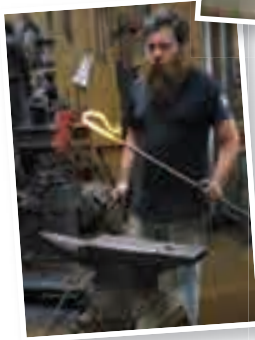


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LOVE TO LEARN

Whether or not you realize it, we learn something new every single day – or you improve your knowledge on a topic that you already know something about. Furthermore, “learning” is not limited to nor synonymous with schooling. There is such a thing as “the school of life” and it is sometimes more important to have “street smarts” (or what I like to simply refer to as common sense) than “book smarts” – although it’s good to have both!

For these reasons and more, this will be our second year of dedicating an entire issue to “learning” – that’s right, learning. We publish it in September, well, because a lot of learning starts to take place in this month with all of the kids returning to school. But as I stated above, learning is something that takes place every day of the year, for people of all ages. And just because you finished college some 20 years ago (or more) doesn’t mean that you’re done!

Just look at some of our stories here, like Carol who went “back to school” to learn about a subject that interested her, or Christine who became a real estate broker and learned quite a bit on that journey. One of our newest additions to the magazine, Jessie, began a whole new career in her 40s when she became a baker, which started with an apprenticeship and a lot of hard work. We also have a piece by Allison, our history buff, who has written and published a couple of history books and she shares her learning experience of that industry with us. Ian takes us on a journey to Kent, and to KentPresents, where some of the greatest minds gather to talk, brainstorm, and to share their knowledge. We’ve got a young man by the name of Caleb May who taught himself how to fish, and he shares his vast amount of fishing knowledge with us.

CB also shares with us the story of what some consider to be the best art teacher – ever! And that’s not this man’s only talent, he’s also quite the painter. Take a look at the work and life story of Warren Prindle in our artist feature. CB also caught up with Ralph Fedele and they discussed the past life of the Irondale Schoolhouse, as well as its journey to its current role in the community. Christine was also able to catch up with the very busy Dick Hermans of Oblong Books fame, and he tells us his entrepreneur story of how he got into the book selling business, amongst other things.

We hope that you enjoy these stories of learning, and we wish you happy trails on your learning journey!

– Thorunn Kristjansdottir



SEPTEMBER 2017

The training wheels are off for this year’s “Learning issue” – just like in the school of life.

Cover photo by
Olivia Valentine Markonic

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Best. Art. Teacher. Ever.

WARREN
PRINDLE



By CB Wismar
arts@mainstreetmag.com

The quote has been credited to two imaginative thinkers: “Those who can, do. Those who can’t, teach.” Was it H.L. Mencken or George Bernard Shaw who initiated the challenging, ironic, and slightly deprecating thought? Does it really matter?

Not only does it not matter, it certainly doesn’t apply when one steps into the quietly creative world of Warren Prindle. Warren is an artist ... and he teaches art. He can, he does ... and, he teaches, too.

Chicago beckons

Prindle’s story is very much a “local boy makes good” tale that includes stops in other states, other cities, and a catalog of experiences that began and have ended up in Sharon, CT. Son of the founder of eponymous Prindle Insurance, Warren left pursuit of the family business to an older brother as he journeyed to Chicago after graduating from high school. First stop in the “City of Big Shoulders” was a three year residency at Moody Bible Institute where Prindle pursued a degree in Theology. There was a stronger muse for Warren, however, and that was his creative side ... his desire to explore the world of fine art.

A navigational shift took him across town to the American Academy of Art where he quickly captured his first degree, followed by degrees from both Northeastern Illinois University and, ultimately, from Northwestern State University of Louisiana.

It was at the American Academy of Art, however, that Warren got his first taste of teaching. When his instructor, widely collected and celebrated painter Fred Berger, quickly identified Warren’s great talent, he was invited to become the teaching assistant for Berger’s class. Master artists appeared in class on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. Tuesdays and Thursdays were the responsibility of student assistants and monitors, who were learning and also supporting the rest of the class.

“It really felt right,” recalls Prindle with the smile that reflects a moment of revelation. The parallel disciplines were set. Do and teach – not mutually exclusive, but very much mutually supportive.

Going home

Married with three young children, the magnetic attraction of Northwestern Connecticut drew Prindle and his family back to Litchfield County after several years in Chicago with dreams, plans, and significant talent. His first idea, setting up his own art school where he could ply his talent

and encourage others, ran into an immediate challenge. Finding art classes from notable painters was not difficult in the area. It was, in fact, quite easy. Another art school was not what the public demanded.

The painting continued, however, as did Warren’s imaginative sense of adaptation and survival. After all, there was a family to support as well as his artistic muse to follow. The catalogue of activities he pursued while remaining true to his art bemuse him and read like a listing of “things one does while searching for the path.” One vivid memory involves time spent with celebrated author Philip Roth, whose *Goodbye, Columbus* and *Portnoy’s Complaint* established him as a literary power. “He was always open and deferential,” recalls Prindle. “Just having extended conversations with him was an education.”

A life at Housy

It was when the medical challenges of a beloved member of the Housatonic Valley Regional High School (HVRHS) provided an immediate need for a substitute art teacher – a need that turned into a permanent opening the following September – that Warren Prindle found his calling.

Maggie Cady, Program Coordinator at the Northwest Connecticut Arts Council recalls Prindle as the most supportive art teacher she had through



Above, top to bottom: *Street Talk*. The artist, the teacher: Warren Prindle. Images courtesy of Warren Prindle.

years of high school and ultimately as a Fine Arts major at Pennsylvania's Muhlenberg College. "He was so perceptive, he knew where our strengths were ... and he made sure we pursued them." That assessment is strong affirmation of Warren Prindle's view of what is so engaging about teaching. "There is such a flow of energy that comes from the students," Warren affirms. "When you get the chance to work with someone who leaves high school and moves on to art school, it's incredibly satisfying."

The satisfaction has been repeated many times. HVRHS art students have been accepted at all of the major art schools and colleges in the United States. Certainly a portion of the credit for that fact is Warren Prindle.

Forever an artist

As important as the teaching side of Prindle's career continues to be, his role as a fine artist cannot be overlooked and certainly not minimized. Warren Prindle is a serious painter whose work is regularly collected and revered by individuals across the country. For the past 20 years, the Carol Robinson Gallery in New Orleans, LA, has been the agent for Warren's work. The list of collections that include his work is most impressive, including the Kirkland & Ellis Law Firm in Chicago, and David Hoy & Sons Fine Art in Los Angeles. He's won significant awards from The National Oil Painters Society (Founders Award), and The Union League Civic Art and Foundation Award.



Several influences are apparent in Prindle's work, all of which have been molded into the distinctive style that is unique to the artist. The Italian influence, from the Baroque forward, appears in his character presentations. It is another Italian artist, film auteur Federico Fellini, whose casting demands best sum up Prindle's character presentations: "You must make every person interesting..." In Warren Prindle's paintings, every person is very interesting. Some of those people even wear halos – gold leaf indicators of their importance and the reverence of the artist's presentation.

Influences behind the work

There is also a spiritual, almost metaphysical influence in Prindle's work as well. While still in Chicago, after his years at Moody Bible Institute, he studied with Bruno Surdo at the Spertus Institute for Jewish Learning and Leadership. His mystical images represent just one transitional period for Prindle who laughingly states, "I've painted my way through art history, including true gesso, egg tempera, and the inclusion of gold leaf."

The motion, emotion, and energy in Warren Prindle's work are magnetic. Backgrounds are almost irrelevant, although he has painted some engaging landscapes and cityscapes. When there are figures central to his artistic vision, they control the space and convey all of the sentiment and emotion generated with each brush stroke of oil paint on panels.

Few of the characters in Prindle's paintings look out from the painting into the eyes of the observer. They are too engaged in their own pursuits to stop and look. In *Saint Mom* the mother of two pushes the stroller forward. Do we notice that she is not on pavement, but struggling through long grass? One thing we cannot ignore is the golden halo that encircles her turned head.

Street Talk captures another moment when the passage of time is more important than paying attention to the audience. Men at work, engaged in the tasks of the day, stop for a moment to talk. The conversation is the only reason to stop, and they are much too engaged to be interrupted.

It is these "moments" that are the spirit of Warren Prindle's work. A look, a kiss, an action that is caught in elegant style to be revisited anytime one is drawn into one of his paintings.

There is another quote, famously made by Fellini that certainly applies to the balanced life and career of Warren Prindle: "All art is autobiographical; the pearl is the oyster's autobiography."

The quote on www.ratemyteachers.com sums up the way the hometown sums up the work of Warren Prindle: "Best. Art. Teacher. Ever." ●



Above top to bottom, L-R: The drawing for *Mystical Painting*, and then the finished painting, *Saint Mom*. Below, left: *Sub-Atomic Love*. Images courtesy of Warren Prindle.



For those interested in seeing the fine art of this uniquely qualified artist, either head to New Orleans or visit www.carolrobinsongallery.com.

Are you an artist and interested in being featured in *Main Street Magazine*? Send a brief bio, artist's statement, and a link to your work to arts@mainstreetmag.com.

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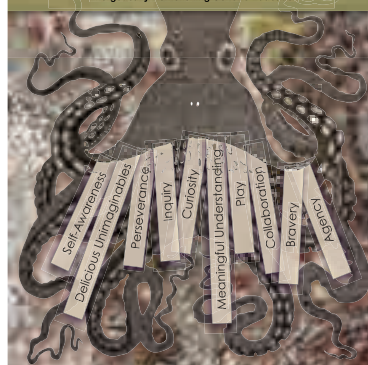


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Claire Markonic just graduated from Bates College where she majored in Geology. “I look forward to exploring the field of Geology outside of the academic environment before heading back to graduate school. Knowing that my work can benefit people in the here and now, whether it’s providing them with drinking water or fuel to power their vehicles is one of the most rewarding aspects of the discipline.” When Claire isn’t focusing on her studies she is a self-proclaimed fixer-upper and loves to be outdoors. “I am grateful to be done with school for awhile so that I can experience life outside of the academic bubble I’ve been in for 18 years.” As a Millerton native, Claire loves to experience the best that all of the four seasons have to offer, and when winter rolls around she’s relieved that the bugs are all gone. You rock, Claire!



Adorable four-year-old **Leo Marchionne** took a couple minutes out of his busy summer vacation to let us know that he is excited to be starting Pre-K at Taconic Hills this fall. Aside from making new friends, he’s looking forward to learning how to read all of his books – although he currently loves reading *Go, Dog. Go!* by P.D. Eastman. Quite impressively, Leo has the whole book memorized! And just as impressive, when he was only three, his favorite book was *Huckleberry Finn*! This summer Leo has been busy doing what he loves; “I love to play with my building blocks, play baseball, go on the boat, swim, read with daddy, and I love my sister, mommy, and daddy,” says Leo. One day he hopes to be an actor, but until then he is hoping chicken and rice are for dinner. “That’s my favorite food!”



Kristina Proper started her teaching career in November of 2002 at Ichabod Crane, and in September of 2003 she moved down county and began working at Taconic Hills. She teaches grades 7, 8, and 9, which is Spanish 1 and 2. “I love teaching my students Spanish! It’s the beginning of a whole new world and culture for them. It opens up so many opportunities for their future, and I get to be the start of it.” Aside from being in the classroom, Kristina loves to spend time with her husband Ryan, and their two boys Alex and Wesley. “I also teach spin classes three days a week at KS Fitness in Hudson.” Kristina is originally from Rhinebeck, but has lived in Columbia County for over a decade and loves the beauty of the area. Well class is about to start, adios amigo!



As summer vacation draws to an end, **Anthony Martucci** is about to enter third grade at Pine Plains Central. He is excited to see all of his friends, continue learning all subjects, but he is most excited about gym class. Anthony likes playing all sports and is on the local baseball team. “I play the catcher and outfield positions.” He plans on going to college after graduating high school and becoming an “army man,” police officer, fire fighter, or race car driver – some tough choices there! With a few years left to decide, he will continue to play with his Legos, play with his baby sister and teach her proper manners, ride his bicycle, and watch his current favorite movie which is *Despicable Me 3*. It sounds like you have a bright future in front of you, Anthony. Keep up the good work in school, too!



Rebecca Gaschel-Clark is a Special Education Pre-K teacher for Region 1 at Salisbury Central School in Lakeville, CT. “Just as a strong foundation is a necessity when building a house, young children need a strong foundation for future learning.” In her teaching, through play and fun activities, she focuses on what are called 21st Century skills that will help her students thrive in the future, such as communication, collaboration, critical thinking, and creativity. This fall, Rebecca will be entering her 24th year of teaching. “There’s no question that what I love most about the job is working in such a wonderful community with such amazing families. It’s so rewarding to see the children learn and grow.” Rebecca grew up in Columbia County, and when she’s not in the classroom, she enjoys doing yoga and heading to the lake with friends and family.



Ralph Fedele came to Millerton in 1988 as a weekender after retiring from JC Penney. He soon became interested in gardening and learning about local history. In 2007, Ralph joined the North East Historical Society and became its president. Later he formed the Friends of the Irondale Schoolhouse and headed the eight-year effort to relocate and repurpose the old schoolhouse as Millerton’s Visitor’s Center (read the related article in this issue). Ralph enjoys traveling, especially to France and Italy, “There is just something special about each place that I absolutely love and makes me want to visit as often as I can.” Most mornings you’ll see Ralph at Irving Farm in Millerton enjoying coffee and conversation with friends. He spends his weekends at the Irondale Schoolhouse, meeting and greeting visitors from far and wide. Stop by and say hello!



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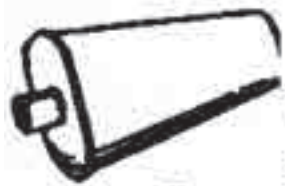
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By Christine Bates
christine@mainstreetmag.com

Dick, do you have a favorite section in your book stores?

Definitely the kids' section with toys and books. It's more fun and less work. We bought the children's store building on South Center Street in Millerton in 1994 because our main store on Main Street was getting too crowded. Our children's section accounts for about 20% of our business.

Are independent bookstores viable?

Indies are definitely making a comeback. I think people realize that when you order from Amazon your money leaves the community. A local bookstore is something real in your life – it's positive, safe, and you interact with people. Everyone leaves our store happy. E-books were really hot, but they are now in gradual decline. Holding a book is a much better experience than reading on a screen, which a lot of us have to do all day long at work. The last 18 months have been the best ever for our two stores.

