure access to even the most basic healthcare services. These contradictions defy easy explanation and demand more than polite sympathy.

Our population continues to grow as families arrive in search of safety, opportunity, and belonging. At the same time, long-established residents quietly leave, drawn to lower taxes or more affordable retirements elsewhere. These patterns, though not new, challenge the balance and vitality of our community. They remind us that prosperity cannot be

sustained if it is not shared, and that true strength lies not in our income brackets, but in our capacity to care for one another.

A truly healthy community is not measured by property values, economic output, or the glow of prosperity alone. It is one where people thrive physically, mentally, socially, and economically—supported by systems that promote safety, equity, and belonging. It is a place where residents feel connected, valued, and empowered to participate in shaping their collective future. It invests in prevention as much as in treatment, in inclusion as much as in innovation, and in the long-term well-being of generations yet to come.

To achieve this vision, we must move beyond awareness to action. Terms such as “preventive care,” “social determinants of health,” and “multigenerational

“A healthy community is measured not by wealth, but by how deeply we care for one another.”

well-being” are not abstractions—they are the pillars of a compassionate and sustainable society. They remind us that access to nutritious food, preventive care, supportive care, mental health care, and meaningful social connection are not privileges but prerequisites for a thriving population.

We cannot ignore what we know to be true: that domestic violence continues to devastate families; that untreated mental illness isolates and destroys potential; that our children face pressures unimaginable a generation ago; and that too many of our seniors, who once gave so much, now face uncertainty in their later years. What is visible to us is only the surface of a deeper and broader challenge.

History teaches that early intervention—whether in medicine, education, or community support—offers the best outcomes. Acting early to prevent a crisis is far more humane, effective, and affordable than responding after harm has taken root. Waiting until problems become pervasive is not stewardship; it is abdication of our shared duty.

We have all witnessed the destructive influence of engineered cannabis, fentanyl, and synthetic opioids—substances that have ravaged families and stolen futures. We have seen how the unrelenting forces of social media distort our children’s sense of identity and self-worth, amplifying insecurities and promoting false ideals. While we cannot undo every loss, we can prevent more. Avoiding even one tragedy—one life or one childhood lost—is reason enough to give our best.

We have the tools, the talent, and the compassion to make meaningful change. What remains is the will to act—to look beyond individual success and see our collective health as the truest measure of progress.

Can we recommit ourselves to this higher calling? Are we able to act early, boldly, and act together? For to whom much is given, much is not merely expected—it is, and always has been, required.

COLUMN

By Tom Nissley



Nearby but closing soon Curtain Call’s “White Christmas.” A beautiful production celebrating the retirement at an inn in Vermont of Army General Henry Waverly, and the loyalty of the men who served under him.

Fantastic singing and dancing. Call 203-461-6358 for tickets. May be sold out. Watch for an extra matinee and grab it if you can.

“A Christmas Carol” is all over the state. Hartford Stage, for instance. But it’s as close as FTC in Fairfield this weekend.

Call 293-319-1404 to beg for tickets. Playing Friday at 7:00 pm; Saturday at 2:00 pm and 7:00 pm; and Sunday at 1:00 pm and 5:00 pm. This is the SUPER production that has been done by Black Rock Theatre for years and one of

December Theater Notes

the best you’ll ever have a chance to see.

Closer to home: “The Nutcracker Ballet” is onstage at New Canaan High School this weekend. The New England Dance Academy produces it beautifully every December. Friday at 7:00 pm; Saturday at 11:00 am and 4:00 pm; Sunday at 1:00 and 4:00 pm.

Then there’s that amazing Pig named Wilbur who makes friends with and is saved by a fascinating spider called Charlotte in “Charlotte’s Web” at TPNC. This is another Do Not Miss production, starring Kim Woods as Charlotte, Joe Niola as Templeton, Wesley Beneson and Miles Langrick as Wilbur, Chris Cluett and Erin Sullivan as John and Martha Arable. And about twenty more...

Thursday, Friday, Saturday at 7:00 pm, Sunday at 2:00 pm. Repeat – Do Not Miss “Charlotte’s Web.”



And the Stamford All School production (at Rippowam Middle School Auditorium) of “ANNIE.”

I saw a sign along the road that said “ANNIE” was playing at Rippowam Middle School, so I assumed it was a Middle School production. Boy was I wrong! The sign actually said this was a Stamford All School Musical playing for two weekends at Rippowam. One of those weekends is behind us but you can probably still get into a performance at 7:30 pm on December 12 and 13, and 2:00 pm on Sunday, Dec.14.

See it if you possibly can. Rippowam is at 381 High

Ridge Road in Stamford, and this production by Nancy Freeman, who has been working with Stamford all school theatre for 30 years is the best thing going right now.

Christmas Eve on God's Acre



WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 24

4:00pm Family Worship Service

6:00pm Worship Service

6:30pm Caroling on God's Acre

7:00pm Worship Service

11:00pm Candlelight Worship Service

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The Congregational Church of New Canaan

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Holiday Stroll Photos



Santa made an early visit to New Canaan, stopping in Houlihan Lawrence Real Estate Brokerage for New Canaan's Holiday Stroll, with many families in line to meet him. With Santa were two of his elves from Houlihan Lawrence: L-R Michele Murray Sloan and Ellen Cummings. Santa, who is with the Connecticut Society of Santas, was sponsored by Houlihan Lawrence.



G. Albert Men's Groomers' terrific client service crew of L-R Katherine Montoya, Valentina Solarte and Valeria Casiano (and Giovanni the Dog!) were also on hand to provide sweet treats to visitors during the Holiday Stroll.



It was a busy night on Elm Street last Friday for the Holiday Stroll, sponsored by the Chamber of Commerce.



Long lines for the Waffle Cabin, in front of New Canaan's iconic Playhouse.



Miniature Horses from Rising Starr Horse Rescue were popular with the many people at the Holiday Stroll



It was a busy night on Elm Street last Friday for the Holiday Stroll, sponsored by the Chamber of Commerce.



Maria and Alberto Gonzalez -- proprietors of G. Albert Men's Groomers on Elm Street -- took the prize for best food at the Holiday Stroll, with Albert's fabulous slow-smoked pork shoulder, plus wine and many sweet treats.



Marshmallow roasting on Elm Street during a chilly, but busy, Holiday Stroll last Friday evening.



Roaming around Downtown New Canaan during the Holiday Stroll on Saturday was New Canaan Town Brass, playing holiday music. One of their stops was in front of Francos Wine Merchants, with proprietor Carl Franco out enjoying the music.



Wave was one of the many stores downtown packed with shoppers last Friday night for the Holiday Stroll.



Photo 4: Spotted on Elm Street during the Holiday Stroll were the Grinch, Gingerbread Man and Rudolf the Red-nosed Reindeer. It seems everyone wants to be in Downtown New Canaan for the holidays.



Friendly horses and children were a natural pair at the Holiday Stroll.



New Canaan Fire Co. No. 1 was out in force on Friday night for the Holiday Stroll. Fortunately the only fires were from marshmallows being safely roasted. Always on call were L-R Asst. Chief William Perritt, Lt. Oliver Dennis, Firefighter Evan Jennings, Fire Marshal Paul Payne and Chief Albert Bassett.



Laura Budd (R), Executive Director of the New Canaan Chamber of Commerce, with a four-legged friend and Nancy Georges, owner of Laurent Ranch, a luxury Western wear store on Elm Street. Laurent Ranch sponsored a corral of several miniature ponies -- very popular with young families -- on Friday night from Rising Starr Horse Rescue in Wilton.

Eleanor Murphy in New York City Ballet’s Renowned ‘Nutcracker’

BY LIZ LEAMY

Eleanor Murphy, the talented and accomplished 12 year-old who hails from Connecticut, is as on point as ever in regard to her journey in the ballet realm, having most recently been selected as Marie (Clara) in the New York City Ballet’s iconic version of George Balanchine’s ‘The Nutcracker’ with music by Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky that has been running since Thanksgiving at the David H. Koch Theatre at Lincoln Center and will conclude on January 4th, 2026.

The Nutcracker is an 1892 two-act classical ballet created through music by Tchaikovsky that was later produced and choreographed by the legendary George Balanchine, the New York City Ballet’s Co-Founder and Artistic Director, in 1954 and characterizes the famous gold standard of the New York City Ballet, as well as that of this stunning dance discipline itself.

This past October, Murphy, a seventh grader at St. Luke’s School in New Canaan, was named to play the role of Marie (Clara), along with one other young dancer, for this season’s much-anticipated New York City Ballet Nutcracker production.

The two alternating children playing Marie (Clara) and cast of 100-plus young dancers (split into two alternating casts) perform alongside the New York City Ballet company dancers in a production that has been presented every year at Lincoln Center since 1954 (except in 2020 due to the Covid pandemic) and is regarded to be a crown jewel of its celebrated roster of extensive themes and variations.

Notably, George Balanchine’s New York City Ballet ‘Nutcracker’ is known as one of the most celebrated productions in this dance discipline having a long-lasting effect on its hundreds of thousands of fans over the years due to its extensive roster of exceptional dancers of all ages, mesmerizing choreography, stunning costumes and magical sets, including its iconic one-ton Christmas tree.

For seven decades-plus, this ever-popular holiday-themed dance production has drawn audiences from all over the U.S. and world due to Balanchine’s amazing talent, dedication and vision in regard to this intriguing, dramatic and magical holiday story with more than 150,000 audience members expected to see it this season alone.

For Murphy, the whole experience of dancing in a professional production amongst the New York City Ballet ensemble on stage in full costume amidst the extraordinary sets and bright, colorful lights telling the ‘Nutcracker’ tale is a unique and memorable pursuit in every regard.

“The best part is that you get to be inside the story,” said Murphy (who goes by the nickname Ella), and who first saw the New York City Ballet’s Nutcracker at age three. “It feels like you’re living the ballet, not just watching it.”

Murphy, who was born in New York City and first started dancing locally at age two, knew right from the start ballet was something she loved.

“When I was two, I started local dance combo classes in ballet, tap, jazz and hip hop once a week,” said Murphy.

Since that time, Murphy has gone on to pursue ballet at full-throttle speed, having earned, by age eight, a coveted spot as a student of the School of American Ballet (SAB) in 2021, the renowned ballet school based in Lincoln Center that was founded by Balanchine for dancers ages six through 18.

“I auditioned for SAB in 2021 after watching the Disney Plus show ‘On Pointe’ during the pandemic, so this will be my fifth year studying ballet at SAB,” said Murphy, citing the popular docuseries that followed young dancers at SAB, capturing their experience training in pursuit of their ballet dreams, with the culmination being the preparation and tryouts for the New York City Ballet’s ‘Nutcracker.’ “I love it, I have to dance.”



Ella Murphy (right) during the production of the “Nutcracker.” (Courtesy of Katie-Jane Murphy)

Murphy also spoke about Balanchine’s tremendous influence in regard to SAB.

“When you’re at SAB, you’re dancing in the same rooms where the Balanchine style was created. It feels like you’re part of something way bigger than yourself,” said Murphy. “The Balanchine style is really fast and musical. It makes you feel like the music is lifting you. It’s different from classical ballet because its freer and more alive.”

Murphy, who commutes to Lincoln Center from New Canaan six days a week in order to train at SAB, said her love of ballet is what drives her more than anything.

“My evenings are full of dance,” said Murphy. “People ask me if I love it and it’s hard to explain. It’s more than that.”

At SAB, Murphy works on her ballet technique, pointe and variations with the acclaimed staff there, as well as steps, movements, leaps and dances, among other things.

“We have been rehearsing since October, so I feel very prepared to give it my best,” said Murphy. “I’ll be bringing my curiosity and imagination to the role of Marie, and a lot of kindness too. I want the audience to feel the magic through me, like they’re discovering everything for the first time”

At the same time, Murphy said she has been working as hard as ever on all aspects of her ballet at SAB in preparation for ‘The Nutcracker’ with this marking her fourth year being part of its performance roster.

“I’m working hard on corrections and keeping my jumps high, but mostly I just want to tell the story in a way that makes people feel the magic like I did when I first saw George Balanchine’s ‘The Nutcracker’ when I was three,” said Murphy.

Clearly, this juncture marks both a thrilling and pivotal moment in Murphy’s career thus far, with the future looking as bright as ever.

For Murphy, it’s all about working as hard as she can so she continues to evolve as a ballet dancer while at the same time maintaining a strong academic life in regard to school.

“I am proud of where I am now and am enjoying this special time,

it’s so much fun,” said Murphy. “There are so many opportunities ahead, but I want to focus [now] on becoming a better and stronger dancer and keeping my grades up at school.”

Meanwhile, Murphy, whose parents, Katie-Jane and Daniel Murphy, are design and marketing creatives, and whose younger sister, Liliane, is a ballet dancer, also spoke about how much she enjoys spending time in New Canaan, with it representing a place of beauty, rejuvenation and inspiration for her.

“[Living in New Canaan] means everything,” said Murphy. “I love it. It’s so pretty and it feels like home. It low key reminds me of [the television show] ‘The Gilmore Girls.’”

In addition, Murphy spoke about how much she enjoys spending time with her family and friends at home and also in downtown New Canaan.

“I like hanging out in town on the weekends with friends shopping and getting gelato,” said Murphy. “I also love being at home in my house spending time with my family, baking and dancing with my sister Lili (Liliane) who dances at the New England Academy of Dance (NEAD). She’s a great dancer, so funny and pretty, and I am her biggest fan.”

Despite her super-busy schedule, especially in regard to performing in The Nutcracker from November through January, Murphy is adamant to make sure to attend her sister’s opening night of ‘The Nutcracker’ that was presented by NEAD (based in New Canaan) at the New Canaan High School December 11th-14th.

“I’ll be there for her opening night,” said Murphy in reference to her sister’s debut performance as a party girl in the NEAD’s ‘Nutcracker’ this weekend that happens to coincide with a night off from her performances with the New York City Ballet’s ‘Nutcracker.’ “I wouldn’t miss it.”

Clearly, Murphy is someone who is as dedicated to her family and friends as she is to her ballet and school, rendering her story as a fascinating, exciting and wonderful on all fronts, much like the classic ‘Nutcracker’ narrative itself.

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GRANTS

CONTINUED From Page 1

a mindfulness approach, for example, and is pretty broad in serving parents. And then another one is specifically to engage folks in the ‘sandwich generation’ that are raising kids and caring for parents concurrently.”

However, helping to fund a new or expanded program does not mean people will be aware of it — a point that the survey highlighted. To that end, “the Community Foundation and the Behavioral Health Alliance will also help to widely market those opportunities so we can really reach parents in the community that might be interested in something but not necessarily looking for it. And certainly one thing the survey highlighted last year was that people don’t necessarily know all the rich programming that’s available in the community. So we definitely want to help these organizations do the outreach and take their time to build it in a format that’s really appealing for people to engage,” stresses Ms. Patterson.

These grants are part of a broader follow-up initiative by the Behavioral Health Alliance and the Community Foundation, with the Foundation being a lead member of the Alliance. One effort is a “work group of the Alliance that is doing more in-depth work on marketing

and outreach, and that was a direct result of the survey findings that said that most parents didn’t know where to turn to for resources or support for themselves or for their kids or another family member,” notes Ms. Patterson. “We’re trying to help support work groups that can really move the needle.”

More Surveys Planned

Another follow-up initiative is a targeted youth survey, which the Alliance hopes to administer in the autumn of 2026, working with the schools. Details of survey construction, partner groups, and specific youth cohorts to be surveyed are still under discussion.

In addition, the Alliance wants to re-administer at the same time the adult survey done in late 2024. The hope is that the efforts by the recent grant recipients, as well as ongoing work by Alliance members who are better informed of the issues through the survey, will demonstrate real progress.

Ms. Patterson emphasizes the value of longitudinal surveys, which help identify what’s working and what’s not. That said, outside environmental factors can affect results — she cited COVID — with the challenge being causally linking actions to results. The Alliance is working with its research partner to best identify “how we manage for that and where we can isolate in the findings if some things are moving in the right direction, others are stuck, others are trending in the wrong direction — can we credit that to different efforts or is it largely

environmental factors?”

Additional Grants

Separate from its work with the Alliance, the Community Foundation has recently awarded \$75,000 in grants from its community behavioral health fund to several organizations. These are Systems Change grants, focused on “broadly improving access and care options in Fairfield County.”

According to Ms. Patterson, the largest grant, at \$50,000, has been made to Laurel House, one of the Foundation’s longtime grantees for direct service work. “In this case, the \$50,000 is helping them actually create a network of behavioral health providers in lower Fairfield County, so to create a stronger provider network that can share a lot more information and coordinate better along their organizations, even individual practitioners.”

Ms. Patterson emphasizes that the \$33,000 in grants related to the survey results and the \$75,000 in Systems Change grants are designed to act symbiotically and “are all intended to help lift all boats. So I think the survey grants are at the ground level. They’re interacting directly with people in New Canaan. The systems level grants are going to make sure the broader environment around people is better set up to access behavioral healthcare.”

LAWMAKERS ON HB8002

CONTINUED From Page 1

affordability in the state either.”

“That,” Fazio said, “is the problem.”

