



New Canaan captains Mikey Hiranman (6), James McInerney (4), Andrew Esposito (14), Adrian Delicata (59), and Ryan Brooks (11) take the field for the coin toss at Trumbull High School. The senior leaders helped power the Rams into a dominant postseason run and an eventual undefeated state championship season.

By SENTINEL STAFF

New Canaan’s 2025 football season didn’t need drama. It had identity. Execution. Unity. And it had a finish that was both clinical and emotional—a 34-13 win over Cheshire in the Class L state final that capped the program’s first undefeated season since 2008 and its fourth straight CIAC championship.

The Rams finished 13-0 and were voted the unanimous No. 1 team in the final state poll, marking back-to-back wire-to-wire seasons atop Connecticut. Their senior class—captains Andrew Esposito, Adrian Delicata, Ryan Brooks, James McInerney, and Mikey Hiranman—closed their careers

with a record of four championship rings.

“This may go down as one of the best I’ve had, if not the best team,” said longtime head coach Lou Marinelli in an interview with the Ruden Report.

Setting the Tone: From Trumbull to the Title

Four weeks before the championship, the Rams put together one of their most complete performances of the year in their last regular season game, a 42-13 rout of Trumbull. Senior Henry Stein rushed for 188 yards on 12 carries, and the defense swarmed from start to finish. The win sealed an unbeaten regular season and propelled New Canaan into the

playoffs in peak form.

When Stein went down with injury during the postseason, junior Finn Mocco took over in the backfield and delivered in the championship game—running for 162 yards and two touchdowns on 24 carries.

New Canaan ran for 188 yards in the final, using a dominant offensive line led by Adrian Delicata, who also played fullback in the Rams’ short-yardage package.

On *Sunday Morning Quarterback* with Dave Ruden, broadcast after the Rams’ 34-13 Class L state championship win over Cheshire, the New Canaan captains discussed the game and

the season. The interview gives insight into the success of this remarkable team.

Smart, Fast, Relentless Defense

“We knew Cheshire was physical,” Delicata said.

On defense, the Rams were as precise as they were physical. Cheshire’s only meaningful score came on a drive extended by a controversial call. Andrew Esposito had chased down the quarterback from behind and stripped the ball.

“That’s just culture,” Esposito said. “You run down the play. You trust your teammates will be there behind you. We’ve done that all year.”

Ryan Brooks, Jack Crowell, Mikey Hiranman, and Grayson Ladley led a front seven that limited scoring opportunities. Crowell returned an interception 46 yards for a touchdown, and Blake Schwartz sealed the win with another interception in the fourth quarter, intentionally sliding at the five-yard line instead of scoring so the team could kneel out the clock.

The Shoe, the Council, and the Bond

After their final practice before the title game, the team gathered for one of the program’s longest-standing traditions: the burning of the shoe. Every senior speaks. Then they set a cleat on fire—

symbolizing that no one can fill the shoes of those leaving.

“I’ve never seen so many players tear up at the ceremony before,” Marinelli said in an interview with Ruden. “They were absolutely determined to win it, and to come out and do it the way they did—it was a real statement.”

Esposito called it the emotional peak of the season. “We’ve all been together since third grade. It hit us—that it was our last time suiting up together.”

That unity was reinforced all year by the team’s Leadership Council, a structured weekly meeting with representatives from every grade. Overseen by leadership consultant Dave Mastroianni, the council served as a space for open dialogue and player-led accountability.

“It was like football therapy,” Marinelli said. “Freshmen, captains, whoever—everyone had a voice. That culture came through in how we played.”

Playing Both Ways, All In

Three of the captains—Esposito, McInerney, and Brooks—played on both sides of the ball, something Marinelli noted was rare even by New Canaan standards.

“We just wanted to be on the field as much as possible,” McInerney said. “Offense, defense, special teams—whatever it took.”

Brooks and Hiranman were anchors in the linebacking corps all season. “We always say—if I’m not there to make the play, someone else will be,” said Hiranman. “And if they’re not, I will be.”

Legacy in Full

The final seconds of the title game were less raucous than you might expect. No helmet tosses, no pile-on celebration. Just handshakes, helmet taps, and respect.

“It was a job finished,” Delicata said. “We were proud. But we also knew it was the last time we’d walk off a field together.”

This senior class leaves behind more than numbers. They leave behind a culture: player-led, emotionally grounded, and built on trust.

The 2025 Rams played like they’d been preparing their whole lives. Because most of them had.

How This Poem Claimed Christmas Eve

By ELIZABETH BARHYDT

For many in New Canaan and around the world, treasured holiday traditions include a bedtime story that begins, “*Twas the night before Christmas*,” on Christmas Eve. We include it here in its entirety for you to read to your family on Christmas Eve if you would like.

While there is some disagreement over the authorship of this now famous poem, most believe it was penned by Clement Clarke Moore (1779-1863).

According to the Library of Congress American Memory project, Moore wrote the tale 202 years ago, on Christmas Eve 1822, while traveling to his Chelsea-district home from Greenwich Village where he had picked up the turkeys that his family donated each holiday season.

Moore created the poem, *A Visit from St. Nicholas* (now known as *Twas the Night Before Christmas*), to read to his own six children that evening. His vision was likely strongly influenced by the vivid description of St. Nicholas written by Moore’s friend, Washington Irving, in *A History of New York* (1809).

Irving was the son of a Presbyterian minister and, more famously, the author of *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* and *Rip Van Winkle*. He wrote a similarly enhanced account of the founding of New York City. In it he explained how St. Nicholas came in a dream to Dutch explorers who were scouting a location for New Amsterdam, now Manhattan.

Yes, the founding of New York City, in Irving’s account, was

divinely inspired by St. Nicholas.

Clement Moore would have been influenced as well by his famous father, Benjamin Moore, who was the Episcopal minister of Trinity Church and who served as the Episcopal bishop of New York, taking part in the inauguration of George Washington as the nation’s first president.

The poem was actually first published anonymously in the *Troy Sentinel* newspaper on Dec. 23, 1823.

A graduate of Columbia University, Clement Moore was a scholar of Hebrew and a professor of Oriental and Greek literature at the General Theological Seminary in Manhattan.

Moore portrayed St. Nicholas as arriving on Christmas Eve rather than Christmas Day. This small detail shifted focus away from stronger religious associations and created a more child-centric Christmas spirit.

His light-hearted poem was originally not meant for publication and was likely submitted without Moore even knowing. Moore did eventually acknowledge being the author, fifteen years later.

His little poem has found its way into the homes and hearts of millions across the world. On Christmas Eve, in our home, our holiday will most certainly include this story.

After our church’s Christmas eve service everyone will open one present. The contents of these presents is never a surprise—always new Christmas pajamas, washed and ready to wear that very night.

Then there will be hot cocoa while we sit by a fire and listen as



Peter reads this magical tale.

Twas the night before Christmas, when all through the house
Not a creature was stirring, not even a mouse;
The stockings were hung by the chimney with care,
In hopes that St. Nicholas soon would be there;
The children were nestled all snug in their beds;
While visions of sugar-plums danced in their heads;
And mamma in her ’kerchief, and I in my cap,
Had just settled our brains for a long winter’s nap,
When out on the lawn there arose such a clatter,
I sprang from the bed to see what was the matter.

Away to the window I flew like a flash,
Tore open the shutters and threw up the sash.
The moon on the breast of the new-fallen snow,
Gave a lustre of midday to objects below,
When what to my wondering eyes should appear,
But a miniature sleigh and eight tiny reindeer,
With a little old driver so lively and quick,
I knew in a moment he must be St. Nick.
More rapid than eagles his coursers they came,
And he whistled, and shouted, and called them by name!
“Now, Dasher! now, Dancer! now, Prancer and Vixen!
On, Comet! On, Cupid! on, Donner and Blitzen!
To the top of the porch!

to the top of the wall!
Now dash away! dash away! dash away all!”
As dry leaves that before the wild hurricane fly,
When they meet with an obstacle, mount to the sky;
So up to the housetop the coursers they flew,
With the sleigh full of Toys, and St. Nicholas too—
And then, in a twinkling, I heard on the roof
The prancing and pawing of each little hoof.
As I drew in my head, and was turning around,
Down the chimney St. Nicholas came with a bound.
He was dressed all in fur, from his head to his foot,
And his clothes were all tarnished with ashes and soot.
A bundle of toys he had flung on his back,

And he looked like a peddler, just opening his pack.
His eyes—how they twinkled! his dimples how merry!
His cheeks were like roses, his nose like a cherry!
His droll little mouth was drawn up like a bow,
And the beard of his chin was as white as the snow;
The stump of a pipe he held tight in his teeth,
And the smoke, it encircled his head like a wreath;
He had a broad face and a little round belly
That shook when he laughed, like a bowlful of jelly.
He was chubby and plump, a right jolly old elf,
And I laughed when I saw him, in spite of myself;
A wink of his eye and a twist of his head,
Soon gave me to know I had nothing to dread;
He spoke not a word, but went straight to his work,
And filled all the stockings; then turned with a jerk,
And laying his finger aside of his nose, And giving a nod,
up the chimney he rose;
He sprang to his sleigh, to his team gave a whistle,
And away they all flew like the down of a thistle.
But I heard him exclaim, ere he drove out of sight—
“Happy Christmas to all, and to all a good night!”

Happy holidays from our Sentinel family to yours. May your holiday be filled with warmth and joy.



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LOCAL NEWS
 BRIEFING
 TOWN HALL

Town Winter Operations
 The Department of Public Works outlined its winter snow and ice operations, which cover 125 miles of roads divided into 12 plow routes and vary based on weather conditions, timing, and equipment. Crews apply treated salt before snowfall, prioritize main roads during storms, and complete cleanup within six to eight hours after snow ends when possible. The town wants to remind residents that pushing snow into streets is prohibited and asked drivers and contractors to follow winter safety rules. Please call (203) 594-3054 with questions or concerns.

Second Installment of Taxes Due
 New Canaan’s second tax installment, covering real estate, personal property, supplemental motor vehicle taxes, and sewer fees, is due January 1, 2026, and may be paid without interest through February 2, 2026. Taxpayers are responsible for payment even if they do not receive a bill. Payments can be made online at newcanaan.info/departments/tax_collector, by mail with a February 2 postmark, or in person at the Tax Collector’s Office at Town Hall.

LOCAL BUSINESSES
 AND NONPROFITS

New Book Drop

 The New Canaan Library has added a new book drop next to the designated drop-off zone. The automated return slot at the entrance remains available 24 hours a day for instant check-in and sorting. Photo credit: New Canaan Library.

UN Series Opens at Library
 On December 10, the United Nations Series opened at the New Canaan Library with a program featuring Kids OR. Photo credit: New Canaan Library.

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Games at ‘Celebrate & Learn’ Event



Children enjoying the many games and crafts during the ‘Celebrate & Learn’ event at New Canaan Library on Sunday to kick off the first night of Hanukkah. See more photos on page 6. Photos by John Kriz.

Hanukkah in New Canaan



Menorah on God’s Acre. A chilly, snowy first night of Hanukkah did not deter people from gathering on God’s Acre to light the first candle of the menorah. L-R are Rabbi Levi Mendelow of Chabad New Canaan, his wife Michal Mendelow who co-directs Chabad New Canaan, First Selectman Dionna Carlson, and Rabbi Cantor Shirah Sklar of Temple Shalom in West Norwalk, who led the service.

BY JOHN KRIZ
Celebration at the Library
 The community celebrations of Hanukkah kicked off on Sunday afternoon with New Canaan Library www.newcanaanlibrary.org, in partnership with the Chabad New Canaan Jewish Center www.newcanaanjewish.org and the New Canaan Jewish Group, hosting a ‘Celebrate & Learn’ event in the library’s Jim & Dede Bartlett Auditorium, with families enjoying games, crafts and tasty seasonal treats.
 “It’s a wonderful opportunity for the community to come together and celebrate this beautiful holiday,” said Rabbi Levi Mendelow of Chabad

“Attending the first night of Hanukkah on God’s Acre was a meaningful reminder of the values that unite New Canaan – faith, family and community.”

New Canaan, noting that New Canaan Library is truly a place for everyone in the community.
 Among the activities of the many dozens of people attending, about half of whom were children, were ring toss around large candles, making dreidels from clay, and constructing colorful paper menorahs. Another project was making illuminated menorahs of paper, small LED bulbs, wafer batteries

and some conducting tape.
 Hot latkes (potato pancakes fried in oil) and sufganiyot (fried jelly donuts) were also on hand – traditional Hanukkah food.
 The United Jewish Federation was also there, distributing free children’s books on Jewish culture and traditions.
 Rabbi Mendelow noted the “terribly horrific and heartbreaking news” of the terrorist murders of and injuries to many Jews at Bondi Beach in Australia who were celebrating the first night of Hanukkah.
 “One of the themes of Hanukkah is the power of light to vanish darkness from the world,” stressed Rabbi Mendelow. “The only way to combat darkness is by lighting a candle, by bringing light into the world. And so this Hanukkah, when the world feels a little darker, we know that the holiday itself teaches us about the importance of light.”
God’s Acre Menorah
 Another wonderful part of the New Canaan tradition

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Board of Education
 Appoints Dr.
 Raquel Harrison to
 Fill Vacancy

BY SENTINEL STAFF



The New Canaan Board of Education voted unanimously this week to appoint Dr. Raquel Harrison to fill a vacant seat on the board, following a two-week selection process that Board Chairman Phil Hogan described as “thoughtful and thorough.”
 The vacancy was created by the resignation of Matt Campbell on Monday, Nov. 24, 2025. At the board’s prior meeting on Dec. 1, Hogan publicly announced the opening and invited residents to express interest. According to Hogan, the response from the community was strong.
 “We received several [indications of interest], and we thank everyone who threw their hat in the ring,” Hogan said. “We hope they feel like their candidacies were given the attention they deserved.”
 Hogan said the process involved active participation from all board members, including “countless meetings and phone calls,” and concluded with parallel caucuses over the weekend before the board reconvened to make a collaborative decision.
 “I think we’re a better and more cohesive board having gone through this process the way we did,” he said.
 After deliberations, the board selected Dr. Harrison, whom Hogan said “differentiated herself and proved to be the best fit for the board at this time.”
 Dr. Harrison, the daughter of Cuban refugees, has lived in New Canaan for nearly 12 years with her husband, Scott, and their three children. Two of their daughters, Hannah and Sarah, attend Saxe Middle School, and their youngest daughter, Maddie, attends South Elementary School.
 Her academic and professional background includes undergraduate studies at the University of Notre Dame, medical school at Cornell University, and a residency at NewYork-Presbyterian Hospital. She spent five years as an assistant professor at the Yale School of Medicine and previously worked as an emergency room physician in Bridgeport.
 In New Canaan, Dr. Harrison has served for the past two years on the Health and Human Services Commission. She is also a co-founder of New Canaan Unplugged, an organization that supports families in navigating the challenges of modern technology use. In addition, she frequently lectures on lifestyle medicine at the New Canaan Library and for New Canaan Cares.
 Her community involvement also extends to athletics and youth programs. Dr. Harrison is a former head junior varsity girls basketball coach at New Canaan High School, a former assistant coach for the girls varsity team, and a volunteer with Young Life, a faith-based youth organization.
 “I’ve asked around, and everything Raquel gets involved in, she seems to make better,” Hogan said. He cited her “even-keeled temperament, evidence-based approach, and positive can-do attitude” as qualities the board needs.
 Board Secretary Erica Schwedel echoed those sentiments, noting the positive feedback she has heard from community members who have worked with Dr. Harrison.
 “She’s thoughtful, she’s collaborative, and she’s an excellent communicator,” Schwedel said. “She’s already demonstrated deep commitment to New Canaan, and I look forward, along with others, to having her expertise and insight on the Board of Ed.”
 Following the comments, Hogan made a motion to appoint Dr. Harrison to serve out the remainder of Campbell’s term. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.
 With the vote complete, Hogan welcomed Dr. Harrison to the board before moving on to the next item on the meeting agenda.
 “Congratulations, Dr. Harrison,” he said. “Welcome to the Board of Education.”


