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## HAPPY HO-HO-HOLIDAYS!

At the time of this writing, it is the third week of November, we've just had what we could consider the very first snow of the season, and I find myself already stressing about the impending holiday season. There's just so much to do, and what seems like not enough time. However, I am mindful of my situation. Being mindful helps me to stop myself and de-stress. I am sure that a few of you are already feeling the holiday stress that is about to descend on us. But I've got to tell you, reading some of our stories in this issue helped to make me mindful of the stress that the holidays can bring into our lives. And reading some of them not only brought that mindfulness to me, but it made me consider what should be the focus of the holidays.

As the saying goes, this is the time of giving, of love, of family. In that spirit, you'll notice that a few of my writers talk about the abundance of "stuff" that we have, and perhaps reconsider gift-giving. In November's issue, Christine featured Stacey Moore of Moore & More Printing, and Stacey's efforts with Adopt-A-Family. In this issue, Joseph writes about two organizations in Connecticut who are helping folks who are homeless, or who could just use a little help. So this holiday season, keep your neighbors in mind. Some of our neighbors and their children could use some help during the holidays. There are many wonderful organizations in our region who do incredible things, and you can make a difference. I implore you to reconsider buying more "stuff" that you really don't need, and take a percentage and give those dollars to folks who could really use them.

And while thinking locally, Ian's story this month had me reconsidering my gift-giving. Think local. Shop local. Support local. Help the environment. There are so many incredible local products that are grown, made, crafted, and produced in our region – and just in our region – and so why not give the gift of a locally-made product? We have honey, beers and spirits, creams and chapsticks, candles, candies, toys, clothes, and so much more.

My take-away from reading the stories that we're sharing with you in this issue is that we live in an incredible area! The people who live, work, and play here are wonderful and interesting. During this time, reflect on what you are thankful for, and let's open our hearts up to all things positive. That may include helping our neighbors, or shopping locally – or something else! Have a happy and healthy holiday season.

– *Thorunn Kristjansdottir & your friends at Main Street Magazine*



DECEMBER 2019

We wish all of our readers a very happy and truly healthy holiday season, as well as a happy and prosperous New Year! Here's to all of you.

Cover photo by  
Olivia Valentine Markonic

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# Barbara Masterson

## People of the harvest



By CB Wismar  
info@mainstreetmag.com

Discovering the story behind Barbara Masterson's transition from a well-respected *plein air* painter to the creator of keen, socially relevant portraits of migrant workers comes into focus when the designation "serendipity" is included in the conversation.

Use whichever definition suits you – happy accident, good luck, excellent timing, or, simply, fate – it was a moment of serendipity when Barbara was painting a rural scene in New York's Hudson Valley when migrant workers came into view. Rather than attempt to "paint around" the workers, she motioned to them to ignore her and pursue the work that brought them into view. Their forms became part of the painting. Then, the forms became individuals, each with a unique story. They were not objects, they became people.

"My work was transformed," suggest Masterson as she contemplates the on-going series of portraits that have dominated her work since the chance encounter in 2015.

A life-long painter, Barbara Masterson pursued fine art and education as her vocation through both undergraduate and graduate degrees at SUNY New Paltz. After 25 years in the classroom, moving from introductory courses to advanced drawing and painting in the Newburgh Free Academy, Barbara entered retirement and embraced the life of being a full-time fine artist. That was 2014. Within a year, her life had changed based on that serendipitous moment in the fields of a local farm.

"These are some of the 'faceless' people that impact our lives," contemplates Masterson as she reflects on the continuing engagement – season after season, year on year – that has developed between artist and subjects.

Since her interest has had no hidden agenda, no devious subplot, the workers have trusted her. Not only are they willing to have their portraits painted, but they have invited her to visit them in the barracks-style housing provided by regional farmers who rely on the migrants' skill and dedicated labor to harvest fields and orchards.

"I'm truly impressed," Masterson affirms, "by the fact that I've never heard the workers complain about their surroundings. This is their life, and they are always smiling."

### Transformation

"I would plan my *plein air* painting trips to be where I knew the workers would be gathering. In the late autumn, when they would leave to find other seasonal work or to go home to Jamaica or Haiti or Mexico, I found myself back in my studio, hard at work."

Being in the studio was a new and interesting experience, since Barbara's focus had been working outdoors, painting landscapes and scenes in the environment itself. But, the winter work in the studio began to yield marvelous results ... the kind of work that enlivens a gallery show and attracts the attention of both critics and collectors.

"My studio work transformed as a result of interacting with the workers. I returned to traditional oil paint and brush from oil sticks. And, I began to paint on a much larger scale."



Above, top to bottom: *Early Tomato Fields*. The artist, Barbara Masterson. Images courtesy of the artist.

It was in the following spring that her dedication was rewarded and the workers who she knew, returned to the Hudson Valley. “They would move to different farms, but the work continued and many of the same workers returned.”

As the crops mature, the workers move easily from farm to farm. As summer blends into autumn, the focus becomes the rich supply of apples that mature across the entire Hudson Valley. “It’s hard work – dawn to dusk,” offers Masterson, “but they are in the orchards seven days a week, bringing the harvest in.” Barbara Masterson is there, as well, documenting the people who are the migrants who travel up and down the East Coast and venture cross-country as the fruits and vegetables ripen.

**Giving back**

It is only logical that once the impact of her encounters with the migrant workers blossomed into a strong body of artistic work that people close to Barbara would be intrigued not only with the paintings, but with the social significance of her work. “One worker asked me if I could help him buy a law book for his son who was studying to be an attorney in Jamaica. I took the name of the book to a friend

of mine who agreed that it was appropriate for a budding law student. It was \$75 for the book. I bought it and took it to the fields where they were working. Grateful for the courtesy, he immediately re-paid the \$75 and gladly forwarded the book to his son.”

Other neighbors and friends recognized the potential to offer modest assistance to the workers and, when spring cleaning revealed a bundle of clothes no longer needed or a garage cleaning episode revealed a bicycle that was no longer needed, they offered them to Barbara to pass along. “One of the men asked if I could help him find two small bicycles for his grandchildren. Neighbors offered up two smaller bikes and, as I watched in awe, he carefully disassembled them, packaged them up, and sent them off to be ridden by grateful grandchildren.”

**Friends on the phone**

Spending time looking deeply into the portraits Masterson has completed, the observer not only gets a sense of the deep strength and perseverance that lives in these individuals, but the personal uniqueness each of them portrays. “These are intriguing people ... individuals ... and I’m honored to call them friends,” affirms Masterson. “During the seasons when they’re not here, working, some of them will call me to simply check in.”