The audience listened in a kind of quiet recognition. Speed is one thing; opacity is another. Together, they unsettle civic trust.

Tom O’Dea: “Ignored in This Building”

Representative O’Dea explained how thoroughly he and other lawmakers attempted to participate before the bill’s passage.

“I can count on one hand the number of times I’ve felt ignored in the [legislature],” he said. “And this is one of them.”

Like the others, he learned the details only on the morning of the vote. “We didn’t get the whole thing until that morning. One hour.”

O’Dea described his attempts to be constructive. He had driven with the governor around New Canaan to discuss housing challenges. He had met with the majority leader. He had attended presentations, drafted proposals, and delivered bipartisan recommendations from planning and zoning officials across Fairfield County.

“We had all reached out to the proponents of the bill on numerous occasions,” he said. “I went to their presentation in Fairfield... I talked to Senator Duff, I talked to Jason Rojas on numerous occasions... and they ignored us.”

His proposal—one he has championed for several years—would give towns a narrowly defined right of first refusal when a private developer submits an 8-30g proposal. “If a builder buys [a property] for a million dollars,” he explained, “the town could buy it for a million plus 5% as long as they build at least 70% of the proposed affordable housing somewhere else in

town within eight years.”

It is, he said, a way for towns to guide affordable development without stripping it away.

He added a coda: “Coffee on me,” he told the room. “Please reach out.”

A Tradition of Home Rule Meets a New Framework

Fazio reminded residents that this is not merely a policy dispute; it is cultural. “There is a 300-year tradition of local home rule here in the state of Connecticut,” he said. “It’s part of the reason why we have such strong communities.”

When he campaigned outside Fairfield County this year, he heard the same concern repeatedly. “This is an issue... top of mind for people all across Connecticut, not just in New Canaan,” he said. “People want to make decisions locally for their own community.”

The core tension of the new law is that it reshapes local authority—sometimes softly through funding incentives, sometimes sharply through statewide mandates.

How the Law Reorders Decision-Making

Representative Courpas, who sits on the Housing Committee, offered the room a structured walk-through.

Fair Share by Way of Regional Councils of Governments

Under the vetoed HB 5002, each town would have received a specific “fair share” number detailing how many units of affordable housing it needed to plan for. The new law hides that number behind a regional intermediary.

“The Office of Policy and Management will allocate a number to a COG,” Courpas said. “Say WestCOG gets 5,000 housing units. It’s up to the 18 or 19 first selectmen to figure out who gets what share.”

She asked basic governance questions during

debate: How will COGs vote? Are their meetings public? Is there a record? “There were no good answers,” she said.

Towns unhappy with their allocation may opt out and create their own plan—subject, again, to OPM approval.

Transit-Oriented Development

Courpas described the return of the “Work, Live, Ride” concept, this time in modified form. Development in certain transit zones will undergo “a diminished review by the community,” she said. Though technically optional, towns that decline to participate will lose eligibility for new state funding.

Parking Restrictions

“No state in the union has a provision like this,” she said of the rule forbidding towns from requiring minimum parking for residential buildings of up to 16 units. Bridgeport, she noted, tried something similar and its city council called the result “an abysmal failure.”

Commercial-to-Residential Conversions

The bill lowers local review standards for converting commercial buildings into housing. “The governor really likes this,” Courpas said. “He really wanted it in this bill.” Unlike other provisions, this one is fully mandatory.

Section 48: Development on State-Owned Land

One of the most striking features, Courpas said, is Section 48, which authorizes the state to develop housing on state-owned land with minimal local review.

New Canaan has 28 such parcels.

“It’s almost like if the town is recalcitrant,” she said, “the state can just come in and develop on state-owned land. To me that’s a disingenuous back door to all the rest of this.”

Carrots, Sticks, and the Local Taxpayer

Courpas warned that although some provisions are framed as incentives, the effect may be punitive.

“If we... don’t opt into the fair share and the Work Live Ride, we would suffer,” she said. “We would not get the funding of those towns and cities which do comply.”

The missing funds, she added, “will get shifted onto the property taxes of the towns.”

Fazio raised similar concerns. The law ties eligibility for school-construction reimbursement bonuses and infrastructure funding to state approval of local housing plans. “That could be millions upon millions of dollars,” he said. “It’s almost like a mandate.”

What Can Be Done Now?

One resident asked whether anything could be done since the governor had already signed the bill.

“Change the law,” Fazio said. “It either requires the people in office to change their minds or the people in office to be changed.”

Courpas said public pressure still matters, as demonstrated when thousands of messages persuaded the governor to veto HB 5002. “Keeping the pressure on... does have value,” she said.

Both acknowledged that lawsuits may emerge, especially concerning unclear procedures, undefined allocations, or delegation of state authority to regional bodies.

“There’s No Version of Democracy...”

As the meeting drew to a close, a resident remarked that it seemed “crazy” to expect towns to respond quickly when even lawmakers could not interpret key provisions. Fazio agreed.

“There’s no version of democracy in which that is the right process to abide by,” he said. “Towns and cities are going to be burdened with these requirements for years to come.”

Staying Put Delivers Holiday Cheer

Staying Put in New Canaan celebrated the start of the holiday season on December 2 with its annual Poinsettia Delivery, an uplifting tradition that brings joy, color, and

connection to local seniors. This year, 22 dedicated volunteers braved cold, rainy weather to hand-deliver 165 beautiful poinsettia plants to Staying Put members across

town. For many seniors, the visit was a welcome moment of companionship and a reminder that they are cherished by the community.

“We are incredibly grateful for our volunteers, who showed such heart and commitment,” said Gina Blum, Executive Director of Staying Put in New Canaan. “A little rain didn’t dampen their enthusiasm. The visits brought joy and holiday cheer to New Canaan seniors.”

Staying Put members expressed heartfelt appreciation for the festive plants. Many noted that the simple gesture made their day feel brighter, and provided a sense of connection during the holiday season.

The annual Poinsettia Delivery is part of Staying Put’s ongoing mission to support older adults in New Canaan by fostering independence, social engagement, and community connection.

For more information about Staying Put in New Canaan or to learn how to get involved, please visit our website at stayingputnc.org or call the Staying Put office at 203-966-7762



Staying Put member Peggy Jay receives a poinsettia.



Staying Put Board members, Jon Kerchoff, Peter Ziesing and Lyn Chivvis head out to deliver poinsettias.

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TOWN OF NEW CANAAN

NOTICE OF RFP

MOVIE THEATER OPERATOR

RELEASE DATE: DECEMBER 3, 2025

The Town is seeking proposals from organizations with experience managing and operating cinemas to operate the movie theater known as The Playhouse, located at 93 Elm Street, New Canaan, Connecticut. The Town owns the Playhouse building and intends to lease The Playhouse building to the successful respondent.

The Playhouse is a landmark two story building located in the heart of downtown New Canaan. The Playhouse building was originally constructed in 1923. In 2022, the Town commenced work on an \$8.5 million interior and exterior renovation project. The project was completed in June, 2024. The Playhouse held its grand re-opening on June 27, 2024. The leased space will include the entire building, consisting of two screening rooms, projection control room, first floor pub and concession area, and second floor lounge/event space with full-service bar overlooking Elm Street. The screening rooms are equipped with state-of-the-art projection equipment, sound systems and luxurious imported seats, all of which were installed in 2024. Each of the two screening rooms has 100 seats (total of 200 seats). The building is ADA compliant and includes an elevator.

Review the RFP. Interested parties should not submit a proposal without carefully reviewing the RFP and familiarizing themselves with all of the conditions, details and requirements. The RFP is available at www.newcanaan.info/online-services/bid-notices/request-for-proposal.php.

Mandatory Site Visit. All respondents are expected to visit the site before submitting their proposals. Site visits can be scheduled by contacting the Town's Superintendent of Buildings, Bill Oestmann at 203-594-3710, or emailing at william.oestmann@newcanaanct.gov.

Submission Deadline. Proposals must be delivered by Friday, January 7, 2026 at 12:30 p.m. (the "Submission Deadline"), to:

First Selectman's Office

Town of New Canaan

77 Main Street

New Canaan, CT 06824

Proposals should be signed and delivered in a sealed envelope labeled "Proposal – Movie Theater Operator" and must be delivered to the office of the First Selectman on or before the Submission Deadline.

Proposals submitted by telephone, e-mail or fax will not be considered.

4901-6894-3998, v. 1

Proposals received after the Submission Deadline will not be considered.

A respondent may withdraw its proposal prior to the Submission Deadline, provided that the respondent's request for the withdrawal is delivered to the First Selectman's Office prior to the Submission Deadline.

A respondent may not withdraw a proposal within ninety (90) days after the Submission Deadline.

The Town reserves the right to reject any and all proposals or any part thereof, to waive defects in the same, or to accept any proposal or any part thereof deemed to be in the best interest of the Town.

The award of a lease to the successful respondent will be subject to the approval of such Town boards and commissions as may be required by applicable law.

LEGAL AD

TOWN OF NEW CANAAN

PLANNING & ZONING COMMISSION

REGULAR MEETING

Notice is hereby given that the Planning and Zoning Commission will hold a Public Hearing on Tuesday, December 16, 2025 this hearing is scheduled as a hybrid meeting to be held in the Town Meeting Room at Town Hall, 77 Main Street at 7:00 p.m. with access available in person or via an on-line system to hear and decide the application(s) as follows:

1. 223 Michigan Road - Upon application of Amy Zabetakis, Rucci Law Group, LLC, Authorized Agent for PelagicOne, LLC, owner(s) for Special Permit approval pursuant to Section(s) 6.4 for after the fact soil disturbance greater than 10,000sq ft. and regrading of land at 223 Michigan Road (Map 34, Block 38, Lot 52) in the Four Acre Zone.

2. 1124 Valley Road (Parcel B, as noted on Map 7816 on the New Canaan Land Records) - Upon application of Amy Zabetakis, Rucci Law Group, LLC, Authorized Agent for New Canaan Land Conservation Trust, Inc, owner(s) for Special Permit approval pursuant to Section(s) 3.2 and 7.7 to establish a philanthropic use as the principal use on the property and to designate the structure as historic in exchange for setback dimensional relief to facilitate the rehabilitation and minor alterations of the structure at 1124 Valley Road (Map 46, Block 105, Lot 78) in the Four Acre Zone.

Dated: December 4, 2025

New Canaan, Connecticut

Daniel Radman, Chairman

LEGAL AD

The Town of New Canaan, Connecticut

Department of Public Works

Request for Proposal

The Public Works Department of the Town of New Canaan, Connecticut, will receive sealed Proposals for "BENKO POOL NEW WATER SERVICE LINE" until 10:00AM Local Time on Tuesday December 30, 2025 at the Department of Public Works Office, Town Hall, 77 Main Street, New Canaan, CT, 06840, at which time and place all proposals will be publicly opened and read aloud.

Specification documents are available at the Department of Public Works Office, Town of New Canaan, Town Hall, 77 Main Street, New Canaan, Connecticut 06840, or by calling William Oestmann, Facilities Superintendent at 203-594-3710. Specifications may also be obtained by e-mailing to william.oestmann@newcanaanct.gov.

There will be a mandatory site visit required for this project. Please contact Bill Oestmann at 203-594-3710 to make an appointment.

No contractor may withdraw his proposal within 90 days after the actual date of the proposal opening. Additionally, the contract documents require the prompt commencement of the work.

The Town reserves the right to reject any and all Proposals or any part thereof, to waive defects in the same, or to accept any proposal or any part thereof deemed to be in the best interest of the Town of New Canaan, Connecticut.

All contractors are requested to note that the award of this Contract is subject to the following conditions and contingencies:

1) The approval of such governmental agencies as may be required by law.

2) The appropriation of adequate funds by the proper agencies.

Tiger Mann

Director of Public Works

Town of New Canaan, Connecticut

LEGAL AD

TOWN OF NEW CANAAN

WATER POLLUTION CONTROL AUTHORITY

NOTICE OF PASSAGE

NEW SEWER IMPACT FEE

The Board of Finance, acting as the Water Pollution Control Authority of the Town of New Canaan, at their meeting on Tuesday, November 11, 2025 Approved the following proposed new Sanitary Sewer Impact Fee for users who are connected to the New Canaan Sewer System who propose to add additional sewer flows to said System.

While regular maintenance of the existing infrastructure is included in the annual budget, it is prudent to consider an impact fee for applications before the Town that result in an increase in anticipated sanitary sewer flows conveyed by the New Canaan Sewer System and then treated by the Wastewater Pollution Control Facility (WPCF).

Public Works and Engineering Departments recommend that a Sanitary Sewer Impact Fee be created that applies to any non-municipal project that results in added projected sanitary sewer flows to the Town Sanitary Sewer System. The estimated projected sanitary sewer flows shall be based on methodology outlined in the Connecticut Public Health Code On-site Sewage Disposal Regulations and Technical Standards for Subsurface Sewage Disposal Systems, dated 2024, or most current version.

For the consideration of the Water Pollution Control Authority (WPCA), it is suggested that a Sanitary Sewer Impact Fee in the amount of \$10 per gallon of added estimated sewer flow be considered for approval. As this is a new fee, Public Works and Engineering Departments recommend this \$10 per gallon of added estimated sewer flow, with the understanding that in the future this fee per gallon may change. This fee will be reviewed annually.

The proposed Sanitary Sewer Impact Fee is a one-time fee to be paid as part of the Building Permit process when filing building permit applications, should the proposed improvements add sanitary sewer flows to the system. If there is no projected increase, no Sanitary Sewer Impact Fee would be applied. Note that Sewer Use Fees are separate annual fees for all users of the New Canaan Sewer System, and not part of the proposed Sanitary Sewer Impact Fee. The final determination of the fee will be completed after an assessment or audit at the completion of the project prior to the issuance of a Certificate of Occupancy.

It Happened

It Happened

It happened. The holidays are here. Thanksgiving came and went faster than a warm apple pie. To make sure you knew it was over, we all were inundated with Black Friday and Cyber Monday emails, social media posts, and stories on the news. The 2025 holiday shopping bonanza has begun!

It is easy to get caught up in the frenzy of holiday shopping, especially when our emails are filled with enticing savings if we ‘purchase on-line before midnight’. But we lose a personal touch in the frenzy. In the midst of Thanksgiving weekend was “Small Business Saturday,” meant to encourage buying local and supporting small businesses. It is understandable if you did not know.

Larger stores have larger budgets and the ability to make sure their marketing messaging is getting to you easily. What that means for us is that if we want to “buy local” we need to work a little harder at it. But it is worth it.

Buying local and supporting small businesses is at the core of our local economy, and is such an important part of what makes New Canaan, well... New Canaan. If we did not have stores such as The Whitney Shop, Elm Street Books, Franco’s, and many others, the feel of our community would be very different indeed.

This time of year, there are many events going on to help us ring in the holiday season.

New Canaan’s downtown is magical all year long. It is like no other in Fairfield County. During the holidays it takes on a kind of Currier and Ives persona. This past weekend it was alive with the annual Holiday Stroll. It reminds us that when we come together as a community, we are all a little nicer, a little softer; we smile more and say hello.

And there is the tradition of coming together to sing carols on Christmas Eve on God’s Acre around the town Christmas Tree. This tradition was started by John Hersam in 1919. He also founded the New Canaan Advertiser in 1908. You cannot get more community than a tradition that has been around for 106 years.

These are just two perfect examples of our vibrant, small, and local community – without them, we would not have such festive activities to look forward to. Buying local lets each of us determine what kind of a community we want to live in. Throughout town there are local deli’s and coffee shops that are the bedrock of that part of our community. If we did not have them, where would we go?

Before you sit down at your computer or pull up a website on your phone, think to yourself “can I get that perfect gift from a local business here in town?” Chances are you can. It may mean a little more effort to get the store, but it is an investment in our community.

There are many small and local businesses throughout New Canaan. They are owned by our neighbors, friends, people who we go to church with, and they need our support throughout the year, but especially this holiday season.

As you go about town purchasing your holiday gifts (and remembering to buy local) keep in mind that the perfect gift is not always the most expensive, but can be the most useful. Perhaps because we have a young wizard in our home we recently came across this quote from J.K. Rowling’s Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone: “One can never have enough socks,” said Dumbledore. “Another Christmas has come and gone and I didn’t get a single pair. People will insist on giving me books.”

Enjoy these last days before Christmas and Hanukah. Enjoy family, friends, fire place games, good restaurants, but most of all enjoy one another.

Editorial Page



“You all deserve a personal pat on the back.”

Fire Safe Warns Residents After Multiple Fires

The Fire Safe CT team is alerting residents across the state after several recent fires were traced to ashes from fireplaces or woodstoves that had not been safely extinguished or properly stored. As winter temperatures drop and home heating increases, officials are urging the public to follow critical safety steps to prevent similar incidents.

“Although ashes may look cool, they can hide hot embers for days,” said State Fire Marshal Lauri Volkert. “We continue to see fires every year that start because ashes were placed in plastic containers, left on porches, or disposed of before they were fully cooled. These fires are preventable

when proper steps are taken.”