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COLUMN

By Carl Franco

Going to the gym, starting a diet, finally cleaning out that closet, maybe even dusting off that résumé, every New Year’s resolution needs a dignified beginning. And let’s be honest: most of those noble intentions are born not at the entrance to the gym or in the prologue of that new diet book, but in the glow of something bubbly. Sparkling wine has a way of making even the most unrealistic resolutions feel downright achievable... at least until mid-January.

Unlike the many options I’ve covered in previous articles, the choices here are a bit more streamlined. When it comes to sparkling wine, you’re really deciding between price, region, and style. So let’s start where it all began, in the Reims area of France.

We all love the legendary tale of Dom Pierre Pérignon shouting to his fellow monks “Come quickly, I am tasting stars” after tasting a white wine that had accidentally gone through a second fermentation. It’s a great story, but like most great stories, it’s only partly true. Plenty of winemakers were already experimenting with secondary fermentation at the time, but it was Dom Pérignon who was the one who perfected the technique and I think had social media been around in the 17th Century, he would certainly been a Champagne Influencer.

I need to preface this by saying that I love champagne. While I know that Americans tend to only use champagne in celebratory settings, the truth is champagne is not just for toasting, it’s a versatile and elegant wine that can enhance a wide variety of dishes. The wine’s crisp acidity, fine bubbles and complex flavor profile makes it the perfect partner from casual appetizers to sophisticated gourmet meals. The high acidity cuts through rich and fatty dishes while the bubbles adds a delightful texture and enhances the flavors of your meal. This is why Champagne pairs well with elegant classics like caviar and oysters, but also comfort foods like fried chicken and fish tacos. Most champagne is made from chardonnay, pinot noir and pinot meunier, but as you get to other parts of the world’s wine growing regions, you will find other varieties that are used.

So, whether you are sipping on a fine bottle of vintage champagne or a non-vintages sparkler from another part of the world, all these wines will elevate your dining experience.

Ok, now that my lecture is over, let’s get down to business. If you want to ring in 2026 in true vintage style, the 2015 Dom Pérignon and the



On the non-vintage side, Ruinart’s Blanc de Blancs and Rosé are always welcome additions to any celebration.



Bollinger, Veuve Clicquot (both Brut and Rosé), Taittinger, and Moët remain classic and dependable choices, and we can’t forget Pol Roger, Winston Churchill’s favorite.



Champagnes are simply small producers who bottle their own wine. Louis Nicaise offers both Brut and Rosé, and not only are the prices significantly lower, but the quality easily rivals the big names.



If you prefer your bubbles from the United States, you’re in luck. Many French houses have established wineries in California, producing some truly impressive sparkling wines. Two standouts are Chandon (from Moët) and the Domaine Carneros Rosé (from Taittinger). We also carry the all-American Schramsberg, available in both Blanc de Blancs and Rosé, each consistently popular and reliably delicious.



Of course, you can’t talk about sparkling wine without mentioning Prosecco (Italy) and Cava (Spain). Prosecco dominates the market, and while there’s no shortage of options, my top pick is the Isotta Manzoni L’Essenza. I never like to knock other brands, but there’s one extremely popular Prosecco that holds a huge share of the market largely because people unknowingly like it as it is the sweetest. It always surprises me when someone insists they like a dry Prosecco but reaches for that particular bottle, especially when

I tell them it has the highest sugar content of any Prosecco we carry.

Moving over to Spain, if you truly prefer dry sparkling wine, the Dignitat Cava is where you want to land. It’s crisp, clean, and significantly lower in sugar than most Prosecco. This single vineyard Cava is crafted organically and made using the traditional method, the same process as Champagne where the second fermentation happens inside the bottle, creating finer bubbles and more complex flavors.



My last stop is South Africa, where the Boschendal Brut and Brut Rosé shine. The Brut is a classic, dry sparkler which is perfect with oysters or seafood, while the Brut Rosé, with its bright red-berry notes, pairs beautifully with salmon and charcuterie.



However you choose to ring in the holidays, bubbles really do deserve more than a quick sip. I found that with all the champagne and sparkling wine I taste-tested this season, these are the best options. As we head into 2026, your resolutions may fizzle, but your bubbles should not.

Carl Franco is the proprietor of Francos Wine Merchants in New Canaan.



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- 6:00pm** Worship Service
- 6:30pm** Caroling on God's Acre
- 7:00pm** Worship Service
- 11:00pm** Candlelight Worship Service

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Town Honors Generation of Service at Recognition Ceremony



Community members who were honored at the New Canaan Civic Service Recognition gathering, include (from left to right) Rich Townsend, Tom Butterworth, Beth Jones, Dr. David Reed, Penny Rashin and Tom Schulte. (Photo Source: New Canaan Sentinel)

By PETER BARHYDT

The Carriage Barn Arts Center was filled last week with applause, gratitude, and more than a few laughs as the Town of New Canaan gathered to honor its latest class of dedicated public servants at the Town Service Recognition event.

With Selectman Steve Karl acting as the master of ceremonies, the evening celebrated what he called the “Class of 2025” – residents who, through years and in many cases decades of volunteer service, have helped form “the foundation that holds this community together.”

“Volunteerism is the bedrock of New Canaan,” Karl said in opening remarks. “Whether elected, appointed, or coerced into public service, these individuals answered the call and dedicated years of their lives to moving this community forward.”

Honoring Leadership and Integrity

Among those recognized was Tom Butterworth, who served on the Town Council from 2017 to 2025. Former council colleague Hilary Ormond described Butterworth as a mentor and a model of integrity, praising his ability to work across party lines and his willingness to step aside to spend more time with family.

“He always reached across the aisle,” Ormond said. “In divisive times, that’s almost heroic.”

Butterworth received an official citation from the Connecticut General Assembly recognizing his civic service, which also included leadership roles with the New Canaan Chamber Music organization, the Town Players, youth football, and First Presbyterian Church.

Service With Substance – and Humor

Rich Townsend, another former Town Council member and chair of the Utilities

Commission, was recognized for his steady judgment and diligence. First Selectman Dionna Carlson highlighted his long-term approach to decision-making, and his behind-the-scenes influence on town governance.

“Rich ensured that every question was examined and every conversation grounded,” Carlson said, adding a lighter note by recalling his memorable appearance at a Gridiron Dinner roast.

Townsend echoed a theme repeated throughout the night: the irreplaceable value of volunteers. “This town can’t afford the volunteers it has,” he said. “You couldn’t put a team like this together.”

A Champion for Schools

One of the evening’s most heartfelt tributes was reserved for Penny Rashin, who concluded 18 years on the Board of Education. Board of Selectmen member Amy Murphy Carroll estimated that

Rashin devoted more than 6,000 volunteer hours to town service, including leadership on major building projects such as Saxe Middle School, New Canaan High School, and the police department renovation.

“Schools don’t just happen,” Carroll said. “It’s the people in the seats doing the work.”

Rashin, who continued her service long after her own children graduated, emphasized resilience and community collaboration in her remarks. “The best thing I ever did was serve,” she said. “I’ve gotten so much joy from it.”

Financial Stewardship and Quiet Leadership

Tom Schulte, who served 11 years on the Board of Finance, was praised by Chairman Todd Lavieri for asking “the best questions,” working tirelessly behind the scenes, and approaching every issue with respect and collaboration.

“He worked nights and weekends on behalf of residents

and taxpayers,” Lavieri said. “If there were a volunteer Hall of Fame, he’d be in it.”

A Lifetime of Community Service

The evening also honored Beth Jones, a lifelong New Canaan resident whose service spans local government, nonprofits, and civic groups. Town Administrator Tucker Murphy called Jones “the kind of person who makes New Canaan, New Canaan,” highlighting her warmth, pragmatism, and trailblazing role as the first woman to serve on the Fire Commission.

Jones thanked the town for “the honor and privilege and joy” of serving across generations.

Guiding the Town Through Crisis

One of the most moving recognitions went to Dr. David Reed, who served as New Canaan’s Town Medical and Health Director from 2004 to 2024. Superintendent of

Schools Bryan Luizzi detailed Reed’s leadership during the COVID-19 pandemic, when daily 8 a.m. calls helped guide the town through unprecedented challenges.

“He runs toward the crisis,” Luizzi said. “Always with compassion, intelligence, and calm.”

Reed reflected on the town’s long-standing support of its health department and the foresight that allowed New Canaan to respond swiftly during the pandemic. “It’s a great town,” he said. “I miss it – but I’m two miles from my granddaughters.”

Remembering Those Lost

The ceremony also paused to remember several volunteers who passed away over the past year, including George Maranis, Keith Richey, Jim Lisher, Linda Androse, and Stewart Sawabini, each remembered for decades of service spanning finance, public safety, conservation, aging services, and emergency preparedness.

“These individuals leave a legacy of compassion, dedication, and unwavering community spirit,” Carlson said.

A Community Effort

Karl closed the evening by thanking local organizations, businesses, and families who support town volunteers, emphasizing that behind every public servant is a network of spouses, children, and neighbors who make that service possible.

“They’re the unsung heroes,” he said. “Without them, this town wouldn’t be what it is.”

As attendees lingered over donated food and wine, the message of the night was clear: New Canaan’s strength lies not only in its institutions, but in the people who quietly, consistently give their time to serve others.



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What I Learned about Advent and Christmas from Children

By Rev. Msgr.
Robert M. Kinnally

One of the great joys of my ministry is to preach a children's homily from time to time. To my great delight, children often take the homily to amazing places that are nowhere near where I thought things would go. Put another way, the children write the homily with their exquisite insights informed by the way they view the world.

Several years ago, I read a passage from the 18th Chapter of Matthew's Gospel to the congregation in which Jesus says this: "Amen, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoever receives one child such as this in my name receives me."

After the children settled in on the floor below the sanctuary, I began the homily with a question: "Boys and girls, why do you think Jesus loves children so much?" Instantly a hand shot up and I called on a five-year-old who said, "Jesus loves children so much because children don't make war."

I was struck recently by the strong sense of hope for the world that children have when I read some of the poems of children who wrote as part of UNICEF's "Poems for Peace."

At that moment I felt that his words would suffice for a homily. The sighs and "wow's" abounded, and I could see more than a few adults wiping their eyes.

That little boy was right, and besides gently calling to task those who "make war," he echoed God's desire and promise found in the prophet Isaiah in this section read frequently in the season of Advent:

On that day, a shoot shall sprout from the stump of Jesse, and from his roots a bud shall blossom...he shall judge the poor with justice, and decide aright for the land's afflicted... Then the wolf shall be a guest of the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; the calf and the young lion shall browse together, with a little child to guide them...There shall be no harm or ruin on all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be filled with knowledge of the LORD.

We can learn so much from children this time of year – and all year long. Their innocence,

their undying sense of wonder, and their sheer delight in the smallest of things should harken us back to our own days of innocence, wonder, and simplicity. Their contagious laughter and hopefulness are inspiring, and their love can heal all hurts. By their presence among us, they give us hope.

I was struck recently by the strong sense of hope for the world that children have when I read some of the poems of children who wrote as part of UNICEF's "Poems for Peace." This project gives children a platform to explain in their own words the impact of conflict and war on their lives along with their hopes and dreams for the future. Two of the poems spoke to me of the courage of these young ones:

From Sudan, Ebtihal wrote: "We long for peace, not battles fought. / And the peace will illuminate the darkness. / Sudan, may happiness be in your heart."

Fedir lives in Ukraine and penned this: "But I believe that happy days will break through the pain. / The war will end; the air raids will stop forever."

A path to peace and hope comes from acknowledging that we are all God's children and that we were loved into creation by the one true God who spoke these words through Jeremiah (a very young prophet): "For I know well the plans I have in mind for you – plans for your welfare and not for woe, so as to give you a future of hope." The context for the Jeremiah prophecy about goodness and hope is the Babylonian exile, but the promise pervades our own world today.

The greatest promise God ever kept was sending the Messiah. If he kept that promise, He will surely keep the promise of a future of hope; but in the meantime, all of creation is waiting. We are giving birth to our best selves while we anticipate once again in the dead of

winter, the birth of the Savior, the light of the world who writes – for us – the greatest story ever told.

On the First Sunday of Advent where we are introduced to moments of waiting for the Lord, I asked the children assembled for the homily: "What does it mean to wait? One of our four-year-old girls responded: "It means it's not your turn yet; but if you are patient, it will be your turn and it will be very good."

Israel waited for a long time for the Messiah who was promised in the prophecy of Isaiah. They never gave up. They dreamed and prayed for the One who would redeem them. It wasn't their turn on those days they really needed their Messiah, but when it was their turn, it was very good.

The first chapter of John's Gospel speaks plainly to us about that moment when God breaks into the world: "And the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us, and we saw his

glory, the glory as of the Father's only Son, full of grace and truth."

God and Human – how awesome is God. Jesus knows what it's like to be me. Jesus knows better than the most well-meaning friend how to console me, hold me, encourage me, pray for me, and love me. That's all we need. He gets it.

Maybe this Advent and Christmas we will know peace from knowing and loving the Father's only Son. And so, my prayer this Advent and Christmas is that we learn from children so that we may stop making war, always wait our turn, and rejoice in the very good things that happen when we are patient enough to trust that God keeps promise and His time is the best time.

Rev. Msgr. Robert M. Kinnally is the Pastor at St. Aloysius Parish, New Canaan.

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

December 21 at 4 PM: Blue Christmas Service – A Service of Hope and Healing. An ecumenical service sponsored by local faith communities.

December 24 at 5 PM: Christmas Eve Family Service.
10 PM: A Service of Lessons & Carols. 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 24: In Stapleton Hall, Mass will be held at 4 and 5:30 PM. In the Church, Mass will be held at 5:30 and 7:30PM. The Children's Pageant will follow 4 PM Mass. Midnight in the Church - Carols with the Choir will begin at 11:30PM.

December 25 at 7, 8:30, 10, & 11:30 AM: Mass will be held in the Church.

St. Mark's Episcopal Church
111 Oenoke Ridge 203.966.4515
churchoffice@stmarksnewcanaan.org
www.stmarksnewcanaan.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 24 at 5 PM: The World's Greatest Christmas Pageant with Holy Eucharist. 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@umcofnewcanaan.org
www.umcofnewcanaan.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 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
cbcnnewcanaan@gmail.com
www.cbcnewcanaan.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

Upcoming Events:
December 31 from 11:15 PM- 12:15 AM: NYE Watch Night. Join for worship, fellowship, and prayer.