And, her neighbors and friends have come to see the once faceless workers as individuals as well. “A former colleague suffered the loss of her husband,” she reminisces in quiet appreciation. “She took \$900 from his estate and gave it to me to purchase clothes and needed supplies. It was a wonderful experience. I got to ask what the workers



Above, top to bottom, L-R: *Mr. Nixon cherry pickin'*. *Andrew - the chosen. The Vinedresser.* Below, left: *Janell.* Imagery courtesy of the artist.

needed, gathered their exact sizes and was able to purchase clothes for them that were not hand-me-downs, but new.”

Masterson’s works appear in collections throughout the United States as well as Germany, Italy, and Guam and have found wider local audiences in gallery showings in Poughkeepsie, Beacon, Kingston, Woodstock, and North Salem, NY. The titles of the shows keep her work in sharp focus – *People of the Land, Farmworkers, People of the Fields.* Her next solo show, *Beyond the Harvest,* will be comprised of her large scale drawings and run from November 4 to January 6, 2020 at the Boardman Road Branch Library in Poughkeepsie, NY. ●

*The catalog of her work can be experienced at [www.barbaramasterson.com](http://www.barbaramasterson.com) where the viewer is invited to make the acquaintance of Desmond, Oliver, Abraham, Andrew, Mr. Nixon, and Miss Sassy, among many others.*

*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 through the arts form on our “arts” page on our website.*





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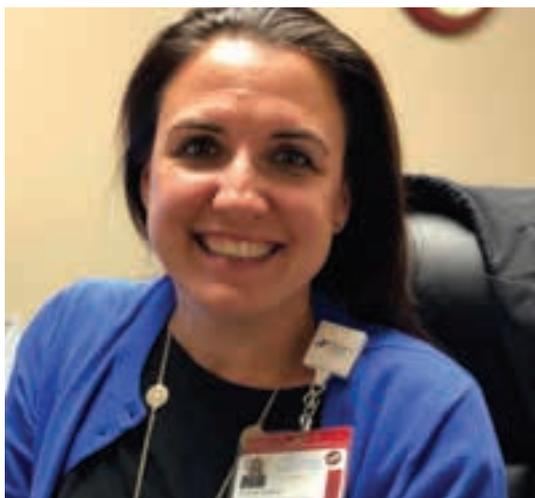
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## friendly faces: meet our neighbors, visitors and friends



**Sean Ball**, assistant meat manager at the IGA Supermarket in Hillsdale, NY, has been cutting meat since the young age of nine years old while spending time at his grandfather's slaughterhouse in Massachusetts. Specializing in Prime Rib, Sean looks forward to a new career even closer to where he grew up and the locals he loves interacting with, "I love cutting different types of meat and serving the people in the town, I'm originally from the Berkshires and moved to New York in 2001, so I love the seasons and the open country." Outside of work Sean embraces his role as a family man, "I love spending time with my family and working on projects around the house – and food, lots of food! And family time."



"I have always felt a need to help people," said **Trisha Rubbo**, a 20-year registered nurse and Sharon Hospital's quality improvement specialist focusing on patient experience. "I love working behind the scenes to help make things better for our patients." She and her husband, Rob, are Watertown, CT, natives, and relocated to Harwinton, CT, with their two children ten years ago. "Our family enjoys the tight-knit community and quiet country scenery," she said. That's also how she feels about Sharon Hospital. "You instantly feel at home, like you are part of the family." Family is very important to Trisha, who spends Christmas Eve with her in-laws following the Italian tradition of feasting on fish and seafood. Christmas Day starts early, with her children opening gifts. Then they have hot chocolate and a light breakfast, while they wait for more family to arrive.



Six months ago, Ruge's Chevrolet in Millbrook, NY, welcomed sales consultant, **Joe Brink**. "It's great meeting so many people and helping them from start to finish to decide on what vehicle best suits their needs." When Joe isn't helping customers with their car needs, he enjoys anything automotive-related, spending time with his fiancée Amber, their dog Arby, and the rest of his family and friends. Raised in Hyde Park, NY, Joe recently made the move to Pleasant Valley. And just like so many of us, Joe too likes the seasonal changes, but says the cold weather is his favorite that comes along with the joys of spending time with family during the holiday season.



Nothing symbolizes the holidays more than letters and postcards from friends, loved ones, and for children everywhere, receiving a response to their wish list from Santa Claus himself. For **Alyssa Tompkins**, Postmaster at the Hillsdale, NY, Post Office, this season will be particularly special. For the last eight years, Alyssa has relished her role as liaison between hopeful area children and the beloved village nestled in the far north. "When I see children's faces light up when they receive response letters from Santa, it's the cutest thing ever." This year, for the first time, Alyssa will feel the joy of experiencing her own child's very first holiday season after giving birth to her son Wyatt last winter. "This holiday season I am looking forward to introducing my son to my family's traditions and enjoying the magic of the season with him and my family."



**Chris Sweet**, in addition to operating Sweet Tree Service, LLC, owns part of Seekonk Christmas Tree Farm. Started by Chris' father in 1978, the farm is a true family business, with Chris' relatives all coming together to contribute to its success. "The holiday season is our favorite part of the year, sharing our trees with all of the people and seeing all of the different families' traditional trips to the farm." Outside of work, Chris loves spending time with family, as well as hunting, which serves as just one of many outdoor activities he enjoys. As scoutmaster of Great Barrington Troop 23, Chris goes camping monthly, while also hiking, canoeing, and backpacking with the group. Having been born and raised in Great Barrington, MA, Chris has always had the chance to appreciate what the local area has to offer. "I love living on the outskirts of town, and enjoying nature and the scenery."



**Meredith Dittmar's** more than 25 years of experience as a graphic designer has made her an especially skilled artisan in the world of presentations. "The best feeling of all is when my work is able to give clients more dignity and confidence in the presentation environment." Her passion for visual transformations has helped her excel in a different, more festival-related field. One of Meredith's annual hobbies is creating Christmas displays for Noble Horizon's Festival of Trees, a task she dedicates most of the holiday season trying to perfect in anticipation of the Auxiliary's popular festival that runs from November 23 through December 7, which culminates in a Gala Party on the grounds at Noble Horizons in Salisbury, CT. "I really love the feeling of the holidays, and when they are behind us, we get to start out with a fresh new year!"

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# 45 years in real estate

David Bain of Bain Real Estate, Kent, CT.

By Christine Bates  
info@mainstreetmag.com

*There are many real estate offices that dot our region. But have you ever thought about what it takes to not just start, but to also run a real estate firm? This month we caught up with David Bain of Bain Real Estate, based out of Kent and Sharon, CT.*

## When did you start your real estate career?

When I was in graduate school in New York City I looked all over the Tri-state area for land in the country. Finally I found a beautiful piece of land in Sharon, CT, and spent my summers building a house and two barns, making pastures, raising sheep, goats and chickens along with six children. It was a little difficult to get to in the '60s and '70s with no interstate, but in those days there was still a passenger train with one car, once a day, that made it to Kent.