The State Police Fire & Explosion Investigation Unit has responded to several of these cases in recent weeks. Sgt. Shawn Benoit emphasized the ongoing risk:

“Even a single ember can ignite a deck, garage, or shed. Ashes should always be handled with caution, stored outdoors in a metal container with a tight-fitting lid, and given several days to cool before disposal.”

Fire Safe CT urges all residents who use fireplaces or woodstoves to follow these best practices:

Safe Ash Disposal
- Allow ashes to cool for several days before discarding.

- Use a metal container with a tight-fitting lid, never plastic, cardboard, or paper.

- Store the container outside, away from buildings, decks, porches, garages, sheds, and dry vegetation.

- Never bring an ash container inside or leave it near combustibles.

Home Safety Reminders

- Install smoke alarms on every level of the home, inside and outside all sleeping areas.

- Install carbon monoxide (CO) alarms on every level and near bedrooms.

- Test all alarms monthly.

- Replace any alarm over 10 years old, or sooner if malfunctioning.

“With the colder weather,

we know people rely on fireplaces and woodstoves,” Volkert added. “We want families and communities to stay warm—and stay safe.”

Sgt. Benoit reiterated the importance of shared responsibility:

“A few extra minutes spent cooling and storing ashes properly can prevent a devastating fire. These simple precautions save lives and protect property.”

For more information on fire prevention and home safety, visit the Fire Safe CT website or New Canaan Fire Marshal’s webpage https://www.newcanaan.info/public_safety/education_center/index.php

New Canaan CERT Holiday Party

New Canaan CERT members celebrated the Holidays in the St Marks “Fireplace” room.

Over 30 members

attended the year end gathering to casually review the years deployments and enjoy some holiday treats and

cheer.

Next years training class for New Canaan CERT will start in late January with 6 classes

ending in late February.

Dates and time schedule of the classes will be announced after the Holidays



How to Give Smarter Before Tax Laws Change

Many New Canaan residents know the New Canaan Community Foundation (NCCF) for its annual grantmaking—over \$1 million distributed to local nonprofits last year alone. Through this work, NCCF strengthens critical programs in areas like behavioral health, early childhood education, and emergency financial assistance for neighbors in need.

What’s less widely known is that NCCF also helps individuals and families manage their own charitable giving through donor-advised funds (DAFs)—a flexible tool that allows donors to receive immediate tax benefits while supporting the causes they care about over time.

With federal tax changes coming in 2026, now is the time to consider how a DAF can make your giving go further. NCCF’s team of experts work closely with donors to align their financial goals with meaningful

community impact—helping generosity reach both its personal and local potential.

To help residents understand these changes and explore smart giving strategies, NCCF hosted an informational event, “Navigating Charitable Giving: Tools, Trends & Tax,” on November 17 at the New Canaan Nature Center, with over 50 individuals and nonprofits in attendance. The event featured insights from financial and investment experts and outlined how donors can give strategically in 2025 while preparing for future tax shifts. Strategies discussed during the event included “bunching” your charitable giving through a donor-advised fund in 2025.

The following tax law changes were also reviewed:

For people who itemize deductions, charitable deductions are reduced by .5% of the donor’s Adjusted Gross Income (AGI). For someone with a \$1,000,000 income, that means their charitable contributions are

reduced by \$5,000 for tax purposes. For taxpayers in the 37% bracket, all deductions are treated as if they are in the 35% tax bracket, effectively taking an additional 5.4% off their charitable contributions.

Today, more than 80 donor-advised and other charitable funds have been established by local families at NCCF. These funds are invested alongside the Foundation’s endowment—more than \$32 million in total assets across 3 different investment options —and fundholders can recommend grants to qualified charities anytime while their investments continue to grow tax-free. Last year, donors advised NCCF in giving away almost \$1.13 million to worthy non-profit organizations – many local, but also across the country. Contributions to donor-advised funds may be made in cash or appreciated securities, providing immediate deductions and the potential to avoid capital

gains.

Fundholders also gain access to NCCF’s trusted local expertise—ensuring their giving is informed, impactful, and aligned with community needs. Many even participate in NCCF’s volunteer grant reviews, joining the Foundation in learning about local nonprofits and amplifying their collective impact.

If you’re interested in learning more about the potential benefits of creating a donor-advised fund at NCCF in 2025, please contact Ann Rodwell-Lawton, NCCF Vice President at ARodwellLawton@newcanaanccf.org.

New Canaan Community Foundation does not provide, nor does it intend to provide tax advice. The above is provided for informational purposes only. Consult your tax advisor to see how these changes affect your specific tax situation.

Michael Reed

BERMUDA^{AIR}

Westchester to *Bermuda*. Just Two Hours Away.

Make a two-hour journey feel like a world away
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FlyBermudAir.com



Recognizing the Miracles of Our Daily Lives



By Rabbi Mitchell M. Hurvitz

Our Chanukah story conveys timeless lessons that resonate deeply with our contemporary Jewish lives.

The Maccabean revolt began when Jews steadfastly refused to yield to both overt coercion and subtle cultural pressures.

The Maccabees understood that authentic courage means

With every new dawn, we are invited to renew our hope and sacred pursuits by which we can assist in making today shine brighter than yesterday.

standing firm, even when confronted by seemingly insurmountable odds.

We embrace the Maccabean spirit when we refuse to abandon our sacred values or distinctive rituals.

It is the same courageous Maccabean spirit that pulses today in the heart of the modern State of Israel.

The spirit by which our Jewish resolve is unwavering, even as we confront those forces that seek to harm our physical and spiritual peace and security.

Chanukah urges us to

recognize the miracles woven through the tapestry of our daily lives.

Sunrises and sunsets are examples of God's wonders that we must appreciate.

Discerning light from darkness is a physical, mental, and spiritual pursuit.

God calls us to be in a Divine and human partnership by which we help bring more light to our world.

With every new dawn, we are invited to renew our hope and sacred pursuits by which we can assist in making today shine

brighter than yesterday. We work with God and become the bearers of light.

The Chanukah miracle is a central part of our Jewish story.

Its heart lies not merely in oil that inexplicably lasted for eight nights, but in the bold decision to kindle that first flame, even when no logical hope remained for the oil to last for its required eight days.

Miracles do not arrive unbidden. They are only possible when we nurture them with our actions, perseverance, and faith.

Chanukah comes in the year's

darkest days. During the darker times, we are called to respond to the deepening night not with resignation, but with the resolve by which we can multiply light and hope.

Chanukah celebrates humanity's partnership with God, reminding us in every generation to have the courage to help miracles take root.

May each of us be worthy partners in spreading the light and may God's miraculous radiance shine ever brighter in our world.

Chag Urim Sameach - A joyous Festival of Lights to all!

Shabbat Shalom,
Rabbi Mitch
Temple Sholom's Senior Rabbi Mitchell M. Hurvitz is a scholar, teacher, community activist and preacher, and is recognized as one of the prominent religious leaders in the Greenwich area and beyond. A frequent guest speaker at synagogues and churches, study groups, community institutions and universities, he is a charismatic personality who engages individuals and stimulates hearts and minds. His teachings can be found in Greenwich Sentinel and in other local and national publications.

Worship Directory and Services

UPDATE SERVICES AND ADD SPECIAL EVENTS TO THIS CALENDAR AT
www.NewCanaanSentinel.com/worship-calendar-updates

Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints
682 South Avenue 203.966.5849
www.ComeUntoChrist.org
Sunday Service: 9:00 AM

Congregational Church
23 Park Street 203.966.2651
office@godsacre.org
www.godsacre.org
Sunday Services: 8:00 AM and 10:00 AM. The 10:00 am service is also live streamed and recorded, the video replay will be available throughout the week. Church School is available on Sundays for children ages 3 through 7th grade each Sunday from September through mid-June.

Recurring Events:
Tuesdays at 9:30 AM: Women's Bible Study
Wednesdays at 9:30 AM: Bible Study
Fourth Thursday from 12-2:30 PM: Meet at the Open Door Shelter in Norwalk to serve a meal.

Upcoming Events:
December 24 at 4 PM: Family Worship Service,
6 PM: Worship Service, 6:30 PM: Caroling on God's Acre, 7 PM: Worship Service, 11 PM: Candlelight Worship Service

First Church of Christ, Scientist
49 Park Street 203.966.0293
christiansciencect.org/newcanaaan
Sunday 10:30 AM, in person only. Sunday School is available during Sunday Service and is open to children and young people up to the age of 20. There is also childcare available for children too young for Sunday School.
Wednesday Testimony Meeting: 1st Wednesday of each month, join by zoom or by phone 646 558 8656. Reading Room Hours: Open Mondays 11-2, Call to confirm hours 203-966-0293. All are welcome to the Sunday and Wednesday services, Sunday School, and the reading room.

First Presbyterian Church
178 Oenoke Ridge Road 203.966.0002
fpcnc.org

Sunday Service: 10am in person or via LocalLive. All are welcome. Coffee Hour after the service is also available in person or via Zoom. Dedicated childcare is available for all children via Wee Care Nanny Agency from 8:45-11:30am in the Nursery School. Transcripts of previous sermons are also available via the First Presbyterian Church of New Canaan's website. Recurring Events: Every Saturday 9:15am (closed) and 10:30am (open): Alcoholics Anonymous. Every Tuesday 8pm: Men's A.A.

Third Wednesday from 6-7:30 PM: Wednesdays at the Well are intergenerational opportunities to learn and grow in faith together. Dinner will be served and all ages are invited.

Upcoming Events:
December 12 at 7 PM: A New Canaan Chamber Music concert with Andrew Armstrong and James Ehnes. Tickets available at <https://newcanaanchambermusic.org/tickets/>.

December 16 from 7-9 PM: Open Mic Night featuring Luke Molina. You are invited to an evening to share music and/or poetry. To sign up, email nickdepuysite@gmail.com.

December 19 from 5-7 PM: Join for the annual Christmas Party for our congregation – an evening of fun, fellowship, food, drinks and caroling.

December 24 at 5 PM: Christmas Eve Family Service. 10 PM: Join for a candlelight service with Communion.

Saint Aloysius Roman Catholic Church
21 Cherry Street 203.966.0020
www.starcc.com
Service Schedule:

Saturday: Vigil for Sunday 5:00 p.m.
Sunday: 7:00 a.m., 8:30 a.m. 10:00 a.m., 11:30 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. The Sunday 8:30 a.m. mass is live-streamed and recorded. Monday-Friday: 7:00 am and 5:30 pm
Saturday: 7:00 am

Recurring Events:
Last Monday of every month 7pm: Women's Praise & Worship Holy Hour
Fridays 7:30am-6pm: Eucharistic Adoration (September-June)
Saturday 8:30am: St. A's Healing Rosary Prayer Group

Upcoming Events:
December 14th at 2 PM: The 22nd Annual Advent, Christmas Concert. Tickets available on the St. Aloysius website.

St. Mark's Episcopal Church
111 Oenoke Ridge 203.966.4515
churchoffice@stmarksnewcanaaan.org
www.stmarksnewcanaaan.org

Sunday Services: 8:00am: Indoor Holy Eucharist Rite I; 9:00am: Outdoor Holy Eucharist Rite II; 10am: Indoor Holy Eucharist Rite II (Live Stream also available on the St. Mark's website). Coffee Hour follows the 10am service. Church School during the 10am service: Godly Play for children in kindergarten through second grade; Holy Moly for third and fourth grades; Meet in the Middle for fifth, sixth and seventh grades. Professional childcare is offered for children ages four and under. Families with children who are not yet ready to separate for childcare are invited to use the rocking chairs at the rear of the chapel.
Weekday Services: Monday-Friday, 8:30am: Morning Prayer Rite II by Zoom.
Wednesday at 12:05pm: Noonday Eucharist in the chapel.

Recurring Events:
First Wednesday at 1pm: Laundry Love volunteering opportunity to come alongside people who are struggling financially by assisting them with their laundry.
First & Third Wednesdays from 6-7:30pm: Youth Group

Upcoming Events:
December 14 at 5 PM: A Service of Nine Lessons & Carols. Carols and hymns are sung by the Choir and by all. Followed by a festive reception. No ticket or registration required.

December 24 at 5 PM: The World's Greatest Christmas Pageant. 9:30 PM: Christmas Eve Prelude with Organ, Brass, Timpani & Choir. 10 PM: Christmas Eve Festival Holy Eucharist.

December 25 at 10 AM: Christmas Day Holy Eucharist

St. Michael's Lutheran Church
5 Oenoke Ridge 203.966.3913
office@stmichaelslutheran.org
www.stmichaelslutheran.org

Sunday Service at 10:00 am. Following the service there is coffee, cookies and conversation' in the Fellowship Hall.

Recurring Events:
Thursday 12 PM: Alcoholics Anonymous

Upcoming Events:
December 24 at 5 PM: Christmas Eve Worship.

Trinity Church
New Canaan | Darien
1800 E. Putnam Ave, Old Greenwich
203.618.0808
info@trinitychurch.life
www.trinitychurch.life

Join us Sundays at 10 a.m. at Greenwich Hyatt Regency for lively worship, thoughtful and applicable teaching, weekly Communion, and an opportunity to make friends and grow in community. Trinity Kids (infants through fifth grade) and Trinity Youth (middle and high schoolers) take place during the service, and coffee and refreshments are served following worship. The service is also available on livestream via Youtube, Sundays at 10:00 a.m.; learn more at www.trinitychurch.life.

United Methodist Church
165 South Avenue 203.966.2666
frontdesk@umcofnewcanaaan.org
www.umcofnewcanaaan.org
Join us for Sunday Worship!
Sunday Service begins at 10:00 a.m.

Come for uplifting music and a relevant, inspiring message – and stay after for coffee and conversation during Fellowship Time.

Sunday School for ages 3 through high school. Child care is available for children from infancy through age 5.

Recurring Events:
First Sunday at 8:45 AM: All men are invited to our monthly Men's Breakfast – a time of warm fellowship, good food, and meaningful conversation as we grow together in faith and friendship.

Upcoming Events:
December 14 at 10 AM: Christmas Pageant. A long-standing UMC of New Canaan tradition! All children and families in our community are warmly invited to participate in our joyful annual Christmas Pageant. We are delighted to welcome everyone – whether you wish to take part in the pageant or simply come, watch, and celebrate the joy of the season with us.

December 24 at 5 PM: Join us for a Family Christmas Eve Service filled with special music, candle lighting, lessons, and carols – a beautiful celebration of the birth of Christ.

Community Baptist Church
174 Cherry Street 203.966.0711
cbcnewcanaaan@gmail.com
www.cbcnewcanaaan.org
Youtube: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCoZ2UNa8aHI3O_Syp_X0KDg
Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/CBCNewCanaan/>
Sunday School at 10:00am
Worship Service at 11:00am
Live Facebook Broadcast 11:30 am

Talmadge Hill Community Church
870 Hollow Tree Ridge Road; Darien, CT
203.966.2314
talmadgehillchurch@gmail.com
www.talmadgehill.org

Ministers: Rev. Carter Via and Rev. Cheryl Bundy Sunday worship service at 10:00am in person. All are welcome! We encourage everyone to stay for coffee hour after the service. Sunday School is every Sunday during the service and uses the Godly Play curriculum. Please reach out with any questions utilizing information listed above!

Recurring Events:
Thursdays at 9:30am: Bible Study
First Saturday at 8am: Men's Group
Second Saturday at 10am: Women's Circle

Upcoming Events:
December 13 at 5 PM: Christmas Candlelight Concert. Email Talmadge Hill for more information.

Chabad New Canaan Jewish Center
137 Putnam Rd
info@chabadnewcanaaan.org
www.newcanaanjewish.org

The Chabad New Canaan Jewish Center is dedicated to strengthening and building the New Canaan Jewish Community by offering local Jewish resources that bring more positivity, Jewish education, charitable activity, good deeds and blessing to our lovely town.

We are about Judaism, not affiliation. Regardless of your background, and however you choose to define your level of Jewish observance or identity, the Chabad New Canaan Jewish Center can add spirituality, joy, study, community and connection for you and your family. The programs of the Chabad New Canaan Jewish Center are held in various locations, all located in New Canaan.

Temple Sinai (Reform Synagogue)
458 Lakeside Drive; Stamford, CT 06903
203.322.1649
www.templesinaistamford.org
Service Schedule:
1st, 3rd & 5th Friday – 6pm in person and via zoom
2nd & 4th – 7:30pm

Recurring Events:
Fridays at 12 PM: Torah Study
Second Saturday at 10:30 AM: Mussar
First and Third Fridays at 5:30 PM: Shabbat Service for Families with Young Children
First Saturday at 8 AM: Avodat Halev Discussion Group

Temple Sholom
300 E. Putnam Ave. Greenwich, CT 06830
203-869-7191
www.templesholom.com
Services: In-person and virtual Friday night Shabbat services, 6:30pm & Saturday morning Shabbat services, 10:30am.

Recurring Events:
Saturdays at 9 AM: Shabbat Study via zoom at <https://zoom.us/j/94358392426?pwd=bFJQem9HWFcxU0EzZUM2VENEZmgYUT09#success>

Vivienne Finn and the Foundation Born in Her Name

By ELIZABETH BARHYDT

This three-part series examines how one family’s loss has sparked a broader effort to change the landscape of pediatric cancer care. The series follows the creation of the Vivienne C. Finn Foundation, launched in memory of 11-year-old Vivienne Cecilia Finn, who died in 2020 from a diffuse intrinsic pontine glioma, one of the most aggressive childhood brain tumors.