What's the secret of running a successful bookstore? How did you learn?

Like any retail store, you have to work hard. Key is staying informed about what your customers are asking for and matching your inventory to your customer base. In a rural area like ours, there are fewer people and you really have to control your inventory. I don't ever look at the best seller lists. I listen to my customers.

I learned the business side by the seat of my pants. The only retail experience I had before starting Oblong was working in a food co-op in Arizona. It's really not so complicated.

You need to pay your vendors, watch your inventory and cash flow, and have access to credit lines for the slow part of the year. We started out with a very small amount of money and a cheap space.

"Those of us who read because we love it more than anything, who feel about bookstores the way some people feel about jewelers..." – Anna Quindlen, How Reading Changed My Life

How do you go about buying books? Are there any books you won't sell?

We try to anticipate what our customers will want to read and we have over 30,000 titles in stock. We even carry right-wing political books because we cover the full spectrum of tastes and ideas. The only book that I have always refused to sell is *Dianetics*, by L. Ron Hubbard.

My daughter, Suzanna Hermans, who has worked in the store since she was eight years old, has liberated me from the job of ordering books. She checks what is sold in both stores almost every day and reorders when necessary. We order seasonally in the spring, summer, and fall. Autumn is the time of the heavy-hitters in the book business, like summer blockbusters for the movie business.

Returning books that don't sell to publishers is also important. You can't predict whether something will sell. About 15% of what we order is returned to the publisher for credit. Returns are time-consuming and expensive because we have to pay the freight. Books are heavy. Returns are one of the things I do now in the store.

Before the internet, book fairs (like the American Booksellers Association, the "ABA," now called the Book Expo) were important for buying, but now they have become more industry social gatherings and provide important educational resources. The New



England Independent Book Sellers Association holds annual conferences which showcase authors and regional books. I've been the president and treasurer, and so has my daughter.

How has the book selling business changed since you started Oblong in 1975?

The margins and logistics of brick and mortar bookstores have actually improved over the 40+ years we've been in business. Publishers now give bookstores 46% off the list price and pay the freight. We used to keep our inventory records on 3" by 5" file cards and it would take over two weeks to order and receive a book for a customer. Now we have a simple, but effective, computerized inventory system and can get a book in a day or two.

Continued on next page ...



Above, top to bottom: Oblong has over 30,000 titles in stock. Photo by Olivia Valentine Markonic. Dick Hermans. Photo by Priscilla Herdman.

Oblong does a lot of special events. Is that an important part of your business?

Word-of-mouth is our most important marketing tool, but we use our website and internet newsletter to announce special events. In our Rhinebeck store we host over 100 events every year, and our White Hart series in Salisbury, CT, has really taken off. We are organizing an event at Bard College for Stephen King and his son who just wrote a book together that has already sold out. Six hundred readers bought a book to get in.

You have two stores. Are the customers different?

Both Oblong stores are about 100 miles from Manhattan which means we tap into an urban New York City demographic. Our Millerton store draws heavily from northwest Connecticut and seems to attract the same customers every weekend, while Rhinebeck tends to be younger and hipper, in part, because of Bard College. Our Rhinebeck store always seems to have different people browsing. Maybe they are tourists visiting the FDR library (there's not a lot to do in Hyde Park), or maybe it's the incredible restaurant scene that has developed in Rhinebeck. After ten

years of thinking about it, we opened in Rhinebeck four days after 9/11 – it took us until 2013 to really get going.

"A place is not really a place without a bookstore." – Gabrielle Zevin

Is it difficult to find employees? How many do you have?

We hire people who are discerning readers. We have eight full time employees including Suzanna and me, and ten part-time employees. Our employees are the ones, like Lisa Wright, our biggest reader, who pick out the staff favorites on the shelves. Right now we have 30 staff picks in Science Fiction alone.

What would you tell anyone thinking about starting a bookstore?

You can open a bookstore in a small town but it's a hand-to-mouth existence for a long time. The first two summers Holly Nelson (my partner at the time) and I lived in a teepee in Milan and rode our Mopeds to Millerton.

Do a survey to figure out how

many people there are in a radius of 15 to 20 miles from your location and identify your competition.

I'm never unhappy in the store and I like working for myself. The boss is always easy on you. I have a pool table outside my office and thousands of CD's that musicians send me for my radio show. It's chaos and different every day. You're never exactly sure what's going to happen, but you've learned how to handle anything.

What are you reading right now?

My daughter picked out *The World of Tomorrow* by Brendan Mathews for me and predicts it will be a best seller in the fall. The novel takes place in New York in 1939, involves the IRA and has scenes in Dutchess County. It even mentions Pine Plains! Normally I read non-fiction and the *New York Times*.

"A bookstore is one of the only pieces of evidence we have that people are still thinking." – Jerry Seinfeld

Why are you running for political office? Is that why your hair is shorter?

I'm running as a Democrat for a seat representing our area in the Dutchess County legislature because I believe that government can affect change and do things that help people. So many people are alienated from democracy and have lost faith in government. I'm willing to do a good job and work with everyone. I'm really trying to get elected and have a lot of support in Milan, where I grew up, and in Millerton.

My hair is now shoulder length – much better for the summer. I've always worn my hair long and saved millions in barbershop bills.

What do you do for fun?

I started doing radio in college in 1966 and have been a disk jockey ever since. For 30 years I've been on WKZE (98.1 FM) in Red Hook on Saturday mornings with a folk and bluegrass show. The show promotes our modest, virtually nonexistent sale of music CD's. It helps keep music alive. Satellite radio and the internet have really been terrible for recording sales. Every Tuesday evening I do a show called *Borderline* on Robin Hood Radio (103.3 FM WQQQ) that is re-broadcast on Saturdays at 6pm.

What's the Outdoor Classroom?

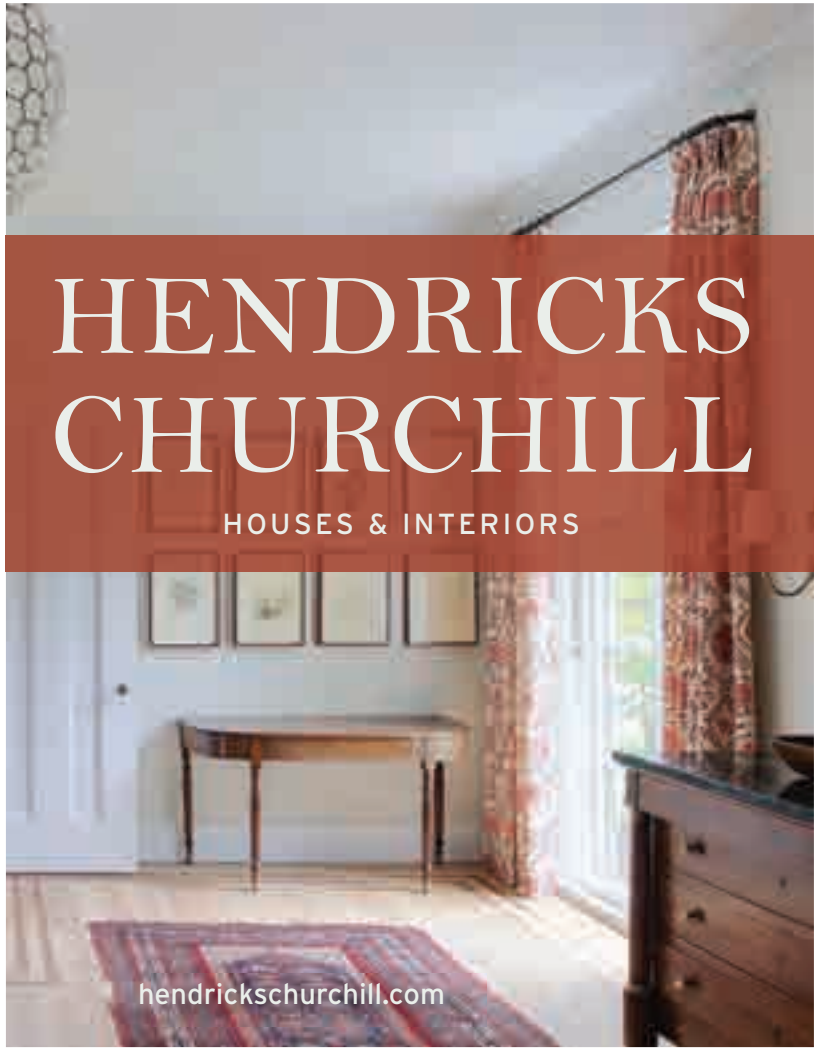
For four decades I have been involved in the Rail Trail and now it will be extended north from Millerton. I worked on developing a \$97,000 grant to provide informational signage along the trail to give an ecological education to riders and enrich their outdoor experience. The signs will focus on the important role of wetlands in purifying water in our watershed. ●

To reach Dick Hermans or to learn more about Oblong Books & Music you can visit them on Main Street in Millerton or on Montgomery Row in Rhinebeck, or visit them online at www.oblongbooks.com.



Above, L-R: The exterior of Oblong Jr. on South Center Street in Millerton (photo Peter Greenough), which is connected to the Oblong building on Main Street, pictured right (photo by Olivia Valentine Markonic). Below, left: There's a wide selection of nutritional and cook books to be found on Oblong's shelves (photo Peter Greenough).





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Smart lessons that apply to grown up businesses too. John knows the right financing can help you succeed without taking on burdensome debt, and when you profit, that's money in the bank – and that benefits the whole community.

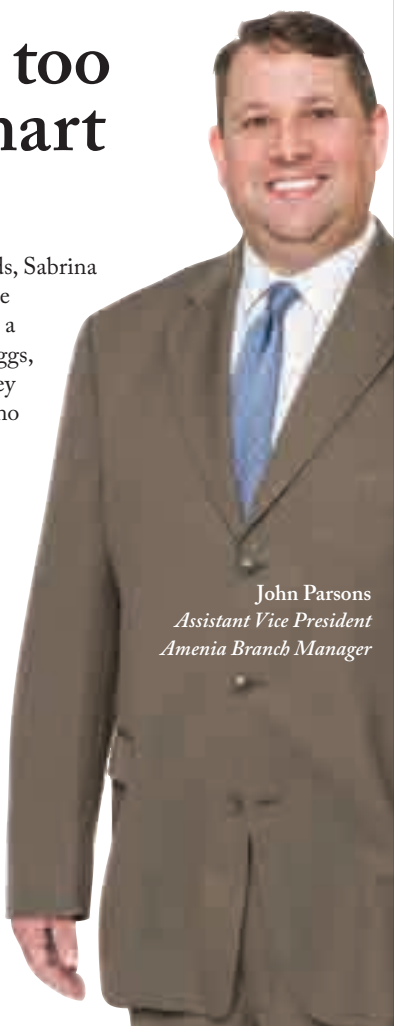
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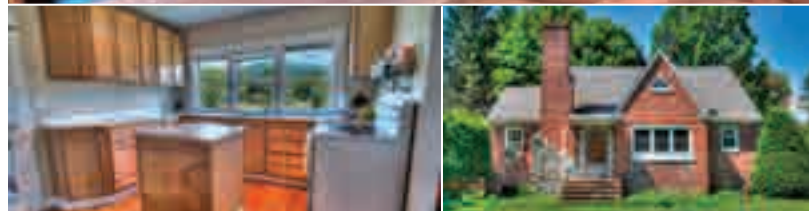
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Back to basics

By Molly Lukins Burke
info@mainstreetmag.com

Please welcome Molly, a new contributor to the magazine. She, along with partner Tamara Martucci, are the principles of Food + Mood NYC, a wellness-based movement from our neck of the woods to New York City (learn more about it at the end of this article). Both Molly and Tamara take living a healthy lifestyle to heart, and live every day according to that health ethos. Due to their expertise and enthusiasm in the field of health and wellbeing, they will be sharing their knowledge with us on these pages. Welcome!

We are in the midst of a “local food” revolution. More than ever before, people across the country are promoting the benefits of consuming locally grown food.

The statistics are nothing short of astonishing: According to the National Farm-to-School Network (which works with local farms to supply food to nearby schools) the number of participating schools grew from two in 1997, to 400 in 2004, to over 42,000 schools today. Similarly impressive, according to the US Department of Agriculture, the number of farmers’ markets in the United States has grown from under 2,000 in 1994 to well over 8,000 in 2016.

As consumers are voting to incorporate fresh, local food into their diet, suppliers, supermarkets, and restaurants are listening and changing their inventory to provide locally produced goods to customers year-round. The end result: healthier and happier people coming together to support a universally smart choice.

Local markets

Thankfully, there are more than a dozen farmers’ markets here in the tri-corner area for residents and visitors to enjoy which include, but are not limited to:

- Amenia Farmers’ Market, ameniafarmersmarket.com
- Copake Hillsdale Farmers’ Market, copakehillsdalefarmersmarket.com
- Cornwall Farmers’ Market, facebook.com/townofcornwallfarmersmarket
- Great Barrington Farmers’ Market, greatbarringtonfarmersmarket.org
- Kent Farmers’ Market, kentct.com/directory/kent-farmers-market
- Millbrook Farmers’ Market, millbrooknyfarmersmarket.com
- Millerton Farmers’ Market, millertonfarmersmarket.org
- Norfolk Farmers’ Market, norfolkfarmersmarket.org
- Pawling Farmers’ Market, pawlingfarmersmarket.org

- Philmont Farmers’ Market, pbinc.org/revitalization
- Rhinebeck Farmers’ Market, rhinebeckfarmersmarket.com
- Share the Bounty Market (in Amenia, NY), facebook.com/Sharethebountyfarmersmarket
- Sheffield Farmers Market, sheffieldfarmersmarket.org
- Thomaston + Torrington Farmers’ Market, nwctfarmersmarkets.com
- West Stockbridge Farmers’ Market, weststockbridgefarmersmarket.org

A sense of community

While more and more kitchens in the area are being stocked with farm-fresh food, the trend has also helped foster a sense of community and raise social awareness, as farmers’ markets become a place for healthy-minded people to gather and support local producers, meet area farmers, and become educated on seasonal harvests.

If you’re looking for a more hands-on experience, try the “pick-your-own” (PYO) farms, where visitors can get closer to the source by plucking fruits and vegetables right from the tree or the stalk. Apart from supporting local growers, it’s a great way to spend an afternoon outside with the family and to introduce children to the farm-to-table concept through first-hand experience.