After nine years of teaching English in private schools, I decided to switch careers and moved permanently to the northwest corner. I had never thought about real estate as a new career. But my insurance agent, who was a real estate presence in Kent, was persistent and talked me into trying it. My very first sale was selling Cloudwalk, a country estate, to Diane Von Furstenberg. What an incredible lady and incredible property. My commission on that first sale was more than I made teaching for an entire year. It was the beginning of a long career.

## Did your experience as a teacher help you in anyway?

Getting students to like *Moby Dick* needed a good bit of salesmanship and that translated easily to teaching clients about real estate. And as a real estate agent you're in constant contact with people – just like in a classroom.

## When did you start your own firm?

I started with Devoe Real Estate and Insurance and about nine years later set up my own firm. The folks who gave me my start were very supportive and wished me and my company Bain Real Estate well.

When I started there was very little competition. But as the Northwest Corner became more of a destination for New Yorkers, better qualified, professional agents joined the business. Some who started with me went on to start other firms (Paul Dooley, Baxter and Gibson, Pepper Scholl, Ira Goldspeil to mention a few) as I had done myself.

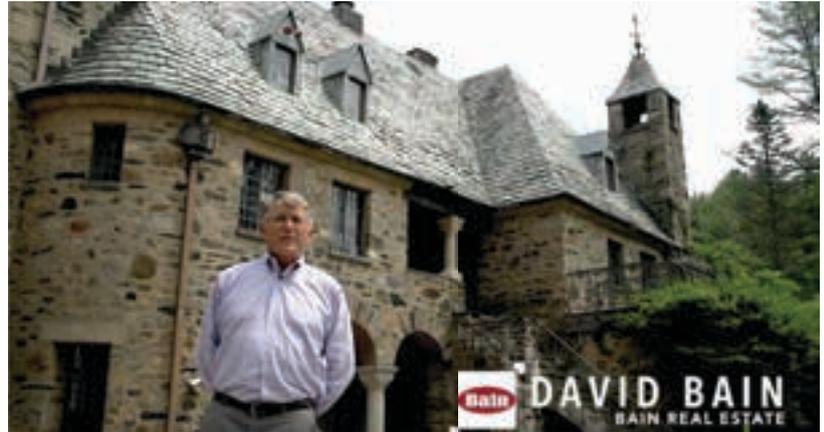
## How has Kent changed in the last 45 years?

Kent has always appealed to second homeowners and the population in the last 100 years hasn't changed much. But the percentage of second homeowners has significantly increased, making it harder for young locals to find a place to settle – a problem we continually try to solve. As a small step in this direction, I established a chapter of Habitat for Humanity and directed the building of six homes in the area.

As a result of this population change, a wonderful, diverse mix of city and town's people, there are more cultural events, more restaurants, and art galleries. There is also a strong urge to protect the open space that keeps the town rural. I had a 30+-year experience helping to run Weantinog Heritage, the Northwest Corner's oldest and largest land trust, and personally helped to preserve over 4,000 acres.

## Many people must approach you about joining your firm as an agent. How do you decide whether they would succeed?

When we are approached by someone wanting to be an agent, my partner, and son-in-law, Chris Garrity and I, both sit down and talk with them.



Above: David Bain standing in front of Cornwall Castle. Photo: Bain Real Estate.

We look to see how comfortable they are communicating with all kinds of people – both weekenders and local clients. We decide whether they would be trainable, to learn the many ins and outs of the business, and, most importantly, whether they could become professionals caring as much for the process as for the rewards. A real estate broker deals not only with a client's major asset, but a whole realm of personal needs a client faces when buying or selling an asset.

## How do you market your firm's services?

Before the internet we spent over a \$100,000 a year on print advertising in the *New York Times*. Now we only advertise in local newspapers and a few magazines and focus our efforts online. We were among the first to have a website, and had early computers, before Apples were developed back in the early 1980s. We use direct mailing, yearly market updates for specific neighborhoods in the three towns where we have offices, and we continue to stress our market knowledge and our service.

## What is the story behind the sale of the Cornwall Castle?

Construction of the stone castle and outbuildings was completed in 1922. The original owners referred to it as a Château, but everyone around here

knows it as The Cornwall Castle. I originally listed it in 2013 at the optimistic price of \$8,850,000. You can see the video I did when the house was put up for sale at <https://vimeo.com/131991592>. At that price, at that time, the castle sat on the market with maybe a dozen lookers who found the price too high. Eventually the owner lost it to Chase Bank. They lowered the listing price to \$1,950,000 and sold it for \$1,600,000 with 275 acres. Chase is now working with a consortium of land trusts to transfer ownership of 700 acres to the State of Connecticut. This acreage will be protected forever and nicely fits with other protected lands. Chase has been very good to work with and shared the goal of protecting these wonderful old woodland acres.

## Is there anything you don't like about being a realtor?

Actually I like everything about it. I love solving problems, walking land, looking and showing homes both large and small, keeping my own schedule, working for myself, and interacting with people. It's a good lifestyle. •

*To learn more about David Bain and Bain Real Estate, you can visit them online at [www.bainrealestate.com](http://www.bainrealestate.com).*

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# Krispy peanut butter chocolate Truffles

By Jessie Sheehan  
info@mainstreetmag.com

I am a huge fan of anything involving peanut butter and chocolate, and if you add Rice Krispies into the mix, well then I am truly just over the moon. These easy-peasy candies, or, as I like to refer to them when I'm feeling fancy, "truffles," are an excellent holiday treat to gift a host or hostess, to bring to a tree-trimming potluck, to have on offer when friends come round, or, to enjoy straight from the freezer whenever the urge hits (which, in my house, is basically always). They come together easily and taste like a marriage between a Reese's Peanut Butter Cup and a Nestlé's Crunch Bar (you're welcome). They also happen to call for ingredients that you already have in your pantry or, at the very least, can get your hands on quite effortlessly.

## To get started...

Peanut Butter (I prefer Skippy) and confectioners' sugar are beaten together in a stand mixer or with a hand mixer. Once smooth a generous glug of vanilla is added, as well as some Kosher salt, as both of these ingredients help make the peanut butter flavor really pop. Rice Krispies (or really any puffed rice cereal of which you are fond) are folded into the mixture. I then use a tiny 1 1/2 tablespoon ice cream scoop to form my candies/truffles, rolling them in my hands to make sure they are completely round. Freezing them briefly while you melt the chocolate makes coating them in it them a tad easier.

I melt the chocolate with a bit of shortening for shine, but you can omit it if you are anti-shortening or just don't have any in the pantry. Rolling the balls in the warm melty chocolate can be a tad tricky, I won't lie, as it is difficult to maneuver them around, while ensuring you've coated every last bit of them, and then transfer them to the prepared pan, without inadvertently scraping off a bit of chocolate in the process. If this happens, just use the tines of a fork to gently spread a bit of chocolate over the exposed part, or, embrace the imperfection that is homemade truffle-making.