Part One traces Vivienne’s life and the path that brought her family from “Diagnosis Day” to the founding of the organization that now bears her name. Part Two brings readers inside Yale New Haven Children’s Hospital, where pediatric neuro-oncologists describe the medical, emotional and systemic challenges facing families. Part Three explores the foundation’s pillars—drug development, family support and legislative reform underway in Connecticut and Washington.

Through this series, readers will see how a single child’s story has inspired a mission aimed at better treatments, stronger support systems and lasting structural change.

The room fell silent when Mairead Finn stepped to the microphone and said, “Good evening and welcome to the



Dr. Asher Marks Dr. Vidya Puthenpera, Mairead Finn. David Finn

inaugural Founders’ Dinner of the Vivienne C. Finn Foundation.” Around tables set with roses, rosary beads and plates soon to hold steak and icebox chocolate cake, friends and family listened as she retold the story that brought them there: the life and death of her daughter Vivienne, and the work now being done in her name.

Vivienne Cecilia Finn was, in her mother’s words, a Sacred Heart of Greenwich “lifer.” She was an artist, a prolific reader and writer, and,

as Mairead noted with a brief smile, a “fashionista—that’s why I dressed nicely tonight.” She joined Girl Scouts and, as Mairead recalled, “she made us troop leaders.” She loved plays and musicals; her mother remembers reciting lines and songs from “Frozen” and “Annie” in the bathroom and says, “I swear we still hear her hum.”

That ordinary schoolgirl life changed on a date the family now calls “Diagnosis Day”: November 16. “November 16th will forever be one of the worst days of our lives,” Mairead told

the audience. Vivienne had been diagnosed with a diffuse intrinsic pontine glioma, or DIPG, an aggressive brainstem tumor that primarily affects children. According to the National Cancer Institute, five-year survival rates for childhood cancers overall have risen from about 58 percent in the mid-1970s to more than 80 percent today, but for diffuse midline gliomas such as DIPG, the survival rate remains essentially zero.

From the moment of diagnosis, the family entered a world few parents expect



VIVIENNE C. FINN
FOUNDATION
FINDING A CURE FOR PEDIATRIC CANCER

to navigate. “Immediately we started a six-week course of radiation,” Mairead said. Vivienne took steroids to bring down inflammation. The family learned a new vocabulary: serial MRIs every six weeks and the “scanxiety” that accompanies each one; biopsies; genomic testing to “understand the DNA of the tumor she had so we could determine her next steps.”

Those next steps soon included clinical trials. The first took Vivienne and her parents to Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center in New York for immunotherapy. For a time, there was cautious hope. Then, Mairead told the dinner guests, “sadly, September 6th, we saw that her tumor was growing again.” The family had to stop (“wash out” of) that study and begin looking for another option.

They found it in a small but promising drug then known as ONC201. But the company developing it was struggling to maintain its supply. “The parent company, unfortunately, was running out of supply for this drug,” Mairead said. For many families, that might have been the end of the possibility. Instead, the Finns stepped into a role few bereaved parents envision.

“The Finn Family Foundation decided to make an investment into the drug company to allow them to continue production and also allow us to open an arm of the trial up at Yale,” Mairead said. She described “badgering Yale” and pressing neurologist Nicholas Blondin to add Vivienne’s oncologist, Dr. Asher Marks, as a fellow to the pediatric arm of an expanded-access trial.

“You all know the result,” she told the room. “Vivienne didn’t last four months after this trial. She died March 10th.” She was 11. But Mairead insists her daughter was “a pioneer for science.” In August 2025, the Food and Drug Administration granted accelerated approval to dordaviprone, the drug formerly known as ONC201, as the first systemic therapy for certain diffuse midline gliomas.

“If you can believe it,” she added, “this is somewhat sad—it’s only the seventh drug that is appropriate for the biology of a child.” That scarcity of child-specific cancer drugs, and the slow, expensive process of bringing new ones forward, became the first pillar of the foundation that now bears Vivienne’s name: funding drug development so that an “eighth drug for children” follows ONC201 more quickly than the previous seven.

The second pillar grew out of another set of numbers. “Did you know that one in four families lose about 40% of their income?” Mairead asked. A parent suddenly spending days and nights at

doctor’s appointments, imaging suites and neurosurgical consultations can lose a job. A mortgage and utilities do not wait. She recalled once rushing to Yale and relying on toiletry bags and a shower at the Ronald McDonald House, calling those simple items “invaluable for people that are rushing out the door with a child that’s sick.”

On the Vivienne C. Finn Foundation website, built by family friend Nalini Goolsarran, founder of EdgeSpace Marketing, a resource page now lists practical help for families “currently battling pediatric cancer, any form of cancer.”

A third pillar looks beyond the hospital and the household to policy and will be the focus of later coverage. For this night, Mairead returned often to the child at the center of it all. On each table lay rosary beads. “Vivienne wore this when she did her MRIs,” she said. “I do believe it gave her a lot of peace and consolation. It’s one of my prized pieces of jewelry because it was the last thing she clutched whenever she died.” Guests were invited to take a rosary home and, if they ever needed courage, to “hold onto the cross, see what happens.”

Near the end of her remarks, Mairead reached for an image that now anchors the foundation’s work. “We all live under the shade of trees planted by others,” she said. “Tonight I want to plant some on Vivienne’s behalf.” She asked those gathered to make childhood cancer part of their own family’s giving and reminded them that “children make up 25% of the American population and they are truly 100% of our future.”

Then she invited everyone to eat. “We’re going to bring out for you some of her favorites,” she said. “Juicy steak and icebox chocolate cake.” Around the room, people rose, talked and began to tell one another the story Mairead had just asked them to carry: the story of a girl who loved art and musicals, whose short life helped bring a new drug to children with a brutal disease, and whose name now sits atop a foundation determined to ensure that fewer families ever have a Diagnosis Day of their own.

The next installment in this series will appear in the upcoming issue of *The Sentinel*. Part Two turns from the family’s story to the physicians who cared for Vivienne, offering an inside view of Yale’s pediatric neuro-oncology program. Readers will hear directly from the doctors who met the Finns in the earliest days after diagnosis, learn how clinical decisions are made for children with rare brain tumors, and see the financial and emotional pressures families confront inside the system.

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YOUR NEWS BRIEF
CONTINUED From Page 1

Wreath-Decorating Workshop



Last week, the New Canaan Nature Center held its annual wreath-decorating workshop, where participants used decorative materials and natural cuttings from the property to create their own wreaths. Photo credit: New Canaan Nature Center.

New Exhibit at the Inn



The Inn opened an art exhibit honoring resident Lea G.'s request to showcase her sons' work for her 90th birthday. The display features pieces by Hale and Harry Allen. The exhibit is open daily through January 30, 2026. Photo credit: Waveny LifeCare Network.

NCCS Song & Dance Activity

New Canaan Country School third and fourth-grade families took part in a Ukrainian

folk song and dance activity led by Music and Movement teacher Jen Thiemann. The session was part of the school's effort to show how students build musical skills through movement and partner work.

Christmas Party at the Inn

The Inn held its annual Christmas party with a holiday meal, carols, group activities, and a visit from Santa Claus.

SCHOOLS

NCHS College Search Discussion



On December 4, families attended a discussion with author Jeff Selingo about the college search process, moderated by Superintendent Dr. Bryan Luizzi. The event outlined key factors to consider beyond rankings. These included fit, mentorship, value, and available opportunities. Photo credit: New Canaan Public Schools.

SLS Visits NYC



Recently, St. Luke's School Literary and Global Scholars visited the New York Public Library to gather materials for their year-long projects. Their research topics range from George Orwell's work to the ethics of nuclear energy. Photo credit: St. Luke's School.

ACROSS CT

Wegmans Mixed Nut Recall

Wegmans is recalling certain unsalted deluxe mixed nuts after a supplier test detected salmonella in raw pistachios used in the products. The recalled items were sold in multiple states, including Connecticut, between November 3 and December 1. Customers can return the products for a full refund.

Ziac Recall

Glenmark Pharmaceuticals recalled certain bottles of the blood pressure drug Ziac after testing found trace amounts of another medication in some lots. The FDA classified it as a Class III recall, meaning no expected health risk. The recall covers more than 11,000 bottles with expiration dates through 2026.



NEW CANAAN FAMILIES:
You Are Not Alone

When someone you love is living with Alzheimer's or another form of dementia, the journey can feel overwhelming. That's why we created **The Navigator Program** — an exclusive **FREE** service for **New Canaan residents**, offering personalized guidance, comfort and support every step of the way.

Through the Navigator program, families have **PRIORITY** access to:

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- Adult Day Program
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 <p>Hayoung Choi violin</p>	 <p>Melissa Reardon viola</p>	 <p>Carlos Walker viola</p>
 <p>Alice Yoo cello</p>	 <p>Sara Scanlon cello</p>	 <p>Andrew Armstrong piano</p>

Thursday, December 11, 3:00pm
Friday, December 12, 7:00pm

First Presbyterian Church of New Canaan



Tickets at
newcanaanchambermusic.org

250 Attend the New Canaan YMCA’s Winter Wonderland Event

Families of all ages in the community came together to attend the New Canaan YMCA’s Winter Wonderland event, where 250 attendees enjoyed holiday games and crafts, cookie decorating, hot cocoa, live music, a special visit from Santa, and more. The beloved event, now in its fifth year, brought families together for a festive afternoon filled with joy and connection. The New Canaan YMCA thanks all who attended, including its event sponsors from the National Charity League, New Canaan Chapter, for helping to make the event so special.



Y Winter Wonderland Fazzino Family with Santa



Make safety your priority on the roads this holiday season.

Are you concerned about a friend’s or loved one’s drinking, cannabis, or drug habits?
Are you worried about yourself?

- Contact Al-Anon or Alateen at 1-888-825-2666.
- For help with drug abuse, reach out to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration National Helpline at 1-800-662-4357.
- For additional resources and support, contact New Canaan Human Services at 203-594-3076.

The New Canaan Health and Human Services Commission wishes you a warm, safe, and joyful holiday season.

Jon Meacham Speaks to His Book “The Soul of America-The Battle for Our Better Angels”

By ANNE W. SEMMES

Historian and presidential biographer Jon Meacham is credited with the line, “History, which will surely be our judge, can also be our guide.” Before 400 gathered in Christ Church Greenwich last Wednesday week evening Meacham spelled out that thoughtful line, often with humor, with his addressing his 2018 book “The Soul of America.” His talk is one of an ongoing “Courage & Faith” speaker series, hosted by Christ Church and St. Barnabas Church. Meacham was introduced by Christ Church Rev’d Marek Zabriskie, as “one of the most respected presidential historians of our time, a Pulitzer Prize winning author,” who’d arrived “at a moment when our country and our world feel deeply unsettled. Jon helps us to remember the deeper truths that have carried us through storms before helping us move forward with hope.”

Meacham was described as “a person of deep and personal faith” and “a dedicated Episcopalian.” And of Meacham’s presidential biographies one was of George Herbert Walker Bush told Zabriskie, “Who grew up here in Christ Church.” “He was born in Milton, Massachusetts,” noted Meacham, “but he got here quick.” But it had taken Meacham 17 years to complete his biography. “It was supposed to be posthumous,” he quipped. “But the son of a ... wouldn’t die.”

Jumping into his book, “The Soul of America,” he told of it being “a genuine labor of love... Everything I’ve ever thought is in this book... but things are kind of crazy in the country... it is a deeply unsettling and tumultuous time.... I’m not entirely sure the constitutional order survives. It is up to us, the people, Lincoln said, all people act on incentive. The people who are in power, their unit of commerce is vote, and if we voted a different way, they would do different things.”

Meacham believed, “We’re facing a moral crisis... and the choice we have to make is do we believe that the democratic lowercase D covenant is worth deferring our own gratification from instant gratification to a sense where we give and we take because that’s what makes a democracy work. You pay taxes up here so that I get a bridge in Tennessee and you’ll never drive over it, but I’m paying taxes so you have better vermouth up here...”

“If we don’t choose to see each other as neighbors, as best opponents,” he continued, “if we take that category and make it enemies, then autocracy is what naturally follows. Because the oldest truth in human history is that the strong rule the weak, the second oldest truth is that the weak can become the strong and the point of the United States of America, the point of the Western liberal tradition was that the rule of law and a constitutional order would take us above the state of nature ... to govern not by the force of our fists, but the force of our ideas.”

“The remarkable thing about the United States of America,” he told, “is that for about 240 years, we had a different answer, and just enough of us decided to take part in that covenant that politics should not be total war every single day, a, fight over identity and power and money.” Meacham would describe himself as, “I am not a Republican, I’m not a Democrat. I have voted for candidates of both parties.”

Meacham takes daughter to Capitol He told of a visit with his teenaged daughter to the Capitol on an “Ash Wednesday in 2021.” And “There’s National Guard troops, not because of a foreign foe, but because of people who chose to believe a lie about an election.” And “The President has provided a running narrative, a reality show that just happens to now be our reality, which I believe is part of the tragedy of the era, but we won’t be able to address what’s wrong without understanding the appeal of the phenomenon.”

“The appeal is that every single day there is a drama being staged for people... sometimes there are Venezuelans in the water and sometimes they’re lawmakers from New York, sometimes they’re

lawmakers from Michigan.... It’s a casting enterprise and it is a consuming, enveloping, incredibly appealing drama for millions upon millions of people.”

“We have to tell a different story of lessons learned over decades in our history,” he said. “The greatest American leaders have managed to articulate a hopeful vision that has for just enough of the time managed to overshadow fear. But there is no permanent victory in American politics short of the coming of the kingdom. I talk about the soul of the country because I believe in Hebrew and in Greek, soul means breath or life... it’s the essence of who we are. But to me, a soul is not entirely good or bad. It’s an arena of contention in which our worst instincts do battle with our better angels. And you just hope that the better angels win enough of the time. And I think our history affirms that again and again.”

“If we can check two boxes, the covenant of modern democracies is we’ll do what it takes. Candor matters in this - and empathy.” And the most empathetic man he “ever knew, not just politician but man” was George Herbert Walker Bush. “President Bush always tried to think about the other guy - and George Bush was not a perfect person...He would do almost anything for a vote, but he’d be the first person to call 911.”

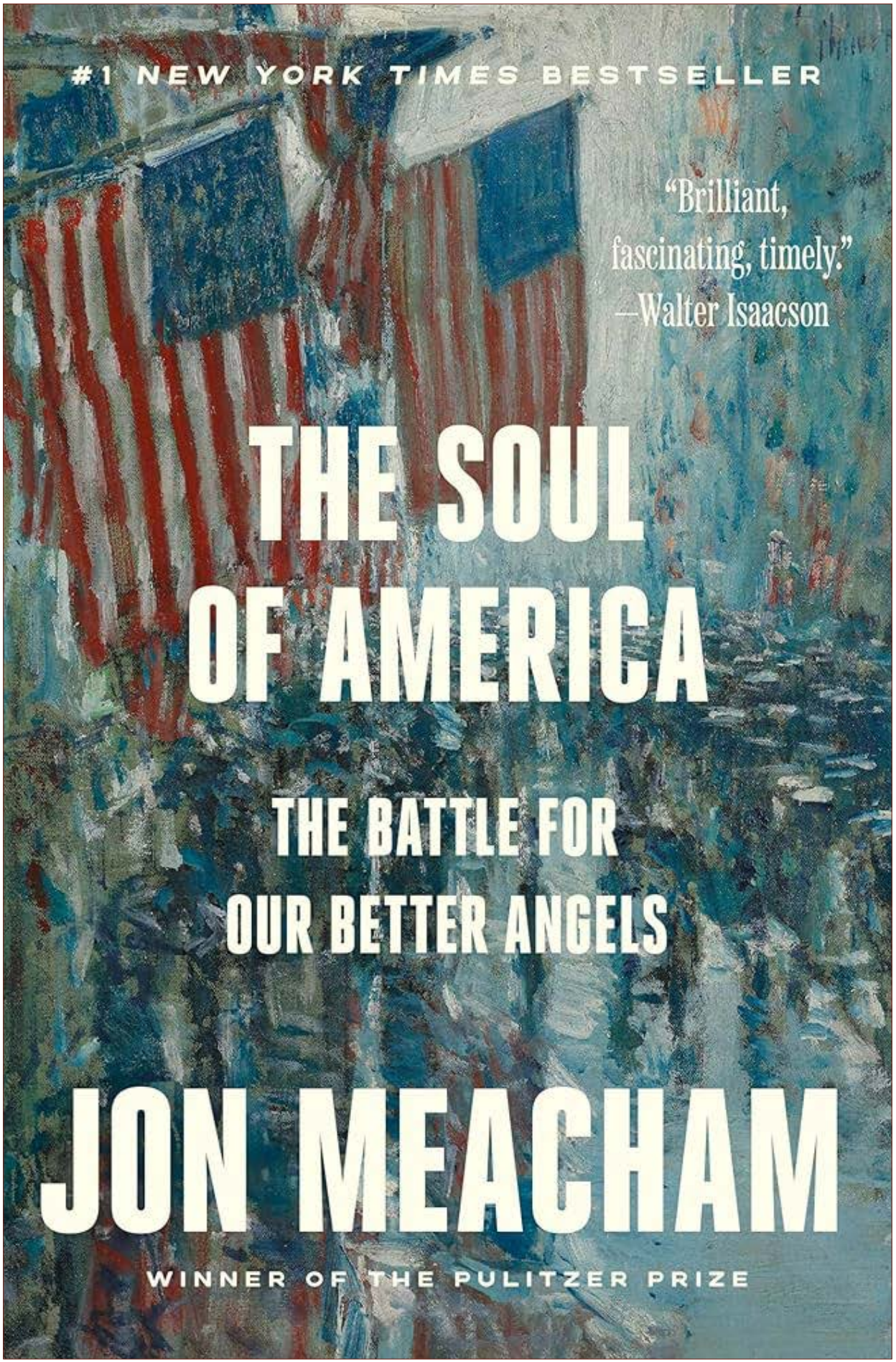
Bush and Gorbachev “This is a man who at the age of 18, drove from Andover to Boston to be sworn into the Navy, was shot down out of the sky at age 20... He was thinking about Mikhail Gorbachev, who had a hardcore right wing in Russia that did not want to see Soviet greatness go away... The wall was coming down, freedom was winning. Bush was thinking how it would work or not work for Gorbachev. It was one of the vital moments in the peaceful conclusion to the Cold War. The Soviet Union is going to collapse without a single American troop being in an unusual forward position. But it happened, not least because George Bush gave Gorbachev room to have his dignity.”