Ellsworth Farm in Sharon, CT

(ellsworthfarm.com) is the quintessential PYO farm, where visitors are not only invited to pick their own fruits and vegetables, but you’re likely to meet owner Michael Bozzi in the fields either hand planting next year’s crops or taking the time to speak to visitors and answer questions about what is available and what is to come.

It’s as simple as good health

Aside from all these benefits, the most direct benefit is, simply put, good health. We take better care of our bodies by reducing the amount of processed foods and drinks we consume. Plus, as the local food movement has taken off in recent years, so too has people’s awareness and interest in the field of wellness, which focuses on healthy and balanced living on and off the plate – in the areas of fitness, sleep, relationships, and emotions. A main precept of wellness is that feeding your mind and soul is just as important to feeding your body.

About us

We at Food + Mood NYC (foodandmoodnyc.com) help people find wellness. We develop programs for individuals and families who want to lead healthier and more balanced lifestyles, but don’t have the time or knowledge to get across the finish line (or start line). We also work with corporations to introduce wellness programs into their company culture and employee benefits, to help improve the health of their employees, reduce insurance costs, promote employee productivity, and attract and retain talent.

Food + Mood NYC scours the region to provide our clients with information about farmers’ markets and seasonal harvests. We work with and rely on these farmers to help us achieve a key component in health and wellness. We are happy to see the number of farmers’ markets expanding and we hope the trend continues.

Here’s to the farmers and to locally sourced food! Here’s to farm-to-table! We couldn’t do wellness without you.



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Seven surprises

FOR A NEW REAL ESTATE BROKER



By Christine Bates
christine@mainstreetmag.com

After more than four years of writing about real estate for *Main Street Magazine* and researching subjects ranging from property taxes to the history and dynamics of the Salisbury real estate market, Pat Best and Mardee Cavallaro asked me to join their firm Best & Cavallaro as a salesperson. After designing, building, renovating, buying and selling properties with my husband I knew quite a bit about real estate, but not about being a broker. In the last three months there have been lots of surprises.

1. Freedom

A real estate salesperson has a job, but selling real estate is really your own business to build, when and how you want. Unless you do something terrible, like punch an unreasonable customer or rob a bank, you probably won't be fired.

You have a desk at the office, a telephone, and a key to the front door. In fact it's better than your own business because you aren't paying the rent, making sure the copy machine is running, or paying for ads in the paper. You can come and go as you please and work from your phone or at home. This flexibility means you can pick up your

child at camp, jump on a last-minute opportunity to go on a cruise, or just stay home for no reason. You mostly answer only to yourself.

2. Getting started is complicated and expensive

Complication, cost, and regulatory bureaucracy are the flip side of freedom. A real estate salesperson is personally responsible for maneuvering through the training, testing, and maze of registering in this highly regulated field. It's not as difficult as becoming a lawyer or an architect, but, to my surprise, much more complicated than becoming a stockbroker.

First you have to reach an agreement with a registered real estate brokerage firm willing to sponsor you in the states where you want to work.

Next you have to figure out what educational training is required. Each state has their own system and variety of options. It may mean driving to Albany for a 75-hour course or taking an online course. The salesperson has to figure out the details, pay upfront, and complete the course. The course information covers a wide range of topics from real estate financing and listing contracts to fair housing and environmental laws, often different in each state. You have to study and take notes even if you have a strong

business background (see photos next page).

Classes are expensive and take time to complete. For example, the National Real Estate Institute course in Connecticut is held for three hours, three times a week for seven weeks and costs \$450 before purchasing textbooks. In New York a 75 hour basic course can start at \$600. After participating in a class for the required amount of time, you also have to pass the test for the course. For me this meant making an appointment on a test day, taking the train to New York City, and spending a morning in the library of the New York State Real Estate Board with the course exam booklet and a sharp pencil.

After receiving a passing grade and a certificate of course completion, the next step is to fill out another application and then take the state test. Please pay another fee! The multiple choice test is given in New York City in a large room with other test-takers in state regulated fields – cosmetologists, waxers, barbers, bounty hunters, private investigators, etc. Typically you get three tries to pass the exam with a required minimum score of 70%. And now you must pay another New York State fee to actually register as a salesperson.

Wait! It's not over yet. If you want to sell real estate in more than one state, in my case Connecticut about a half a mile over the New York State border, you have to get

a reciprocal license – more forms, more fees. And then you have to pay again to become listed and gain access to the Multiple Listing service in that state and region which can be another big \$300+ fee that's payable every year.

In short, it was a big surprise to learn how much time, energy, effort, and money you need to invest to even start being a real estate salesperson.

3. So much fun – but not for everyone

If you look at every "FOR SALE" sign, pick up real estate magazines and squint at tiny photographs of houses, you would enjoy the weekly broker-only open houses. They are a way for brokers to showcase their agency's listings to other brokers, and also for salespeople to get to know each other and share information. "Did you hear that the house on Main Street is in contract and had three offers?"

With the help of GPS, a salesperson discovers back roads and mansions hidden at the end of long driveways. One experienced real estate salesperson volunteered that he loved working 100 miles north of New York City because of the beauty of the landscape; the variety

Continued on next page ...

of properties, farms to estates and log cabins; and the quality of the people, clients, and agents. “Most everyone is really pleasant and agents work together. It’s not cut-throat – it’s cooperative.”

Meeting new, powerful, and creative people, the gamut of individual lives, is the other fascinating part of being a real estate broker, especially since our region has so many second acts; investment banker becomes poultry processor, actor turned antique dealer, attorney succeeds as wine importer. Then there are clients who have been here generations with histories to share; when Babe Ruth sat on my father’s porch chewing tobacco or when the NAACP was founded at Troutbeck.

If you don’t like to drive, explore, work on weekends, talk to people at any time like Saturday evenings at 9:30, deal with unexpected problems from frozen pipes to contract details, you should never be a real estate broker. You wouldn’t enjoy it.

4. Money

Learning how sales commissions are structured was another revelation. “Listing” commissions are negotiable depending on the services

provided, but are usually between 4% and 7%. The seller will be paying this fee at the closing. Like an investment banker retained to sell a business, every real estate broker is searching for “listings.” All of the brokers’ expenses involved in selling a property – from photographs to advertising to open houses – are included in this fee. All brokers invest money and time to try and sell a house before the end of the contracted listing period – usually six months to a year.

In order to maximize the likelihood of a sale, the listing broker offers to split their listing fee with any other broker who brings a buyer. At the closing of the sale the commission money will be shared between the brokerage firm listing the property and the firm bringing the buyer. The licensed real estate professional who signs up the listing or brings the buyer will then split that commission with their firm. Typically the salesperson will receive around 50% to 70% depending on their production level, with their firm retaining the balance. For a salesperson that lists a house or an agent who brings a buyer for a listing by another broker this would amount to only \$2,500 to \$3,500



for each one of them on a \$200,000 house. Unlike the Hamptons, real estate professionals in our region drive Subarus, not Maseratis.

5. Who are they?

Real estate professionals are energetic, extroverted, self-motivated, and, most importantly, they are optimistic and good listeners. JD Salinger would have been a terrible real estate agent, but JK Rowling, author of *Harry Potter*, would probably do very well.

Because limited job opportunities exist for experienced professionals in our area, many brokers, especially those dealing with the weekend market, have had impressive corporate experience – marketing, finance, media, and retail – before joining a real estate firm. Most are very active in their communities – schools, clubs, the EMT squad, local politics, and nonprofit boards. Most broker websites include the educational, work, and volunteer backgrounds of all their agents. They are an amazing, varied group of people.

6. It’s hard work

Being a real estate agent is not glamorous – sellers and buyers ask you to do all sorts of unexpected things. One morning Pat Best came into the office of Best & Cavallaro after she cleaned out the kitchen cabinets of a rental and took everything to the transfer station. Agents arrange for lawns to be mowed, septic systems to be pumped, and alarms checked. They pick up buyers at train stations and find places for them to stay overnight. They

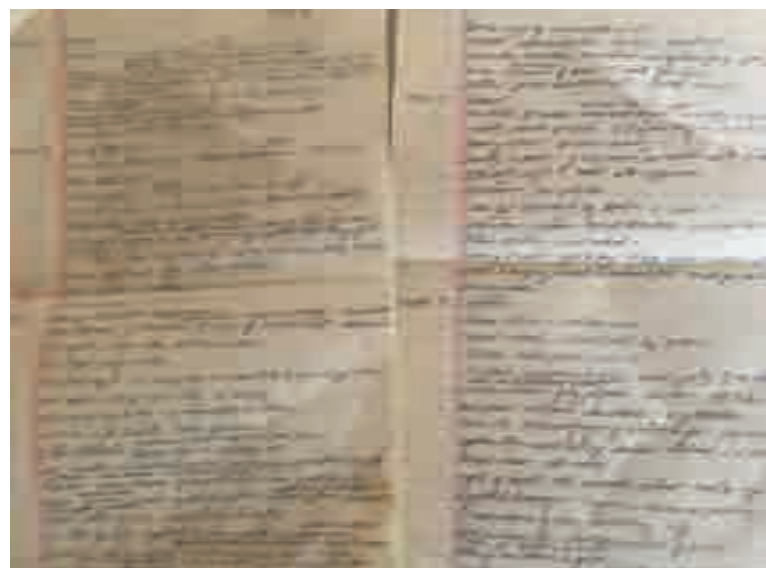
drive them all around the countryside showing them houses they may never buy.

Most importantly, brokers give advice. They share their market experience with sellers on when to list, how to price, and how to show a home to maximum advantage. They may recommend painting, landscaping, or even staging. They will supervise the professional photographer. Recently I spent one morning with a drone pilot in a field filming acres of incredible views.

Often they give advice that is not in their self-interest. Fred Peters of Warburg Realty in New York recently confided that he persuaded a client not to move, and not to buy a larger home. For potential buyers, agents provide invaluable information on the region, the school system, taxes, home prices, renovation costs, and negotiation. John Harney of William Pitt Sotheby’s International persuaded my husband and myself **not** to buy several pieces of raw land.

7. The best part

Your friends, neighbors, and colleagues congratulate you. It’s not like becoming a stockbroker where your brother-in-law tries to sell you annuities and wrap funds. They applaud you when you make your first sale. Other real estate brokers complement you. Friends are interested in what you’re seeing. It’s very different from Wall Street and I love it. ●



Above: Christine’s study notes for the New York State real estate salesperson exam. Above top, right: Prep guides and sample tests help you pass.

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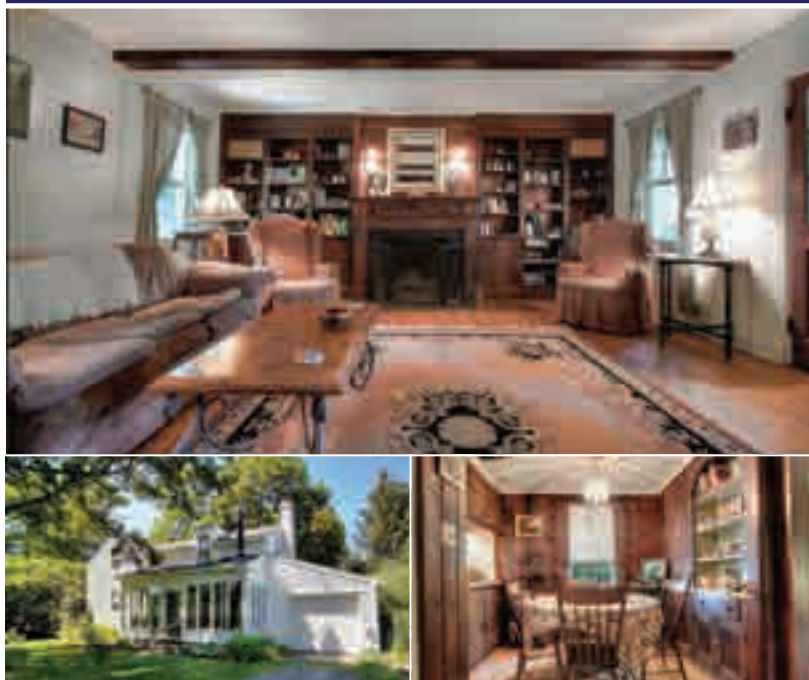
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My Sprinkle Epiphany:

A journey from brief-writing to baby monitors to baked goods

By Jessie Sheehan
info@mainstreetmag.com

Welcome to our newest contributing writer, Jessie. In the coming months she'll be sharing tips and recipes with us from the kitchen and baking world. She begins by sharing her story of how she got into her sweet smelling baking career. To learn more about Jessie visit our website or follow her on Instagram at jessiesheehanbakes.

Over a decade ago (at the ripe old age of 38), I radically changed course professionally, abandoning the law, and a brief stint as a stay-at-home-mom, for the flour-dusted, sugar-coated kitchen of my neighborhood bakery. To say I am not much of a risk-taker would be an understatement. Honestly, I'm what many (ahem, my husband) might describe as rigid and very much a creature of habit. But all those many years ago, with two boys under three at home, I made what I now consider to be an awfully bold power move: I bravely entered Baked, who make the best chocolate and salty caramel cakes, and offered to work there for free in exchange for on-the-job training in the fine art of sweets-making. Spoiler alert: they said yes.



A love of dessert

My love of cookies, cake, and ice cream, among many other tasty treats, is legendary: a meal is not a meal unless it ends with a sweet, and a day without dessert is close to sacrilege. I did not grow up at my mother's apron strings, however, teetering on a tall kitchen stool before I could even walk, stirring cookie dough with a large wooden spoon grasped in my tiny fist. My first word was not "whisk" and "homemade," it was not part of the familial lexicon. My birthday cakes were made of mint chocolate chip ice cream from Baskin Robbins, my after school snacks were Drake's Devil Dogs or Nabisco Double Stuf Oreos, and a favorite dessert after dinner was a Pepperidge Farm Raspberry turnover (à la mode, of course). As an adult, I happily followed suit: buying whatever treat it was I craved; the notion of making it from scratch never even crossing my mind.

But something happened in my late thirties after baby boy number two: chock it up to new-mommy-brain, but my craving for eating sweets was slowly transforming into the desire to actually make them, too. Moreover, as baking at home began in earnest, so too did thoughts of going back to work. I was done with lawyering – I knew that (I'd been on an extended "maternity leave" from my law firm for three years, since the birth of my first son) – but I also knew that being a good mom depended on me working on something other than how best to grind my



own baby rice cereal.