For a final, dare I say sophisticated, touch, I like to sprinkle the truffles with flaky sea salt, as it plays so nicely with the (some would say *über*) sweetness of the milk chocolate. And speaking of milk chocolate, I for one adore it and believe it deserves a comeback, which I am single-handedly trying to spearhead. But if you lean more towards the semi-sweet, or even the bittersweet, by all means go for it.

## Help from a friend

And a final word about the origins of this recipe. A lovely woman from Milwaukee, who read about me in her local paper when I was in Wisconsin, on a book tour last fall, has generously sent me countless recipes from her collection, as she and I share a love of old-school sweets and treats. In fact, not only are these "truffles" inspired by a recipe she gave me, but the banana split cake that graced these pages in April was inspired by one of hers as well. I adore twisting and



tweaking old recipes and on the off chance you're in possession of some oldies, but goodies, tucked away in a tin recipe box, or stuck in the junk drawer (no judgment) and are willing to share, I'd love to take a look and perhaps revamp for the pages of this magazine.

## The ingredients and what to do

Yield: about 30 truffles

- 1/2 cup unsalted butter, room temperature
- 2 cups smooth peanut butter, preferably Skippy
- 3 1/2 cups confectioners' sugar
- 1 Tbsp pure vanilla extract
- 1 Tsp kosher salt, preferably Diamond Crystal
- 3 cups Rice Krispies, or other crisped rice cereal
- 3 cups milk chocolate, chopped, or chips
- 3 Tbsp vegetable shortening

Flaky sea salt for sprinkling

Line two cookie sheets with parchment paper.

In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, beat the butter and peanut butter on medium speed until combined. Add the sugar and beat until smooth. Finally, add

the vanilla and salt and beat just to incorporate.

Add the Rice Krispies and mix on low to combine. The mixture will be quite thick. Roll the mixture into 1 1/2-inch balls and place on one of the prepared sheets. Place in the freezer briefly while you make the chocolate coating.

Melt the chocolate and shortening in the microwave on high in 20 second bursts, whisking after each. Dip the balls in the melted chocolate and place on the clean parchment lined pan. You can use two forks to help you cover the balls in chocolate and move them to the prepared pan. Sprinkle with flaky sea salt.

Let them set up in the refrigerator for about 30 minutes. •

*Jessie is a baker and cookbook author; you can learn more about her through her website [jessiesheehanbakes.com](http://jessiesheehanbakes.com).*

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# Northwest Connecticut's Big 3 Real estate trends in Kent, Salisbury & Sharon, CT

By Christine Bates  
info@mainstreetmag.com

For this month's real estate article *Main Street* looks at the last 16 years in Connecticut's Northwest corner spanning from 2003 through the bubble of 2005 to 2008 to the current market. It's been quite a ride in these three Connecticut towns bordering New York in our magazine's circulation area. Readers should note that both the Town of Washington and the Town of Roxbury to the east have higher incomes, higher median prices and sales volumes than these three towns, but have experienced similar trends.

The value of a single family home, largely driven by weekenders in the second home markets of Salisbury, Sharon, and Kent rocketed upward, sank in price and activity, and bounced back. But prices have not returned to their height in 2008, and are now oscillating at more sustainable levels.

**More house for less money**

Median sale prices of single-family homes may be one of the best measures of long-term real estate market trends. The 16-year history beginning in 2003 shown in Chart 1

tracks the median price paid in each of these three towns. The peak for each one was reached in different years: Salisbury in 2005 and 2008 at around \$740,000, and in Sharon and Kent in 2010/11 at lower levels just over \$600,000.

Median prices recorded between these towns have fluctuated, but generally rising and falling together with Salisbury typically recording higher prices. Recently the gap has widened again with Salisbury median prices exceeding \$520,000, Sharon at \$425,000, and Kent below \$375,000. The distinctive carriage house (see photo) listed \$530,000 is an example of a Salisbury median priced home.

All three towns are still posting median prices \$200,000 lower than their peak levels, but over a \$100,000 above their lowest period. To put this activity in perspective, the data resource company, the Warren Group, calculates the current statewide Connecticut median price at \$264,000.

Another real estate gauge is median price paid per square foot shown in Chart 2. On this measure the three towns have recovered from



Above: This renovated carriage house at 27 Millerton Road is an example of a median-priced home in Salisbury. Photo courtesy of Tom Callahan, Elyse Harney Real Estate.

their post bubble lows although again at a different pace and level. Kent's bottom was in 2012 when price per square foot plummeted to close to \$150, Salisbury hit bottom in 2012/13 at over \$180 a square foot, while Sharon's low was in 2016. Currently Salisbury is hovering close to \$250 a square foot with Kent and Sharon bouncing around between \$175 and \$200 a square foot. Like median prices, not surprisingly, none of these towns have come close to reaching their high price points with Sharon feeling the biggest drop off from a peak of \$300 in 2008 to below \$200 recently. Cumulative inflation over the last ten years has been around 18% so homes in these towns, like most real estate, have not realized a positive financial return.

**Total sales dollars in Salisbury reached 2008 levels**

Despite the decline in median prices, Salisbury's total sales in 2017 reached or exceeded the \$50 million

Continued on next page ...





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in annual sales during 2008, but experienced a sharp decline this year to \$30 million. Chart 3 shows the 12-month rolling annual dollar sales volume activity in each of the three towns. With some exceptions, Salisbury has experienced the highest dollar sales volume in most years with Kent and Sharon bouncing around below. The chart illustrates clearly the slow down in sales activity across all markets from 2009 to 2013 and then gradual recovery until the beginning of 2019 when sales activity in all three markets dropped around \$10 million. In the case of Salisbury this was due to the decline in the sale of houses over \$1 million from sales volume over \$30 million a year to a paltry \$10 million in the last 12 months. At this stage it's not clear if this trend will continue downward or once again bounce back when the spring selling season arrives and inventory levels increase.

**Why are homes in Salisbury more expensive?**

All three of these towns are expensive and prestigious with their share of celebrities, hedge fund managers, and investment bankers, but Salisbury consistently commands higher prices and greater sales activity. Numbers tell part of the

story. Overall sales volumes can be explained, in part, by the fact that Salisbury simply has more housing units and more people than Sharon or Kent. See comparison on Chart 4.

Higher median sales prices may be due to several factors. Salisbury has median household income of over \$82,000, 18% higher than Connecticut's median household income of \$70,331, while Kent's is below the statewide median.

Historically low property taxes may also add to Salisbury's appeal and translate to higher prices. The annual property taxes due on a median priced home of \$521,000 in Salisbury are slightly lower than the taxes on a Sharon median priced home of \$425,000 and \$600 less than that on a much less expensive median priced home in Kent of \$374,500. Interestingly Salisbury's Grand List, the town's total value of real property increased 4% from 2008 to 2016, one of the few towns in the entire state to see an increase.