“That case was never made to me by President Bush,” told Meacham. “It was made to me by Gorbachev who said that the moment that Bush decided to be quiet and dignified and restrained because of empathy was one of the critical moments in leading to the peaceful dissolution of the Soviet Union. If George Bush can do it, can’t we?”

Meacham ended with another memorable Bush moment. “We’re in this church where in October of 1953, the Bushes buried their daughter, Robin Pauline Robinson Bush... The Bushes had lost her to leukemia.” Pulling a note out of his pocket, he said, “I want to share with you part of a letter that President Bush in the 1950s wrote his mother, also your fellow parishioner, Dorothy Walker Bush, who kept it in her bedside table on Grove Lane until she died in 1992.

“It’s a unique document in presidential literature.” He began, “There is about our house a need. The running, pulsating restlessness of the boys as they struggle to learn and grow needs a counterpart...We need some soft blonde hair to offset those crew cuts. We need a dollhouse to stand firm against our forts and rackets and a thousand baseball cards. We need a legitimate Christmas angel, one who doesn’t have cuffs beneath the dress... We need a little one who can kiss without leaving egg or jam or gum.... She was patient... Her peace made me feel strong...”

And it was during the 17 years with Meacham working on Bush’s biography that he would ask Bush to read that letter out loud to him. “Long before he finished,” told Meacham, “He broke down with an extraordinary level of physical sobbing.” “Why did you want President Bush to read that?” interrupted Bush’s Chief of Staff entering the room. “Well,” Meacham responded, “If you want to know someone’s heart... The President jumped in saying,” ‘You have to know what breaks it. That’s who we should be.”



“The greatest American leaders have managed to articulate a hopeful vision that has for just enough of the time managed to overshadow fear.”



Jon Meacham, Courage & Faith speaker and presidential historian addressing the audience at Christ Church Greenwich. Photo by Bobbi Eggers.

REAL ESTATE DASHBOARD

REAL ESTATE DASHBOARD EDITOR
John Engel | John.Engel@Elliman.com

REAL ESTATE DASHBOARD CONTRIBUTOR
Robyn Bonder | Robyn.Bonder@Elliman.com

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NEW LISTINGS

Address	List Price	SqFt	Price/SqFt	AC	BR	FB
47 Bank Street	\$1,395,000	1,684	\$828		3	2
226 Putnam Road	\$2,999,000	4,581	\$655	1.01	4	5

NEW SALES

Address	Original List	List Price	Sold Price	DOM	BR	FB	Acres
357 Jelliff Mill Road	\$1,189,000	\$1,189,000	\$1,310,000	16	3	3	1
59 Snowberry Lane	\$1,800,000	\$1,695,000	\$1,600,000	97	5	4	2.04
331 Dans Highway	\$2,195,000	\$2,195,000	\$2,805,000	5	5	4	6.28
100 Spring Water Lane	\$2,399,000	\$2,399,000	\$2,500,000	8	7	4	2.11
48 Silver Ridge Road	\$2,495,000	\$2,495,000	\$2,495,000	31	4	3	1.13
1580 Ponus Ridge	\$3,499,000	\$3,499,000	\$3,400,000	146	5	4	2.54
515 Carter Street	\$5,750,000	\$5,750,000	\$5,925,000	8	5	5	2
250 Carter Street	\$6,495,000	\$5,945,000	\$5,600,000	56	6	8	2.01

He Wants to Waive the Contingency, She Wants to Wait *Inside Couple Dynamics in Real Estate*



BY JOHN ENGEL

Last week’s column began with *Men Are from Mars, Women Are from Venus* — a book we weren’t reading for real estate but that nonetheless gave us language for patterns that show up every weekend at open houses. The point wasn’t the gender sketch itself so much as the framework: stress responses, “caves,” connection, and the way people switch into loss-aversion the moment a negotiation turns into an inspection report. Behavioral economists have spent decades proving what John Gray mapped metaphorically: People react to potential loss with twice the intensity of potential gain, and you can watch that play out in staging budgets, bidding wars, and decisions about debt.

The first column argued a simple idea: No one approaches a house like a neutral calculator. They arrive with wiring. This week, we move from the metaphor to the mechanics — from the audiobook to the kitchen table — to see how those internal operating systems shape real couples, real sellers, and real transactions.

Risk, Relationships, and the Reality of Bidding Wars

In housing markets, that risk-tolerance gap expresses itself in down-payment choices, borrowing behavior, and comfort with debt. Zillow’s Consumer Housing Trends Report shows that men are more likely to borrow the maximum allowed, while women are more likely to choose a mortgage payment that preserves future flexibility. When buyers waive mortgage contingencies to win bidding wars, the decision tracks the same pattern: The partner who is more risk-tolerant tends to see the contingency as an obstacle; the risk-averse partner sees it as a necessary safety valve. It’s the same house, same price, same lender — but a different internal calculation of potential danger.

And then there’s seller behavior. Some sellers look at a major staging or painting project as an investment with a likely return — a risk worth taking to maximize their outcome. Others experience the up-front cost as a threat, a sunk expense with no guarantee of payoff. One is thinking in terms of opportunity, the other in terms of potential loss. Behavioral economists would call this framing. Gray would say they are simply wired to feel safety differently. In practice, agents see the consequences: deals that never make it to market because risk aversion wins the argument.

Feelings, Facts, and the Two-Track Mind

Consumer-decision researchers have long shown that people make buying choices through two systems: affective (emotion-driven) and cognitive (analysis-driven). Gray’s metaphor neatly maps onto this dual-system model. Some buyers fall in love with a house because it “feels right” — light, flow, neighborhood, potential. Others



George and Mary regard the old Granville house in Frank Capra's 1946 classic Christmas film, *It's a Wonderful Life*.

evaluate structure, mechanicals, comps, and resale value first.

When partners operate on different channels, their timelines and thresholds diverge. One is ready to write an offer; the other is still gathering data. From the outside it looks like disagreement. Inside, it’s simply two systems solving the same problem using different tools.

Real-estate is uniquely suited to expose these differences because the product is both financial and emotional. A house is an asset and a dream. It’s shelter and identity. Research on dual-process decision-making shows that when purchases combine risk, emotion, and long-term consequences, couples often shift back and forth between the two systems — sometimes in conflict, sometimes in synch. Agents watch this in real time: The partner who was analytical at the open house suddenly becomes emotional at inspection; the partner who fell in love on day one suddenly panics at the appraisal. It’s not inconsistency. It’s human decision-making under uncertainty.

Add time pressure — the spring market, disappearing inventory, a competing offer — and the decision process tilts even further. Studies on choice overload show that people perform worse when forced to choose quickly with imperfect information. In real estate, this means a higher fall-through rate, more post-inspection withdrawals, and more “cold feet” moments that have nothing to do with the house and everything to do with how humans process stress. Staging, renovation decisions, buying before selling, taking out contingencies — all of these are filtered through each partner’s unique blend of emotional and analytical reasoning. Gray’s model doesn’t explain everything, but it names the tension couples feel: two people trying to buy one house while using two different operating systems.

The funny thing is, none of this feels abstract when you’re standing in a kitchen with a couple trying to decide whether to offer. You can almost sense which instinct is firing. One person is imagining hosting Thanksgiving; the other is calculating resale value. One is picturing morning light; the other is worried about the roof. They’re not disagreeing — they’re processing. Gray calls it different emotional needs; the scientists call it different evaluative pathways. I just see two people trying to make one decision with two entirely different sets of chemistry behind it.

Let’s look at a few situations I’ve run into recently and see whether Gray’s framework actually clarifies anything.

Painters, Profits, and Polar Opposites

Two recent sellers illustrate the contrast better than any theory can. About a year ago, I advised a woman preparing to move overseas to finish her painting but avoid taking on more big projects. She didn’t listen — because she couldn’t. She had a vision for what her home could be, and she wanted it to present perfectly. She poured more than \$300,000 into restoring a cottage, renovating a master suite, and upgrading a kitchen, all in the months before listing. It was emotional, yes, but it was also excellent business:

“They’re not disagreeing — they’re processing.”

The house received multiple offers and sold for roughly \$600,000 more than we originally projected, all in a single weekend. She had a partner, and together they talked through every decision, every risk, every possibility.

Now contrast that with a single man I’m advising today. He also inherited a home in his divorce, has rented it for a decade, feels no emotional attachment to it, and is preparing to leave the country. We have time — nothing happens in December. The stager is ready to go. I recommended a \$40,000 paint and stage that would almost certainly add \$100,000 in value by spring. He chose not to do it. Not out of stubbornness or budget constraints, but because, as he put it, “The next owner will want to pick their own colors anyway.” To him, the house is just a house, and the path of least resistance feels like the logical one. No partner to talk it through with, no emotional imprint, no vision beyond “get it listed and go.”

If Gray were listening in, he’d say these aren’t just two different temperaments; they’re two different stress responses. The first seller expanded her field of view, imagined possibilities, and pursued completeness. The second moved toward simplicity, narrow focus, and lowered friction. She leaned into vision; he leaned into efficiency. One response maximized the upside. The other minimized disruption. Same market, same season, same advice. Two entirely different internal operating systems.


Week Two Summary

This second column in this series shows how couples and sellers translate risk, emotion, and analysis into real decisions. Sometimes that produces spectacular upside; sometimes it produces missed opportunities. What looks like conflict is often just different wiring.

In the final installment next week, the lens widens again. We will look at timing, the psychology of the spring market, and the way real estate teams themselves mirror the dual operating systems buyers and sellers bring to every transaction.

John Engel is a broker with the Engel Team at Douglas Elliman in New Canaan, and he cuts his tree each year in Easton - this year taking care to check for mice after last year's nest rode home with them and erupted with activity once the tree was decorated. Across hundreds of acres of neatly organized trees he could see the colonial-era stacked stone walls meander, green with lichen, separating spruces from firs. Only in New England. He stopped for a moment to reflect how long those walls must have been there, the quiet backdrop to so many family Christmas photos over the years.


Submit questions and comments to John.Engel@Elliman.com



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12
DEC

7:00
PM

New Canaan Chamber Music Concert

14
DEC

4:00
PM

Charis Chamber Voices Concert

16
DEC

7:00
PM

Open Mic Night

17
DEC

7:00
PM

NC High School Choirs Concert

24
DEC

5:00
PM

Family Service

24
DEC

6:30
PM

God's Acre Caroling

24
DEC

10:00
PM

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Rob Mathes' Masterwork Makes Holiday Magic



Now entering its 33rd season, the 2025 Rob Mathes Holiday Concert returns to the PepsiCo Theatre—with Mathes leading a 40-voice choir, six-piece horn section, string quartet, and featured vocalists James “D-Train” Williams and Vaneese Thomas. Mathes calls it “a Lincoln Center-quality evening of some of the best musicians in New York City—and the world.” In this 2018 photo from the 25th Annual Rob Mathes Holiday Concert at the Performing Arts Center at Purchase College, Rob Mathes (second from left)—our own neighbor who grew up, studied, and still lives in Greenwich—shares the stage with Sting, Vanessa Williams, and David Sanborn. The sold-out performance marked the show’s 25th anniversary, capturing what Mathes brings home to us every December: world-class musicianship rooted in community.

By ELIZABETH BARHYDT

Rob Mathes does not just bring a holiday show to Westchester each December. He festival convenes a summit of New York’s A-list players, a choir that sings like a conservatory, and a book of original songs braided with Ellington-grade horn writing and English-choral glow. The room is the PepsiCo Theatre at The Performing Arts Center, Purchase College—just over the state line in Harrison, at 735 Anderson Hill Road—close enough for New Canaan to claim it as home turf.

The show’s local roots run deep. Mathes grew up in Greenwich, studied with revered area teachers, and traced his catalyst to a High School jazz-ensemble performance where, as a ninth grader, he watched his uncle, trombonist and composer Skip Kelly, solo and realized he needed to write for instruments. “It was literally like an explosion went off in my head,” he recalled. “I need to write for instruments and be a part of what that is.”

The origin story of the holiday concert began with a small rhythm section and a 20-voice choir at Second Congregational Church in Greenwich in 1993–94, then grew as Mathes’ studio life connected him with area horn players and gospel singers who could make a December stage sound like Jazz at Lincoln Center powered by R&B voltage. “These were not just cute horn

arrangements,” he said. “It’s more in the style of like Steely Dan meets Ellington meets Wynton... a six-piece horn section... and extraordinary gospel singers.”

The present-day production functions like a musical summit compressed into two hours. Mathes will field a 40-voice choir, a six-piece horn line, a five-piece band, featured vocalists James “D-Train” Williams and Vaneese Thomas, and a string quartet led by Jonathan Dinklage [yes, if you are wondering, brother of Peter]—then layer intimate carols, original ballads, and big-band detonations across the set so that no section overwhelms the others. “It has its really delicate moments,” he said. “This is not a ‘I Saw Mommy Kissing Santa Claus’ evening... it’s a Lincoln Center quality evening of some of the best musicians in New York City—and the world.”

The bench is as serious as the claim. The concert is known for an “all-star band” and a “high-energy evening of rock, jazz, and blues,” with Mathes’ originals and rewired classics that “rival performances seen on the world’s best stages.” Those previews track the lineage of players who rotate through: world-class rhythm sections, New York brass stalwarts, and storied soloists with

Mathes defies labeling. He defies genres.

Broadway, television, and rock-tour credits.

The ensemble around him is built from relationships earned across three decades of session work and tour direction. The show benefits from that network. Players who have anchored late-night television bands, toured with the Rolling Stones, and recorded platinum albums treat the Purchase stage like a year-end reunion.

The PepsiCo Theatre’s scale—intimate sight lines, audio that flatters both brass punch and choir blend—lets you hear the arranging choices that define Mathes’ reputation. The auditorium is designed for acoustic clarity and professional production; Mathes prefers doing two performances in the smaller hall rather than one in the larger concert hall because a 700-seat space keeps the music close and the dynamics honest. “I want something a little more intimate where there’s not a bad seat in the house,” he said. “In fact, the balcony sounds great—

it’s a good seat—and we can do it twice.” He calls the hall “really perfect... set up for all the different needs—the dressing rooms, the lighting—they just have everything.”

Mathes defies labeling. He defies genres.