I remembered a college guidance counselor suggesting I read a book entitled, *What Color Is Your Parachute*, to help me narrow down the professional path best taken post-school. Although I couldn't recall all of the relevant questions necessary to ask one-self when choosing said path, I knew enough to focus in on what it is I loved doing on the regular. At this particular moment in time the stars had aligned and I actually knew the answer: baking.

A baking internship

The visit to Baked and my request to learn the ropes, occurred the very next day, and my "sprinkle epiphany" right after: I was standing in the decorating station of the bakery, filling bags with granola (not very sexy, I know, but you have to start somewhere), and in front of me on a low shelf were rows, upon rows of little glass jars filled with sprinkles of a million different shapes and sizes and a wide variety of multi-colored sanding sugar for decorating cakes. As I gazed at all the perfect little containers, filled with such prettiness, I felt both deeply comforted by what I saw, and terribly excited. Comforted because it felt so right to be part of the delicious smelling hustle and bustle of a bakery and so excited for all that I knew would come.

To some degree, the rest is history: I worked at Baked for the next several years, first as an unpaid intern

and then as a junior baker. Eventually I began testing recipes and then developing them for the books written by the bakery's founders. This led to freelance recipe development work and the opportunity to write my first cookbook, *Icebox Cakes*. My second book, *The Vintage Baker*, will be published by Chronicle Books in the spring of 2018.

Now I won't lie: do I wish I had thought to pursue a profession in pastry straight out of college? Absolutely; when I imagine what my career might have looked like had I started twenty years earlier, I get goose bumps at the possibilities. But I also know that the time I took prior to entering Baked on that fateful spring day, being a lawyer (and full disclosure: there were some years spent as an actress pre-law school . . . but that's another story), and having children were necessary to get me to the brave, risky place I'd reached when I realized (correctly, in hindsight!) that baking might just be my "thing."

Today, I am so grateful to my youthful 38 year-old self for her fearlessness – at the time, I felt so old. But looking back almost 12 years later, I realize I was merely a spring chicken. The learning curve has been steep, but (mostly) joyful and I truly could not imagine a more perfect way to spend my days than in my apron, wooden spoon in my now grown-up fist, mixing up a batch of cookies. ●

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WRITING HISTORY: LEARNING TO LOVE TIME TRAVEL

By Allison Guertin Marchese
info@mainstreetmag.com

Looking back, Part I

In the year 2017, my house turned 277 years old. The house was first built in 1740. It was originally just a one story, a simple structure, with the kitchen and a massive fireplace underground, and a living space and perhaps a sleeping loft above it. The house sits up on a shale ledge with the back half facing the Kinderhook Creek. The time when the house was built was known as the “Colonial Period,” when settlers and Native Americans lived together in the wilds of New York State, without electricity, without conveniences like water or indoor toilets, and often without food, protection from frigid weather, or safety from marauders.

There is little documented history of my house from the mid-1700s, though it is the oldest home in our little hamlet in Columbia County. There are no photos, no lithographs, no drawings, per se. Recording homes or modest dwellings like mine was not a priority when staying warm and surviving the season consumed most of one’s time.

I have learned, however, that in the 1800s my house was once called the Bull’s Head Inn, and was a stagecoach stop on the New York to Boston (Albany Turnpike). Traces of that period still exist in the walls of my bedroom, upon the worn, wide-planked floor boards, along the raw wooden beams, and stone foundation gathered from the creek.

Traces of the arched ceiling in the grand ballroom, where guests of the Inn danced is still visible. It is now split into two massive bedrooms on the top floor. On the main floor there is also an expansive kitchen that once served as a public restaurant. And attached to the back of the house, I am told, were servants’ quarters, that apparently aged with time and fell over the hillside. The immense fireplace that once served as a central gathering

place is still standing in the basement, and there are other bits and pieces that remain.

In many ways it is this place – this house, this history – that first sparked my curiosity and inspired me to write about New York’s past.

Looking back, Part II

Writing has always been my passion. As a kid I kept a diary. In college I wrote plays and short stories, and published the occasional poem and essay in the school newspaper. Then, as most passions tend to do, my love for writing morphed into a practical source of income and I started a career in public relations in New York City. When I eventually found my way to the country and moved into marketing and as a fundraising professional, I continued to write – but never in the way I had hoped.

When I reached a “certain age” however, and saw more clearly how much time had passed in my life and possibly how much time I might have ahead, I consciously refocused my work so that I could consult to organizations and companies working from home, and then devoted a specific amount of time to writing, in earnest.

On the hunt for history

Living in a historic hamlet in New York allowed me to get to know my neighbors. On one particular afternoon, while visiting with a friend across the Kinderhook Creek, I found on his bookshelf a hefty history volume retelling the story of Columbia County, NY.

Each time I visited this friend I dragged the big blue book off the shelf and sat in his library happily flipping through the large, dusty pages. After a few chance visits with the book, I began to have a peculiar experience... the very scent of a history book began to provoke a feeling in me, it seems that old books have a tendency to do that sometimes.

After several visits to my friend’s bookshelf and many hours with the big fat history text on my lap, my



Above: Allison’s historic home early 1900s.

neighbor came to my house with the volume under his arm. He gave it to me as a gift, knowing that I would love it for many years to come. It once belonged to his mother, I later learned. She, Lucy Vine Clerk, had lived in our tiny hamlet her whole life and was a much beloved antique dealer.

The book he gave me is called *The History of Columbia County*. It was written in 1878 by Captain Ellis, and as much as I loved the contents, the etchings of pastoral hillsides and young lawyers, for me it lacked the texture of life in the early days. The chapters explained in detail land patents, mill production, and critical family connections, but it was missing the interesting pieces of people’s lives.

I wanted to know what people ate, how they took care of their horses, what they did for fun. I longed for a closer look, a microscopic glimpse into what it truly felt like to live here in the early days. How did the people celebrate the holidays? Where did they hide their secrets? It soon became apparent to me that no one had written a book about Columbia County in over 139 years and perhaps it was about time I did.

Once I had it in my mind that I wanted to write this book, I began to do research. This is one of the many times that I thank the Gods that we

received the gift of the internet – and what I like to refer to as the “Oracle of Google.”

Not to get too philosophical, or too grandiose, but in real terms, the internet has become our collective consciousness. There, in the cybersphere, is possibly the entirety of the collective knowledge of all of the humans who have lived in the past.

When I think back to when I was in college, when books lived in the library, and to access the information you had to actually go there and find a text. It boggles the mind a bit to look at how life has changed because of the internet. When I consider how many hours I sifted through clumsy encyclopedias in order to finish a term paper, or how often I buried myself in that book until I uncovered the single fact, I feel exhausted.

But today a strange and wonderful futuristic fantasy has come true, and a tool for researchers beyond imagination is literally at our fingertips. Since a large part of history is now stored in cyberspace, I eagerly suited up for the intergalactic travel, and went into the future to discover the past.

The history business

I think one of the most personally persistent challenges of being a writer

Continued on next page ...

is what to do with my work. I imagine that this is a question for anyone who creates anything: what do you do with it after it's done? After discovering that there was enough history left in Columbia County to write another book, I was faced with the daunting question: what next?

It's easy to write books, stories, articles, and essays and just let them sit in my computer. I have done this, more times than I'd like to admit. To date, I have three completed novels on my hard drive. Sometimes I feel like they're unadopted puppies at the pound. I have a deep longing to free them, to find the little darlings a home. It's awful. Those novels plague me. I made a decision, however, I didn't want to abandon my history book. This time, before writing it, I wanted to be assured it would have a home.

Thankfully, with the help of a few fellow writers, and a huge dose of determination, I found a receptive publisher, The History Press in North Carolina, which is now Arcadia Press. The process to get my book published with this company started with an initial letter of inquiry (a query letter). Once past this first test of approval, the publisher asked me to present a formal proposal.

I found out rather quickly that the book business boils down to two factors: how you sell your book to the publisher, and how the publisher sells your book to the public.

Book proposals, if you've never encountered one, basically require a synopsis of your entire book concept, the chapters or table of contents, chapter samples (often, but not always required), an image list and samples, and a complete marketing plan. This information is neatly wrapped up into one very long document. The proposal, by its very nature, forces you to fully understand what you're writing about and how you can help get the book in the hands of readers.

The key to a successful book proposal is writing it in a way that sells the book to the publisher. The proposal is generally you, pitching yourself, your experience, your writing ability, and your idea to the people

who are going to invest in creating the book.

Having lived a life as a fundraising professional, writing a book proposal wasn't very difficult. In fact, it resembled the pieces of writing a grant. And if that sounds dry and rather unglamorous, it is. The nuts and bolts of writing history isn't incredibly exciting. What is exciting about writing history is the content.

The history dig

When the book contract arrived, I have to admit, I did a little dance of joy in my kitchen that day. Excited to finally be working toward a final book, I felt exhilarated and eager to start writing. What I soon found out however, was that this book was going to require about 80% research and only 20% writing.

My goal for the book, to be titled, *The Hidden History of Columbia County, NY*, was to find truly remarkable tales that were unknown to readers or at least stories that hadn't been unearthed in a long time. I also wanted the chapters to be short, entertaining, and accessible to readers of all ages. And as for images, I had hoped to find photos, illustrations, or drawings that would startle, surprise, and be remembered.

It would have been nice had all of these stories been right there when I opened up Google and asked the Oracle a question, but that's not how the research happened.

I used the internet a lot, mostly to dig into old out-of-print books (Project Gutenberg, a free service), and I used Kindle Library (a paid service with unlimited access to books on my Kindle device) which gave me access to books as well. But I also looked at zillions of old newspapers, New York State museum archives, and once again, I spent many hours in area libraries in the historic resource sections, reading old books, sifting through hand-typed histories, diaries, autobiographies, journals, magazines, letters, post cards, audio recordings, movies, videos, and more.

Because history has a way of hiding, you have to dig, and as we all know, sometimes digging gets messy. Collecting the information for me was rather organic and unscientific.

I wish I could say I had a meticulous system of cataloging each bit of information, tagging, and classifying it in an excel sheet, or in some other formal research system, but I didn't. Having never had formal training as a researcher (I went to Fordham University for journalism and creative writing), I simply lumped the facts together in one big group according to each chapter. It wasn't scholarly, but for me it was effective.

Along the research path, a few unexpected things happened. In an uncharted land, it's hard to know where you're going, so I wandered through history like an explorer without a map. Often though, I thought I was traveling toward one story, but I often meandered around so much that I ended up finding another. I can imagine that this is how Hudson stumbled upon my adoptive home of Columbia County, so I wear this accidental tourist behavior with a badge of courage.

The second unexpected thing that happened was what I affectionately call "time travel." History has a wonderful way of dragging you out of the present day life, and hurling you through time and space. It immerses you quite thoroughly in sights, smells, and sojourns beyond imagination.

The history time machine can also throw a few curve balls. Once you're in the warp, you can get lured away into distant lands. For instance, at one time I thought I would write about a place called the Mastodon Mill for my latest book, *Hudson Valley Curiosities*, and the next thing I know, I'm with the famous portrait painter, Rembrandt Peale and Cotton Mathers (of witch trials fame) digging up dinosaur bones and immersed in a one-of-a-kind reference called the *Mastodon Paleobiology, Taphonomy, and Paleoenvironment in the Late Pleistocene of New York State*. This is just one example of wayward travels. Luckily I'm the kind of person that enjoys mystical adventures in writing, and I find no danger being untethered, like a balloonist.

History writing

As I say to the groups of people who come to hear my history presentations, I think of myself as a story-teller rather than a history writer.

The short story has always been my favorite style of writing, so each of my books (now on my third, fingers crossed), is really a collection of short tales. What's great about writing in this style is that as the author, I can clearly envision the beginning, the middle, and the end. I also find that reading a short history story can be gratifying and fun!

In writing my books, I continue to take a rather unorthodox approach. The process by which my stories go from being purely raw material to complete tales seems to be one part imagination, one part muscle, and two parts magic.

I say magic because the act of creating is not something that I've ever been able to define. Without a doubt, I've gone back and read my books and wondered how they possibly happened. The only way I can really explain the magic is by returning to the story of my house.

My 1740 colonial house has ten rooms, a barn, and sits on three acres looking out on to the rolling waters of the Kinderhook Creek. The Kinderhook has its own story to tell ... when the Mahican Native Americans once walked along its banks. Along the edge of the Creek are rocks and stones and the occasional artifact. The land under my house rolls down toward the creek, and the hillside reveals an old dump where I have uncovered shards of Delft porcelain, bits of old brown crocks, toy guns, and even a silver cup with initials scribed on the side. The remnants of time gone by still remain, in the physical form and in spirit.

When my significant other (now my husband) and I moved into our historic home in the late 1990s, we had a few strange experiences. OK, yes, there were the occasional rather large thumps in the night that went unexplained. And oh, there were a few shadows that appeared out of the corner of my eye that turned out be nothing. But then there was the night that the ghost dog appeared. Not once, but twice! That's a story that I've always wanted to write, so perhaps I'll save that one for the next book.

Happy history hunting. ●

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The news about trees...

By Claire Copley
info@mainstreetmag.com

Have you ever considered how little we really know about the trees that share our world? New studies are showing that plants have astounding abilities to sense and react to changes in their environment. This research has given us information about trees that is not only astonishing, but will likely change the way we view our forests forever.

Trees are thought to have evolved during the Devonian period (416 to 359 million years ago), a time of explosive evolutionary action among land plants. Trees began as small, primitive forms that would have barely brushed our ankles. As trees and other plants evolved they became adapted to life outside of their marshy environments and spread across the surface of the planet. This brought about major chemical and physical changes in the earth's atmosphere, making the earth increasingly hospitable for other forms of life (including animals and humans).

The first known tree was identified from 385 million-year-old fossils found here in what is now New York. For many years, scientists examined large, conical fossils that were thought to be trees, but it was recently determined that they were, in fact, giant fungi, sort of like 25' tall mushrooms. Interestingly, it turns out that the interactions between plants and fungi is perhaps the most important symbiotic relationship on the planet.

The hidden lives of trees

Agriculture has brought about significant decline in the number of trees on our planet. Scientists estimate that the earth now has 46 percent fewer trees than it did 12,000 years ago. We clear millions of forested acres every year. In April of this year the results of a large global study were published which concluded that there are 60,065 tree species currently known to science, more than half of which exist only in one country. Science is helping us to learn more about trees as a resource, and how to use those resources more sustainably.