Grace Community Church
9:30am Service @ New Canaan High School, 11 Farm Road, New Canaan 203-966-7600
info@gracecommunity.info
www.gracecommunity.info
Welcome to Grace Church, where we strive to build a church of action, founded on Biblical truth, characterized by faith, grace, community, service, authenticity, clear thinking, and cultural relevance. Grace Community Church is an exercise in knowing God, knowing truth, and building community that extends to our full lives, not just to our Sunday mornings. Join us Sunday mornings at 9:30am or via GCC's Facebook page or YouTube page. Nursery care and Sunday school/teen programming is available for babies through 12th grade. Coffee and bagels available in the lobby after the service, all are welcome.

Upcoming Events:
December 24 at 3:15 PM: All are invited for a festive afternoon Christmas Eve Service. Arrive early to enjoy Holiday Jazz, followed by our 4pm service. After the service, gather friends and family to take keepsake photos.

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@chabadnewcanaan.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.templestainaistamford.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>

CELEBRATE & LEARN
CONTINUED From Page 2



HANUKKAH IN NEW CANAAN
CONTINUED From Page 2

Celebration at the Library

The community celebrations of Hanukkah kicked off on Sunday afternoon with New Canaan Library www.newcanaanlibrary.org, in partnership with the Chabad New Canaan Jewish Center www.newcanaanjewish.org and the New Canaan Jewish Group, hosting a ‘Celebrate & Learn’ event in the library’s Jim & Dede Bartlett Auditorium, with families enjoying games, crafts and tasty seasonal treats.

“It’s a wonderful opportunity for the community to come together and celebrate this beautiful holiday,” said Rabbi Levi Mendelow of Chabad New Canaan, noting that New Canaan Library is truly a place for everyone in the community.

Among the activities of the many dozens of people attending, about half of whom were children, were ring toss around large candles, making dreidels from clay, and constructing colorful paper menorahs. Another project was making illuminated menorahs of paper, small LED bulbs, wafer batteries and some conducting tape.

Hot latkes (potato pancakes fried in oil) and sufganiyot (fried jelly donuts) were also on hand – traditional Hanukkah food.

The United Jewish Federation was also there, distributing free children’s books on Jewish culture and traditions.

Rabbi Mendelow noted the “terribly horrific and heartbreaking news” of the terrorist murders of and injuries to many Jews at Bondi Beach in Australia who were celebrating the first night of Hanukkah.

“One of the themes of Hanukkah is the power of light to vanish darkness from the world,” stressed Rabbi Mendelow. “The only way to combat darkness is by lighting a candle, by bringing light into the world. And so this Hanukkah, when the world feels a little darker, we know that the holiday itself teaches us about the importance of light.”

God’s Acre Menorah

Another wonderful part of the New Canaan tradition is the lighting of a menorah on God’s Acre. This menorah will have each of its lamps lit on subsequent days by different synagogue or family groups.

On Sunday, the first day of Hanukkah, Rabbi Cantor Shirah Sklar of Temple Shalom in West Norwalk hosted the service, and led the chilled, but enthusiastic attendees in several songs.

“This season is a season of light and of miracles,” said Rabbi Sklar. “It is such a joy to be here with all of the New Canaan community, our friends and our neighbors, and it is especially important during these difficult times in Jewish life that we show our pride and our commitment to Jewish community, our pride in our celebration, in our values and in our traditions. And we are so glad to be here on God’s Acre once again.”

First Selectman Dionna Carlson, who also braved the cold and snow, said “Attending the first night of Hanukkah on God’s Acre was a meaningful reminder of the values that unite New Canaan—faith, family and community. I’m grateful to celebrate alongside our residents as we honor traditions that enrich the fabric of our town.”

The last of the eight menorah lightings will

be this Sunday at 3:30pm, led by New Canaan Chabad, which will also have a chocolate ‘gelt’ (candy) drop for children from the aerial ladder of one of the town’s fire trucks, along with hot latkes and sufganiyot.

Everyone is welcome to attend these menorah lightings.

Hanukkah History

The story of the eight-day holiday of Hanukkah is found the First and Second books of Maccabees. During the second century BC there was a revolt by the Maccabees, led by Judah Maccabee, against Antiochus IV Epiphanes, king of the Seleucid Empire which ruled the land known as Judea, and Jerusalem which was in it. During that time, Jewish religious practice

was often atrophying, and sometimes outright suppressed. The successful revolt restored traditional Jewish practice, and established the Hasmonean Dynasty there. Once victorious, the Maccabees entered Jerusalem and ritually cleansed the Temple of Solomon. However, only a small container of sacred oil could be found -- just enough to light the temple’s menorah [see Exodus 25:31-40] for a day. However, the menorah burned for eight days: a miracle.

The Hanukkah menorah has nine settings for candles. The one in the middle is called the Shamash, or attendant, candle. It is lit first, and is used to light the other eight candles, one on the first day of the celebration, two on the next, and so on.

Obituary

Patricia Corey



Patricia Corey passed away on Sunday, November 23, 2025, in Seattle, Washington. Born in Southbridge, Massachusetts, on June 29, 1948, to Joseph Lyons and Beatrice Paul, Patricia, or Pat as she was often known, spent most of her adult life in New Canaan, CT.

She is survived by her husband, Michael Corey, her spouse of 56 years; son, Andrew; daughter-in-law, Kimburly; grandchildren, Julian and Sydney; and brothers Paul Lyons and Joseph Lyons.

During her time in New Canaan, Patricia

held volunteer roles within the New Canaan school system, as well as with the New Canaan Nature Center.

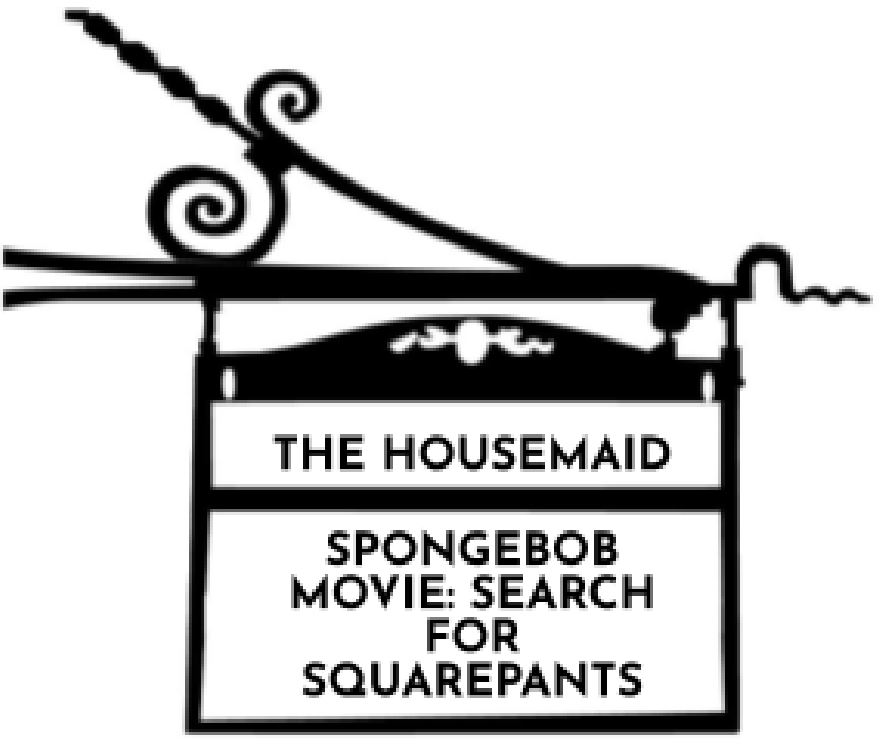
She graduated from Catholic elementary and junior high schools, and Southbridge High School, all in Southbridge, MA; earned a B.A. from Montclair State College, where she was certified to teach French; and an M.B.A. from Fairleigh Dickinson University.

Patricia and Michael relocated to the Magnolia neighborhood of Seattle in 2019, to be closer to their son and his growing family. Her grandchildren brightened her final days. Patricia had a passion for helping others, nature, animals, traditional crafts, and, above all, her family.

The New Canaan Sentinel does not charge for obituaries. Every member of the community deserves to be remembered and honored without families facing added financial burdens. Obituaries may be sent to Caroll@GreenwichSentinel.com.

The cost of publishing obituaries is covered by The Sentinel Foundation, a nonprofit that supports the local Top 5 Things to Do Today daily email, obituaries, education and entertainment pages, worship pages, and sponsorship of charitable organizations and events.

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How Sweat Rewires the Brain: Exercise, Neuroplasticity, and Mental Health



By Teresa Alasio

We have all heard and read recommendations from medical experts, fitness gurus and even official government offices about how much exercise adults and children need to stay healthy and live longer lives. According to the American Heart Association, if adults get at least 150 minutes of moderate aerobic activity, like brisk walking, or 75 minutes of vigorous activity, like running, in addition to muscle strengthening exercises and balance activities, our hearts stay pumping longer and better. Similarly, the Presidential Fitness Test, which was developed in the 1950’s to combat obesity, chronic disease and improve strength among our young people, looks to maintain the bodies of our young people.

But did you ever hear about how exercise affects the brain?

When considering whether or not to engage in physical exercise, it’s important to be aware that movement doesn’t just shape your body, it reshapes your brain. Exercise boosts the production of brain-derived neurotrophic factor (BDNF), shifts key hormones like atrial natriuretic peptide (ANP), and even changes the structure of

We have all heard and read recommendations from medical experts, fitness gurus and even official government offices about how much exercise adults and children need to stay healthy and live longer lives. But did you ever hear about how exercise affects the brain?

brain regions tied to memory, focus, and emotional balance. These transformations help explain why staying active can ease depression and anxiety, sharpen attention in ADHD, and enhance executive function, the mental control center in your prefrontal cortex.

To bring this all into the public spotlight, psychiatrist John J. Ratey, through his influential book Spark, argued that aerobic exercise is one of the most effective tools for improving mood, thinking, and learning. In his book, Ratey weaves together decades of research showing that raising your heart rate kicks off a biochemical chain reaction that primes the brain for change, a process known as neuroplasticity. He uses multiple examples from studies done worldwide that demonstrate the extraordinary effects of exercise on the brain in both children and adults. His work draws on the same molecules and mechanisms scientists continue to explore today.

Factors and Peptides Provide Growth and Calm

Brain Derived Neurotrophic Factor (BDNF) acts like a nutrient for your neurons, helping them grow, connect, and communicate better. Studies show that even one workout can temporarily spike BDNF levels, while consistent training makes the effect stronger over time. A large meta-analysis found that both single workouts and long-term routines reliably boost BDNF — offering a biological explanation for why exercise helps memory, mood, and mental clarity.

ANP, or atrial natriuretic peptide, is a lesser-known heart hormone released during exercise that may help calm anxiety. Research suggests higher ANP levels are linked with lower panic and anxiety responses, hinting that aerobic workouts might soothe the nervous system from the inside out.

Exercise grows the brain,

literally

The changes aren’t just chemical. Imaging studies show structural transformations in the brain, too. In one landmark trial, older adults who walked regularly increased the size of their hippocampus, a key memory and learning region, and performed better on spatial-memory tasks than those who didn’t. Because the hippocampus and prefrontal cortex govern memory, stress, and decision-making, these physical changes provide a solid foundation for improved mental health and sharper thinking.

Real-world results for mental health

Beyond lab data, clinical trials show that exercise often rivals traditional treatments for mood and attention challenges:

- Depression: In studies comparing exercise to antidepressants, both groups showed similar improvements. Meta-analyses confirm a moderate impact of physical activity on depressive symptoms.

- Anxiety: Exercise consistently lowers anxiety levels, likely through BDNF, ANP, and better stress regulation.

- ADHD: For children and adults with ADHD, regular aerobic exercise improves focus, impulse control, and overall executive function — likely thanks to increased dopamine and norepinephrine activity.

The prefrontal cortex in motion

Your brain’s “CEO,” the prefrontal cortex, manages planning, focus, and emotional regulation. Exercise promotes better blood flow, increases growth factors like BDNF, and strengthens communication networks between brain regions. Over time, this synergy translates to sharper thinking, steadier emotions, and better decision-making — a reminder that moving your body can literally help you think more clearly.

What long-term research shows

Months of consistent aerobic activity lead to measurable effects: slight increases in hippocampal volume, sustained elevations in BDNF, and lasting improvements in mood and anxiety. These benefits appear across age groups and fitness levels, even with moderate routines like brisk walking or cycling. The key is regularity, not

perfection.

What we still don’t know

Some questions remain. Blood measurements of BDNF don’t perfectly reflect levels inside the brain, and individuals vary in how much exercise they need for noticeable improvements. Scientists are still studying which types and intensities of exercise best serve different mental health or cognitive goals, and how genetics and medications may influence results.

The bottom line

If you want to boost your mood, concentration, or long-term brain health, the evidence points to a simple strategy: move often and find activities you enjoy. Aim for regular aerobic exercise like walking, cycling, or swimming and add strength work when possible. Even small, consistent efforts yield real biological and psychological benefits.

Exercise isn’t magic, but it’s close. After decades of research, from brain scans to clinical trials, the picture is clear: physical activity is one of the most reliable, accessible ways to improve mental health and make your brain more adaptable. It’s a hopeful message for everyone proof that movement strengthens not just muscles, but the mind itself.



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LEGAL AD

TOWN OF NEW CANAAN

PLANNING & ZONING COMMISSION

Notice is hereby given that the Planning and Zoning Commission at a regular meeting held via hybrid and in person on December 16, 2025 duly adopted the following resolution(s). Approved Applications become effective upon the filing of a copy thereof in the office of the Town Clerk.

1. RESOLVED, 223 Michigan Road – that the 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 is approved.

2. RESOLVED, 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 is approved with conditions.

3. RESOLVED, discussion and consideration of the request of Elliot Siderides, Windward Development, Inc. to amend the Zoning Regulations dated June 16, 2007, amended July 7, 2025 to amend Section(s) 4.6.D and 4.8.H to permit hotels and to provide various dimensional waivers for certain types of development in the Business C Zone is approved and effective December 22, 2025.

4. RESOLVED, 39, 49-51 Locust Avenue – that the application of Elliot Siderides, Windward Development, Inc., Authorized Agent for Two Corners, LLC, owner(s) for a Site Plan and Special Permit approval pursuant to Section(s) 4.6.D, 4.8.E and 4.8.H to allow the construction of a hotel with accessory uses such as retail, office, and below grade parking in the Business C Zone at 39 Locust Ave (Map T, Block 73, Lot 724) and 49-51 Locust Avenue Ave (Map T, Block 73, Lot 723) is approved with conditions and effective December 23, 2025.