Expanding the Frame

Mathes treats December as repertoire, not routine. He speaks about Ellington’s Nutcracker Suite with unguarded joy—“you put that on... it’s the greatest thing you’ve ever heard”—and writes horn charts that move with that vocabulary. He admires the English choral canon and anchors his ballads in that harmony: “In the Bleak Midwinter,” early Vaughan Williams, carols that combine modal melody with counterpoint. He revisits spirituals and gospel standards with the rhythmic sophistication he absorbed from jazz. He also keeps expanding the frame.

please turn to Page B5



Elton John, Rob Mathes, and Matthew Morrison



Rob Mathes working with The Edge and Bono



Ron Mathes working with John Williams



with Jeff Beck




Rob Mathes served as the music director for President Obama’s inauguration concert at the Lincoln Memorial.



with Don Henley

Penguins of the World



Emperor



King



Gentoo



Yellow-eyed



Chinstrap



Magellanic




Macaroni



Adelie



Erect-crested



African



Fiordland



Humboldt



Northern rockhopper




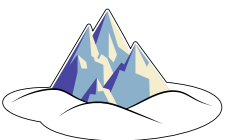
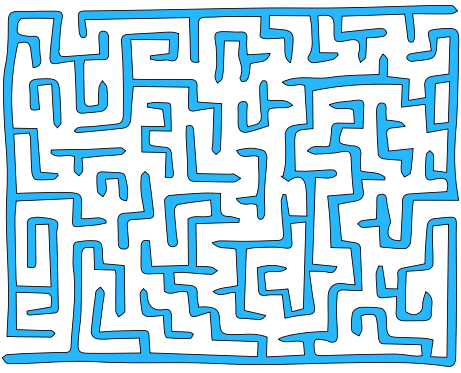


Galapagos

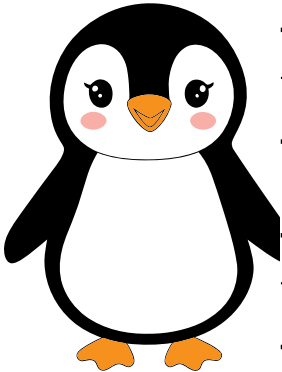


Little blue



White-flipped

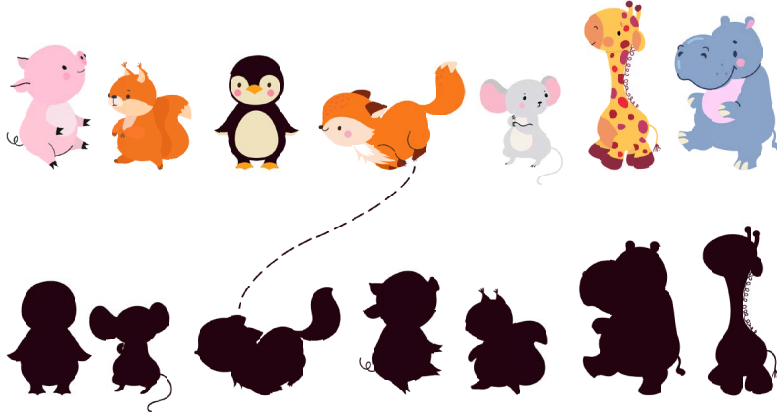




Penguin

Penguin

Find the correct shadow



Sudoku for Kids

	1		3		5			
5		4						1
	6	5	4					
	4				5	6		
3		6		1				
4					3	2		

3	6			2				
		1		6	5			
5	1		2		6			
		6		3				
6				1				
	3	4	6			2		

	2			5	6			
5		4			2			
4		2	6		3			
	3			2				
		6		4				
2		5	3			1		

		2	5			3		
5		6		4				
	1		4					
4	6				1	2		
		4	1					
3	5				2	4		

SUDOKU

Each row, column, nonet can contain each number only once. Answers below.

Easy

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

Hard

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

Very Hard

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

Easy

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

Hard

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

Very Hard

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

Sudoku answers

Bottom row – Very Hard

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

Bottom row – Hard

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

Bottom row – Easy

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

Top row – Very Hard

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

Top row – Hard

3	6	4	5	2	2	9	6	1
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---

Top row – Easy

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

Submit your events at:
newcanaansentinel.com/submit-an-event/

TOWN MEETINGS
<u>Monday, December 15</u>
Inland Wetlands Commission 7-8 p.m., Location not posted at time of publication.
Planning & Zoning - Zoning Regulation Subcommittee Special Meeting 7-9 p.m., Town Hall Meeting Room
<u>Tuesday, December 16</u>
Board of Selectmen 8:30-9:30 a.m., Town Hall Meeting Room
Charter Revision Commission Special Meeting 5-6:30 p.m., Town Hall Board Room
Planning & Zoning Commission 7-8 p.m., Town Hall Meeting Room
<u>Wednesday, December 17</u>
Housing Authority 5:30-6:30 p.m., via Zoom
Police Commission 6-7 p.m., Police Department Training Classroom, 174 South Avenue
Town Council 7-8 p.m., Town Hall Meeting Room & via Zoom

Friday, December 12

COFFEE AND CONVERSATION
8:30 – 9:30 AM at the Lapham Center
Sponsored by the New Canaan Sentinel for a weekly community coffee and conversation.

Open Bridge with the New Canaan Men’s Club
11:30 AM at the Lapham Center
All are welcome to join in the fun and friendly bridge games. Les Kurian and Phil Evensen will provide supervision and guidance for all skill levels. Whether you're an experienced player or completely new to the game, you are welcome to join. You do not have to be a member of the Men’s Club to play. Free. No registration required.

New Canaan Chamber Music | “The Magnificent Mendelssohn Octet”
7 PM at the First Presbyterian Church
The concert will be a veritable showcase of seasoned professionals and a quartet of rising stars. Tickets are available at <https://newcanaanchambermusic.org/tickets/>.

Charlotte’s Web
7 PM at the Powerhouse Theatre
The Children's Literature Association named Charlotte's Web "the best American children's book of the past 200 years". Joseph Robinette, working with the advice of E.B. White, has created a play that captures this work in a thrilling and utterly practical theatrical presentation. This is a beautiful, knowing play about friendship. Tickets are available at <https://tpnc.org>.

The New England Academy of Dance Presents the Nutcracker Ballet
7 PM at the New Canaan High School Auditorium
Attend the New England Academy of Dance's Nutcracker Ballet, featuring the Norwalk Symphony Orchestra. Tickets are available at NEADance.com.

Saturday, December 13

Winter Wonderland
10 AM - 1 PM at the New Canaan Nature Center
Join and be transported into a whole new world as the New Canaan Nature Center transforms into a Winter Wonderland filled with fun and exciting winter holiday activities for the entire family. Registration will be available at <https://newcanaannature.org/winter-wonderland/>.

Grace Farms Holiday Market
10 AM & 5 PM at Grace Farms
Enjoy a festive day of shopping with a curated selection of gifts. Register at <https://gracefarms.org/event/grace-farms-holiday-market>.

Cooking Demo: Dumpling Making
11 AM at the New Canaan Library, Kend Kitchen & Community Room
Unlock the art of dumpling making in this demonstration-style class that celebrates flavor, tradition, and technique. You’ll learn how to make dumpling dough from scratch, master a variety of folding styles, and prepare delicious fillings that span cultures. On December 6, registration will be available at <https://www.newcanaanlibrary.org/event/hold-cooking-class-158665>.

Calendar of Events for Your Fridge

Sustainable Holiday Décor
11 AM at Grace Farms
Make one-of-a-kind holiday décor from living plants and other natural materials with the Grace Farms Garden Team. Tickets are \$50/ person and available at <https://shorturl.at/X9f2Z>.

The New England Academy of Dance Presents the Nutcracker Ballet
11 AM & 4 PM at the New Canaan High School Auditorium
Attend the New England Academy of Dance's Nutcracker Ballet, featuring the Norwalk Symphony Orchestra. Tickets are available at NEADance.com.

Broadway Inspirational Voices Christmas Concert
3:30 PM at Grace Farms
Broadway Inspirational Voices returns to Grace Farms with a site-responsive program that connects us with the presence of the human voice to inspire the audience toward joy. The one-hour program features a holiday repertoire developed for Grace Farms by Connecticut native Allen René Louis, Broadway Inspirational Voices Artistic Director and GRAMMY®-nominated Creative Director and Producer. Tickets are available at <https://shorturl.at/z3yue>.

Adaptive Circus Program: Preschool Free Play
4 PM at the New Canaan Library, Jim & Dede Bartlett Auditorium
Join Circus Moves for 30 minutes of free exploration especially for children with support needs and their families. Balancing, bouncing, tossing, trying, spinning, smiling, jumping, juggling, and lots of clowning around. Come build fine and gross motor ability and gain body-awareness and cooperation skills in a high energy, inclusive environment. Circus Moves activities are adapted to meet each participant at their developmental level. Register at <https://shorturl.at/IVzKB>.

Charlotte’s Web
7 PM at the Powerhouse Theatre
The Children's Literature Association named Charlotte's Web "the best American children's book of the past 200 years". Joseph Robinette, working with the advice of E.B. White, has created a play that captures this work in a thrilling and utterly practical theatrical presentation. This is a beautiful, knowing play about friendship. Tickets are available at <https://tpnc.org>.

Sunday, December 14

The New England Academy of Dance Presents the Nutcracker Ballet
1 & 4 PM at the New Canaan High School Auditorium
Attend the New England Academy of Dance's Nutcracker Ballet, featuring the Norwalk Symphony Orchestra. Tickets are available at NEADance.com.

Charlotte’s Web
2 PM at the Powerhouse Theatre
The Children's Literature Association named Charlotte's Web "the best American children's book of the past 200 years". Joseph Robinette, working with the advice of E.B. White, has created a play that captures this work in a thrilling and utterly practical theatrical presentation. This is a beautiful, knowing play about friendship. Tickets are available at <https://tpnc.org>.

Monday, December 15

Open Bridge with the New Canaan Men’s Club
10 AM at the Lapham Center
All are welcome to join in the fun and friendly bridge games. Les Kurian and Phil Evensen will provide supervision and guidance for all skill levels. Whether you're an experienced player or completely new to the game, you are welcome to join. You do not have to be a member of the Men's Club to play. Free. No registration required.

Chair Yoga
11:30 AM at the New Canaan Library, Jim & Dede Bartlett Auditorium
With the support of a chair, this gentle Chair Yoga class will help you improve postural alignment, maintain pelvic mobility, reduce muscle tension and gain strength through flowing movements and focused breathing. Register at <https://www.newcanaanlibrary.org/event/chair-yoga-166688>.

Fit for Life with Mike
12 PM at the Lapham Center
This class focuses on upper, lower, and core muscle strength while emphasizing posture and balance. Participants use their own body weight and stretch bands in a power circuit of exercises. It is a dynamic and safe program, and every aspect is scalable to almost any

fitness level. Free. To register, call (203) 594-3620.

Wednesday, December 17

Open Bridge with the New Canaan Men’s Club
10 AM at the Lapham Center
All are welcome to join in the fun and friendly bridge games. Les Kurian and Phil Evensen will provide supervision and guidance for all skill levels. Whether you're an experienced player or completely new to the game, you are welcome to join. You do not have to be a member of the Men’s Club to play. Free. No registration required.

Holiday Movie and Hot Cocoa | A Christmas Story
11 AM at the Lapham Center
Join for this fun Christmas classic, and enjoy some coffee, cocoa, cookies and company. Based on the humorous writings of author Jean Shepherd, this beloved holiday movie follows the wintry exploits of youngster Ralphie Parker, his brother and friends in the weeks leading up to Christmas Day. Guaranteed to warm your heart and leave you in the Christmas Spirit. Free. To register, call (203) 594-3620.

Billiards for Everyone with Mike Bacon
2-4 PM at the Lapham Center
If you’re looking to have some fun, learn to play pool, or just play a game, join Mike on Wednesdays. Free. To register, call (203) 594-3620.

Journey into the World of Tea | Herbal Infusions
3 PM at Grace Farms
Explore the distinction between tea and tisane. Taste hot and cold versions of different herbal blends while learning the origins of herbs and the different methods of preparation. Register at <https://shorturl.at/vlgny>.

Thursday, December 18

Life Reimagined
1 PM at the Lapham Center
Purposeful living promotes happiness, better sleep, longevity, a healthier heart and reduces the risk of Alzheimer’s and other diseases. Hosts Marcy Rand, LMSW, Director, New Canaan’s Human Services Department, and Robin Rockafellow, LCSW, will lead an informal and friendly group discussion of who we were, who we are, and the creative ways to explore our interests, abilities, knowledge, and activities in connection with the community around us. Free. To register, call (203) 594-3620.

ChatGPT, Gemini, and Beyond: Understanding Today’s AI Chatbots
6 PM at the New Canaan Library, Craig B. Tate Conference Room
Join for an engaging and approachable overview of today’s most widely used AI chatbots. This session is designed for beginners and everyday users, with no technical background required. Register at <https://shorturl.at/K5qyc>.

Friday, December 19

COFFEE AND CONVERSATION
8:30 – 9:30 AM at the Lapham Center
Sponsored by the New Canaan Sentinel for a weekly community coffee and conversation.

Open Bridge with the New Canaan Men’s Club
11 AM at the Lapham Center
All are welcome to join in the fun and friendly bridge games. Les Kurian and Phil Evensen will provide supervision and guidance for all skill levels. Whether you're an experienced player or completely new to the game, you are welcome to join. You do not have to be a member of the Men’s Club to play. Free. No registration required.

Saturday, December 20

New Canaan Santa Run
7:30 AM at Waveny Park
All ages and abilities are welcomed and encouraged to run or walk the 5K course or 1-mile course. More information is available at <https://runsignup.com/Race/CT/NewCanaan/NewCanaanSantaRun>.

Sunday, December 21

Poetry Reading with New Canaan Poet Jamie O’Halloran
3 PM at the New Canaan Library, Craig B. Tate Conference Room
The New Canaan Library is pleased to welcome New Canaan poet Jamie O’Halloran for the official launch and reading of her recently published debut collection Ballast. O’Halloran will answer questions after the reading. Refreshments will be served. Register at <https://shorturl.at/Vbjhz>.

Monday, December 22

NCHS Madrigals: A Holiday Performance
11 AM at the Lapham Center
Celebrate the holidays with the festive music of the NCHS Madrigals. This extraordinarily talented group of singers is sure to delight, as they perform a variety of seasonal songs. Light refreshments will be served. Free. To register, call (203) 594-3620.

Chair Yoga
11:30 AM at the New Canaan Library, Jim & Dede Bartlett Auditorium
With the support of a chair, this gentle Chair Yoga class will help you improve postural alignment, maintain pelvic mobility, reduce muscle tension and gain strength through flowing movements and focused breathing. Register at <https://www.newcanaanlibrary.org/event/chair-yoga-166689>.

Fit for Life with Mike
12 PM at the Lapham Center
This class focuses on upper, lower, and core muscle strength while emphasizing posture and balance. Participants use their own body weight and stretch bands in a power circuit of exercises. It is a dynamic and safe program, and every aspect is scalable to almost any fitness level. Free. To register, call (203) 594-3620.

Friday, December 26

THERE WILL BE NO COFFEE AND CONVERSATION at the Lapham Center

Wednesday, December 31

Wellness Tea Retreat
10 AM- 3 PM at Grace Farms
Relax in the Pavilion and savor a flight of three Grace Farms wellness teas: Rest, Breathe, and Settle. The teas are paired with prompts for self-reflection, adapted from Grace Farms’ River Retreat publication. Register at <https://gracefarms.org/event/wellness-tea-retreat/2025-12-31>.

Friday, January 2, 2026

THERE WILL BE NO COFFEE AND CONVERSATION at the Lapham Center

Monday, January 5, 2026

Vision Board Making for Adults
6 PM at the New Canaan Library, Anderson MakerLab
Join to make your very own Vision Board: a collage of images, text, and other materials to create a visual representation of your goals. Materials will be provided but attendees are welcome to bring their own as well. Register at <https://www.newcanaanlibrary.org/event/vision-board-making-adults-189451>.

Tuesday, January 6, 2026

Avoiding AI-Powered Scams
12 PM at the New Canaan Library, Craig B. Tate Conference Room
In this class, you’ll learn about several scams that use AI tools and get informed on how to better identify these scams to help protect yourself and your family from fraud. Register at <https://shorturl.at/SrgWR>.

Friday, January 9, 2026

COFFEE AND CONVERSATION
8:30 – 9:30 AM at the Lapham Center
Sponsored by the New Canaan Sentinel for a weekly community coffee and conversation.

Health Talks with Shannon and Ellen
11 AM at the Lapham Center
Meet up with Shannon and Ellen from the Health Department for coffee, conversation and snacks. These engaging discussions will help improve your mood and your health! Topics will be announced in the Lapham Center eblasts. To register, call (203) 594-3620.

Saturday, January 10, 2026

Nonprofit Volunteer Fair
10:30 AM- 1:30 PM at the New Canaan Library, Jim & Dede Bartlett Auditorium
Attend a Nonprofit Volunteer Fair featuring 40 nonprofits in New Canaan and the surrounding area. Drop in to speak with representatives and learn how you can get involved with these organizations. Whether you're looking for volunteer opportunities for kids, teens, or adults; hoping to get involved with a nonprofit's board; or simply wondering what organizations support our community, this fair is the place to find answers and make connections.

Wednesday, January 14, 2026

Game Time with Mike Bacon: Name That Face!
12 PM at the Lapham Center
Mike returns as emcee of Name That Face! Guaranteed to bring a smile to your

Calendar of Events for Your Fridge

face, as you test your recall and identify famous world leaders, authors, entertainers, scientists and others in this fast-paced contest. Lunch will be served. Free. To register, call (203) 594-3620.

Blood Sugar & Blood Pressure Clinics
12:30 PM at the Lapham Center
Ellen Samai from New Canaan’s Department of Health provides in-person blood sugar and blood pressure testing. If you plan to have your blood sugar level tested, it is recommend you fast for four hours prior to testing. To register, call (203) 594-3620. Walk-ins welcome.

Thursday, January 15, 2026

NCPS Transition to Kindergarten Meeting
9:30 AM at East Elementary School
All incoming parents from East, South, and West are welcome to join for a presentation & conversation about preparation for kindergarten, including social, emotional, & developmental milestones. More information is available at <https://www.ncps-k12.org/o/ncps/page/kindergarten-information>.

Clever and Crafty with Tricia
1 PM at the Lapham Center
Join Tricia to create quilling snowflakes. Free. To register, call (203) 594-3620.