In his book, *The Hidden Life of Trees*, Peter Wohlleben tells us that trees communicate among themselves. He cites Acacia trees on the African Savannah who are regularly nibbled by giraffes. The Acacias release a toxic substance into their leaves to discourage the giraffes, and then, emit a pheromone warning to other nearby trees that hungry giraffes are about. Pheromones are chemicals produced and released into the environment by animals and insects to affect the behavior or physiology of others of their species. We now know that plants, especially trees, use pheromones as well.

Wohlleben goes further, saying that trees can accurately identify insects that are attacking based on their saliva. The determination is so precise that the tree can respond by releasing specific pheromones which attract specific predators to combat the attacker. Interestingly, Mr. Wohlleben concludes that if trees can identify insects by their saliva, they must be exhibiting a sense of taste.

Plants have all the same senses as humans...

When I was young, I was taught to think about trees as static beings, mostly dead, perhaps most valuable

as habitat and fuel. Scientists are finding now that trees are sentient beings that register and communicate their feelings. Michael Pollan, author of many books about plants, states in a recent (2013) article in *The New Yorker Magazine* that plants have all the same senses as humans, and then some. In addition to hearing and taste, they can sense gravity, or the presence of water, or even discern an obstruction blocking the path of its roots. Trees use sounds, tastes, smell, touch, and more to regulate and react to their environment.

Pollan writes: "Plants are able to sense and optimally respond to so many environmental variables – light, water, gravity, temperature, soil structure, nutrients, toxins, microbes, herbivores, chemical signals from other plants – that there may exist some brain-like information-processing system to integrate the data and coordinate a plant's behavioral response. [...] electrical and chemical signalling systems have been identified in plants which

are homologous to those found in the nervous systems of animals. They also noted that neurotransmitters such as serotonin, dopamine, and glutamate have been found in plants, though their role remains unclear.”

Self-defense

Trees can, and do, defend themselves. We are used to thinking of trees as passive, but in fact many trees carry toxic tannins in their leaves and bark that can poison predators. We know that Black Walnuts use their toxic capabilities to discourage other plants from taking root in their vicinity, thereby reducing competition for scarce resources. In addition to releasing pheromones to communicate with other plants on a variety of topics, underground networks of fungi also enable trees to communicate with the plants around them.

A symbiotic relationship

Recently, scientists have done extensive research on the fungal networks that exist underground and connect trees in communities. Mycorrhizal fungi live on tree roots in a symbiotic relationship. They assist the tree in location and uptake of nutrients and water. In return, the trees provide them with simple sugars made as a byproduct of photosynthesis, on which the fungi feed. These fungi reach out to other trees and create underground networks that connect individual plants together and transfer water, carbon, nitrogen, and other nutrients and minerals. Scientists are investigating other functions that these networks might perform as well.

The mycorrhizal fungi provide trees with the ability to communicate and share resources. Forest Ecologist Suzanne Simard has shown us how trees use this network of soil fungi to communicate their needs and aid neighboring plants.



Photo source istockphoto.com contributor swkunst

She has identified hubs within these communities that form around a central tree, she calls these “Mother Trees,” that may be connected to hundreds of younger trees around them. These “Mother Trees” track the health of the other trees and send their excess nutrients, such as carbon, to those who need it most. They also orchestrate community inputs and resource sharing.

Many mature trees need huge quantities of water to survive. A large Oak tree can consume about 100 gallons of water per day, and a giant Sequoia can drink up to 500 gallons daily. The complex root network of trees limit flooding by soaking up excess water and reduce erosion by holding the soil in place. These roots are soil creators as they bore through rock and hard packed layers, searching for nutrients and turning rock to soil. Trees are also able to soak up pollutants in the soil and render them less harmful.

Trees are our allies

As it turns out, trees are an important ally of humans. They offer a huge variety of benefits: food, medicine, and raw materials as well

as shade, windbreaks, and flood control. They curb air pollution, lower temperatures, and increase biodiversity. Trees are soaking up much of the carbon dioxide that is at dangerously high levels due to the burning of fossil fuels.

In Los Angeles, trees remove nearly 2,000 tons of air pollution each year. Trees, especially old growth forests, are combating life-threatening climate change by absorbing excess CO₂. Trees provide shade from the harsh effects of the decline of the ozone layer. They reduce UV-B exposure by about 50 percent, reducing cancers.

Many individual trees can live for centuries or millennia. Researchers know of a Bristlecone Pine in California that they date as 5,062 years old. Even when a tree does finally die, its impact on the forest is far from over. Dead wood creates a slow release of nitrogen as well as microhabitats for animals, fungi, lichens, mosses, and insects.

Interconnectivity

The most important concept we have learned about our natural environment in the last fifty years is this vast interconnectivity. Scientists are continuing to seek ways to advance and apply this concept productively.

Mr. Wohlleben tells this story in his book:

“Katsuhiko Matsunaga, a marine chemist in [Japan], discovered that leaves falling into rivers and streams leach acids into the ocean that stimulate the growth of plankton, the first and most important building block in the food chain. More fish because of the forest? The researcher encouraged more planting of more trees in coastal areas, which did, in fact, lead to higher yields for fisheries and oyster growers.”

Our forests are vast ecosystems which we are only beginning to fully comprehend and appreciate. Trees are not isolated individuals, but active community members that support thousands, maybe millions, of species of living organisms. Understanding these communities is an ongoing enterprise. Bringing our best scientists to this subject is yielding extraordinary and essential information. ●

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It's time for Art



By Dominique De Vito
info@mainstreetmag.com

It's September, which brings with it that lifelong "back to school" feeling, whether you have children and are helping prepare for a new school year, or not. September marks a shift – a shift in seasons, a shift in perspective, a shift that brings an itch. An itch to do something new; to learn something new. *Main Street Magazine* recognizes and appreciates this annual occurrence by dedicating this issue to learning. The message is: Find something and, if it moves you, do it! Shift your own habits and perspective, look to scratch that itch, and see what starting something new can do to transform you and your world.

This article is all about the art classes that are available in the area. As with all things, there is no lack of diversity of class offerings for *Main Street* readers.

Whether you want to take up something traditional like drawing or painting, or whether you've always wanted to try printmaking, or you want to explore mixed media – or maybe you want to take your digital photos to an artsy level – you can find a class for that.

Here's a rundown of the organizations that offer classes and a sampling of what you'll find there. As Georgia O'Keefe said, "Whether you succeed or not is irrelevant, there is no such thing. Making your unknown known is the important thing – and keeping the unknown always beyond you."

The Art School of Columbia County

The Art School of Columbia County in Ghent, NY, opened its doors in July 2013 and has flourished since. Its mission is to nurture creativity and community through the visual arts, and its goal is "imagining art for everyone."

The ASCC is housed in a small former schoolhouse at the intersection of Harlemville Road and Route 21C – a stone's throw from Hawthorne Valley Farm and School. The site itself is an inspiration of natural beauty, and an oasis of calm and creativity in the heart of Columbia County. Besides the wealth of classes it offers, the School also hosts regular exhibitions of faculty and student works in the space.

Class offerings vary by season, with those for the fall to include mixed media, computer-based art, gesture drawing, pen and ink, exploring color through abstracted landscape, and more traditional painting

and drawing.

The ASCC has an active "Art in the Library" program, where instructors work with children in classes from Kindergarten to 6th grade in libraries throughout Columbia County on projects that marry poetry and artistic expression. The program has been a huge hit.

Learn more about the Art School of Columbia County by visiting its website at www.artschoolofcolumbia-county.org, email to artschoolofcolumbiacounty@gmail.com, or follow the School on Facebook. Located at 1198 Route 21C, Ghent, NY.

"Art washes away from the soul the dust of everyday life." – Pablo Picasso

Betsy Jacaruso Studio & Gallery

If you live in Dutchess County you should check out Betsy Jacaruso Studio and Gallery at the Rhinebeck Courtyard at 43 East Market Street. Betsy is a watercolor artist, and offers weekly classes that she teaches on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Saturdays from 10 to 1, and on Tuesdays from 1 to 4. The focus is on learning basic watercolor techniques to develop individual style in a relaxed group atmosphere. All levels are welcome for these classes, and she also periodically offers classes for absolute beginners.

The Studio also offers regular pastel

and life drawing classes; a "tips and tricks" class that explores using masking, sponges, and other materials to enhance a work; and a new class in "iphoneography." There's also an open studio time on Fridays from 3 to 5.

Learn more about Betsy and the classes at www.betsyjacarusoartist.com. You can also email her at betsyjacaruso@gmail.com, or find her on Facebook. Located at 43 East Market St., Rhinebeck, NY.

"Generally speaking, color directly influences the soul. Color is the keyboard, the eyes are the hammers, the soul is the piano with many strings. The artist is the hand that plays, touching one key or another purposively, to cause vibrations in the soul." – Wassily Kandinsky

Hudson River Valley Art Workshops

Greenville, NY, is home to Hudson River Valley Art Workshops, which bills itself as "a unique art center in New York's inspiring Hudson Valley." That certainly sounds worth checking out, and it is! Greenville is situated in the upper Catskill Mountains,

Continued on next page ...

about halfway between Windham and Albany. The workshops are multi-day immersion “packages,” where participants stay at the Greenville Arms 1889 Inn anywhere from three to five days. The packages are like Club Med for artists and include class tuition, lodging, and meals. Outside of time spent in the workshop classes, participants can use the studio space any time, as it’s available 24-hours during a stay. Paradise for artists!

All levels are welcome, and workshops range from Landscape Painting to Collage to Plein Air and Still Life painting to Watercolor and even a self-directed artist retreat. Workshops take place throughout the year. If you get started with a class in your area, you could ask someone for the gift of an Art Workshop package for the holidays or a special birthday gift. I know I would love that!

Learn more about Hudson River Valley Art Workshops at www.artworkshops.com. There’s a form on the website to request specific information, or you can email info@artworkshops.com. Check them out on Facebook, too. Located at 11135 State Route 32, Greenville, NY.

“Everyone discusses my art and pretends to understand, as if it were necessary to understand, when it is simply necessary to love.” – Claude Monet

The IS183 Art School of the Berkshires

Naturally, the Berkshires is not without its offerings of art classes – thank goodness!

The IS183 Art School of the Berkshires in Stockbridge, MA, has been going strong since 1991. Based in the historic Citizens’ Hall in Stockbridge, the school has classes there and at other locations in the Berkshires. It’s similar to the Art School of Columbia County in that in addition to classes and workshops in a variety of

media for all levels, the School offers a Learning Through Arts program for schoolchildren. The goal is to offer art-making as a tool to improve academic and behavioral learning to children through school residencies, after-school programs, and summer camps.

IS183 is proud to have extended its arts offerings to over 40,000 adults and 16,000 children in the Berkshires over the past 25 years. Wow!

A look at its class offerings confirms that there’s something for everyone in a variety of media – even ceramics, fiber art, jewelry-making, photography, and writing/graphic storytelling, along with the more traditional painting, drawing, printmaking, and collage. I was drawn to a class called “I Wish I Could Draw,” and one called “Gallery to Landscape” that’s held at The Clark in Williamstown. It offers its space for private use as well, and conducts art parties for those interested in creative activity or corporate team building.

Learn more about IS183 Art School of the Berkshires at www.is183.org. Like them on Facebook. 13 Willard Hill Road, Stockbridge, MA.



*“To be an artist is to believe in life.”
– Henry Moore*

Renaissance Art Center

Last but certainly not least, if you live in and around Great Barrington, you can take art classes at the Renaissance Arts Center. It’s a school of visual and performing arts, and offers weekly classes as well as one-day workshops.

They’re busy at Renaissance, with year-round offerings of a variety of painting and drawing classes for people of all ages, and also dance and gymnastics; music and vocals; creative writing; paint parties; creative camps; and even college portfolio development. There’s an Art of Airbrushing class that sounds really interesting, and also a Photography and Digital Media class – along with several painting and drawing classes.

Learn more about Renaissance Arts Center at www.renaissancegb.com. Their Facebook page is Renaissance Arts & Wellness Center, so it sounds like they may be expanding. 420 Stockbridge Rd. #11, Great Barrington, MA.

Paint and Sip

I’d be remiss if I didn’t mention that a very entertaining and easy way to test the creative waters is to participate in

a Paint and Sip. An instructor guides a group through the creation of a painting that’s already been selected and done by the instructor at these events. Participants drink wine while working on the painting. These are usually attended by groups of friends or coworkers, though that’s not necessary – you can go by yourself and have a great time.

They’re held at locations as varied as Paint & Sip studios (like the ones in Saratoga, NY, and Pittsfield, MA) to private studios and homes, to wineries (Hudson-Chatham Winery does them under a tent in the summer months) and bars/taverns (like The Mount Washington House in Hillsdale, NY). Do a Google search to find something near you. They’re very fun!

*“Nothing makes me so happy as to observe nature and to paint what I see.”
– Henri Rousseau •*



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FISH ON:

A KID'S GUIDE TO THE RIGHT BAITS

By Caleb J. May
info@mainstreetmag.com

I'm not the most experienced angler. I just started about three years ago and I am only 14 years old. However, for some reason I'm obsessed with baits and lures. They're pretty much all that I talk about. Just ask my parents, they'll tell you.

To give their ears a break, I'd like to share with you the baits and lures that work in certain situations, seasons, and water temperatures. Also, I'd like to apologize to any trout, fly, or offshore anglers. I'm pretty much only a bass angler.

Now let's get started.

Winter

When the ice is just starting to come off the lakes and ponds there are a few key baits to be throwing. The first is a jig. A jig looks like a weight and hook wearing a hula skirt. You can add a soft plastic trailer that should "match the hatch" or replicate what the bass are feeding on. In a lot of cases that is crayfish.

After you cast, reel the jig back very slowly and keep in contact with the bottom of the lake or pond. My

former music teacher and avid fisherman, Robert Nellson, told me that countless times in these cold conditions he has seen people reel the bait back to the boat too quickly. This can be problematic because bass are very slow and lethargic when they're cold, so it is unlikely that they'll chase something going fast. They'll only bite something right in front of their faces.

The second is a lipless crankbait. It looks like fish or crawfish with two treble hooks. A crankbait of any kind helps you cover a lot of water. Try to pull them along weed beds, which are commonplace in this area and where bass like to hang out.