Krista Neilson, Secretary

Dated December 16, 2025

LEGAL AD

TOWN OF NEW CANAAN

INLAND WETLANDS COMMISSION

Notice is hereby given that the Inland Wetlands Agent has approved the following application:

Permit Number (IW-25-48) issued to John C. Mori and Brooke Burdine, 1381 Smith Ridge Road, Map 41 Block 102 Lot 28. Install soil and erosion controls and temporary access road. Selectively remove trees and shrubbery. Install a 265’ l.f. by 4’ high lower retaining wall and a 195’ l.f. by 4’ high upper retaining wall. Other construction activities include: Construct 24’x38’ pool house with 10’x22’ open porch. Install cultec drainage system and make connections. Construct 20’x40’ stone patio w/ outdoor fireplace. Demolish existing deck and re-build with 5’x20’ enlargement. Upon completion, fine grade, topsoil, seed/sod and landscape all disturbed areas.

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Newspaper Magic

In 1897, newspaper magic happened. An eight-year-old girl, Virginia O’Hanlon, wrote a simple three-sentence letter to *The New York Sun* newspaper asking if Santa exists. Her father suggested she write: “Papa says, ‘If you see it in THE SUN it’s so.’” The power of the fourth estate. What transpired has become legend. The editor who wrote the response, Francis Pharcellus Church, who had been a war correspondent during the Civil War, used it as an opportunity to not just say whether Santa exists or not, but to highlight the importance of faith and believing in something larger than yourself.

It is difficult to imagine what Francis Church must have experienced as a war correspondent and how this affected him afterwards. The Civil War ravaged our country; more than 600,000 Americans died. It was, at times, brother fighting brother as our country tore itself apart. During the four-year conflict there was extreme suffering, and we can assume that Church saw this and that it left an imprint on him. At its conclusion, the South’s infrastructure was destroyed and the long, hard process of Reconstruction began. Many felt that society was broken as a result and that there was a collective loss of faith. When Virginia’s letter came in, Church must have jumped at the opportunity to craft such a brilliant reply—a reply asserting that if there were no Santa, “The eternal light with which childhood fills the world would be extinguished.”

Only faith, fancy, poetry, love, romance, can push aside that curtain and view and picture the supernal beauty and glory beyond. Is it all real? Ah, VIRGINIA, in all this world there is nothing else real and abiding.

Newspapers are an interesting thing. You have the opportunity to make an impact. Church’s editorial appeared on page seven of *The Sun*, below a piece on the “chainless bicycle.” You would not think it would have gotten much notice, but it did. It was read and the magic began. Today, it is the most reproduced editorial, in part or whole, in the English language. It words and phrasing are both quick-paced and soothing. We like to imagine Church wrote it quickly, in a fit a passion. “Yes, VIRGINIA, there is a Santa Claus. He exists as certainly as love and generosity and devotion exist, and you know that they abound and give to your life its highest beauty and joy.”

We do not begin to believe our editorials are as impactful as Church’s most famous one. However, we do have faith. We have faith not just in our paper (and faith that you are reading the editorials), but in our community and our neighbors. We believe that Santa abounds in New Canaan in large ways and small. We see it first hand when we see the Toys For Tots donations opportunities around town. Did you know that New Canaan High School students collected 300 toys in two days for children in Stamford that might not otherwise have a gift? Thanks to the generosity of the high school students and many civic groups, businesses and others, these children will know holiday cheer.

At the heart of Church’s editorial is a question: *how can you believe in something, have faith in something that you cannot see and when others tell you it does not exist?* To the doubters and naysayers, he responds, “Only faith, fancy, poetry, love, romance, can push aside that curtain and view and picture the supernal beauty and glory beyond. Is it all real? Ah, VIRGINIA, in all this world there is nothing else real and abiding.”

As you gather next week with family and friends, as the race to the holidays concludes with the actual holiday itself, we hope that everyone will take a moment to avoid the “skepticism of a skeptical age” and look for what we, as a community, can hold up with pride as meaningful accomplishments.

It is this effort, and many others, that need faith and belief to be made real.

Yes, there is a Santa Claus.



Yes, Virginia, There is a Santa Claus

Originally published in the *New York Sun* in 1897.

DEAR EDITOR: I am 8 years old. Some of my little friends say there is no Santa Claus. Papa says, ‘If you see it in THE SUN it’s so.’ Please tell me the truth; is there a Santa Claus?
VIRGINIA O’HANLON.
115 WEST NINETY-FIFTH STREET.

VIRGINIA, your little friends are wrong. They have been affected by the skepticism of a skeptical age. They do not believe except they see. They think that nothing can be which is not comprehensible by their little minds. All minds, Virginia, whether they be men’s or children’s, are little. In this great universe of ours man is a mere insect, an ant, in his intellect, as compared with the boundless world about him, as measured

LETTER

YMCA Campaign Chairs Seek Community Support

Dear Editor,
On behalf of the New Canaan YMCA Annual Campaign Committee, we are writing to ask our fellow community members to please join us in supporting our Y.

The Y is a pillar in our community that teaches our kids, supports our seniors, embraces all abilities, opens doors to those less fortunate, advances our health no matter our stage in life, and most importantly, brings our community together.

The needs throughout our community are all different; a young family looking to find connection, a child ready to make friends and build confidence, a teen needing a healthy space away from devices, adults seeking to prioritize their

by the intelligence capable of grasping the whole of truth and knowledge.

Yes, VIRGINIA, there is a Santa Claus. He exists as certainly as love and generosity and devotion exist, and you know that they abound and give to your life its highest beauty and joy. Alas! how dreary would be the world if there were no Santa Claus. It would be as dreary as if there were no VIRGINIAS. There would be no childlike faith then, no poetry, no romance to make tolerable this existence. We should have no enjoyment, except in sense and sight. The eternal light with which childhood fills the world would be extinguished.

Not believe in Santa Claus! You might as well not believe in fairies! You might get your papa to hire men to watch in all the chimneys on Christmas Eve to catch Santa Claus, but even if they did not see Santa Claus coming down, what would that prove? Nobody sees Santa Claus, but that is no sign that there is no Santa Claus. The most real

things in the world are those that neither children nor men can see. Did you ever see fairies dancing on the lawn? Of course not, but that’s no proof that they are not there. Nobody can conceive or imagine all the wonders there are unseen and unseeable in the world.

You may tear apart the baby’s rattle and see what makes the noise inside, but there is a veil covering the unseen world which not the strongest man, nor even the united strength of all the strongest men that ever lived, could tear apart. Only faith, fancy, poetry, love, romance, can push aside that curtain and view and picture the supernal beauty and glory beyond. Is it all real? Ah, VIRGINIA, in all this world there is nothing else real and abiding.

No Santa Claus! Thank God! he lives, and he lives forever. A thousand years from now, Virginia, nay, ten times ten thousand years from now, he will continue to make glad the heart of childhood.

We’ve all come to the Y for different purposes over the years, but what makes our Y truly remarkable is how it always brings us together.

physical and mental health, a cancer survivor determined to regain strength, a young adult with varying abilities who has found community at the Y, a senior seeking ways to stay engaged physically and socially, and a family who is struggling financially hoping for their child to attend summer camp.

We’ve all come to the Y for different purposes over the years, but what makes our Y truly remarkable is how it always brings us together.

Donations make this unwavering support for our community possible and create amazing opportunities every day. Thanks to donations, the Y provided over \$325,000 in financial assistance last year ensuring every child had the opportunity to participate in programs like summer camp or swim lessons, and that every adult had the opportunity to support their physical and mental health, no matter their current financial situation. Donations also support life-changing

programs for individuals in our community including those with varying abilities, adults with chronic disease, cancer survivors, seniors, teens, families, and more.

Please consider a gift to the Y this year and join us in bringing our community together to be healthy, happy, connected, and supportive of one another.

Donations can be made online at www.newcanaanymca.org/donate or by mail to New Canaan YMCA, 564 South Avenue, New Canaan, CT 06840, Attn: Development Office.

Respectfully,
Jessica Knowles
Rick Routhier
Amy Zinser
2025 New Canaan YMCA Annual Campaign Chairs

Multiple Fires Linked to Improper Ash Disposal

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

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

Inside the Fight: Yale’s Pediatric Neuro-Oncologists and the Families They Serve

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 traced 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.

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.

When Vivienne Finn arrived at Yale New Haven Children’s Hospital days after her diagnosis, her parents were ushered into a space that hardly resembled a conference room. “It was really a broom closet,” Dr. Vidya Sarma recalled. Yet into that small room came the neurosurgeon, an ICU physician, a social worker, residents, and two doctors who would become central figures in the family’s life: Dr. Sarma and Dr. Asher Marks. It was an



Sue Moretti Bodson interviews Dr. Vidya Puthenpura and Dr. Asher Marks

“It’s their body. We want them to have a say.” – Dr. Vidya Sarma

early signal of what pediatric neuro-oncology requires—a full team, crowded in close, because the work is too complex and too human to be done by one physician alone.

Dr. Sarma’s path to this field

began far from Connecticut. At 19, studying engineering in college, she traveled to India to visit relatives and spent time in a pediatric cancer hospital. The hospital served both wealthy and poor families, and the children

she met there—“fighting for their lives and so happy and full of energy,” she said—changed her direction. She returned to school and changed her major. Looking back on that decision, she called it “very life altering.”



Dr. Marks describes himself as “a reluctant oncologist,” but not for lack of interest in medicine. He always expected to become a pediatrician and admired the primary-care doctor he saw growing up. During residency, he imagined hanging a shingle and treating neighborhood families. “I loved working with kids,” he said. But by his second year of training, he felt something missing. Primary care was becoming, in his words, “a business model,” leaving less time for deeper conversations with families. He found himself drawn to the oncology rotation, where he could sit, listen and learn about a child’s life.

He made one promise he later broke. “I told my wife I would never go into oncology—her father died of cancer,” he said. “Then I said I would never do brain tumors, because that’s what he had. And I ended up doing brain tumors.” He has spent more than a decade at Yale working with children from diagnosis through treatment, often for months at a time.

The difference between pediatric and adult neuro-oncology is stark. Pediatric neuro-oncologists are trained first as hematologist-oncologists and then trained further in brain and spinal tumors. Adult neuro-oncologists often come from neurology. That distinction shapes treatment. Children metabolize chemotherapy differently and can endure higher doses. Their cells recover faster, but the intensity of their care means they may spend weeks in the hospital with suppressed immune systems and require frequent blood transfusions. “We bring them to the brink and then pull them back,” Dr. Marks said.

With diffuse intrinsic pontine gliomas and other diffuse midline gliomas, the defining challenge is biology. Historically, physicians relied on MRI scans alone to diagnose these tumors, because surgical removal is not possible. In recent years, neurosurgeons have become more comfortable performing targeted biopsies, and laboratory advances allow physicians to identify the specific molecular mutations that drive aggressiveness. That information has begun to reshape treatment pathways, though it has not produced a cure.

Dr. Sarma emphasized the collaborative nature of the field. “The pediatric brain tumor community is very small and we all know each other,” she said. They participate in national and international tumor boards, debates that bring together clinicians from major centers to examine hard cases. There is no competition among institutions when the disease is this unforgiving. If a trial is open at Memorial Sloan Kettering that might suit a child in New Haven, the Yale team will call Sloan directly. The goal is simple: “They want to go to school. They want to be around their siblings,” she said. If a trial can be opened at home, the team will work to make it happen.

Families face more than medical decisions. Many have to weigh whether traveling across the country for a trial is worth

the strain. Dr. Sarma noted that a young person’s own voice matters: “It’s their body. We want them to have a say.” Adolescents who have returned to school may resist further scans because they want distance from their diagnosis. “Sometimes you have to let them live,” she said.

Supportive care forms the backbone of Yale’s program, and the doctors make clear that it affects outcomes. Dr. Sarma’s research shows that nearly half of families treated at Yale have at least one unmet basic need—food, housing, utilities or transportation. Those families often arrive later in the disease course, experience more severe treatment side effects and face higher financial instability. Parents working hourly or inflexible jobs may lose employment because of the time required for treatment. “These are just very basic things that every human should have, not just a family whose child is fighting cancer,” she said.

Insurance adds another layer. “No treatment takes place until insurance approval is obtained,” Dr. Marks said. Medicaid often authorizes treatment more quickly than private carriers. The team regularly spends hours on the phone seeking approval for chemotherapy, imaging or supportive medications. Each delay, they stress, adds burden to families already navigating fear and uncertainty.

The strain on clinicians is evident. Hospital finances have narrowed the availability of non-revenue roles such as psychology, social work and nutrition—roles that are essential to treating the “whole child,” as the team describes it. Dr. Marks said that when he started 13 years ago, a clinic day was eight complex patients supported by several staff members. “Now I have to see 16 just to keep afloat,” he said.

Coping requires boundaries. Dr. Marks drives home from New Haven each night and crosses a particular bridge that marks the point where he forces himself to let the day go. His wife works with victims of human trafficking, so the rule in their home is strict: neither brings work across the threshold. Dr. Sarma relies on humor and a group text thread among colleagues that serves as a place to decompress. They build Lego sets—a ritual that grounds them through cycles of grief.

They still speak of Vivienne often. She was direct, witty and fiercely curious. “She used to call me ‘V-Dizzle,’” Dr. Sarma said. Dr. Marks remembers her humor and sharpness: “She gave it back just as hard as you do.” They also remember the day she died. After leaving the ICU, the two physicians walked away from each other without speaking, each needing space before they could talk.

Despite the weight of the work, both insist they cannot imagine doing anything else. They measure success not only in survival but in honoring a family’s goals: allowing a child to remain at home, preserving moments of normalcy, providing clarity during frightening choices, and, when cure is not possible, offering peace at the end of life.

They also return to the importance of community. A room full of people willing to hear the stories and understand the gaps—financial, scientific and emotional—gives them confidence that the work can move forward. As Dr. Sarma put it, “It’s a hard conversation to have, but being willing to have it matters.”

For the Finns, the Yale team’s honesty and compassion provided the guidance they needed during the worst months of their lives. For the doctors, Vivienne’s story—and the foundation now built in her name—is a reminder that the smallest patients can leave the deepest imprint on the science and the care that will follow.

Learn more at the Vivienne C. Finn Foundation online at <https://vcfinnfoundation.org/>

Part Three in the Jan 8 issue will explore the foundation’s pillars—drug development, family support and legislative reform underway in Hartford and Washington.

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YOUR NEWS BRIEF
CONTINUED From Page 2



Men’s Coffee Hosts Reinhardt



Recently, Paul Reinhardt of the New Canaan Parent Support Group spoke at a Men’s Coffee held by Staying Put. Photo credit: Staying Put in New Canaan.

Tree Lighting at the Inn



The Inn marked the holiday season with a Christmas tree lighting, featuring Eric Thunem. The tree will remain on display for residents throughout the season. Photo credit: Waveny LifeCare Network.

Brushes and Bites



Recently, Staying Put hosted a Brushes and Bites event featuring a guided painting activity. Photo credit: Staying Put in New Canaan.

Land Trust Presents to Staying Put



Recently, Robin Bates-Mason and Chris Schipper gave a presentation to Staying Put on the New Canaan Land Trust and Grupes Home.

Rhodes Speaks to Rotary Club



Recently, Dr. Leonaura Rhodes spoke to the New Canaan Rotary Club. Drawing

on more than 25 years of experience, she discussed how brain function affects overall health and outlined practices that support cognitive well-being. She also referenced her personal experience with brain fog and an ADHD diagnosis. Pictured L-R: Tom Ferguson and Dr. Leonaura Rhodes. Photo credit: New Canaan Rotary Club.