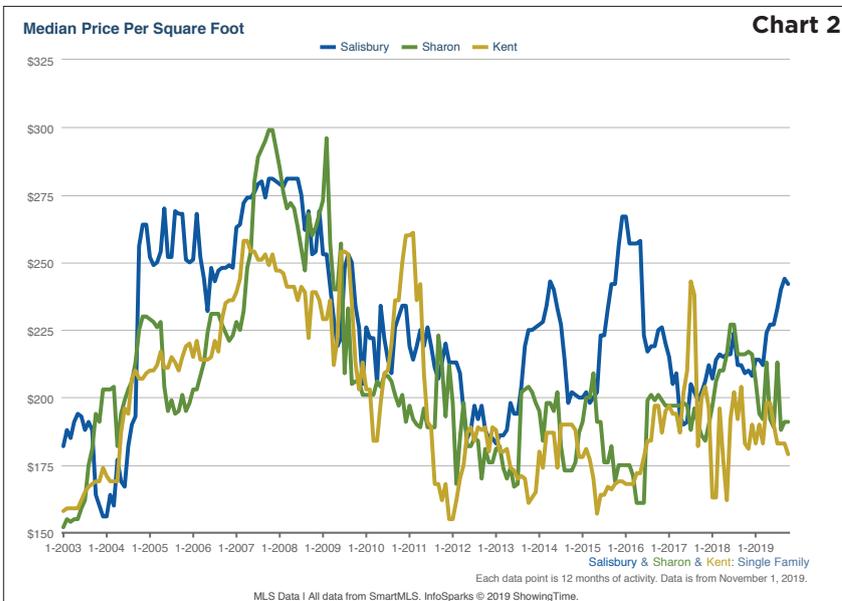
There are other less mathematical explanations. Some attribute recent lower prices in Kent and Sharon to potential pollution from the Cricket Valley power plant located just on the other side of the New York State line. One realtor commented on the touristic quality of Kent and the



motorcycles on weekends. Another said Sharon suffers from lack of commercial vitality and walkability compared to the center of Salisbury with the town hall, the bank, the post office, grocery store, shopping, and restaurants. A third suggested that Salisbury simply had better, well-priced inventory with more turn key homes, which seem to be in high demand. A long-time resident suggested it was the impact of valuable lakeside properties in Twin Lakes and Lakeville, and year-round recreation in Salisbury. Many buyers feel Salisbury is a safer blue chip investment.

Tom Callahan of Elyse Harney Real Estate offered his opinion: "A huge driver of sales at the median price point is the combination of young families who wish to enroll

Above, top to bottom: This quintessential Sharon six bedroom home on the green is listed at \$795,000. Photo courtesy of Klemm Real Estate. Located on the sought-after Treasure Hill with protected views, this Kent home's listing price was recently reduced to \$995,000. Photo courtesy of Pat Best, William Pitt Sotheby's International Realty.



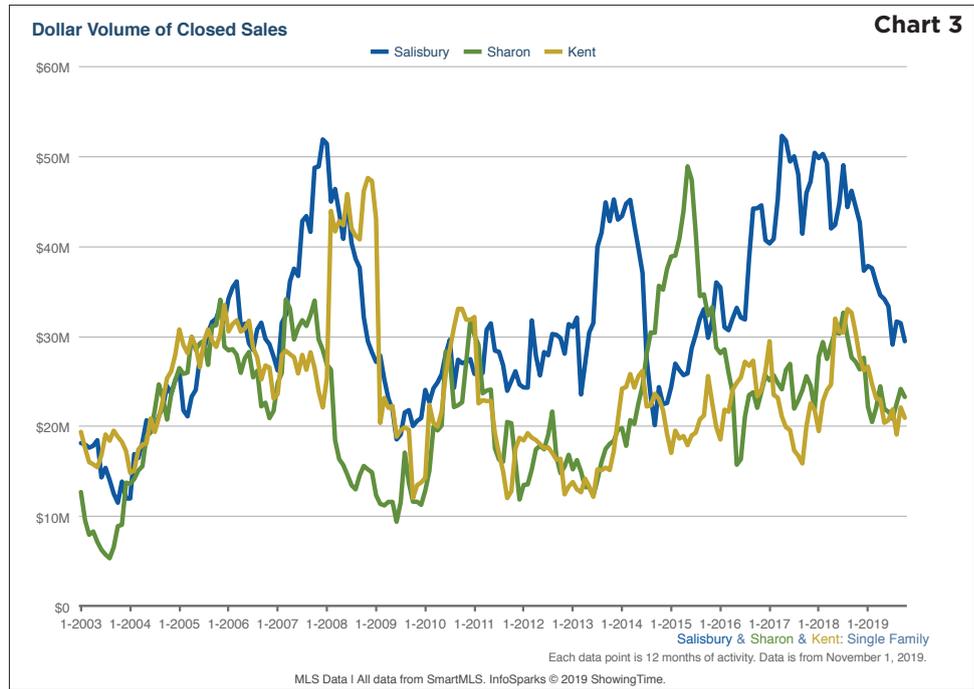
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their children in Salisbury Central School, or one of the three private schools and weekend residents who enjoy the distinctive character and beauty of Salisbury and its six lakes. Salisbury also has several access points to the Appalachian Trail and hiking and walking trails.”

**Is this a lull or a trend?**

There are many reasons for buying a second home – a retreat, more space for overflow from a cramped city apartment, the relatively low purchase price compared to a metropolitan apartment or an expensive suburb, the prospect of a profitable summer rental, and even, eventual appreciation in value. And then there are the downsides – pipes freezing, a long drive, security, two of everything – insurance, taxes, utilities, refrigerators, beds, etc. The basic pros and cons have not changed.

Real estate brokers notice the increased reluctance of buyers to commit, especially at higher price points. Both sales volumes and number of sales are down in the last twelve months. The question is why? Interest rates are low, the stock market continues to chug along, there’s full employment. Offsetting these positives are the fear of another recession with homebuyers still remembering the impact of 2008 on their careers and investments. Couple this hesitation with the high price for primary housing in New York, lack of inventory and turn key properties, and affordability for local buyers. Then add to all this the federal Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017, which lowered the ceiling on mortgage deductibility to \$750,000 and limited state income tax and property tax deductibility to \$10,000. This has had a cooling effect on real estate prices in high-income blue states, especially on second home markets.