Spring

When fishermen hear spring, they think of the spawn. When the water temperature reaches 50 to 60 degrees, bass will start to move into shallow water and make beds.

When this happens my favorite bait to throw in the beds is a Zoom Lizard, a soft plastic lizard-shaped bait with four arms and a long tail. I Texas rig it on an extra wide gap hook (EWG). A Texas rig threads the hook through a plastic lure to make sure it catches only fish and no weeds. You fish it weightless or with a worm weight. Since lizards will eat the eggs out of bass beds, bass will bite to protect their future offspring.

Another spring tactic is a Zoom Finesse Worm on a jighead. A jighead is just a weight and a hook fused together – no skirt and no weed guard. This combination of plastic worm and hook will kick up tons of dirt and attract bass.

The last bait is a soft jerkbait like a Zoom Super Fluke, a small fish-like plastic bait with a wiggly tail. Even a soft jerk of the rod will send it into a



Above, top row, L-R: Jig with crawfish trailer, Bluegill lipless crankbait, Zoom Lizard, Zoom Finesse Worm on jighead, Texas-rigged Zoom Super Fluke. Bottom row, L-R: Topwater spook, Lucky Craft Slim Shad D-9, square-bill crankbait. Not pictured: Topwater frog (lost at sea). Photo: Caleb J. May. Below, left: Large Mouth Bass caught with Texas-rigged Zoom Superfluke. Photo: Ken Lauber.

frenetic action as if it were an injured baitfish. This also attracts bass.

I have caught fish off of all these. These are truly fish catchers.

Summer

In the summer, bass will be in shallow water in the morning, deeper water in the afternoon, and return to shallows in the evening.

A great way to catch summer bass is a topwater bait, which floats on the surface. The ideal time to throw one of these is early in the morning with a cloudy sky and a bit of chop in the water.

My former science teacher, John Conklin, another outdoorsman, said he likes to throw a spook – a torpedo-shaped hard bait with treble hooks. When you jerk the rod it will dart in different directions.

Another great way to catch fish topwater is with a frog. It looks like a cute squeeze toy, but don't be fooled – it has a hook on each side of its collapsible body.

When bass go to deeper water it is wise to throw a deep-diving crankbait like a Lucky Craft Slim Shad D-9. A crankbait resembles a baitfish, but has different sized lips to either go deeper or shallower.

Bass will also hang out around fallen trees submerged in the water. In these places throw a square bill crankbait, which when bounced off of branches will trigger bass into biting.

Fall

I am not much of a fall fisherman because I am in school and play soccer. That is when I watch YouTube videos and do my research to get ready for when the lake thaws. I also watch shows like *Monster Fish*, *River Monsters*, and *Bassmasters* to round out my education.

The lure of fishing

For me, fishing gives me an escape from the hectic world. It connects me with nature via a rod, reel, and line. No one in my family really likes to fish, so it's been an amazing experience teaching myself how to fish through videos, websites, conversations, and trial and error.

If I have one thing to say to anyone getting in the game of fishing, just relax. Don't worry if you lose a ten pounder or your brand new lure. It happens. All you have to do is fish on.

A few helpful websites: www.tacklewarehouse.com, www.wired2fish.com, www.bassmaster.com. YouTube channels: Jon B, 1rod1reel fishing, APbassin, Flair, Lunkers-TV, and LakeForkGuy. Places to get tackle: Terni's, Tackle Warehouse, Mystery Tackle Box, and Amazon.

If you have any questions or want to talk baits you can contact me via email at ceelo10@icloud.com.



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A gathering of the minds: KentPresents

By Ian Strever
info@mainstreetmag.com

Jogging behind the Chief Economist of the World Bank on a cool summer morning in Kent, CT, is a comforting thing. First, you can be pretty sure that the world economy hasn't imploded overnight. Second, you can keep up with Paul Romer, as long as he is in dress shoes. Third, you won't be late for the conversation he is about to lead as a part of KentPresents, a gathering of some of the finest minds of our era in one of Connecticut's most scenic towns.

A community of learners

KentPresents offers participants an opportunity to rub shoulders with movers and shakers like Romer in fields as diverse as economics and the visual arts. Over three days in late July, illuminati converge on the Kent School for a festival of ideas on par with TED and Aspen Ideas, but with "the opportunity to chat with just about anyone attending or speaking," according to founder Ben Rosen.

Such access is, indeed, uncommon. Following his talk on Saturday morning, several attendees engaged Senator Chris Murphy in discussion about the Washington, D.C. circus and the state of the Connecticut economy, and I found myself sitting next to former NATO Ambassador (Ret.) Nicholas Burns during a talk on Putin's Russia that I think we both found unsettling.

There are no receiving lines, no throngs of reporters to breach. One of the striking features of KentPresents is the way in which the entire population comprises a community

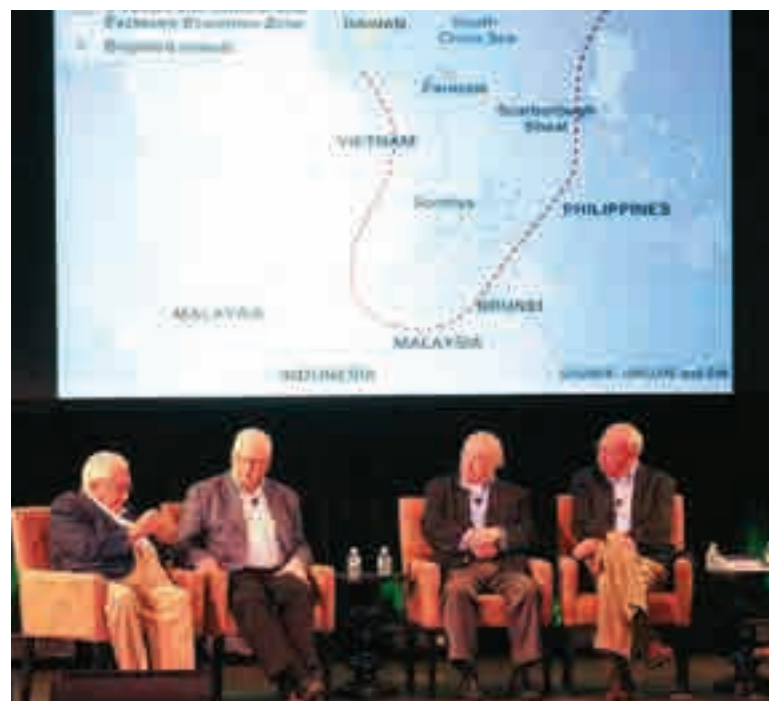
of learners. Speakers attend each others' talks, and the well-educated, well-heeled audience attains a high level of intimacy in a brief amount of time. This is aided by the number of returning attendees who have participated since the event began in 2014. The result is 72 hours of stimulating intellectual conversation among some very influential and brilliant individuals.

Chances are that you're not the smartest person in the room

If you are the kind of person who suspects you might be the smartest person in the room, KentPresents will disabuse you of that delusion. For starters, you're at a conference with Henry Kissinger.

But nearly every speaker has a way of opening up topics in novel and provocative ways. The dashing Dr. Scott Small, a neurosurgeon at Columbia University and Director of the Alzheimer's Disease Research Center, delivered a fascinating glimpse inside the science of forgetting, positing that the act of forgetting is a biological adaptation (you may now commence celebrating). His talk included excerpts from Jose Luis Borges, references to Kant and Jung, and exchanges with moderator and memoirist André Aciman that operationalized his work for an aging audience that clearly values the life of the mind.

All of the presenters are brilliant not simply because they are knowledgeable, but because they can explain their complex fields of study in sensible ways. The intricacies of economic policy become malleable in the hands of people such as Romer, Paul Krugman, and



Jared Bernstein. Their session, "Is Inequality Unstoppable?" linked the widening income gap to political decisions and social trends with which everyone is familiar, but that have had subtle implications beyond the scope of your typical *New York Times* article. The panel's consideration of wage subsidies, Universal Basic Income, and job creation programs illuminated the kind of thinking that actually becomes policy – not a Twitter post.

Only an hour?

The sessions last for about an hour, which is both a strength and a shortcoming of the event. "Reinventing American Education" in one hour is absurdly ambitious, and as a professional educator, I found myself avoiding all educational topics for what I found to be both their prosaic and frustrating treatments in such truncated sessions. As a friend put it, "It's like Little League baseball: everyone played baseball, so everyone in the stands is a coach."

Above: Henry Kissinger, J. Stapleton Roy, Jack Matlock, Thomas Pickering, and James Hoge participate on a panel discussion on southeast Asia. Photo: KentPresents.

Continued on next page ...

Everyone went to school, so everybody thinks they know how to solve the education problem.”

For other topics, however, an hour was perfect. Author and physician Dr. Aaron Carroll spent his allotted time advocating for a more scientifically-literate population by enumerating the many myths that our media has perpetuated about health. His hilarious and flippant responses to audience questions about the dangers of peanuts, sugar, and gluten-free foods was deftly laced with helpful advice about how to better scrutinize scientific studies. With the kind of clarity that is a hallmark of each speaker, he distinguished between epidemiological and interventional studies (the former is associational, the latter causal), and explained why absolute reductions in risk are more valid than relative reductions (i.e., saving one life out of ten thousand with a cholesterol drug may not be worth the “fifty-percent” risk reduction that gets reported on the evening news).

Shaping the canopy

I am not a physician, and I don’t even play one on TV, but the chance to interlope in these unfamiliar spheres is priceless (although the event does charge a fee – more on that later). Part of my logic in straying from educational concerns was that I am too familiar with the content and the arguments. For neophytes, a talk about charter schools may entice, whereas an hour on tax reform is just enough to keep me from having an anxiety attack about the future of our country.

There are a few takeaways about learning here. Our brain is like a tree, and throughout our lives, we are continually pruning branches and shaping the canopy. We allow our stronger branches to grow

unchecked, but when we fail to cultivate other areas of intellectual development, many of those branches die. That French you learned in tenth grade? It’s not all there anymore. Your aspiration to play the piano that never got off the ground? It gets harder with each day to become that virtuoso you imagined. KentPresents allows attendees to at least ward off the arborist for a few days.

The ecstatic experience of learning

Festival organizers also carefully consider the ways in which they approach topics, so even the mundane becomes remarkable again. In some cases, pairing unfamiliar speakers generates the effect. Journalist Amanda Ripley and Columbia University professor Safwan Masri tackled the trend of disengaged males in school systems around the world through an illuminating look at Jordan, where women outnumber men two-to-one in colleges and universities. Ripley’s persistent queries of Jordanian students uncovered social practices that would not have been offered in official state interviews, and Masri’s extensive work throughout the Middle East to develop Global Centers for Columbia provided insights into systemic problems that newspapers generally miss. The following morning, I noticed the two of them socializing during a break, surely comparing notes.

Today’s educational institutions are so preoccupied by test scores and job creation that they often overlook the ecstatic experience of learning: that captivating, rapturous feeling that comes from intellectual stimulation. KentPresents allows participants to experience that in the most organic setting. There is nothing innovative about the format of the sessions, but when curious minds gather around interesting topics, synergy happens. As I mentioned, however, that synergy comes at a price. Tickets to the program are \$2,500, with proceeds



benefiting local charities through grants and contributions.

That said, the organization reaches out to area schools to offer teachers and students the opportunity to attend, gratis. For Housatonic Valley Regional High School 12th grader Massyl Mallem, the experience generated three pages of reflective writing, and piqued his voracious intellectual curiosity. By the time I finally sat down with him in one of the final sessions, he had expanded his career aspirations beyond anything he had imagined beforehand. The former aspiring lawyer now saw multifold possibilities and nuances for what he could do with his future, and that (to co-opt the slogan) is priceless. ●

Above top: The picturesque Kent School campus provides the backdrop for three days of stimulating conversation among attendees. Directly above: 2016 attendee Todd Eberle poses a question during a session. The conversations between speakers and attendees catalyze intellectual debate. Photos: KentPresents.

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*The Communion, oil and paper on paper,
65 x 43 inches, Christina Painter, 2017*



*Stein Stepping, river stones, 22 x 18-25 x 10 in.
Dan Peterson, 2017*

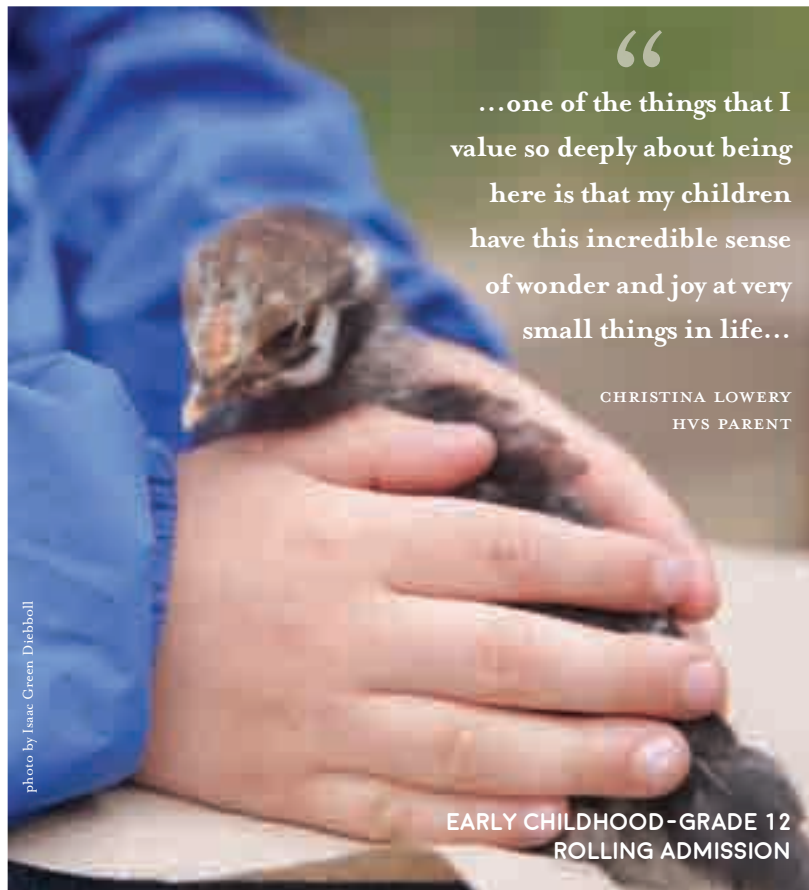
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RETURNING TO SCHOOL

LATE IN LIFE

By Carol Ascher
info@mainstreetmag.com

Over forty years had passed since I'd been a student when I registered for a course at Hartford Seminary. Although I had taught writing at local libraries, and am a constant reader and writer, graduate school (which I had plowed through during the rough years of Vietnam War protests) had left me with an allergy to formal schooling.