Hamilton Joins Rotary Club



Two weeks ago, the Rotary Club inducted Perrin Hamilton as a new member. Hamilton owns A Place at Home, a senior home care business, and has lived in New Canaan since 2021. Pictured L-R: Perrin Hamilton and Keith Simpson. Photo credit: New Canaan Rotary Club.

SCHOOLS

Toys for Tots



Recently, NCPS elementary schools launched their annual Toys for Tots drive in partnership with the New Canaan Police Department, with students from South, East, and West Schools participating. Donation drop-off locations remain open at each school. Photo credit: New Canaan Public Schools.

NCCS Study Indigenous History



Fourth graders at New Canaan Country School are studying the region’s Indigenous history as part of an interdisciplinary unit. Students recently viewed arrowheads and spear points found on land around the school and presented by the school archivist. The artifacts were donated to the school by alumna Emma Thurton and are partially displayed in Carver Commons. Photo credit: New Canaan Country School.

SLS Dining Rating



The FLIK Dining team at St. Luke’s School earned a 99 percent score on a national operational audit. The rating was recognized at recent Middle and Upper School town meetings. The audit evaluated areas including allergy management, service efficiency, and food quality.

ACROSS CT

Travel Guidance from CDC

The CDC issued updated travel guidance identifying active chikungunya outbreaks in Bangladesh, Cuba, China’s Guangdong Province, and Sri Lanka, along with other countries where risk remains elevated. Chikungunya is a mosquito-borne virus with no cure, and vaccination is recommended for outbreak areas and may be considered for longer stays in higher-risk regions. The CDC said the virus has spread to more than 100 countries, though no locally acquired cases have been reported in the United States since 2019.

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:

- 24/7 Assistance
- Adult Day Program
- Support Groups
- Resources and Services
- Respite Care

NAVIGATOR

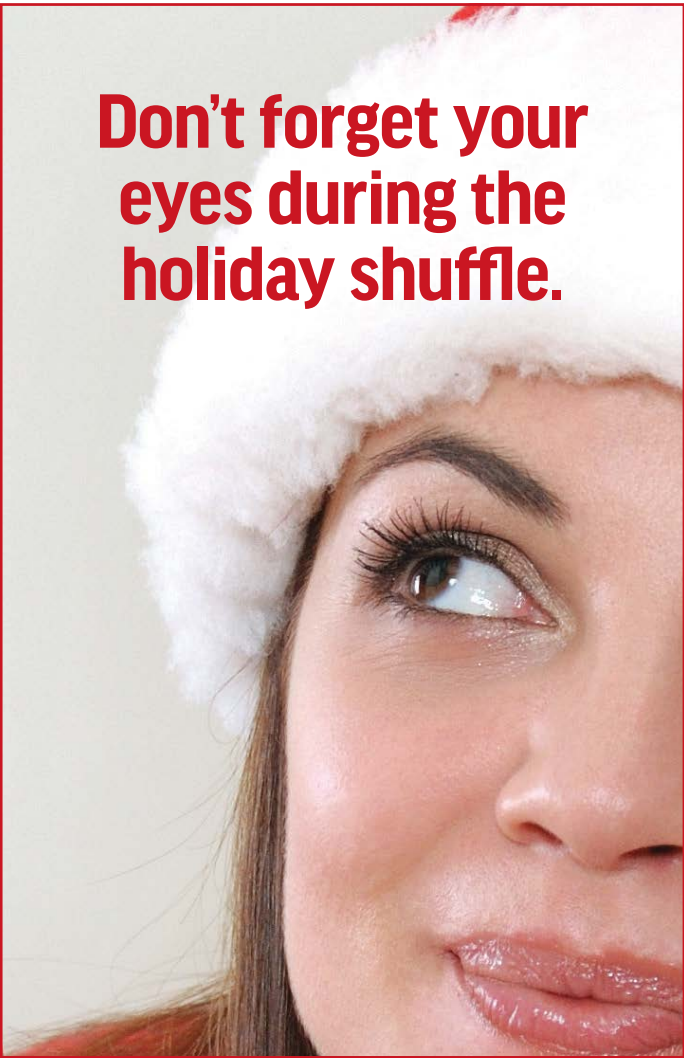
Alzheimer’s and Dementia at Home for New Canaan

SCAN TO LEARN MORE

Call: (203) 594-5289
Email: navigator@waveny.org

3 Farm Road, New Canaan, CT | www.waveny.org

Don't forget your
eyes during the
holiday shuffle.



Robert J. Fucigna, M.D.
1445 East Putnam Ave.
Old Greenwich
(203) 348-7575
AOCT.CO

Town Hall's December Message: Holidays, Taxes, Aquarion Fight, Charter Review



By DIONNA CARLSON

December is a time to reflect on the past year, celebrate our community, and look ahead with hope and optimism. I want to extend my warmest wishes to the entire community for a joyful and peaceful holiday season. I am grateful for the dedication, generosity, and spirit of service that define New Canaan.

For those looking for a meaningful way to brighten someone's holiday, I encourage you to consider supporting our Human Services Holiday Program. Donations made through the Human Services online donation portal provide gift cards to local children in need. Your contribution, no matter the size, can make a profound difference in a family's holiday season. Go to newcanaan.info then to departments/human services/donation portal/holiday program.

Opposing Sale of Aquarion

As you have read here in the Sentinel, PURA denied the proposed Regional Water Authority acquisition of Aquarion Water. Aquarion has since filed an Administrative Appeal with the Connecticut Superior Court, along with a Motion for Expedited Treatment to have the matter decided before January 23, 2026. New Canaan

Your contribution, no matter the size, can make a profound difference in a family's holiday season.

has filed to intervene in this appeal, and we remain firmly opposed to the purchase of Aquarion by the RWA. New Canaan is joined by Fairfield, Ridgefield and Westport along with the Office of Consumer Counsel, MetroCOG and WestCOG in its opposition and legal intervention in this case.

Taxes Due

A reminder to all residents that January 1 is the date when property tax payments are due. Please plan accordingly to avoid penalties.

Charter Revision

You have also read here in the Sentinel that the recently formed Charter Revision Commission has begun its important work to review and consider changes to the structure of our municipal government. Their first public hearing was held on December 2, and there is another meeting scheduled for Tuesday, January 6 at Town Hall. All meetings are public. I encourage residents to follow their progress and participate in this vital civic process. Information and updates can be found

at newcanaan.info, then click on government and the Charter Revision section under Commissions.

News from Waveny

Finally, a bit of news from Waveny Park. You will notice a reconstructed parking lot at the west end of the mansion was recently completed. This project resulted in 16 additional parking spaces in approximately the same size area as the old lot.

Wishing you and your families a wonderful holiday season and a happy, healthy New Year.

Dionna Carlson is the New Canaan First Selectman. Her leadership is guided by a respect for local decision-making and a commitment to keeping residents informed and engaged. Read more from Dionna each month by subscribing to her email newsletter, News From Town Hall. To sign up to receive the newsletter visit newcanaan.info and click on the red bar at top, Sign Up For Alerts. To read the latest issue of the newsletter, visit newcanaan.info and click on the yellow bar at top, News From Town Hall.



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BFJ Planning Updates Commission on Zoning Regulation Review

By PETER BARHYDT

The Planning and Zoning Commission received an update Monday night on New Canaan's ongoing Zoning Regulation Update, a comprehensive review of the town's zoning regulations being conducted by its planning consultant, BFJ Planning.

Frank Fish, principal in charge at BFJ Planning, appeared before the full commission alongside Project Manager Suzanne Goldberg and Senior Planner Emily Tolbert to outline the work completed to date and the next steps in the process.

"This effort is really about stepping back and looking at the zoning regulations as a unified document," Fish said. "Over time, regulations get amended section by section, and our goal is to bring clarity, consistency, and alignment with the town's long-term planning goals."

Goldberg said the project has involved a detailed analysis of existing zoning language,

with an emphasis on identifying outdated provisions, internal inconsistencies, and areas where organization and definitions could be improved.

"We're looking closely at how the regulations function in practice," Goldberg said. "That includes how applicants, residents, and staff use the code, and where confusion or inefficiencies tend to arise."

Emily Tolbert noted that BFJ Planning has also been reviewing zoning regulations from comparable communities to identify best practices that could be adapted to New Canaan's context.

"One of our key focuses is usability," Tolbert said. "Zoning regulations should be understandable not just to planners and attorneys, but to residents who want to understand what's allowed in their neighborhoods."

Commission members underscored the importance of ensuring that any future changes protect New Canaan's character while

responding to evolving planning needs. Several commissioners raised questions about how the updated regulations might balance flexibility with neighborhood stability.

"This is foundational work," one commissioner said. "Zoning decisions shape development patterns for decades."

Fish emphasized that the zoning update remains a work in progress and that community input will be an essential part of the process moving forward.

"There will be multiple opportunities for public engagement before any changes are adopted," Fish said. "We see this as a collaborative effort with the commission and the community."

No formal action was taken at the meeting, which was intended to provide an informational update to the commission. Additional presentations and discussions are expected as BFJ Planning continues developing draft zoning revisions for public review.



Make safety your priority on
the roads this holiday season.

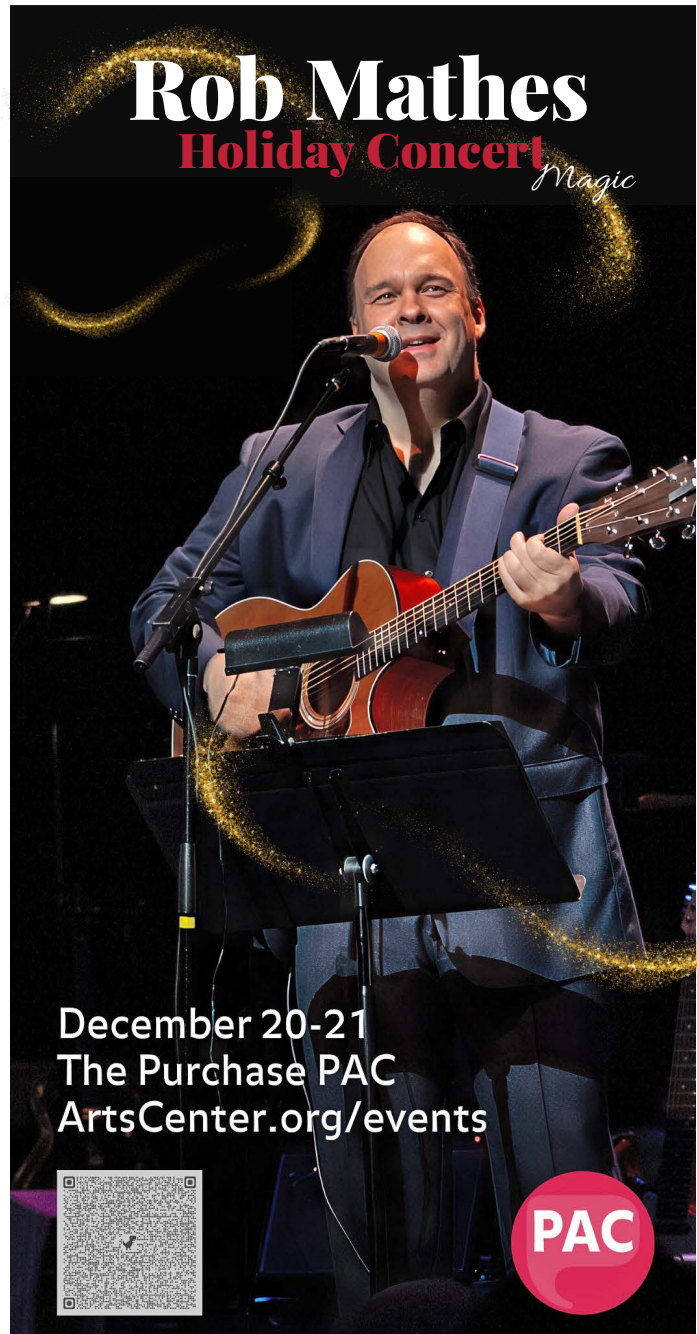
Are you concerned about a friend's or loved
one's drinking, cannabis, or drug habits?
Are you worried about yourself?

- 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.

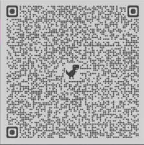
The New Canaan Health and Human
Services Commission wishes you a warm,
safe, and joyful holiday season.

Rob Mathes
Holiday Concert

Magic



December 20-21
The Purchase PAC
ArtsCenter.org/events



PAC

REAL ESTATE DASHBOARD

REAL ESTATE DASHBOARD EDITOR

John Engel | John.Engel@Elliman.com

REAL ESTATE DASHBOARD CONTRIBUTOR

Robyn Bonder | Robyn.Bonder@Elliman.com

NEW SALES

Address	Original List	List Price	Sold Price	DOM	BR	FB	Acres
234 Marvin Ridge	\$1,350,000	\$1,350,000	\$1,490,000	4	3	2	1
44 Putnam Road	\$1,495,000	\$1,495,000	\$1,817,000	9	5	3	1
860 Silvermine Road	\$1,995,000	\$1,995,000	\$2,250,000	14	5	4	0.72
298 Greenley Road	\$2,550,000	\$2,550,000	\$3,100,000	2	4	3	2
38 Fitch Lane	\$3,695,000	\$3,695,000	\$3,550,000	44	5	5	2.39
469 Brookside Road	\$3,800,000	\$3,800,000	\$3,850,000	25	6	5	3.43
63 Middle Ridge Road	\$3,895,000	\$3,895,000	\$3,850,000	28	5	5	2.29
561 Smith Ridge Road	\$8,750,000	\$8,750,000	\$8,650,000	21	5	5	4

Spring Panic, Slow Feet, and Strong Teams *How Timing and Agents Shape the Deal*



BY JOHN ENGEL

Last week’s column picked up where the first one left off. After using *Men Are from Mars, Women Are from Venus* and Prospect Theory to frame how people process stress, risk, and potential loss, we stepped into actual living rooms and watched those instincts play out. We saw partners reacting to the same house with different thresholds for danger and possibility, sellers who either expanded their field of vision or narrowed it to the simplest path, and couples whose “disagreements” were really just two operating systems trying to solve the same problem.

Together, the first two columns made one thing clear: Gray’s metaphors and behavioral economists’ findings show up in real estate constantly — during inspections, staging decisions, contingencies, and every moment when possibility becomes commitment. This week, in the final column, we add timing to the equation and look at how the Spring Market, uncertainty, and even the wiring of agents themselves shape what happens next.

When the Starting Line Becomes the Stumbling Block

Selling decisions reveal a lot about how people process risk, but buying decisions reveal even more. So after watching those two sellers in last week’s column take opposite paths, I found myself thinking about a very different kind of situation, one that’s years in the making, not months. If the single man and the perfectionist renovator show how people behave when the finish line is in sight, the next story shows what happens when the starting line itself becomes the obstacle.