**CHART 4: SHARON, SALISBURY, KENT COMPARISON**

	Sharon	Salisbury	Kent
Population <sup>1</sup>	2,782	3,685	2,917
Square miles in town	59.6	60.1	49.6
Median household income 2012-2016 <sup>2</sup>	\$79,639	\$82,794	\$60,714
Mill rate 2019 <sup>3</sup>	14.40	11.60	18.61
Total housing units	1,943	2,439	1,508
Average sale price <sup>4</sup>	\$559,160	\$723,311	\$546,517
Median price as of October 2019 <sup>4</sup>	\$425,000	\$521,000	\$374,750
12 month total \$ sales volume <sup>4</sup>	\$21.6 Million	\$33.3 Million	\$20.6 Million

<sup>1</sup> 2018 Connecticut Housing Data Profiles  
<sup>2</sup> CERC 2018 Town Profiles produced by the CT Data Collaborative generated in January 2019.  
<sup>3</sup> 2019 Mill rates from State of Connecticut Data Portal  
<sup>4</sup> Data from Connecticut MLS October 2019 Rolling 12 Months

**What do all these numbers mean?**

If you have been looking for a house, now could be an excellent time to buy with end of the season discounts to listing price being advertised every week and a general softening of prices. Kent might offer a more affordable alternative to both local and weekend buyers than Sharon or Salisbury. Buyers should also consider that it’s possible to buy an existing house for far below the cost of new construction. Sellers who bought at the peak of the market should look carefully at Chart 1 and adjust their pricing expectations to the reality of today. •

*Christine Bates is a realtor with William Pitt Sotheby’s International Realty in Salisbury, and has written for Main Street Magazine since our first issue in 2013.*

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# Food & shelter

Two agencies in Torrington promote the spirit of the holidays

By Joseph Montebello  
info@mainstreetmag.com

As Thanksgiving fades, thoughts turn to Christmas, carol-singing, gift-giving, and general merriment. But for many it is a season of sadness and despair. Homelessness and hunger are prevalent in so many of our local towns. But Torrington, CT, has two organizations that are helping to bring cheer to those who need it most.

## Prime Time House

Prime Time House, which recently celebrated its 30th anniversary, is a branch of Clubhouse International, a community-based membership organization designed to support people living with mental illness, offering opportunities and services so that individuals can rejoin the worlds of friendship, family, employment, and education.

“People who become part of Prime Time are known as members,” explains Christina Emery, executive director of the group. “We help them with a variety of things, from gaining confidence to life and work skills. A potential member can come in and have the program explained by a counselor. Once accepted a member is part of the family, working in the kitchen,

servicing lunch, answering phones. They basically run the clubhouse along with our staff.”

A food pantry is open to members twice a week and there is a daily lunch program as well as a weekly wellness dinner. Here members help cook the meals and learn about nutrition and meal planning. Additionally, the camaraderie is an opportunity to hone their social skills.

“We have about 35 members who come to the clubhouse daily,” says Emery. “They can stay as long as they choose and for those who have no family this is their only support system.”

Prime Time also has a career services-supported employment program that works with 100 individuals at a time to find suitable jobs and then a case manager is on hand to find suitable housing.

## Funding is crucial

Like so many organizations funding is crucial and challenging. Prime Time has two contracts with the state of Connecticut that fund the clubhouse and a small contract for supportive housing. The rest comes from donors and from their annual



Prime Finds pop-up shop. This year “Prime Finds Home for the Holidays” will open at the site of the former Murphy’s Pharmacy on the green in Litchfield.

“We are so grateful to Mark Murphy and his sister Marla Golden for donating their space to our annual event,” Emery says, “and to the United Methodist Church for providing storage space.”

This year’s event opened on Friday, November 15 with a “Sip and Shop” from 4:00 to 7:00pm, and will run through December 29. Attendees were treated to a grand assortment of home furnishings and art objects generously donated by local residents. In addition to Murphy’s Pharmacy, sponsors include Thomaston Savings Bank, United Methodist Church of Litchfield and Bantam, Torrington Savings Bank, Northwest Community Bank, Litchfield Bancorp, AL-TEK Electronics, Inc., William Pitt Sotheby’s International Realty, Brooks, Todd & McNeil, Northwest Hills Credit

Images on this page courtesy of Prime Time House.



Continued on next page ...



Top image courtesy of Prime Time House. Above and below, images courtesy of FISH.

Union, Turning Point Realty, Clifford A. Cooper Architecture, Marlin Santore Realty, Doyle's Medical Supply, LLC, Eastside Electric, Inc., and Thurston Rowe Funeral Home.

**FISH**

Food banks have become a way of life for many and it is important to recognize that these places need our help. FISH (Friends in Service to Humanity) has held a presence in Torrington since 1972 when it was started by Carol Angevine. Originally its purpose was to supply transportation for those in need. Since then FISH has evolved into the largest emergency homeless shelter in the northwest corner, offering 35 beds, five of which are designated for veterans. It provides families and individuals a safe and secure haven as they await supportive housing. It also serves as a food pantry for many residents in outlying communities. Last year

FISH distributed enough food to provide over 115,000 meals for over 500 families.

Deirdre Houlihan DiCara has been director of FISH for the past six years and has devoted countless hours and days to advance the organization's outreach and spread the word of what is available to those who need assistance.

"Our goal is to end homelessness and hunger by giving those in need the tools, resources, and confidence needed to gain back their independence," explains DiCara. "It takes courage for someone to ask for help and we try to make it easier and to fulfill some of their needs."

With one of the grants DiCara received she purchased a 10x14 ft walk-in freezer. "We are now able to offer frozen turkeys at Thanksgiving along with fresh vegetables. We get tremendous support from local food purveyors. Stop & Shop and the Big Y are amazingly generous and every Friday we go to Arethusa Farm Dairy to pick up milk and cheese."

However, it becomes increasingly challenging to keep up with food demand. DiCara has been meeting with food providers as well as the Connecticut Food Bank to come up with the best delivery system. She envisions a food hub that would allow pickups to be quicker and more efficient.

**Helping children**

Christmas is another occasion when FISH makes sure that people have some way of celebrating. The program is limited to families with chil-

dren who qualify under the income guidelines. It provides a Christmas dinner for the family as well as gifts for the children, including those of high school age.

"We also do a fundraiser at Five Points Gallery and have a Santa Claus who greets children and tries to fulfill their gift wishes. Needy children suffer so much this time of the year and we make sure that every one of them gets a gift of some kind."

**Please do what you can to help**

It is the passion and concern that DiCara and Emery display that makes these organizations operate smoothly. Both understand the need to help those in circumstances beyond their control.

"We try to make things as easy as possible," says DiCara. "We want people to feel hopeful and know that we are there to help them succeed in any way we can."