Tuesday, January 20, 2026

Lunch & Learn with Arianne Kolb, Executive Director of The Merritt Parkway Conservancy
12 PM at the New Canaan Museum & Historical Society
Bring your own sandwich, soup or snack and join for a Lunch & Learn. Arianne will discuss the importance of the Merritt Parkway since its creation in 1932 and it’s impact on travel in the Northeast and explore the intriguing history of one of Connecticut’s iconic landmarks. Register at <https://nchistory.org>.

It’s Teatime!
2:30 PM at the Lapham Center
Get out of the cold and enjoy an old-fashioned tea with friends. A variety of teas, sandwiches and teats will be served. Free. To register, call (203) 594-3620.

Friday, January 23, 2026

New Canaan Sports Trivia Night Hosted by Terry Dinan
6 PM at the New Canaan Museum & Historical Society
Join for New Canaan Sports Trivia Night. There will be a Mexican Buffet dinner and drinks (including beer & wine). This event is open to all ages. Register at [https://](https://nchistory.org)

nchistory.org.

Wednesday, January 28, 2026

Mahjongg Strategy Class | How to Pick a Hand
12 PM at the Lapham Center
Join Aggie in learning how to choose a hand and make the Charleston work for you. Free. To register, call (203) 594-3620.

Thursday, January 29, 2026

Tech Workshop with Cooper Young and George Geist of Good Kid Tech
2 PM at the Lapham Center
The program will begin with a fifteen-minute presentation on a tech-related topic, followed by time to answer your personal tech questions. Free. To register, call (203) 594-3620.

Mocktails
6:30 PM at Grace Farms
Enjoy an evening of crafting and sipping delicious mocktails. Create three seasonal beverages while discovering connections between food, culture, and community. Tickets are \$28/non-members, \$22/members, and available at <https://gracefarms.org/event/mocktails-2/2026-01-29>.

Friday, January 30, 2026

Humanity in Architecture Film Festival | Day One
6:30-8 PM at Grace Farms
Opening night of the film festival will feature an evening film and conversation with inspiring themes that will echo throughout the next day. Register at <https://shorturl.at/HHeEi>.

Saturday, January 31, 2026

Humanity in Architecture Film Festival | Day Two
10 AM- 5 PM at Grace Farms
Spend the day with films and Q&As spread among three spaces. Throughout the day there will be additional opportunities to join a guided winter walk, yoga and movement with Pilin Anice, and a design session with Slade Architecture. Register at <https://shorturl.at/PhOr0>.

Owl Moon Night Hike
6:30-8 PM at the New Canaan Nature Center
Join to discover how owls use their senses to navigate the night. Tickets are \$15/person. Registration will be available at <https://newcanaannature.org/night-hikes/>.

SAVE THE DATE

Wednesday, February 4, 2026

Demystifying AI
12 PM at the Lapham Center
This AI presentation will demystify artificial intelligence by defining AI in plain language, exploring its main forms—from classic machine learning to cutting-

edge large language and agentic models—and tracing its evolution and practical uses both in enterprise and daily life. Free. To register, call (203) 594-3620.

Tuesday, February 10, 2026

Flower Arranging with Juliet Howe of Twigs Design
11 AM at the Lapham Center
In this hands-on workshop, Juliet will guide you through echo-friendly, approachable floral design techniques, sharing some of her favorite tips and creative strategies as you craft your own unique arrangement. Containers and choice of fresh flowers will be provided. Participants are asked to bring clippers, if possible. \$50/person. To register, call (203) 594-3620.

Lunch & Learn with Mary Frances Malone, and The Town Players of New Canaan on the History of Valentines Day
12 PM at the New Canaan Museum & Historical Society
Bring your sandwich, soup or snack and join for a Lunch & Learn session. On this special day, Mary Frances Malone, along with The Town Players of New Canaan, will delve into the History of Valentine’s Day. Discover the stories behind the celebration through engaging narratives and performances. Register at <https://shorturl.at/F5LLt>.

Thursday, February 12, 2026

Clever and Crafty with Tricia
1 PM at the Lapham Center
Join Tricia to create felt needling penguins. Free. To register, call (203) 594-3620.

Tech Workshop with Cooper Young and George Geist of Good Kid Tech
2 PM at the Lapham Center
The program will begin with a fifteen-minute presentation on a tech-related topic, followed by time to answer your personal tech questions. Free. To register, call (203) 594-3620.

Friday, February 13, 2026

Valentine’s Bingo
11 AM at the Lapham Center
Play bingo and win prizes with a Valentine’s Day theme. Free. To register, call (203) 594-3620.

Wednesday, February 18, 2026

Recognizing Cognitive Biases and Building Healthier Thinking Habits
10:30 AM at the Lapham Center
Join Gabriel Corredor, founder of Evergreen Daytime Senior Care, for an engaging presentation on how confirmation bias, the spotlight effect, and loss of aversion quietly influence our decisions - and how understanding them can help us think more clearly,

act more confidently, and connect more effectively. Free. Coffee and treats will be served. To register, call (203) 594-3620.

Thursday, February 19, 2026

Understanding Hospital and Subacute Evaluations: Purpose, Process and Patient Benefits
11 AM at the Lapham Center
Ever wonder why hospitals and subacute care facilities conduct so many tests and evaluations? Join Kathy Collins to learn about the purpose behind these assessments, how they help ensure safety, guide treatment and support recovery. Free. To register, call (203) 594-3620.

Tuesday, February 24, 2026

How to Use My Rec with Kathy Collins
11 AM at the Lapham Center
If you’ve used MyRec to register for a program at Lapham only to find out when you come to the program that you were not registered, this talk is for you. Join Kathy to learn how to use this system to register for all your Lapham programs and activities. We’ll review Step-by-step how to create an account, browse programs, add choices to your account, register and receive confirmation. Free. To register, call (203) 594-3620.

Friday, April 17, 2026

Breeches & Bowties Spring Gala
Time to be announced at the Wee Burn Country Club
Join the New Canaan Mounted Troup at their 2026 Spring Gala with guest speaker Drew Doggett. Tickets will be available at <https://newcanaanmountedtroup.org>.

Thursday, May 7, 2026

NCNC Annual Lecture & Luncheon
11:30 AM- 2 PM
Additional details will be provided as the event approaches.

BLOOD DRIVES

Monday, December 15 & Tuesday, December 16

Greenwich Blood Donation Center
99 Indian Field Road
Greenwich, CT 06830
11:00 AM – 7:00 PM

W e d n e s d a y , December 17

Merritt 7 - Building 501
429 Main Ave
Norwalk, CT 06851
8:00 AM – 1:00 PM

VFW
465 Riverside Avenue
Westport, CT 06880
11:00 AM – 4:00 PM

Greenwich Blood Donation Center
99 Indian Field Road
Greenwich, CT 06830
9:00 AM – 5:15 PM

Thursday, December 18

Greenwich Blood Donation Center
99 Indian Field Road
Greenwich, CT 06830
7:00 AM – 3:00 PM

Support Services & Meetings

Friday, December 19

Suicide Prevention Training: Question, Persuade and Refer
11 AM at the New Canaan Library, McLaughlin Meeting Room
Those trained in QPR learn how to recognize the warning signs of a suicide crisis and how to question, persuade, and refer someone to help. Register at <https://shorturl.at/jnvoQ>.

Wednesday, January 7, 2026

Alzheimer and Dementia Support Group with the Waveny LifeCare Network
2 PM at the New Canaan Library, McLaughlin Meeting Room
Family members, caregivers, and friends are invited to meet for informative and supportive group sessions to help navigate changes related to memory loss and cognitive decline. Register at <https://shorturl.at/GPkxL>.

Thursday, February 19, 2026

Understanding Hospital and Subacute Evaluations: Purpose, Process and Patient Benefits
11 AM at the Lapham Center
Ever wonder why hospitals and subacute care facilities conduct so many tests and evaluations? Join Kathy Collins to learn about the purpose behind these assessments, how they help ensure safety, guide treatment and support recovery. Free. To register, call (203) 594-3620.

Every Friday

AA Speaker Meeting
Wheelchair Access
Fridays at 7:30 AM
Congregational Church of New Canaan

Every Saturday

AA Meeting-Sober Citizens Group
Saturdays at 9:15 AM
First Presbyterian Church of New Canaan

AA Meeting-Laundry and Dry Cleaning Group
Saturdays at 10:30 AM
First Presbyterian Church of New Canaan

Lost Then Found NA Meeting
Wheelchair Accessible
Saturdays at 7 PM

United Methodist Church (back entrance)

Every Monday

AA Meeting
Wheelchair Access
Mondays at 7:30 AM
Congregational Church of New Canaan

Adult Child Al-Anon Meeting
Mondays at 12 PM
St. Mark’s Church, Youth Room

Every Tuesday

Adult Child Alanon Meeting
Tuesdays at 12 PM
St. Mark’s Parish House, Conf. Room

Every Wednesday

AA Step Meeting
Wheelchair Access
Wednesdays at 7:30 AM
Congregational Church of New Canaan

Al-Anon Parent’s & Newcomer’s Mtg.
Wednesdays at 7:30 PM
Silver Hill, Jorgenson House
208 Valley Rd., New Canaan

Every Thursday

AA Big Book Meeting.
Wheelchair Access
Thursdays at 7:30 AM
Congregational Church of New Canaan

New Canaan Parent Support Group
7- 8:30 PM
St. Mark’s Episcopal Church
New Canaan

OUR NEIGHBORS

Friday December 12 to Sunday, December 14

New Haven Ballet presents The Nutcracker
Times Vary at the Shubert Theatre. 247 College Street, New Haven
Join Clara on a dazzling journey through the Land of Snow and the Land of Sweets, performed by students from the New Haven Ballet School alongside New York City Ballet stars Harrison Coll and Sara Adams. A timeless tale of adventure, courage, and joy for the whole family. Tickets are available at <https://www.shubert.com>.

Saturday, December 13 to Sunday, December 21

A Sherlock Carol
Times Vary at the Westport Country Playhouse
25 Powers Court, Westport
Two literary legends collide when a grown-up Tiny Tim calls on Sherlock Holmes to investigate the mysterious death of Ebenezer Scrooge. This wildly inventive holiday mashup of Dickens and Doyle blends mystery, heart, and humor in a witty and wondrous theatrical treat. Tickets are available at <https://www.westportplayhouse.org>.

MATHES MAGIC
From Page 1

One year, inspired by the best performance he has ever seen of Beethoven’s Missa solemnis in Philadelphia, he invited the Philadelphia Orchestra’s concertmaster, David Kim, to join him. Mathes explained that Missa solemnis “was almost unperformable because the choir parts are so demanding,” with “high B-flats for ten minutes,” yet it contains “some of the most sublime music ever written.” What moved him most was “this long violin solo in the Benedictus movement,” which he called “perhaps my favorite Beethoven music.” He recalled turning to his wife in Verizon Hall and saying, “I have never heard the violin played like that in the Missa solemnis.” When he met Kim again months later while working with Sting, he told him from the stage, “I can’t believe you’re here, David... I’ve never heard and will never hear the Missa solemnis played that beautifully.” Kim replied, “Can you say that again? I didn’t quite hear that,” and soon after agreed to appear in the holiday concert.

Another season he re-voiced “Dreidel, Dreidel” as “Strayhorn Dreidel,” a wink to the Duke–Strayhorn partnership and a nod to the show’s regular Hanukkah segment.

The Hanukkah segment is not token; it is crafted. Mathes has made a habit of writing a Hanukkah song “almost every

year,” studies the history with rabbis and friends, and composes new work that carries narrative weight rather than novelty. “Teach me everything you know about Hanukkah,” he once asked Rabbi Go. From that afternoon’s lesson on Judah Maccabee and the miracle of the oil, he drew themes of humility and endurance. “The Hanukkah story is beautiful,” he said. “It’s a story of a small group of people changing the world in different ways.” He uses that spirit to write pieces like “Strayhorn Dreidel,” “Too Many Stars,” and others that balance swing, modal harmony, and story. “Some of the greatest music ever written was written by Jewish composers,” he noted, “but the Hanukkah music is terrible... so I try to change that.”

The result feels less like a standard holiday revue and more like a living anthology.

The setlist toggles between Mathes’ own cycle and recalibrated favorites. “William the Angel,” a narrative about a disheveled guardian bent on saving one soul before returning to heaven, has become a call-and-response with the audience; on the one year he tried to rest it, he heard about it in the lobby. “If I don’t do that every year, I’m in trouble,” he said. “Wake Up, It’s Christmas Morning” and “When the Baby Grew Up” sit beside close-harmony carols, blues-choir shouts, and horn-driven instrumentals.

Mathes often calls the audience “part of the band,” a family that renews itself when new listeners

The result feels less like a standard holiday revue and more like a living anthology.

show up and longtime fans return with friends. The lore includes a supporter who flies in annually from Utah and brings two additional people each time, seeding future regulars. “We had heard about the concert... We will never miss one again,” is how Mathes summarizes many conversions.

Mathes’ own account of why the concert endures puts the focus back on the people who come. He calls it a “family reunion” with “the emotional architecture of Dickens.” In his words, A Christmas Carol “is a miracle... a story of humility and redemption.” He says the combination of that story with “the story of innocence entering the world with God entering the world, not with a mighty army but in the most fragile of ways,” is what gives the concert its heart.

The event also raises funds for Food Rescue US – Fairfield County, linking a night of virtuosity with local need. For Greenwich readers, that matters: the music is world-class and the impact is local.

The production values show a composer/arranger’s obsession with proportion. Horn voicings arrive like sentences that resolve grammatically; the string quartet articulates counter-melodies with

chamber articulation; the choir is fed syllabic lines that reinforce groove rather than sit on top of it. The band can drive a gospel vamp hard enough to lift a balcony and then decay into near-silence for an a cappella benediction. The pacing is as considered as the harmonies: a groove-forward opener, a choral tableau, a secular standard reframed in minor-key melancholy, original songs sung by each of Mathes’ daughters, a jazz interlude that quotes Ellington or Strayhorn without pastiche, then a climactic pairing that marries revival-tent joy to cathedral resonance.

The concert’s frame also includes the Bitter End in Greenwich Village, where Mathes will run warm-up sets with his core band—no choir, no strings—before the Purchase weekend. The club’s place in New York music history gives those nights a historic throughline back to Dylan, Baez, and Lady Gaga.

For all of the headliners he has served—Sting’s Symphoncities project, the Broadway musical The Last Ship, Springsteen sessions, Weezer’s orchestral record—December is where Mathes stands alone. He writes the charts, hires the players, sings the songs, and conducts from the keyboard or

the guitar. It is also where his Greenwich story is onstage: teachers’ names spoken from the mic, neighbors in the choir, families in the rows who have passed tickets down like season seats. If you live here, this is not a destination event across a river; it is a twenty-minute hop to a space that would be worth a pilgrimage even if it were two states away.

For a Greenwich audience, the argument is simple. If you love music, the most complete version of December in the New York region is in your backyard. The concert is built by one of your own, educated by the teachers who still shape students in town. The venue is close enough to treat like a neighborhood theatre, yet the band plays with a skyline résumé.

“If they stop coming, we can’t give the concert,” Mathes said of the audience, half-joking but making a point. He spends the rest of the year watering other people’s gardens—arranging, orchestrating, conducting—then asks his neighbors to meet him once a year so he can bring the whole toolkit home.

Tickets are available through The Performing Arts Center, Purchase College website (<https://www.artscenter.org/events/the-rob-mathes-holiday-concert-2/>)



Rob Mathes on stage rocking with Bruce Springsteen.



Rob working with Peter Gabriel.



Rob working with Bonnie Raitt.



Rob working with John Williams and Heart.



Rob on Stage with Sting.

Universal Crossword

Edited by David Steinberg

ACROSS

1 Tremendously

5 Take to court

8 Board, in room and board

13 Stud site

14 Top-ranked

15 “Lord of the Worlds” in the Quran

16 Tex-Mex chain (In this clue’s answer, note the first 2 letters + the last 2)

18 Harsh light

19 Iron deficiency

20 Tender spot to hit in conversation (... first 2 letters + last 2)

22 Shredded

23 Rosalynn Carter, ____

24 One shows you the way

25 Fuming

27 Repeat

30 H.S. support group

32 Civil rights ____

33 “Defying Gravity,” in “Wicked” (... first 4 letters + last 2)

38 ____ out (ventilates)

40 Untruth

41 Cover with asphalt

42 Field for miners? (... first 2 letters + last 3)

47 Telluride SUV maker

48 Gossip

49 Galaxy part

50 Sick

51 Boxer Laila

54 Apr. book reviewer

56 Connect them!

58 Fund (... first 2 letters + last 2)

61 Polished, as a paper

64 NASA scientist

65 Easley Country home to the ancient Mayan city Tikal (... first letter + last 3)

67 Fragrance

68 A Shake-speare play has five

69 Hip to

70 Groups of 12-Down

71 Squeeze (by)

72 Minor dent

DOWN

1 Actress Jessica

2 Item of interest to a bank?

3 Small collectible

4 “I love you,” in Spanish

5 “Catch my drift?”