The clearest example I’ve ever seen of risk-processing in real estate was a couple — both lawyers — who spent five years trying to buy a house. They saw more than a hundred properties. They made offers on at least five. They had multiple acceptances. And each time, the same pattern repeated: They sailed through the search, sailed through negotiation, and then unraveled during inspections. What looked, from the outside, like indecision was really two highly trained risk analysts doing exactly what their professional lives demanded: finding the flaw, anticipating the liability, protecting against the downside. Gray would say they were scanning for emotional safety; Prospect Theory would say they were reacting to potential loss with twice the intensity of potential gain. I only knew that every time we crossed the threshold from “possibility” to “commitment,” they switched into litigation mode. Inspections weren’t information; they were exposure.

To their credit, this couple never rushed, never forced it, and they finally bought a house that felt safe enough, solid enough, and predictable

enough that the risk finally aligned with the reward. Watching that moment, after five years, was like watching two operating systems finally sync.

What struck me most wasn’t their caution; it was the choreography. They didn’t argue. They didn’t contradict each other. They ran the analysis together, like two litigators preparing a brief. One would spot a structural concern; the other would dive into legal exposure. One would question resale risk; the other would go straight to worst-case scenarios. In Gray’s language, they weren’t operating from “cave” or “connection,” but they were doing something different entirely: They were co-authoring the same anxiety script. And as their agent, I learned that my role wasn’t to talk them into anything. It was to give them the time, data, and space to let the defensive perimeter run its course. The moment their system felt safe, they moved. And when it didn’t, they didn’t. Simple as that. Their eventual purchase didn’t happen because the house was perfect. It happened because, for once, the facts didn’t trigger the circuitry that had stopped them a hundred times before.

Early Birds, Late Bloomers, and the Spring Market Clock

Every year, right after the Super Bowl, the Spring Market begins — long before Connecticut looks anything like spring. Brown snow, bare trees, and frozen yards. Nothing photographs well. Nothing feels inspiring. And yet, this is when some of the most decisive buyers make their moves. Gray would probably say it’s because different people experience uncertainty differently. Some feel energized by getting ahead of the pack; others need the environment to “feel right” before committing.

I see it every February and March. The early-season buyers walk into a house, see past the mud and salt, and make decisions quickly because they’re focused on beating competition, not waiting for perfect conditions. The late-season buyers, by contrast, want context-green lawns, leafy canopies, a sense of what a house becomes in June. They’re not slower; they need to process more environmental data before the decision feels safe. Prospect Theory would say the early buyers are minimizing future loss (fear of missing out). The late buyers are minimizing present loss (fear of choosing wrong). It’s the same inventory, same town, and same prices, but two entirely different timing instincts shaped by how each person experiences risk, beauty, uncertainty, and momentum.

For sellers, the psychology of spring timing is just as revealing. Early in the season, when nothing looks its best, the prospects who show up are often the ones who have already been through a fall cycle, lost a bidding war, or watched inventory evaporate the previous year. They’re primed, motivated, and less sensitive to cosmetic imperfections. By late spring, the buyer pool shifts: people who waited for good weather arrive with higher expectations and lower urgency. They’re picturing summer

barbecues, end-of-school routines, family visits. They want the house to match the season they’re imagining. This means sellers who list early don’t need perfection; they need competitiveness. Sellers who list late need presentation. It’s not that one group of buyers is “better” than the other; they simply carry different psychological clocks. Gray would say some people move when the internal decision feels resolved, and others

“A good team doesn’t eliminate the stress of real estate. It absorbs it, balances it, and makes space for people to decide in the way that fits their wiring.”

move when the external world aligns with their emotional picture.

Couples reveal even more in how they navigate timing. Some arrive at an open house in February and immediately sync: One sees potential, the other sees urgency, and together they move. Others collide. One partner is energized by acting before competition arrives; the other cannot imagine committing tens of thousands of dollars based on a yard full of snow and a landscape that looks nothing like the listing photos. They’re not disagreeing on the house; they’re disagreeing on readiness. Gray’s framework makes that visible: One partner needs resolution; the other needs resonance.

When couples disagree on timing, I’ve learned it’s rarely solvable through data alone. They don’t need comps; they need alignment. And sometimes, the answer is as simple as waiting until the trees leaf out, because one partner can’t feel the house until the house is fully itself.

The numbers support all of this. Days-on-market data across Fairfield County consistently shows a dip in late April and May as the largest wave of buyers enters the market. Mortgage rate lock research shows that when rates dip even slightly in the spring, urgency spikes. Buyers act faster, offers concentrate, and competition increases. The school calendar adds a psychological deadline: Families who want to be settled by September start writing offers between March and June. This is why June and July closings peak every year, regardless of macroeconomic conditions. It’s not the market — it’s human wiring. Early buyers act to avoid loss; mid-season buyers act to capture opportunity; late-season buyers act only when the picture of their next chapter is

fully formed. Gray would say these aren’t market forces; they’re timing personalities.

Teams, Temperaments, and the Power of Two Lenses

What ties all these stories together isn’t gender, or personality, or even the houses themselves. It’s the simple truth that real estate forces big decisions under imperfect information, and people reveal themselves under that kind of pressure. Some retreat. Some expand. Some need the facts. Some need the feeling. Some can’t move until the picture is perfect; others can’t wait that long. Gray gave us the metaphors. Behavioral economics gave us the math. The field gave me the case studies. And taken together, they explain why no two buyers move the same way, no two sellers evaluate risk the same way, and why the same house can look like opportunity to one person and danger to another. If we began by asking whether Gray’s ideas show up in real estate, we’ll conclude by suggesting that the answer is yes — every weekend, every season, every negotiation.

Which brings me to the part of this conversation that feels the most personal to me: how we work as agents. If couples reveal their wiring when buying or selling a house, agents reveal their wiring in how they guide people through it. Gray didn’t write about real estate teams, but his framework makes something obvious in hindsight: This is a business that benefits from dual operating systems. One person notices the numbers; another notices the nuance. One person sees risk; another sees potential. One can read the room; the other can read the inspection report. Melissa and I see it every day in our own partnership: Buyers gravitate toward one of us for reasons we sometimes only understand later. And because they get both, they get a fuller view — not because of gender, but because two different lenses pick up more than one.

The industry itself quietly reflects this. Most agents are women. Many of the most analytical, data-driven agents I know are women. Many of the most intuitive, client-attuned agents I know are men. The point isn’t that Mars sells better than Venus, or vice versa. It’s that the work demands a blend: presentation and pricing, logic and instinct, strategy and empathy. The longer I do this, the more I see that no single style captures the whole process. Buyers need information and reassurance. Sellers need clarity and vision. Negotiations need backbone and diplomacy. And very few people — agents or clients — carry all of that in one operating system.

There’s also real evidence that teams outperform solo agents. NAR’s Member Profile shows that team-based agents consistently close more transactions per year and handle a wider range of client types than individuals, even when controlling for experience. Teams convert more leads, move listings faster, and manage negotiations more efficiently because no one person is trying to carry every role. Behavioral researchers would

say that teams reduce cognitive load: When one agent is running numbers, the other can read the couple. When one is analyzing inspection issues, the other can manage the emotional arc of the decision. It’s not that teams work harder; it’s that they distribute the psychological weight of the process. In a field where buyers and sellers are already managing uncertainty, the structure itself becomes a stabilizer.

I see this in my own work with Melissa. People assume we divide tasks by gender, but we don’t; we divide them by wiring. She notices what people feel before they say it. I notice patterns that will matter three steps later. She can walk into a house and understand immediately how a buyer will move through it. I can look at the same house and understand immediately how an appraiser will. Clients don’t always articulate why they connect with one of us first, but they do. And when they work with both of us, the process gets steadier. We’re not proving John Gray right. We’re proving something simpler — that two complementary operating systems catch more of what matters than one can.

We began this series with the framework and continued with the field. Now, I’ll offer the practical conclusion: People buy and sell homes in deeply human ways. Gray’s metaphors don’t explain everything, but they explain enough to make the work more interesting, to remind us that decisions about money, risk, timing, and home are never just logical. They’re personal, patterned, emotional, and sometimes contradictory. And if that’s true, then the best way to guide people through them is with more than one tool, more than one temperament, more than one way of seeing. A good team doesn’t eliminate the stress of real estate. It absorbs it, balances it, and makes space for people to decide in the way that fits their wiring. In the end, that’s the whole point: one house, two decision-makers, and a process that works better when no one has to navigate it alone.

This week’s final column pulls together the entire series, from Gray’s metaphors to Nobel Prize-winning research, from sellers’ choices to couples’ choreography, and finally, to the role of teams. The throughline is simple: Houses are where psychology, money, stress, and hope collide. The more honestly we see how wiring, timing, and partnership shape decisions, the better we can build a process that doesn’t just deliver a closing, but makes people feel safer and more understood on the way there.

John Engel is a broker with the Engel Team at Douglas Elliman in New Canaan. This is the season for baking, sewing, needlepoint, and ornament making. John’s parents made ornaments as newlyweds back in 1965. John made them in school, his kids made them in school, and now his adult children feel that they need to make a few more. Funny thing about ornaments: There’s always room for just one more.

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



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30

NOV

4:00

PM

Deck the Halls Advent Party

11

DEC

3:00

PM

New Canaan Chamber Music Concert

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

Candlelight Service

Please Plan to Join Us for Some or All of These Events!

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Sunday Worship/Sunday School – 10am
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A Blue Christmas Service

Sunday, December 21
4:00 pm

at First Presbyterian Church
of New Canaan

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- Lonely
- Divorced
- Navigating a loss

An ecumenical service sponsored by
local faith communities

*“The light shines in the darkness, and the
darkness did not overcome it.”
(John 1:5)*



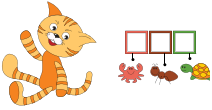
FIRST PRESBYTERIAN
NEW CANAAN

Christmas Eve Family Service

Hope for a Troubled World

Wednesday, December 24 5 pm

178 Oenoke Ridge
Sunday Worship/Sunday School – 10am
Visit fpcnc.org or call us at 203-966-0002 ext 1



GAMES AND
PUZZLES



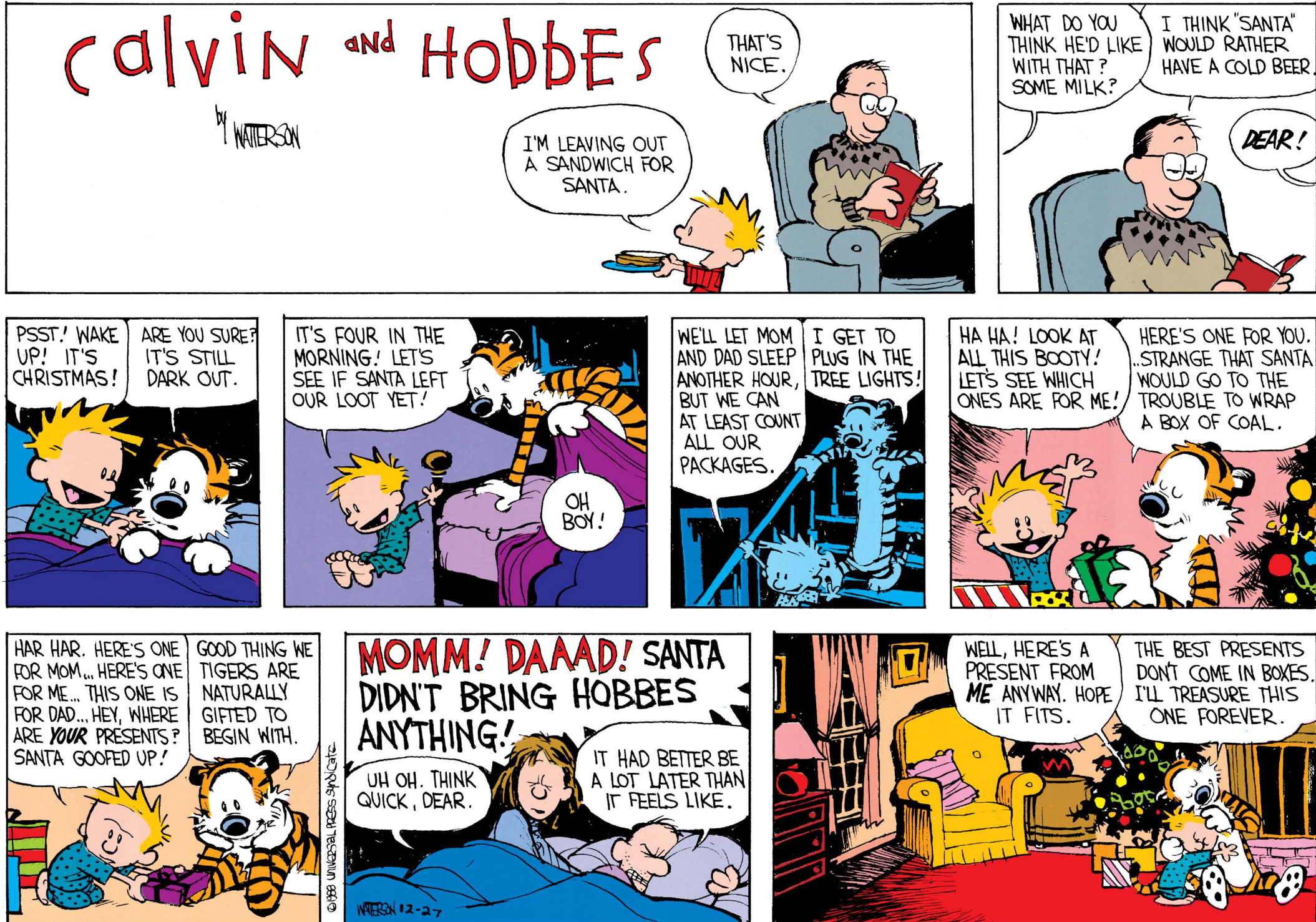
CROSSWORD
PUZZLES



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WEEKS



WHAT TO DO:
COMPREHENSIVE
COMMUNITY
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Wildly Successful: The Reindeer



BY JIM KNOX

From partridges to penguins, there are many animals associated with Christmas, yet one consistently flies to the top of the list. In fact, this animal and Christmas are virtually inseparable—forever linked in verse and lore. Providing the “horsepower” pulling Santa’s sleigh around the world each Christmas Eve, this animal has achieved unquestioned job security, as well as a place in our hearts for bringing the holiday with it on its travels.

The Reindeer, Rangifer tarandus, is both an actual living creature and a legendary beast representing all the magic of Christmas and the holiday season. Its mythic qualities such as flight, worldwide endurance, and uncanny navigational ability, are well known—so no need to go

Though they can run at a startling 50 miles per hour—virtually flying along the ground, they conserve their energy and focus on the next step of their journey. In fact, the famous clicking of their hooves is an actual phenomenon.

into the technical details here.

It is the other beast, the actual member of the deer family, that possesses nearly equally astounding qualities that impress even the most field hardened biologists. Known worldwide as Reindeer, and as Caribou in North America, these creatures represent a superbly adapted super species comprising roughly 10 subspecies (taxonomists are hotly debating this one). Although we have minor tweaks to this finely-tuned design, the basic form and function across this super species is among nature’s finest.