DiCara and Emery are but two of many who devote their time and skills to helping those less fortunate. It is the time of year for all of us to step forward and do as much as we can. •

*During the season of giving, if you are willing and able, we encourage everyone to help those in need – whether they be one of these organizations, or one of the other many local organizations that help our friends and neighbors in need. And so, for more information visit [www.primetimehouse.org](http://www.primetimehouse.org) or call (860) 618-2479, and [www.fishmwct.org](http://www.fishmwct.org), or call (860) 482-7300.*





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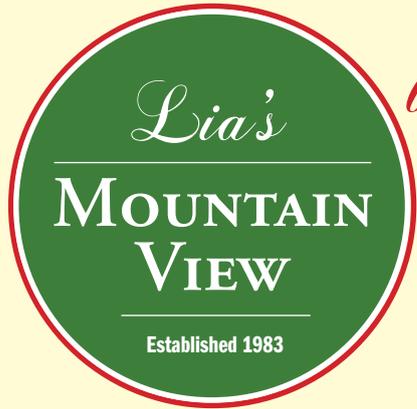
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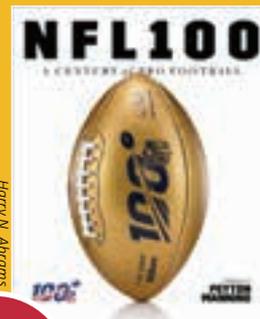
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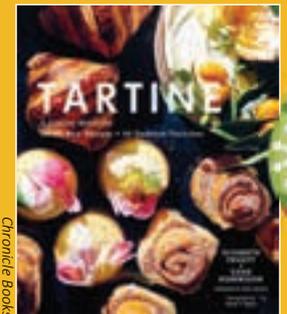
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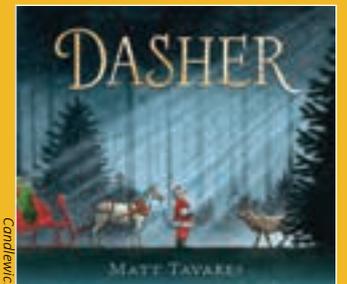
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# I'm dreaming of a green Christmas

By Ian Strever  
info@mainstreetmag.com

Although it is naturally the darkest time of the year, color abounds in the holiday shopping season. Starting with Black Friday (when retailers get out of the red), stores rake in the green with fairy tales of white Christmases in their displays and soundtracks of *Blue Christmas* pumped through their speakers. Sparkly lights and tinsel dazzle shoppers into purchasing the latest technology, which lights up with flashing LEDs and pulsing blue panels.

It's a sensory overload, really. Pine-scented everything, an endless parade of sweets, and snuggly pullovers constitute an assault on our senses and appeal to any possible path to get us to join in on the commercial bacchanalia.

Playing Ebenezer Scrooge among these festivities is not really an option for all but the most curmudgeonly, but whether it is your January credit card bill or a New Year's morning hangover, there is a price to pay for our indulgences. That late December trip to the transfer station often involves lean-

ing into the tailgate to cram in every last bit of cardboard and wrapping paper that we can get out of our house in one trip.

## Shop green. Shop local.

Without forever alienating family members and annoying co-workers, there are ways to make green the defining color of the holidays. Start by doing the things that they won't even notice: whenever possible, buy local and give your favorite UPS worker a break from the relentless deluge of packages from Amazon. Hudson and Millerton in NY, Great Barrington and Lee in MA (to name a few local towns) all offer quaint, walkable downtowns with more than enough stores to satisfy a range of gift-buying needs. It is true that you will not find everything in the world, but their boutiques and independent retailers offer unique gifts that will stand out among mass-produced, mass-purchased online alternatives.

## More is not better

The alternative is going to the biggest marketplace in the world, the internet, where you can find just about anything, only to be overwhelmed by everything. Hours of Cyber Monday searching can spell hours of frustration, and sometimes a

smaller number of options makes it easier to make a decision.

One experiment conducted by psychologists Sheena Iyengar and Mark Lepper compared the effectiveness of displaying 24 varieties of jam in a grocery store to displaying six. They found that while shoppers may have appreciated the greater variety, they were ten times more likely to actually purchase a jar when they only had to select from among the six choices. In other words, fewer options can save you time and frustration, and in local shops, you'll find more unique possibilities and items that are sometimes unavailable online.

But here's the thing: simply purchasing local may or may not be more environmentally-friendly unless you account for the origins of the object you are buying, and that is a complicated calculus. Any item from a foreign country requires the support of a logistics chain to arrive in our area, and that usually means massive container ships, heavy-duty trucks, and air transportation, all of which consume massive amounts of fuel. Still, depending on its port of entry, rail transport may get it here with far less fuel, but then there's the warehouse storage, local transportation, and the energy required to run the store. With Amazon pledging to reduce its carbon footprint by fifty percent by 2030, maybe that will eventually be greener, but right now, it's just hard to determine the environmental impact of a purchase on anything but an item-to-item basis.

Below, left: Terni's store in Millerton, NY, offers a select number of heirloom-quality goods such as Pendleton shirts and blankets that will outlast multiple, inferior products.



Continued on next page ...

### Get your Red Rider

Take the classic 1938 Red Rider carbine-action two-hundred shot range model air rifle. In addition to the frequently-cited risk of shooting out one's eye, buying one in 2019 will increase one's carbon footprint considerably. This all-American gift is manufactured in Rogers, Arkansas, so that helps by cutting out the overseas transport. While rail transport is an option, the time required to move from train to heavy-duty truck would slow distribution, and even WalMart doesn't make extensive use of rail transport in favor of their more flexible (and proprietary) trucking operation. The good news is that you can still get a Red Rider at Terni's in Millerton, NY, along with a small selection of high-quality goods from Pendleton – all while joining the legions of customers who have shopped there since it opened a century ago this year. In the words of one online reviewer, "this place is a museum that is a store."

### Locally-made products

This is all to say that buying local in the purest sense of the phrase is the best way to minimize the carbon footprint of your holiday shopping. To do that, start from the other direction: consider the kinds of objects that could be made within our region with materials from the area. Farm-produced goods such



Above: Hudson's walkable downtown also features a wealth of antiques dealers that stem the flow of objects into our landfills. Photo: City of Hudson. Below, left: Stores like Drift, in Portsmouth, NH, feature upcycled clothes: new creations derived from remnants and re-worked vintage clothing. Photo: Drift.

as maple syrup, honey, and various alcoholic beverages embody that supply chain, although some local operations will supplement their locally-grown ingredients with imports.

Crown Maple Syrup is located in Dover Plains, NY, and sources all of their sap from their 800-acre farm, although some of their more exotic offerings such as Madagascar Vanilla and Sabatino Truffle-infused varietals require some imported ingredients. Kent Falls Brewing and Hillrock Distillery also claim farm-to-table operations, and with some exceptions for certain kinds of hops, peat, and containers, they are pretty much true to their word. Both offer distinctive beverages with minimal environmental impact. Gift baskets that include these kinds of products, supplemented with farm market purchases, make sustainable, high-quality presents.

### Buy used or re-purposed

A straightforward approach to trimming your environmental impact is to cut out all of the transportation concerns by buying used or re-purposed gifts. Hudson, Millerton, and Rhinebeck in NY, and Sheffield in MA, all have thriving antique dealers that include everything from high-end mid-century couches to the vintage baseball cards and talking viewmasters I spotted at the Millerton Antique Center. These kinds of purchases necessitate a

bit more background knowledge about the recipient's tastes and style, but you can be assured that no one else will give them the same present. First edition books, framed butterflies, cast iron cookware, and Mickey Mouse relics from the 1960s might be the perfect gift for a certain someone in your life, saving objects from the landfill and the additional fuel and resources consumed by newly-generated replacements.