6 Country assigned the .su domain in 1990: Abbr.

7 Actor Hawke

8 Repulsive “X-Men” adversary?

9 Palindromic fashion magazine

10 One may go off at 10 a.m.

11 Baby bug

12 Animals that outnumber people in New Zealand

14 Stork’s perch

17 Discharges a T-shirt

21 Cannon

25 Sobbed

26 Honeyed quaff

27 Opera solo

28 Colorful Hindu festival

29 Boo-boos

31 Shazam or Snapchat

34 Folder for dispatched emails

35 Lahore native

36 Apt word within “devilish”

37 Not imagined

39 Took a load off

43 Private matters

44 Banjo accessory

45 West Point students

46 Crumble away

51 Make mortified

52 Knight’s long weapon

53 Word with “voice” or “peace”

55 Fish tank buildup

57 Lacking courage

59 Ilk

60 What skill really was, per a sore loser

62 North Carolina college

63 “Aw, heck!”

66 Enjoyed jiaozi

PREVIOUS PUZZLE ANSWER

1/12

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Family Time Crossword
 The (K) Clues Are for Kids

Created by Timothy E. Parker

ACROSS

1. ____ and circumstance

5. (K) Sow or ewe pronoun

8. (K) At the highest point

12. (K) A Great Lake

13. Something a state adds on to a sale

14. (K) Nevada city

15. Scottish loch

16. Chicken ____ king (2 words)

17. Perpendicular building wings

18. (K) Place at the bottom of Earth (2 words)

21. (K) “I spy with my little ____ ...”

22. (K) Late December song

23. Pack down

25. (K) Elderly

27. (K) Part of a pingpong table

29. Do therapy for an injured elbow

32. (K) Wharf

34. (K) Total, in addition

36. Busy person’s list

37. (K) Move away from the group

39. (K) Space between two close mountains

41. (K) Much sooner than later

42. (K) Thing before a front porch

44. Like a controlled lion

46. (K) Maximizing suffix

48. Like The Babylon Bee

52. “‘Tis a pity!”

54. (K) Neverland’s Peter

55. International defense org.

56. Emulate the Titanic

57. (K) Mimic a primate?

58. Blood circulation problem-maker

59. Water aw whirl

60. (K) Very small

61. (K) Some stately trees

DOWN

1. (K) Some farm enclosures

2. (K) Cookie brand

3. Take someone’s words the wrong way

4. A pasta sauce

5. (K) Paper fasteners

6. Angel topper

7. Praise to the skies

8. (K) “Where ____ you?”

9. (K) Thing to answer (2 words)

10. (K) “And it ____ costs a million dollars!”

11. Prepare for a photo

19. (K) A chick’s mom

20. Hammer and anvil location

24. (K) Accomplished, as a goal

25. Co-____ (some apartments)

26. (K) Like an activated candle

28. (K) Yank

30. “Much ____ About Nothing”

31. (K) Wrapped present part

33. (K) Remy from “Ratatouille,” for one

35. Afternoon performance

38. (K) “Uh-huh”

40. Golf score

43. Melonlike tropical fruit

45. Chop into tiny pieces

46. “____ on down the road”

47. (K) Eluded a tag, in a way

49. Scotch strip

50. (K) Powerful little energy source

51. (K) They hold many cars

53. (K) Birds fly in it

Can you find the answer to this riddle within the solved puzzle?

Place for just one pupil?

Look for the answer in next week’s paper.

PREVIOUS PUZZLE ANSWER

1/12

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1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11

12 13 14

15 16 17

18 19 20 21

22 23 24

25 26 27 28 29 30 31

32 33 34 35 36

37 38 39 40 41

42 43 44 45

46 47 48 49 50 51

52 53 54 55

56 57 58

59 60 61

1/13

Wrap Party by Adrian Johnson

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12

13 14 15

16 17 18

19 20 21

22 23 24

25 26 27 28 29 30 31

32 33 34 35 36 37

38 39 40 41

42 43 44 45 46 47

48 49 50

51 52 53 54 55 56 57

58 59 60 61 62 63

64 65 66

67 68 69

70 71 72

Horoscopes

Cosmic Context

This week highlights a blend of reflection and renewed energy. The Sun remains in Sagittarius, encouraging optimism, expansion, and philosophical outlook — a mood that builds steadily toward the new moon in Sagittarius on December 19, setting the stage for fresh starts.

Weekly Forecast by Sign

Aries (March 21–April 19)

Your aims sharpen now. As Mercury moves through Sagittarius, your mind gravitates toward long-term plans and inspired ideas. Use this week to sketch out big-picture goals — and leave time for quiet reflection before committing.

Taurus (April 20–May 20)

Material stability and comfort matter. You may feel drawn to reassess finances or family resources. Rather than rush major purchases or deals, focus on clarifying values and laying groundwork for future security.

Gemini (May 21–June 20)

Conversations and connections take on significance. Honest dialogue could lead to breakthroughs, whether in relationships or personal endeavors. Be open to new perspectives — but double-check details before signing off on anything.

Cancer (June 21–July 22)

Your home and inner life invite calm and restoration. The week favors balancing external demands with emotional recharge. Small acts of self-care or tending to domestic routines may bring much-needed peace.

Leo (July 23–August 22)

Creative energy stirs. Ideas may flow freely, especially around self-expression, hobbies, or personal projects. Rather than launching big changes now, refine your vision — the new moon offers a more auspicious moment to act.

Virgo (August 23–September 22)

Structures and daily routines call for review. Use the clarity you have this week to clear clutter — material or mental — and recalibrate habits. A simpler, more organized path will serve you well as the year draws to close.

Libra (September 23–October 22)

Relationships and shared values come under quiet focus. Conversations may reveal underlying patterns that need airing. Approach with openness and seek fairness — your diplomacy can smooth difficult talk.

Scorpio (October 23–November 21)

Introspection deepens. You may encounter memories or emotions long buried. Channel that sensitivity into creative or spiritual pursuits rather than impulse. Let this be a time of internal growth rather than external action.

Sagittarius (November 22–December 21)

Your season amplifies hope and potential. The cosmos supports envisioning your future — travel, learning, or renewed goals may call. Be mindful of fatigue; ground your enthusiasm with practical steps before diving in.

Capricorn (December 22–January 19)

Shared resources, intimacy, or financial partnerships may benefit from honest discussion. You’re asked to evaluate commitments carefully and ensure transparency. Thoughtful planning now can prevent misunderstandings later.

Aquarius (January 20–February 18)

Learning, discovery, or expanding your worldview feels inviting. Whether through study, conversation, or travel plans, remain open to growth. Avoid rushing — take time to weigh what aligns with your values.

Pisces (February 19–March 20)

Emotional clarity comes into focus. You may feel drawn to let go of outdated ideas or habits. Use the week to reflect, journal, or seek quiet. What you release now can free space for deeper understanding.

How to Use This Week

December 12–19 brings a mix of reflection and forward momentum. With the Sun in Sagittarius guiding inspiration — and a new moon on the 19th ready to reset intentions — treat this time as an opportunity to envision what you truly want, refine your direction, and prepare for a fresh start.

7 LITTLE WORDS

Find the 7 words to match the 7 clues. The numbers in parentheses represent the number of letters in each solution. Each letter combination can be used only once, but all letter combinations will be necessary to complete the puzzle.

CLUES

1 one of week’s five, usually (7)

2 sound on a sitcom track (5)

3 all’s diversified partner (6)

4 one poking around (8)

5 part of a ticker-tape parade (8)

6 best-selling author Flynn (7)

7 bent out of shape (9)

SOLUTIONS

WO NF SUN DAY RUM

UGH GI TED ET DIS

TO AN ER DRY LA

MAG TOR RK LLI CO

Previous Answers: STRESSFUL 2. MOOSE 3. SWEATSUIT 4. HONEYBEES 5. ZIGZAGGING 6. RECESSES 7. LEVEL
 8/25

The answers to this week’s puzzles can be found in the next issue on December 5.

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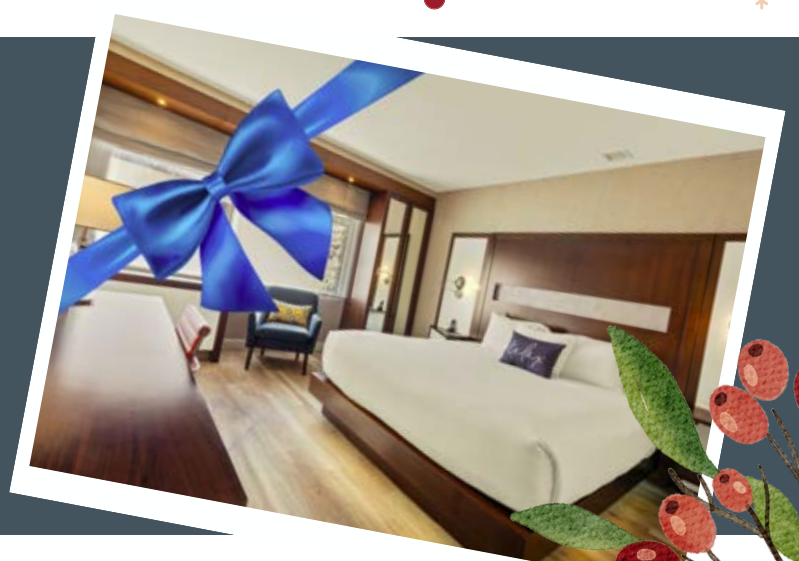


NEW YEAR'S AT TONY'S

Ring in the New Year with a Special Tony's Prix Fixe Menu, DJ & Champagne Toast at Midnight!
Early Seating (5-6:30pm): \$100pp
Late Seating (8:30-10pm): \$150pp
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We're saying "Goodbye" to 2025 and "Hello" to 2026 by offering a special "Buy One, get 50% Off" Promo for everyone who stays with us on December 30th & 31st OR December 31st & January 1st!



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Wildly Successful: The African Penguin



By JIM KNOX

We wound our way downward through the scrubby vegetation. With the cries of gulls overhead, we followed the boardwalk toward the beckoning sound of the surf. A glance at the immense Granite boulders protecting the beach from the unpredictable South Atlantic revealed the aptly named coastline. Boulders Beach in Simonstown, South Africa is a stunning spot. Sheltered inlets of crystal water fade to turquoise, marking the transition to the deeper waters off the Cape Peninsula beyond. Forming part of the Table Mountain National Park Marine Protected Area, the beach is a division of South African National Parks (SANParks) and a national treasure. Though it is a place of unsurpassed natural beauty, we

Hunters of small fish and crustaceans, these hardy little penguins can hold their breath for over 2 minutes and can dive to depths of 400 feet where they forage for sardines, anchovies, crustaceans, and squid.

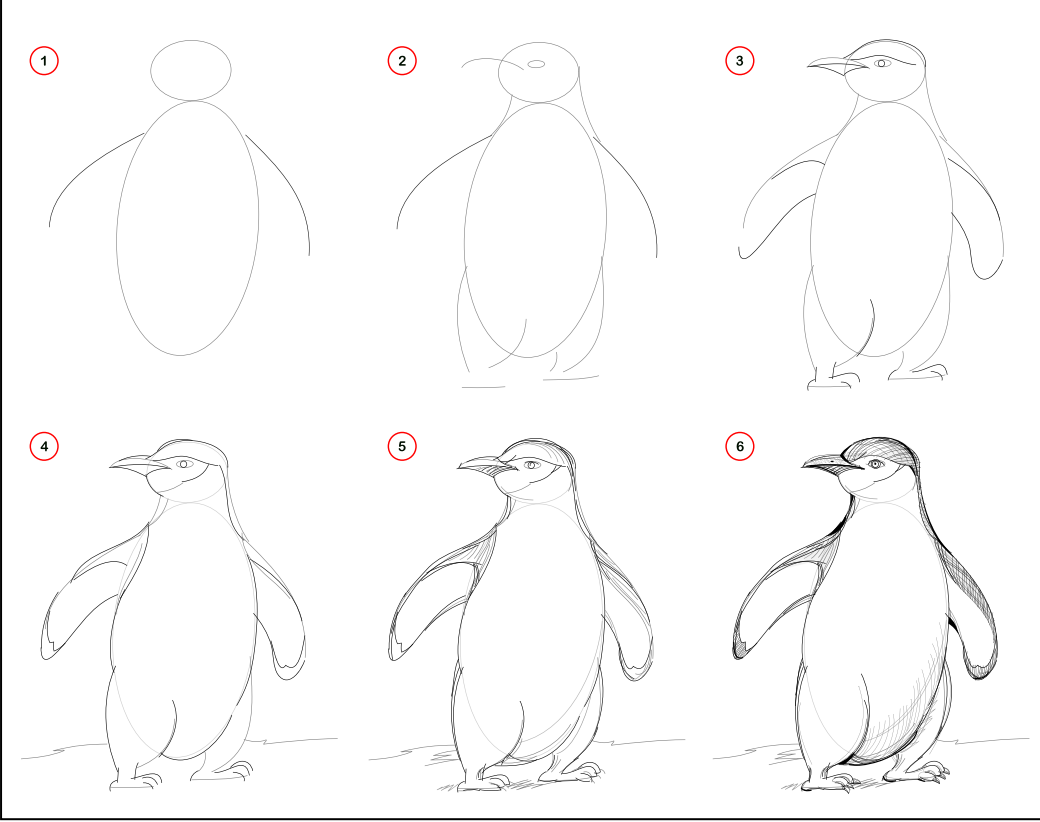
were there for the most famous residents of the beach.

The African Penguin, *Spheniscus demersus* (meaning wedge-shaped plunger) is a creature of seeming contradiction. An exclusively African species representing a family of 18 living species of birds, most of which are found in Antarctic waters, these little guys stand out among their cold-water cousins. They also stand out for their larger-than-life vocalizations. Described as sounding like a braying donkey, the mating calls seem like they could not possibly emanate from the small, elegant seabirds.

Sporting trademark black and white plumage like their cousins, these birds reach lengths of 24-27 inches and attain weights of 4.5 to 11 pounds. Like related species, their feathers are predominantly white on the underside and blackish on the back, with a bold white “ram’s horn” sweep

of feathers extending over the bird’s eyes, wrapping the sides of its head, and extending down its flanks. With a black chest and flank patch and peppering of black flecks, each bird has similar, yet distinctive individual patterning which provides both protection from predators and identification recognition among members of the colony. Utilizing a form of camouflage known as countershading, the penguin blends in with shades of deep water when seen from above and blends in with diffuse skylight, when seen from below. A sharply pointed beak, black webbed feet and slim tapered wings round out the appearance of these handsome birds.

The combination of hot coastal temperatures and cold ocean waters make for simultaneously challenging environmental extremes. So how do the birds cope with this



temperature swing? While the bird’s dense waterproof plumage keeps it warm against the cold South African waters, a unique bare patch of skin above the penguin’s eyes enables it to dissipate excess body heat when the mercury soars. The hotter the bird gets, the more blood flows to these exposed patches of skin. There, the blood is cooled by the surrounding air to lower the bird’s internal temperature. Due to increased blood flow, the bare patches gain a deeper shade of pink as the bird warms up.

To fuel bodies capable of handling such temperature demands—which must also attain 15 miles per hour (nearly three times the speed of an Olympic swimmer) to avoid Great White sharks and capture speedy fish such as Capelin and Night Smelt, these birds must consume high quantities of protein-rich prey daily. Hunters of small fish and crustaceans, these hardy little penguins can hold their breath for over 2 minutes and can dive to depths of 400 feet where they forage for sardines, anchovies, crustaceans, and squid. Stoking up on such prey, African Penguins

can eat more than one pound of food (14% of their bodyweight) daily!

Yet as well-adapted as these birds are to their environment, they face human-induced challenges. With a naturally restricted range from Namibia to South Africa, their limited habitat is under pressure from coastal development and fisheries overharvesting. With worldwide population estimates of several million birds in the early 20th century, the penguins have suffered a plummeting decline with an estimated 42,000 birds surviving today. Originally detected as a single pair emerging from the surf of Boulders Beach in 1982, the African Penguin colony has grown to an estimated 3,000 birds which represents a critical subpopulation!

Recognizing their significance as a key component to a healthy ocean ecosystem, as well as our ability to aid in their recovery, conservation organizations such as Connecticut’s Beardsley Zoo, The San Diego Zoo Wildlife Alliance, and the Southern African Foundation for the Conservation of

Coastal Birds (SANCCOB) have worked to protect these endangered seabirds. As a seabird conservation specialist organization, SANCCOB’s mission centers on strengthening populations of seabirds affected by oil spills and low fish availability. Additionally, the scientists and response teams of SANCCOB help to rescue, rehabilitate, and release penguins that have been oiled, abandoned, or injured.

In the African Penguin we have a creature which is superbly adapted to function as a key species in the ocean ecosystem, yet an animal which needs our help. Though facing many threats to its survival, it is a resilient bird which responds to conservation efforts and rallies support through its appeal. And when you’re black and white, and cute all over—that’s some appeal.

Jim Knox serves as the Curator of Education for Connecticut’s Beardsley Zoo and as a science adviser for The Bruce Museum. Jim enjoys sharing his passion for wildlife conservation with audiences in Connecticut and beyond.



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