With a very un-deer-like barrel shaped body and short legs, the Reindeer’s form departs from the norm. It is this high mass to low surface area ratio that conserves vital heat in the planet’s most forbidding cold. Yet its adaptations for subpolar survival don’t end there. From

head to hoof, the Reindeer is a marvel built for survival. Unlike nearly all members of the deer tribe, they possess a broad hair-covered nose which ensures no skin is exposed to frostbite inducing wind. In fact, the nose is so well protected, the hairs extend deep inside the deer’s nostrils ensuring the searing cold can be baffled and filtered before it reaches the animal’s lungs.

The Reindeer’s eyes alone encompass a suite of amazing adaptations. With horizontal pupils, the Reindeer focuses on the horizon where both food and predators are found. They are among an elite class of mammals known to possess ultraviolet vision. With elevated levels of ultraviolet light in the polar and subpolar regions due to the reflection of snow and ice, this is an invaluable trait. This enables them to detect life-sustaining lichens which absorb

ultraviolet wavelengths of light. Similarly, they can detect the light spectrum signature of their main predator, the wolf, as wolf fur also absorbs ultraviolet light. Even more significantly, the Reindeer remains the only known mammal to possess eyes which change color seasonally—from an amber color in summer to blue in winter. This reduces the amount of light reflected back out of the eye which confers sharp vision even in the near dark conditions of the long Arctic winter.

While the Arctic is snow and ice bound throughout most of the year, the brief Arctic summer results in massive thawing. With migrations that may take the Reindeer herds hundreds of miles, long water crossings are inevitable, and the Reindeer’s hollow hairs act as a life preserver, buoying their bulky bodies while their oversized paddle-like hooves drive them through the water at more than six miles per hour—faster than an Olympic swimmer’s 4.7 miles per hour! These same hollow hairs trap body heat and insulate the Reindeer so well, snow will not melt on its body. This in turn provides an additional layer of insulation.

The Reindeer’s unique antler configuration features a palmate “shovel” on the brow of one antler. This enables the animal to scrape snow away from lichens once its keen nose has detected their presence as much as two feet below the snow’s surface! Used in conjunction with the antler, the Reindeer uses its broad hooves to paw away ice to get to its food. This is achieved by the seasonal growth of the hooves which develop a prominent sharp outer edge in winter (which aid in traction) and a contracting center to protect the sensitive base of the hoof from sharp ice.

While these physical adaptations are extraordinary, it is the behavioral Reindeer which is an even more impressive beast. The Reindeer’s hardiness and resilience are legendary. Having worked with these creatures in



conditions down to zero degrees Fahrenheit, I can assure you they are extremely comfortable in the cold. In fact, they thrive in much colder conditions—possessing the highest temperature range tolerance of any known mammal. Withstanding temperatures from 65 below to 115 degrees Fahrenheit (there are captive herds in South Texas), these beasts can endure a temperature swing of nearly two hundred degrees!

Reindeer utilize the collective eyes, ears, and noses of the vast herd to detect danger and locate scarce resources on their long migrations. Though they can run at a startling 50 miles per hour—virtually flying along the ground, they conserve their energy and focus on the next step of their journey. In fact, the famous clicking of their hooves is an actual phenomenon. The tendons riding over the sesamoid bones in their feet produce a distinctive clicking sound which enables the herd to maintain forward progress and stick together during even whiteout blizzard conditions!

In the Reindeer we have a golden opportunity to incorporate some wild wisdom into our lives.

Working together—and sticking together as a team—especially during tough times, will see us through. Adjusting our vision to changing conditions, thereby detecting essential changes in our world will serve us well. Utilizing the collective strength of the group to advance the interest of all ensures everyone has something to contribute and can likewise benefit. Conserving our energy for those moments when it is needed most will enable us to conquer unforeseen challenges that lie ahead. As a survivor of the planet’s most forbidding realm the Reindeer teaches us that by utilizing our unique abilities and working together, our dreams can take flight!

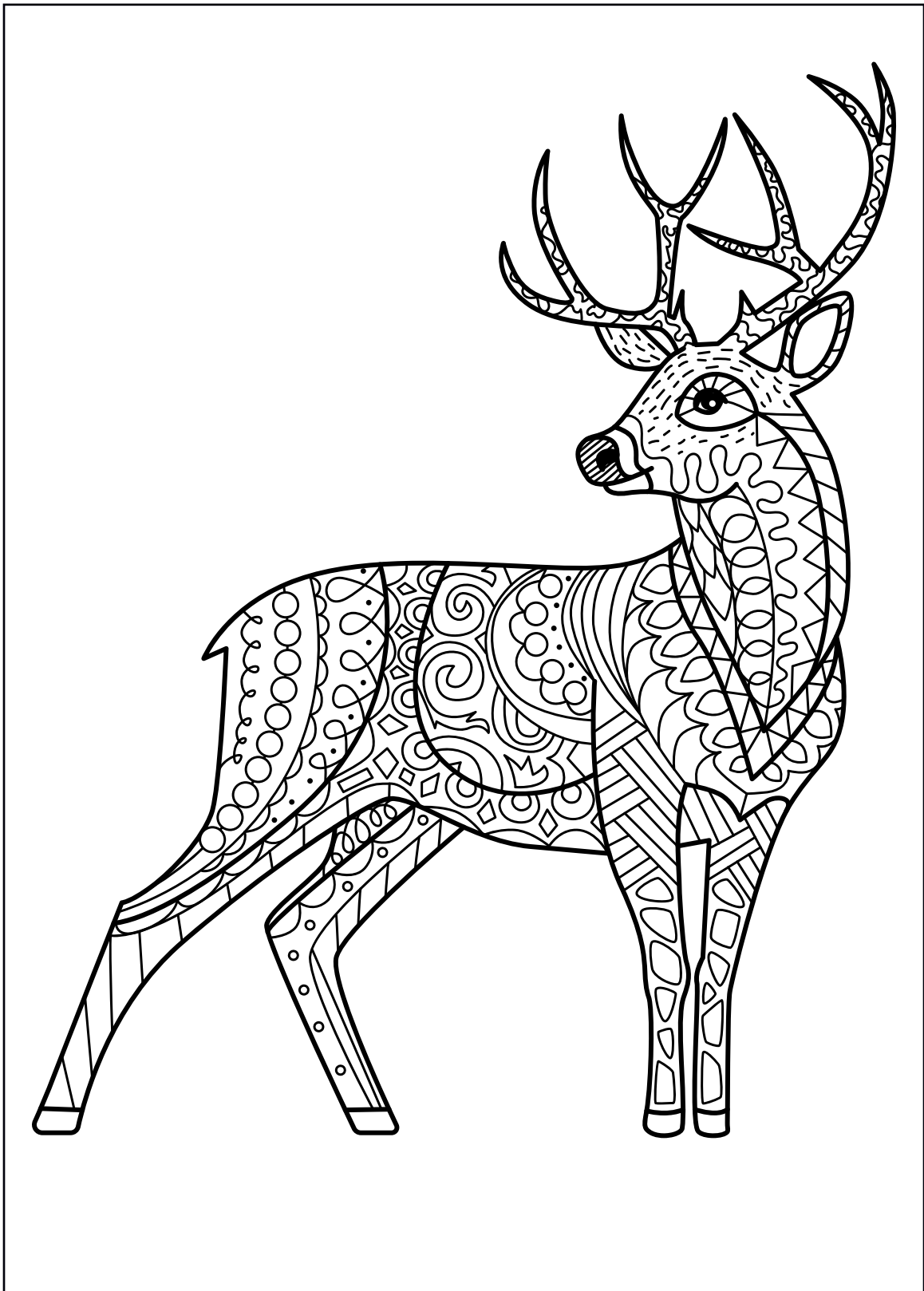
Jim Knox serves as the Curator of Education for Connecticut’s Beardsley Zoo and as a Science Adviser for The Bruce Museum. A Member of The Explorers Club, Jim enjoys sharing his passion for the world’s wildlife with audiences in Connecticut and beyond.

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Sudoku for Kids

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

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SUDOKU

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

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Sudoku answers

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8	4	9	5	7	2	1	3	6	4

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

TOWN MEETINGS
Monday, January 5
Zoning Board of Appeals 7-8 p.m., Location not posted at time of publication.
Tuesday, January 6
Board of Selectmen 8:30-9:30 a.m., Town Hall Meeting Room
Charter Revision Commission 5-6:30 p.m., Town Hall Board Room

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.

‘Edge of Darkness’
7-8:30 PM at the Dome, New Canaan High School
This special evening features Edge of Darkness, a stunning 25-minute film that takes viewers soaring over the towering cliffs of comet 67P, diving into the bright “lights” on Ceres, and witnessing the first-ever close-up views of the dwarf binary planet Pluto/Charon and its moons. Following the film, guests will enjoy a live presentation that brings these celestial objects to life and explores how they move through space. Tickets are \$20 and available at <https://shorturl.at/tCuT5>. All proceeds from sales will directly support student programming at The Dome.

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

Gentle Yoga
10 AM at the New Canaan Library, Jim & Dede Bartlett Auditorium
Join a tranquil, foundation-building class designed to introduce new students to yoga, as well as offer regular practitioners a gentle class to complement their yoga practice. Participants must bring their own yoga mat. The class is designed to have modified poses so everyone has the best experience. Register at <https://www.newcanaanlibrary.org/event/gentle-yoga-90594>.

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

Calendar of Events for Your Fridge

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.

Tuesday, December 23

Open Tech
2-4 PM at the New Canaan Library, McLaughlin Meeting Room
If you need help with email, smartphones/tablets, social media, or accessing the digital library, stop by for one-on-one support from a tech librarian. Tech assistance is limited to 20 minutes per session and is provided on a first-come, first-served basis.

Friday, December 26

THERE WILL BE NO COFFEE AND CONVERSATION at the Lapham Center

Saturday, December 27

Open Morning for Writers
10:30 AM- 12 PM at the New Canaan Library, McLaughlin Meeting Room
Open Morning for Writers is once-a-month quiet writing space. There will not be any instruction or talking in the room. Bring your pens and your notebooks, or computers to write for one and a half hours without distractions. Register at <https://shorturl.at/JMibE>.

Monday, December 29

Gentle Yoga
10 AM at the New Canaan Library, Jim & Dede Bartlett Auditorium
Join a tranquil, foundation-building class designed to introduce new students to yoga, as well as offer regular practitioners a gentle class to complement their yoga practice. Participants must bring their own yoga mat. The class is designed to have modified poses so everyone has the best experience. Register at <https://www.newcanaanlibrary.org/event/gentle-yoga-90595>.

Tuesday, December 30

Open Tech
2-4 PM at the New Canaan Library, McLaughlin Meeting Room
If you need help with email, smartphones/tablets, social media, or accessing the digital library, stop by for one-on-one support from a tech librarian. Tech assistance is limited to 20 minutes per session and is provided on a first-come, first-served basis.

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

Saturday, January 3, 2026

Yoga and Movement with Pilin Anice
10:30 AM at Grace Farms
This invigorating class takes participants through a breath-centered yoga practice while incorporating live music. Accessible for all levels, no prior yoga or meditation experience is required. Participants may bring their own mats, towels, props, and water. Tickets are \$20/members, \$25/non-members, and available at <https://shorturl.at/nTPWT>.

Monday, January 5, 2026

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-180318>.

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>.

American Coach: The Triumph and Tragedy of Notre Dame Legend Frank Leahy with College Football Analyst Ivan Maisel
7 PM at the New Canaan Library, Jim & Dede Bartlett Auditorium
Award-winning sportswriter Ivan Maisel brings the forgotten legend of Notre Dame head football coach Frank Leahy back to life, based on rare and complete access to Fighting Irish football historical archives and the Leahy family. In conversation with media executive Terry Dinan, the voice of New Canaan Football, Maisel will speak about Leahy’s complex legacy, Notre Dame’s defining program, and the history of college football. Register at <https://shorturl.at/CCK4M>.

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.

Monday, January 12, 2026

Computer Basics: Introduction to Windows 11
3 PM at the New Canaan Library, McLaughlin Meeting Room
Those who are new PC users or are thinking of updating their operating system from Windows 10 will benefit from this class, which teaches the basics of the latest Windows 11 operating system. Register at <https://shorturl.at/PcGIQ>.

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 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.

Friday, January 16, 2026

Winter Drop in Movie | Thelma
11 AM at the Lapham Center
When 93-year-old Thelma Post gets duped by a phone scammer pretending to be her grandson, she sets out on a treacherous quest across the city to reclaim what was taken from her. Free.

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.

Open Tech
2-4 PM at the New Canaan Library, McLaughlin Meeting Room
If you need help with email, smartphones/tablets, social media, or accessing the digital library, stop by for one-on-one support from a tech librarian. Tech assistance is limited to 20 minutes per session and is provided on a first-come, first-served basis.

Wednesday, January 21, 2026

Former Navy SEAL Mike Hayes Presents "Mission Driven"
7 PM at the New Canaan Library, Jim & Dede Bartlett Auditorium
Mike will discuss his new book Mission Driven: A Path to a Life of Purpose. This lecture is for anyone going through a transition. Mission Driven is a roadmap for discovering what drives you, and a playbook for translating those drives into opportunities. Register at <https://www.newcanaanlibrary.org/event/hold-mike-hayes-170290>.

Thursday, January 22, 2026

Get the Most Out of Google
11 AM at the New Canaan Library, Craig B. Tate Conference Room
Go beyond basic search and explore the various ways to get the most out of your Google account. Participants will learn about Google Books, Google Translate, Gemini, and more. Register at <https://www.newcanaanlibrary.org/event/get-most-out-google-189453>.

A Brief History of Medieval Medicine
6:30 PM at the New Canaan Library, Craig B. Tate Conference Room
Join Reference Librarian Flannery for a fascinating look at the often misunderstood world of medieval medicine and the surprising foundations it set for today’s medical practices. Register at <https://www.newcanaanlibrary.org/event/flannery-lecture-190496>.

What College Admissions Trends Mean for Your Child’s Future – And How to Stand Out
6:30 PM at the New Canaan Library, Community Room
Join Lindsay Tanne Howe, CEO of LogicPrep, a college admissions consultancy housed in Greenwich that guides families, for an insider’s look at selective college admissions – from test-optional policies to the impact of AI – and how applicants can create a powerful, authentic narrative to gain admission to their dream schools. Register at <https://shorturl.at/9KIUE>.

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://nchistory.org>.

Saturday, January 24, 2026

Adopt-a-Tree Kickoff Event
9:30 AM- 2 PM at the New Canaan Nature Center
This season-long program begins with the Adopt a Tree Kickoff Event where syrup families/groups learn the process and take part in choosing and tapping a tree for the season (about 30 minutes). After the Kickoff Event, participants will then collect sap 1-3

Calendar of Events for Your Fridge

times a week for the entire syrup season and take part in boil downs where real maple syrup is made at NCNC. You'll even get your very own bottle of NCNC-made maple syrup at our end of season celebration in March. Register at <https://newcanaannature.org/adopt-a-tree/>.

Monday, January 26, 2026

NC Focus: Paths to Affordable Housing
6:30 PM at the New Canaan Library, Jim & Dede Bartlett Auditorium
This presentation by Town officials will explore the paths New Canaan has taken to meet its Affordable housing needs and State requirements by focusing on three specific projects. More information and registration is available at <https://shorturl.at/Wgn2N>.