Then last winter Eileen Epperson, with whom I was in a book group, mentioned a course she was about to take. Eileen is Salisbury's hospice chaplain and has been working towards a Doctor of Ministry at Hartford Seminary. "Religion in Conflict and Peace-making," taught by Professor Yehezkel Landau, would meet once a month for a full day of classes. By chance, I had watched a YouTube video in which Landau and a Palestinian discussed the Israel-Palestine conflict with mutual respect and compassion. When Eileen said she thought community members could audit Landau's course, my heart leapt with excitement.

The logistics

Since Eileen was staying in Hartford for another course, I would be on my own. I wondered how I would stay alert through an early morning hour-long drive to West Hartford, over eight hours of classes, and another hour's drive home in the dark.

Marel Rogers lives near me and has a studious streak. Newly widowed and open to adventure, Marel liked the idea of taking the course



Pictured are moments from the second class that Carol took. Carol herself can be seen in the above photo where the Imam is giving a lecture, third in from the right – the one with pen and paper in front of her. Photos courtesy of Carol Ascher.

together and sharing the drive. After missing a critical turn on our way home that first evening, we alternated acting as co-pilots – enjoying the time to review the readings, debrief from the long day, and just chat.

Although I had avoided school long enough to fear being the oldest person in the class, the students were a mixed group: there were young men and women in the Seminary's masters program in Peace Studies; a number of clergy in their middle and later years, some with full-time congregational responsibilities; and a few retirees like Marel and me, auditing the course.

This class, and then another

What the readings and discussion gave us was a way to understand the upsurge in worldwide religious violence, the role of religion, ethnicity, poverty, and other factors in these instances of bloodshed, and what religious leaders had

done, and were doing, in countries as diverse as Ireland, Nigeria, and India either to exacerbate antagonisms or to diffuse resentments and promote peace. Although those of us auditing weren't required to turn in papers, I found myself completing the assignments as a way to relate what I was learning to my own experience of intolerance.

Last summer, I registered for a sequel course at Hartford Seminary, "Building Abrahamic Partnerships," again taught by Yehezkel Landau. Since the course was an intensive, involving eight straight days (including several evenings) of academic lectures, personal explorations, and participation in services at churches, synagogues, and mosques, students were asked to do a good deal of advance reading on the three Abrahamic traditions.

Again we students spanned a wide age range, from those still training for their clerical professions, and middle-aged clergy busy with small and large congregations, to activists and people of good will of various ages. Of the thirty students admitted, a third were Muslim (including several African Americans whose parents had converted to Islam, or who themselves

were converts), a third Christian, and a third Jews. Though the readings had been compelling, nothing could compare with the emotional power of getting to know students of other faiths and their religious observances.

Like many, I stayed in a Seminary dormitory, re-experiencing the initial uneasiness of a strange bare-bones bedroom and the challenge of making it my own, and the lessening awkwardness as I came to know fellow students who shared the bathroom and kitchen with me.

How had age changed me as a student? While most students took notes on laptops, I wrote in a lined notebook, as I had many decades earlier. Though sometimes personal thoughts intruded on my concentration, I think I was less easily distracted than I might have been at twenty or thirty. A hunger for discovery that I had once taken for granted had been re-awakened, and being in school again felt precious to me. ●



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Log on to learning: The basics of online courses

By Mary B. O'Neill, Ph.D.
info@mainstreetmag.com

Taking courses online is an increasingly popular way to earn a degree or to expand your horizons. Colleges and universities offer online courses within departments, as well as degrees and certificates you can pursue wholly online. These classes, completed solely over the internet, are markedly different from on-the-ground classes, where you show up for a class at regularly scheduled times and see a live instructor. (There are also hybrid courses that are conducted online with sporadic class meetings).

Enrolling in an online class may seem daunting, especially if you are uncertain about your computer skills or how you would do without the physical presence of an instructor. You need not be afraid! As a certified iTeach instructor, I'll demystify the basic premises and concepts of online learning.

Master of the Universe

Taking a course online can be extremely rewarding, and the opportunities are endless. You can take courses at institutions across town or across the world on an endless variety of topics. You will discover a capacity to be integrally involved in your own educational process and become a self-motivated learner.

The intrinsic motivation required for online learning will carry over into other areas of your life, as you discover you are the master of your own educational fate. This revelation is quite an empowering one. It bolsters an attitude of lifelong learning, a necessary component of being a nimble worker and citizen in the 21st Century.

Role of instructor

One of the largest differences between online and on-the-ground teaching is the role of the instructor. While students are always responsible for

their own learning, in on-the-ground classes students expect the instructor to feed them course content. I have often heard the comment, "I didn't understand the reading, so I figured I'd wait for class for you to explain it."

Online learning shifts the responsibility squarely back to the learner, with the instructor playing the role of facilitator and guiding hand. Students learn for themselves and from each other to a much greater degree.

MOOCs

A perfect way to begin engaging with online learning is through a low-risk MOOC, which stands for Massive Open Online Course. MOOCs may be similar in content to online degree courses offered at a college or university, but there are some key differences. MOOCs are generally non-credit courses offered to vast numbers of people.

MOOC courses are free of charge. However, increasingly MOOC courses are offering optional certificates of completion for a nominal fee. This certificate is proof that you satisfactorily completed the course and can entitle you to additional interaction with the instructor(s). What good is the certificate? Well, it can prove to a current or potential employer that you are self-motivated and possess an additional body of knowledge. This can be especially useful if you are changing careers or positions. It proves that you have independently gained mastery of a given skill set.

More college-bound students are using MOOCs to bolster their college résumé. This certificate of completion shows that the student is pursuing enrichment. It's also a less costly and more convenient substitute for taking college courses during summer break.

A downside of MOOCs is that without a tuition fee and grades to motivate, you must create your own incentives for finishing a course in the absence of hefty tuition and grades. The onus is on you to complete the course and do your best.

Be clear about why you're taking the class and what you want to get



out of it. Is it to dabble in a new field? Satisfy curiosity? Enhance a skill? See what online learning is about? Once you are clear why you're enrolled, you can then create and monitor your own motivation and know how hard to drive yourself.

Two of the most well-known MOOC platforms are Coursera and EdX. Both platforms offer courses developed at and administered by higher educational institutions around the world and feature some well-known presenters.

While much of what is discussed in this article applies to MOOCs, the following observations and advice offered are for the next level of online classes – those taken for credit through a college or university.

Technology access

Before you put your money down for an online class for credit, make sure you have the technological capacity to succeed. Consider your Wi-Fi connection. Is it dependable, or does it sporadically fail? Does your computer have the speed and memory you'll need to load information, play videos, and download documents? If these are issues you will need to find a place,

such a local library or café, where the connection is strong, fast, and stable, and a computer that's up to the task.

The institution you're taking the course from should be able to tell you what minimum tech requirements you'll need to run their online platform. The instructor can tell you what specific programs or applications they use in the class.

When I run an online class, two weeks before the course begins I release to enrolled students a mock module for students to complete. It contains assignments and activities utilizing all the tech requirements they'll need. This gives them time to secure the necessary skills and equipment.

In online learning, it's the students' responsibility to make sure they are up and running by the course commencement date. Instructors are generally unsympathetic to students who "show up" for class lacking the technology or requisite skills.

If you need help, call or email the college's tech support department. They have helplines, as well as an

Continued on next page ...

office you can visit if you're nearby. There are also many online YouTube videos that walk you through a given procedure within the online platform.

Course content

Online courses contain some medium for conveying information. Some examples are required texts, articles, videos, slide presentations, and links to websites. Instructors may also have video lectures that they have created or those available online, such as TEDTalks or Khan Academy.

To assess your mastery of this material, the instructor may have reading comprehension activities in the form of short-answer quizzes or homework. These online assessments are usually scheduled by the instructor to open and close at given times. There can also be individual or group projects, papers, and more weighty exams, such as midterms or finals.

Other popular features of online courses are discussions and journals. Both are generally responses to a

Mind your manners

Online discussions require the class to exercise "netiquette" or online etiquette. Since you're not meeting in person, there's a chance that someone may post unfiltered responses that might be discriminatory, inflammatory, or dismissive toward other students. These types of posts are seriously frowned upon and will sometimes carry consequences.

Craft your responses first in a word processing platform. This accomplishes two goals. It safeguards your responses from the vagaries of internet connections. If your connection is lost mid-post, your work won't be saved and you'll have to start over.

It also builds in some extra layers between composing your post and ultimately sharing online with others. This allows time to reflect and ask yourself if your submission is reasonable and devoid of personal attacks and insults.

In the five years that I've been using online discussions and journals

them. They say it also gives them more time to organize and express their thoughts. This is especially true with journal entries about how course content dovetails with their lives. Often these entries are so honest and deep that I feel honored a student has shared them with me.

Other students, who are self-professed introverts, find that online postings allow their voice to be heard. Because of this, I've taken to using online components in my on-the-ground classes. I can scaffold student confidence and provide a more comfortable platform from which to "speak." Students who might potentially go through a semester with minimal air time in the physical classroom can now share their considerable talents with the group online.

I affirm these online efforts through my instructor comments where I urge my more introverted students to share their worthy thoughts with others when we meet in class. Over the course of the term, as confidence grows, so does their participation in classroom discussions.

Community of learners

Creating a community of learners is a critical component of online learning, and one that sadly, some instructors ignore. Before you register for a class, contact the instructor and ask them how they create community in their online class. If the answer doesn't satisfy you, then decide how important the class is to you. Is it worth taking despite a lack of community?

There's nothing worse than taking an online class and feeling like the instructor is hidden and that some invisible hand is releasing course content, much like the Wizard of Oz. You want to see the person behind the curtain and make sure they see you.

If a potential student were to ask me that question I would tell them that I:

- Create regular course announcements to link course content to current events that make the material more relevant
- Inject humor and enthusiasm in my own video segments to deliver content
- Devise assignments that allow students to share information about their

own lives, and I share some of mine

- Provide individual feedback to student submissions and assess them on a timely basis
- Regularly encourage students to interact through a "watercooler" area of the course, where they can share insights and questions about the course
- Promptly respond to student questions via the course platform or email
- Make myself visible in the course every day so students know I'm out there

Review the syllabus

Before registering for an online class, contact the instructor and ask them for a copy of their syllabus. You have every right to see this document before you enroll. Don't be afraid to ask for this. It's basically your course contract and you need to assess if the course is right for you. That syllabus should contain some important information:

- Course objectives and outcomes
- Grading requirements
- How to contact the instructor
- Required texts
- Synchronous vs. asynchronous components (synchronous means that a part of the course requires you to be online at a given date and time for a virtual meeting. Asynchronous means that you can complete assignments when it works for you, regardless of others).
- Required group or individual projects and assignments
- Major exam dates
- Due dates (best practice dictates that due dates are consistent throughout the course, e.g., Tuesdays at 5pm, so the course can stay on schedule and students can get into a rhythm of completing and submitting work).

Log into learning

Online learning can be enriching and convenient. It can provide a substantial and creative learning opportunity. This occurs when the instructor delivers content in a clear, predictable, and engaging manner, and when students take control of their own learning and become contributing citizens of an online learning community. •



question or prompt provided by the instructor. The difference between these two activities is that discussions involve the whole class and may require a response to another student's post. Journal responses are private, between the instructor and student, and allow for greater individual reflection and intellectual risk taking.

in all my classes, I haven't had a single instance requiring intervention, but I always make adherence to netiquette a requirement of each assignment, along with word counts, grammar and spelling, and depth of thought.

Deep in thought

Online interactions can sometimes surpass the discussions and reflections I'm able to garner from my on-the-ground sessions. Students tell me they're more comfortable taking a stand or reflecting online. In-person exchanges are anxiety-producing for



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The school bell still rings

The Irondale Schoolhouse in Millerton, NY

By CB Wismar
info@mainstreetmag.com

For many a passing motorist, the building was an eyesore. It was an oddity, sitting so close to the road, nearly overwhelmed by a large maple that had grown to maturity in the years since 1930 when the Irondale Schoolhouse saw its last students exit to pursue their dreams.

The schoolhouse had been built and occupied in 1858, a full four years before Col. John H. Ketchum led the fathers, uncles, and brothers of the school children in the Dutchess County Regiment into the American Civil War, to fight at Gettysburg and beyond.

Through its 75 years of useful life the modest schoolhouse welcomed nearly 2,500 children from the Town of Northeast. One teacher taught all the grades, led, encouraged, and disciplined up to 40 students at a time.

But the building had become a derelict.

A new life

At one time, it had been one of 14 one-room schoolhouses scattered across the Town of Northeast. Now it was in need of demolition ... or moving. Whatever the method, the building needed to be gone.

Wreckers would have had short

work of taking down the old building were it not for the imagination, the vision, the tenacity, and the simple stubbornness of one local Millerton resident.

Ralph Fedele had completed an illustrious career in retailing, retiring from his position at JC Penney when the retail giant relocated its corporate offices from New York to Plano, Texas, and Ralph decided to remain close to his Rhinebeck, NY, roots.

At home in Dutchess County, Ralph celebrated his retirement by realizing he had much too much energy and ambition left to slip into the rocking chair on the front porch and while away his years. The Historical Society attracted his attention, as did local politics. He served as President of the Northeast Historical Society when a discussion in a Society meeting introduced the subject of the derelict schoolhouse on Route 22, a mile and a half north of the center of Millerton. Ralph felt a spark and fanned it into a flame.

"It took us eight years to relocate the Irondale Schoolhouse and restore it to what it is today," he says with a certain pride that bespeaks the sheer tenacity required. "We



purchased the building in 2011 from Judith and Floyd Rosini with the provision that the building was to be moved."

The task of moving a building

The "we" that Fedele refers to is the not-for-profit Friends of the Irondale Schoolhouse, the entity that undertook the painstaking process. Reflecting on the "before" photos of the schoolhouse, it becomes readily apparent that moving the structure was only one step. Where to move it? How to move it? How to get the clearances and approvals needed to complete the project? And ... where was the money coming from?