Tuesday, January 27, 2026

Belle Burden Presents "Strangers" In Conversation with Holly Parmelee
7 PM at the New Canaan Library, Jim & Dede Bartlett Auditorium
Join for an evening with author Belle Burden in conversation with Holly Parmelee, to discuss her memoir Strangers. The memoir is about the sudden end to a seemingly happy marriage—an aching, love-filled, and transcendent account of surviving betrayal and discovering joy. Register at <https://shorturl.at/ztQS6>.

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 Nice, 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

Tuesday, February 3, 2026

Paper Flower Workshop with the Green Vase
11 AM at the Carriage Barn Arts Center
Join Livia Cetti of The Green Vase and learn how to create stunning paper roses. These beautiful blooms are crafted to last forever and showcase the art of handmade paper flower making. This two-hour class is a wonderful opportunity to learn this unique art form. Tickets are \$150/members, \$165/non-members, and available at <https://carriagebarn.org/event/rose/>.

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

Friday, December 19

Stamford Church of Christ
1264 High Ridge Road
Stamford, CT 06903
11:00 AM – 1:30 PM

Saturday, December 20

Union Baptist Church
805 Newfield Avenue
Stamford, CT 06905
8:00 AM – 1:30 PM

Monday, December 22

Green's Farms Church
71 Hillandale Road
Westport, CT 06880
12:00 PM – 5:00 PM

Tuesday, December 23

American Legion
60 County Road
Norwalk, CT 06851
11:00 AM – 4:00 PM

Wednesday, December 24

Norwalk Inn
99 East Ave
Norwalk, CT 06851
8:00 AM – 1:00 PM

Friday, December 26

Norwalk Hospital
34 Maple Street
Norwalk, CT 06856
9:00 AM – 5:00 PM

Saturday, December 27

Archangels Greek Orthodox Church
1527 Bedford Street
Stamford, CT 06905
8:00 AM – 1:15 PM

Monday, December 29

Strong Comstock Community Center
180 School Road
Wilton, CT 06897
11:30 AM – 5:30 PM

First Presbyterian Church Stamford
1101 Bedford St
Stamford, CT 06905
11:00 AM – 4:00 PM

Tuesday, December 30

Norfield Church
64 Norfield Road
Weston, CT 06883
9:00 AM – 2:00 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>.

Friday, January 16, 2026

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/Iz8jL>.

Monday, February 2, 2026

Hands-Only CPR and AED Training by New Canaan EMS
6:30 PM at the New Canaan Library,
Learn Hands-Only CPR from New Canaan EMS and save a life. Hands-Only CPR focuses on chest compressions (which keep the patient's blood flowing to vital organs) and the use of an Automatic External Defibrillator (AED) when available. Register at <https://shorturl.at/eoFwp>.

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 19 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>.

Friday, January 9, 2026 to Sunday, January 25, 2026

The Lion in Winter
Times Vary at Curtain Call
1349 Newfield Ave
Stamford, CT
The Lion in Winter, by James Goldman, is a modern-day classic. The play tells the story of the Plantagenet family, who are locked in a free-for-all of competing ambitions to inherit a kingdom. The queen, and wealthiest woman in the world, Eleanor of Aquitaine, has been kept in prison since raising an army against her husband, King Henry II. Let out only for holidays, the play centers around the inner conflicts of the royal family as they fight over both a kingdom and King Henry's paramour during the Christmas season 1153. Tickets are available at <https://www.curtaincallinc.com/the-lion-in-winter>.

Universal Crossword

Edited by David Steinberg

ACROSS

- 1 Press (down)
5 Raise objections
10 Longest human bone
11 Compliment
12 Tiny tot
13 Scottish city on the Clyde
14 One sketching part of a bird? (Hint: This clue's answer ignores squares 2-4. Enter a body part in those squares to create valid, unclued Across and Down answers.)
16 Bids the most
17 "Crossword," e.g., grammatically
18 Intent
21 "___ alive!" (horror movie cry)
22 Fire up Microsoft's search engine? (... ignores squares 6-8 ...)
26 "... except that wasn't the case"
27 Scorpion's substance
28 Wildcat spotted in South America
30 Turn left, as a screw

- 32 Submerged sandbank
33 "Speak up already!"
34 The "So What" singer went fast? (... ignores squares 6-8 ...)
37 One created Lake Mead
40 Youngest-ever U.S. congress-woman
41 Not much, as of hand sanitizer
42 Perseverance rover's org.
43 Extraordinary charged particle? (... ignores squares 1-3 ...)
48 Pampers products
50 Tips off
51 Is jealous of
52 Takes in a good book
53 T-shirt style
54 Refuse to grant
DOWN
1 *Caddie's pegs (Hint: Each starred clue's answer ignores its square in 14-, 22-, 34- or 43-Across.)
2 French for "mine"
3 Actress Olivia
4 Expecting a baby
5 Prepare, as a bath

- 6 Relieve
7 Throbbing headache
8 "Until everyone comes home" org.
9 "<<" letters on a remote
10 *Reedy areas
11 *Course of action
12 *Brevity is the soul of ___
13 Chow
14 1914-18 conflict: Abbr.
15 Bygone bird
19 A party to
20 Las Vegas' ___ Grand
22 Idle periods
23 Ear: Prefix
24 *Null's partner
25 *Superlative suffix
26 Prominent
Toucan Sam feature
28 Neighbor of Indiana

- 29 *Inward-curving
30 Desk's portable substitute
31 "Hey," in Chile
32 Four Seasons amenity
33 *___ Antonio
35 *Runs on TV
36 *Cinco - tres
37 Board game?
38 Warts and all
39 Gym surface
42 Studious and introverted, say
44 *Instagram post, briefly
45 "'That's scary!'"
46 Head for the hills
47 Intend
48 Actor Patel
49 Certain
Tripadvisor listing

PREVIOUS PUZZLE ANSWER

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

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www.upuzzles.com

Family Time Crossword
The (K) Clues Are for Kids

Created by Timothy E. Parker

ACROSS

1. Happening with regularity, to really old poets
4. (K) "Stop! Don't take another step!"
8. (K) Tiny particle that's a building block
12. Musical work based on a religious text
14. Beat soundly
15. Like some guidance, or mom-and-pop related?
16. (K) "... Simon ___ pieman ..."
17. (K) Cherry pit
18. Go back with a DVR
20. (K) State-ly place?
22. (K) Selected in no particular order
24. Porsche 718 Cayman, for one (2 words)

28. (K) The movie after part II
29. (K) U-turn from "hate"
30. (K) ___ Jose, Calif.
31. FedEx'd
32. (K) Had peanuts and honey
33. An extra cost for a service
35. Tattoo place
37. (K) Skinny fish without scales
38. Drink maker on a string (2 words)
40. Dance of Cuban origin
44. Royal decree
45. (K) 266 divided by 14
47. (K) Valentine's Day symbol
48. Narrowly spaced, as eyes (2 words)
49. Chalcedony with black and white bands
50. (K) Swirl of water

51. (K) Zoo attraction
DOWN
1. (K) Thing said when dropping something
2. Campus Greek house, briefly
3. Pacific plant with an edible root
4. (K) Truthful
5. (K) Museum purchase
6. (K) Dishonest speaker
7. Willingness to respect the beliefs of others
8. Generic username
9. More "in" style
10. (K) Performing better than
11. Impressive college deg.
13. Professor's job security
19. Battle among generals

21. Certainty
23. Tiny parasite
24. (K) High-five sound
25. Powerful drink
26. Diner eggs order (2 words)
27. (K) Automobile
31. (K) Sign of respect in the military
33. (K) Weep
34. Belief against a church's beliefs
36. House paint variety
39. Adorn unnecessarily
41. Arizona city or feature
42. (K) Cellphone reminder sound
43. Starting poker chip
44. To and ___
46. (K) Indicate "yes" silently

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

Fire insurance?

Look for the answer in next week's paper.

PREVIOUS PUZZLE ANSWER

A	R	C		S	E	A	L		S	T	B	A	R	E
C	O	O		T	A	R	O		E	I	R	E		
H	A	M		M	E	R	E	R		M	A	I	L	
E	M	B	E	R		A	D	E	P	T	L	Y		
			L	E	U		M	E	S	H				
24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38
B	A	T	S		S	T	Y		T	O	R	E		
B	Y	E		G	A	S	O	L	I	N	E	S		
			R	E	A	M		R	O	D				
40	41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50	51	52	53	54
A	M	A	L	G	A	M		G	A	M	E	S		
I	O	T	A		J	U	B	I	L	A	N	T		
D	I	E	T		O	F	A	N		I	V	Y		
E	L	S	E		R	F	D	S		D	Y	E		

Previous riddle answer:
It is spoken by many? 27 D) It's

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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		

1/14

Local Anesthesia by Joe Deeney

			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						

Horoscopes

December 19, 2025 – January 8, 2026

This festive season kicks off under a New Moon in Sagittarius on December 19, inviting fresh beginnings in communication, adventure, and family narratives. Sagittarius encourages us to expand our horizons and share meaningful moments, perfect for travel and reconnecting with loved ones. Saturn and Neptune influences this week urge emotional clarity and patience in family conversations. Later in the period, the Sun enters Capricorn on December 21, shifting focus toward tradition, structure, and holiday responsibilities as we move into the new year. Jupiter is retrograde in Gemini, encouraging reflection and thoughtful review of how we connect and communicate through year's end into early January.

Aries (Mar 21-Apr 19)

Holiday gatherings bring opportunity and challenge. Sagittarius energy invites bold conversation and storytelling; be mindful of speaking with warmth rather than impulse. Practical advice: schedule breaks from busy celebrations to recharge, and let laughter lead tense moments. New Year's goals benefit from reflection now.

Taurus (Apr 20–May 20)

This season highlights emotional bonds. Deep talks with family can bring healing – approach with calm honesty. Practical advice: in gift-giving and planning, prioritize meaning over expense. Capricorn energy later encourages you to organize holiday tasks with grace.

Gemini (May 21-Jun 20)

Connections and communication are your stars this period. The Sagittarius new moon invites travel or shared stories that bridge generations. Practical advice: double-check plans and messages – retrograde Jupiter suggests care with details. End the break with renewed clarity about career and study plans.

Cancer (Jun 21-Jul 22)

Home and hearth are in focus. Let the festive mood soften old emotions, and lean into traditions that ground you. Practical advice: host with simplicity – people value presence more than perfection. New energy arrives this week to help you restore emotional balance before 2026.

Leo (Jul 23–Aug 22)

Romance and creativity flourish. Shared meals and gatherings are your stage; lead with generosity. Practical advice: balance social excitement with quiet family moments. Use holiday storytelling to deepen connections and spark warmth through January.

Virgo (Aug 23–Sep 22)

Holiday logistics may feel demanding. Sagittarius energies invite you to loosen perfectionism around celebrations. Practical advice: create a simple holiday checklist and let others help. Capricorn season later

supports long-term planning – ideal for resolving unresolved family matters.

Libra (Sep 23–Oct 22)

Joy and beauty align for festive cheer and social gatherings. You naturally ease tensions, but watch overcommitting. Practical advice: give priority to meaningful interactions over busy schedules. The holiday week is perfect for thoughtful reflection on partnerships and shared values.

Scorpio (Oct 23–Nov 21)

Family finances and shared traditions come into view. Honest, compassionate dialogue will ease misunderstandings. Practical advice: set boundaries where needed, and be generous where you can. Transition into the new year with clear intentions about financial health and emotional balance.

Sagittarius (Nov 22–Dec 21)

This season is your cosmic kickoff. The new moon encourages big ideas and joyful exploration. Practical advice: channel your optimism into planning meaningful travel or family rituals. Celebrate with openness and let curiosity guide new traditions as you move into 2026.

Capricorn (Dec 22-Jan 19)

Capricorn season arrives on December 21, prompting a shift toward structure and focus. Holiday responsibilities fall naturally to you, but pace yourself. Practical advice: set realistic holiday expectations, and weave rest into your schedule. This time supports setting grounded goals for the new year.

Aquarius (Jan 20–Feb 18)

Social circles and extended family connect you this season. Your insight helps those around you find common ground. Practical advice: use holiday gatherings to bridge gaps, not reopen old ones. Reflection now supports clearer communication as Jupiter retrogrades.

Pisces (Feb 19–Mar 20)

Holiday magic meets emotional depth. You sense undercurrents before others do; use this intuition gently. Practical advice: celebrate with soulful connection rather than grand gestures. The period between holidays and January 8 is ideal for setting heartfelt intentions for 2026.

Seasonal Guidance:

This holiday span is about joyful connection, reflective release, and grounded beginnings. Whether navigating family dynamics, travel plans, or quiet respite, let your intentions be guided by compassion, clarity, and optimism – values that will carry you into the year ahead.

Happy holidays and see you January 8, 2026.

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 historic events (6)
2 made plumper (8)
3 SpongeBob's neighbor (9)
4 high points (4)
5 Chrissie of The Pretenders (5)
6 ponders (5)
7 cut out (6)

SOLUTIONS

- _____

SQ	FI	RD	TT	HY
NDE	JO	TS	SE	UID
RS	EX	MUS	WA	EN
ES	FA	YS	ED	CI

Previous Answers: 1. WORKDAY 2. LAUGH 3. SUNDRY
4. RUMMAGER 5. CONFETTO 6. GILLIAN 7. DISTORTED 8/26

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The answers to this week's puzzles can be found in the next issue on January 8.

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PUZZLES

CHRISTMAS CROSSWORD

HOW MANY?

Find the correct shadow

FIND 10 HIDDEN OBJECTS

There are only two identical christmas trees. Find it.

JOY

CHRISTMAS word search

S	Z	Q	L	G	F	H	E	L	F	H	J	Y	C
H	O	L	L	Y	J	C	D	L	W	L	H	V	F
E	B	D	F	T	Q	C	V	M	R	G	M	Q	P
G	O	Z	U	B	B	R	N	J	E	A	A	A	O
C	K	Y	B	V	H	X	A	O	A	B	J	M	X
O	K	O	F	A	M	I	L	Y	T	L	O	I	L
O	M	W	Y	G	C	L	C	K	H	I	T	S	R
K	B	V	T	N	N	D	C	A	N	G	R	T	S
I	V	A	X	P	O	H	H	B	P	H	E	L	F
E	C	G	L	T	V	C	R	U	B	T	E	E	M
S	E	A	K	L	X	M	I	S	S	S	U	T	H
N	B	M	G	J	S	Z	S	T	N	R	Y	O	E
N	E	G	I	J	B	G	T	Q	Q	O	A	E	V
W	L	E	F	L	N	N	M	L	V	T	W	L	V
I	L	L	T	G	K	E	A	R	N	J	F	N	I
M	S	B	S	Z	M	V	S	A	F	X	S	M	V
W	Z	L	J	P	L	J	S	I	B	R	C	L	H

CHRISTMAS

SNOW

JOY

ELF

GIFTS

TREE

LIGHTS

ANGEL

SANTA

FAMILY

HOLLY

BALLS

BELLS

COOKIES

MISTLETOE

WREATH

Words can be horizontal, vertical or diagonal.