Those challenging questions fired Ralph Fedele's imagination and those of the volunteers who became "Friends." There were seemingly endless barriers to the project. The center of Millerton, right near the Rail Trail that bisected the town, seemed like a perfect spot for the relocated building. Perfect as the location might have been, it took years of investigation, frustration, re-grouping, writing, re-writing,

Above: The schoolhouse where it sits today, on Main Street and between the head of the Rail Trail and Brick Block Auto Parts. Below, left: The inside of the schoolhouse, much like it was back in its heyday.



Continued on next page ...

and outright arguing to finally secure a permanent spot for the Irondale Schoolhouse.

"It was Mark Molinaro from Red Hook who helped us find the right direction and consulted with us as we produced the proposal that finally found acceptance," recalls Fedele who finds it much easier to smile about the years of struggling now that they are firmly in the past.

"The fundraising efforts were another challenge," he remembers. "With the move, the building was no longer deemed 'historic,' but that didn't make it any less attractive as a useful addition to the community."

The renovation and it's purpose today

As it stands today, in the heart of the town, it proudly hosts visitors, art exhibits, school groups, and passersby on the Rail Trail. The building has undergone a complete restoration, including a new cupola constructed as an exact replica of the original bell tower that was perched atop the original Irondale Schoolhouse. "Kids love to ring the school bell," comments Fedele. "The original bell is in place and still has a fine tone."

Serving as a Visitor's Center

positioned amid restaurants, shops, galleries, and boutiques, the schoolhouse hosts special programs including a rather richly appointed Halloween party for area school children.

Inside the building, a fully illustrated timeline of the origin, transport and restoration of the schoolhouse offers a 21st Century presentation set comfortably in a 19th Century context. Original slate blackboards can still accept the chalk renderings of contemporary students. The painted interior boasts colors that replicate the original finishes, discovered as layers of paint were scraped and the historic hues documented. The paint has been spread on the salvaged and patched plaster that was part of the original construction.

"One of the most important uses of the Schoolhouse is the development of educational programs," offers Fedele who continues his role as President of the Friends of the Irondale Schoolhouse. "We are establishing an Irondale Scholarship Program to support local students. It's a grand way to extend the original mission of the school... and to celebrate the great efforts of the 'Friends' who have made this all possible."



Above, L-R: Gladys Cook Woodnutt in front of the schoolhouse's front door. Ralph Fedele. Above top right, top to bottom: The schoolhouse as it sat north of Millerton on Route 22 before it was moved. The schoolhouse being moved, with its roof removed, taking the turn onto Main Street at the intersection of Route 22 in Millerton, NY.

Art shows at the schoolhouse

Contributions to the community cultural life continue, based in the Schoolhouse building. Art runs deep in Ralph Fedele's roots. His father had been an art teacher in New York City. His great-grandfather had been a sculptor in his native Sicily.

"We host art exhibits by talented professional artists from the region, and we welcome curated art exhibits that feature the works of students who have visited the Schoolhouse and respond to those visits by creating original art," explained Fedele.

Exhibits throughout the late summer and autumn will attract more visitors to the relocated Irondale Schoolhouse where they can not only enjoy the creative work of the artists represented, but take a few moments to re-live the days when school teacher Gladys Cook Woodnutt rang the bell to summon her pupils into the one-room schoolhouse to learn 'the three R's' and prepare themselves for life in

the hamlet of Irondale ... in the Town of Northeast, New York.

Upcoming art exhibits at the Irondale Schoolhouse include a group show of children's art projects over the Columbus Day weekend (October 6-9) and Richard Patrick Coombs' appearance during Millerton's Fall for Art Village-wide festival, taking place October 12-15.

One of the axioms Ralph Fedele has followed throughout his adult life is a simple one: "Leave it better than how you found it." A visit to the Irondale Schoolhouse will provide ample affirmation of that lofty goal. •

The restored Irondale Schoolhouse is located at 16 Main Street, Millerton, NY. More information can be obtained by contacting the Friends of the Irondale Schoolhouse on Facebook.

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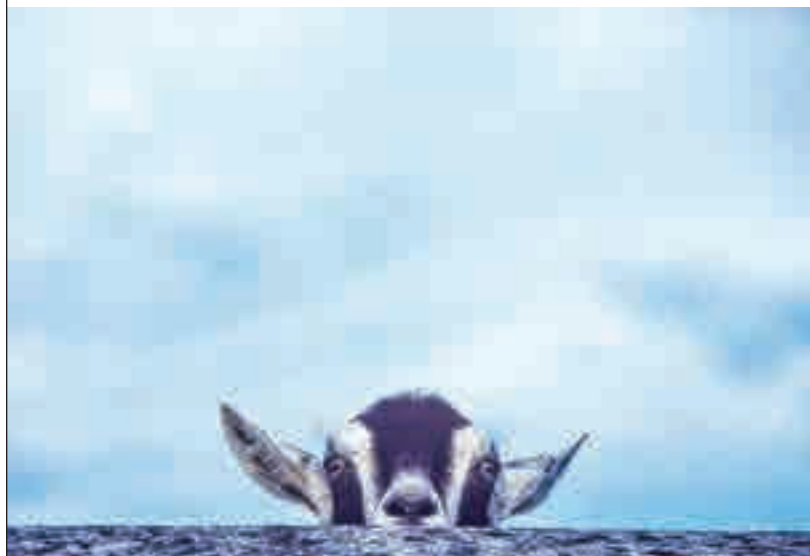


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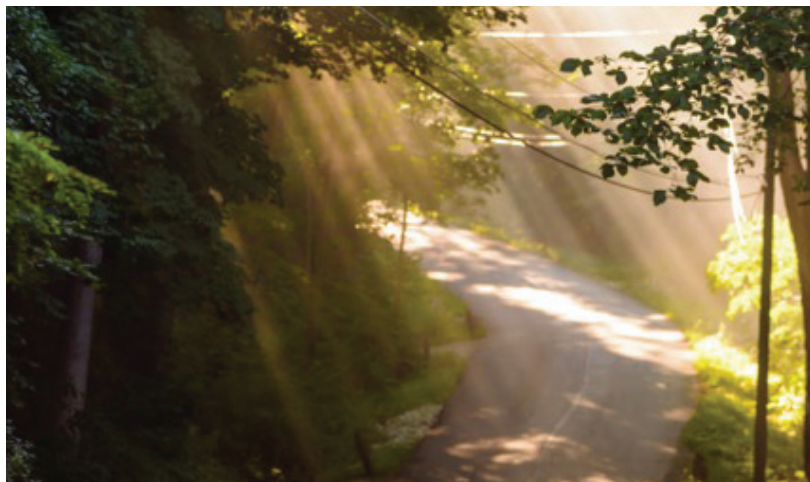
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We all have struggles that can lead to stress. It's natural to push unpleasantness away rather than facing it and finding peace within the storm. Welcome Katherine Crum, Ph.D., into your life. With more than 25 years experience in meditation, yoga, and contemplative prayer, Katie took her first MBSR course in 1994 and is a qualified teacher of the course that Jon Kabat-Zinn created in 1979. She completed the UMass Medical School Center for Mindfulness professional training program. Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction was originally developed to help patients with severe pain and/or chronic illness through meditation and yoga. After decades of research, MBSR has expanded these practices into the daily lives of people dealing with stress of all kinds. Katie explains that it takes at least six weeks to establish a healthy habit, which is why the course lasts eight weeks. In an MBSR class you will learn how to improve your ability to handle stress, developing your awareness of present-moment experience(s) and using simple movement to release muscular tension. You'll become increasingly aware of the interplay of mind and body in health and illness, and learn to face change and difficult times with greater ease. Katie is very much looking forward to having you in her class and teaching you, your loved ones, and your friends.



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Indian Mountain School, founded in 1922, teaches Pre-Kindergarten through 9th grade. As an independent school, their program is designed in alignment with their school's mission. Teachers make use of their expansive 600 acre campus, providing opportunities for outdoor and experiential learning that ties directly into the curriculum. In the classroom, each student is individually known, challenged, and supported within an environment that emphasizes the importance of fun, collaboration, and the role of brain research in education. This is an exciting time to be an educator, "We are learning so much more about the brain and what learning actually is and is not. With this information, we can intentionally design a learning experience for students that is transformational," explained Head of School, Jody Soja. Integrating outdoor and adventure education, athletics, music and art education, service learning, and a robust curriculum will cultivate engaged, motivated, and confident learners. IMS is one of a small number of junior boarding schools nationwide – this allows IMS to accept students from all over the country and the world. This makes their student body very diverse, enriching the learning and living experience for the entire community.



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As they have been saying for years, "Start em' young," especially when it comes to education and socialization. As a parent, you only want to send your child to a clean and safe environment, but early education is a huge bonus. We are fortunate enough to have Little Professors in our local area where they accept children from ages three to five from any local township or school district. Little Professors has been open to the community for over 20 years, and they are open year-round providing both full-time and part-time childcare. Their program focuses on six areas for children to thrive: practical life (children learn to care for themselves and their surroundings), sensorial activities (promotes development of coordination and motor skills), language arts (children develop reading and writing readiness), math (teaches basic addition and subtraction), science (acquaints children with the earth and its many wonders), and play (a key part of the program fostering growth in confidence, imagination, and social skills). Little Professors is open Monday through Friday, 7:30am – 5:30pm and would love the opportunity to care for your child. Please call today to inquire about further details. Once you hang that first masterpiece on your fridge, you will know you made the right decision. Learning has never been more fun for your little one.



Housatonic Camera Club

Share your love of photography with fellow photographers. Salisbury, CT. housatonic_camera_club@yahoo.com

If you enjoy taking pictures of the picturesque local scenery, or of our family, friends, and pets, The Housatonic Camera Club might be the perfect fit for you. The Club is composed of members from communities in the tri-state area who meet to share their love of photography, their experiences, travels, expertise, and to educate one another and the public. Members, beginners, advanced amateurs, and professionals work in print, film, digital, color, and black & white mediums. On the third Tuesday of the month from September through June, the Club meets at Noble Horizons in Salisbury, CT. The Club also offers annual programs that are open to the general public ranging from exhibits and slide shows to field trips and workshops teaching the basics of photography to cutting-edge technology and techniques. As part of the New England Camera Club Council (NECCC) and Photographic Society of America (PSA), members are encouraged to submit photos for competition within the HCC three times a year. Those chosen go on to the next level of competition. If you or someone you know is interested in learning more about the Housatonic Camera Club, please contact Dawn Dingee or Jeff Kreitman (co-presidents).

INSURING YOUR WORLD

As vacation days are seemingly drawing to a close, folks are thinking of traveling north to Canada for that last bit of R&R! When you do go, make sure you notify your auto insurance carrier since you should have a Canadian ID card in your possession when you cross the border. The card doesn't add any expense to your policy, it just gives you legal proof that you are covered while traveling in the Canadian provinces. Canada's auto laws are very similar to New York's, yet the Canadian officials like to know that you have a valid policy of insurance. If you are traveling through Mexico or in Europe, make sure you take the rental care coverage since no New York policy will extend coverage outside of the United States, Canada, or any US possessions such as the US Virgin Islands. Some credit cards offer this type of protection, so it's worth a call to find out if yours provides such coverage. Remember, people don't plan to fail, they fail to plan! Happy motoring.

Kirk Kneller
Phone 518.329.3131
1676 Route 7A, Copake, N.Y.



Brad Peck, Inc.

Effective communication means success of your business or non-profit

Writing well is a key component of your overall strategy. The primary goals of business writing are to educate, convince, and motivate. Increase the likelihood of realizing these goals increase when you:

- **Write like a journalist.** Placing your who, what, when, where at the beginning of your document. People are busy and attention spans are short—don't test them.
- **Move recommendations and required actions to the top.** Prioritize what you want the reader to do or know at the beginning. Follow with your justifications.
- **Be Brief.** Be brutal with your word counts. Brevity is critical. Less words also equate to fewer writing errors.
- **Create space.** Dense text blocks overwhelm the reader. Break up text with subject headings, shorter sentences and paragraphs, tables and charts, and bullet points.
- **Avoid jargon.** Don't sacrifice clarity for SAT words and an overly formal tone. The goal isn't to prove your IQ. It's to educate, convince, and motivate. Use clear, simple language.
- **Ban procrastination and proofread.** For clarity's sake, write it, leave it, then edit and revise it. Errors distract your reader and confuse your message.
- **Practice.** Clear writing requires practice and intention. Perseverance will yield benefits to your career and your organization.



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Top ten public relations tips for the year ahead

The start of the school year is always a time for stepping back and considering plans for the coming year, so I hope these top ten communications tips will help you and your business succeed in the coming months.

1. Communicate authentic, content-rich information that keep your clients in-the-know and coming back for more.
2. Build your relationships with the local press in a regular way.
3. Create relationships with social media multipliers who can get information out quickly.
4. Educate trade press about your latest and greatest achievements and developments.
5. Publish informative newsletters or press releases regularly.
6. Keep your employees informed about what you are sending the press and what the press is writing about your company.
7. Maintain an up-to-date press page or room.
8. Attend and participate in industry conferences and functions.
9. Create a budget for advertorials with local press.
10. Apply for awards in your industry.



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You can teach Rover to roll over!

As a seasoned dog trainer, I am happy to say, "you CAN teach an old dog new tricks!" Older dogs who are healthy and physically capable of handling the task can learn many new things, including: obedience, sport (agility, barn hunt, dock diving – to name a few), therapy, and detection (detecting substances such as explosives, illegal drugs). I have trained several older rescue dogs in the activities listed above. In some cases, I find older dogs easier to train because their focus tends to be better than a younger dog, who may be more easily distracted.

No matter what the age, establishing rules and boundaries is an important part of successful training. Food driven dogs tend to learn quickly at any age and food can be a handy tool during the training process. But some dogs are simply not food-driven. If food simply does not work, ask your trainer for different ideas on how to motivate, such as incorporating a favorite toy into the training process. Training older, destructive dogs takes guidance as well. Seeking professional help for this training process is recommended. Certain breeds, even at an older age, have a tremendous amount of energy. Exercise along with proper training is the key to their success.

Remember not to overlook an older dog because of fear that they are not trainable. Consider the advantage of their maturity, which tends to reveal a more accurate picture of their true personality, as opposed to a puppy, whose personality develops over time. With compassion, time, and dedication to training, successful training is possible at any age!

– Melissa Brady, Certified Dog Trainer, Tails & Trails, LLC

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A close-up photograph of a hand dropping a small, dark seed into a hole in the soil. The background is a soft-focus green, suggesting a garden or field.

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