### Upcycle/recycle

Then there's the upcycled/recycled market. Although I'd never given much thought to the difference between the two, Drift, a boutique in Portsmouth, NH, called out to my teenage daughter and her friend when we walked by this fall, and I suddenly found myself surrounded by re-purposed and re-fashioned garments that, to quote a song lyric, "borrowed nostalgia from the unremembered eighties," and sewed it together with contemporary flare. I can't say I got it, but two teenage girls know way more about what's in fashion now, so take their word for it.

I'm not naive, though. December 15 will come around, and you'll still be stumped about a gift or two, and the internet is Just. So. Easy.

If you must use it, do your best to purchase from a single retailer at the same time to minimize on shipping and packaging. You'll thank me when it comes to that post-holiday trip to the transfer station.

Lastly, some of us are old enough to forego the ritual of gift-giving altogether, and if your family is of the right mindset and spirit, consider proposing a truly charitable gesture of donating to the favorite charity of an assigned family member or to a mutually-agreeable cause. Everyone will need to give some thought to the charity, and having done this with my family last year, I can attest that we will all remember the gift years later. We pooled our usual gift-buying funds to help a dear friend of the family who had fallen on hard times. It not only made the friend's year, but it was more meaningful and environmentally-friendly than buying gifts that would ultimately end up in the landfill. Try out the suggestion on a family member or two and see if it takes; it will make everyone's holiday shopping a happier, greener experience this year. •

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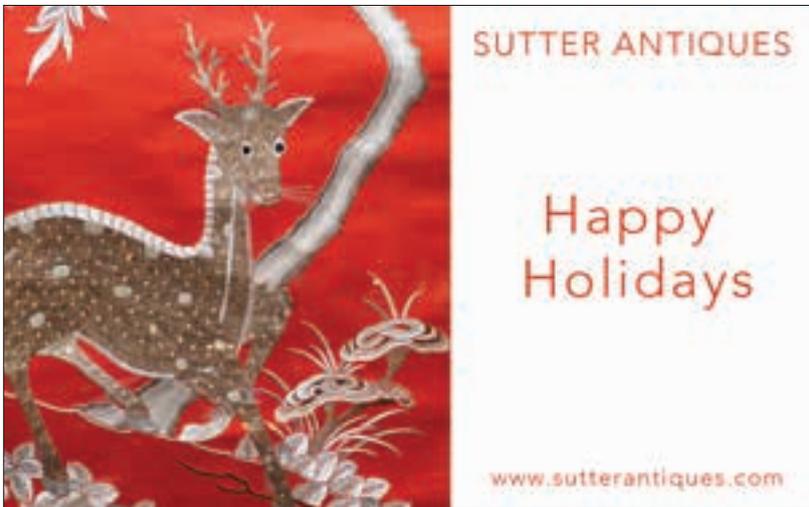


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## Enjoy upcoming events:

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**Nutritional Tips to Survive the Holidays and Beyond** – December 10 at 11:45 am. Delicious lunch followed by a discussion with nutritionist Roufia Payman DT, CDN of Nuvance's Northern Dutchess Hospital. FREE

**High Energy Zumba Classes with PJ** – Beginning on December 10, from 5-6 pm, certified Zumba instructor PJ Birriel will teach a weekly Zumba class in the Community Room. \$15/class or \$10/class for a package of 10.

**Hamish Lutris Presents The U.S. Presidency: Forgive Your Enemies, But Never Forget Their Names** – Monday, December 16, from 10:00-11:30 am. Highlighting the American presidency and the resonating impact of Presidents long after their terms have ended. FREE

**Wanda Houston and Her Band Perform Holiday Favorites and More at Noble Horizons** – December 21 at 2 pm. Reception to follow. FREE

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# a winter candyland:

area sweet shops  
mark the occasion



By Griffin Cooper  
griffin@mainstreetmag.com

As we grudgingly move farther away from youth and toward the prosaic shelf of adulthood, so too does the feeling of the holiday season at times. What was once the happy mirth of familiar songs accompanied by the closeness of family now has the habit of feeling replaced by obstinate seasonal responsibilities. Often though, we gaze back over our collective shoulders, searching fondly for the nostalgic thread that links the innocent wonder of holidays past with our desire to once again be filled with kinship in our present.

What can often yoke these two realities is found in the physical objects that ignite our cathartic memories of seasons gone by. The traditions that remain rooted in our lives, hanging lights, for example, on a tree decorated with items passed down through generations, backdropped by songs whose lyrics recall our adolescent introduction to this unique time of year. Even Mother Nature herself does her part to shepherd our hearts back to wonder as she pulls her wintery blanket over the sky with the first snowfall of the season. Most often however, it's the savory and sanguine treats the season offers that rekindles our holiday spirit.

From butterscotch to fudge, English toffee to peppermint, and holiday staples like candy canes and Christmas

cookies, the Tri-corner area is home to a veritable wonderland of sweet offerings to both dazzle the taste buds, and satiate the urge for a taste of youth.

Here are a few shops that present locals with the opportunity to reintroduce the spirit of the holidays to young and old alike, the stewards of warm memories, and the gatekeepers of triumphant joy.

#### **Robin's Candy Shop - Great Barrington, MA**

The power heartfelt memories have on our present couldn't be more evident than in the story behind Robin's Candy Shop located on Main Street in Great Barrington, MA. Owner Robin Helfand says she grew up hearing stories about the candy shop her grandparents owned in Washington Heights, NY, during the early half of the twentieth century. Robin herself spent much of her youth in the shop and fondly remembers the taste of those sweet treats while gaining firsthand knowledge into the business of candy from suppliers traveling from Manhattan.

In 2004, after moving out of New York City and into the haven of the Hudson Valley, Robin used her decades of marketing mastery to open Millerton Market in Millerton, NY. A bakery and gourmet speciality food shop that baked bread so hot it would

melt the chocolate inside the store, giving Robin an idea inspired not only by her unique intuition, but by a familiar sense of the nostalgic sweets from her childhood. As a result, Robin decided to focus her talents exclusively on chocolate and headed for Great Barrington's Main Street.

Today, Robin's Candy has since expanded from its original offering of handmade chocolate truffles to the "broadest array of sweets, including American classics, imported delicacies, and creative gifts." Customers are encouraged to explore every nook and cranny of this local sweet spot to conjure the kind of warm memories only the smell of sugary delicacies can.

This season, Robin is excited to bring an international flavor to her holiday customers celebrating each occasion, "I am delighted to welcome holiday shoppers with a bounty of Hanukkah and Christmas treats from the world over. Sourcing hand-crafted artisanal sweets to share with guests is my passion – in fact, I'll be bringing back new delicacies from my recent trip to South Africa and Kenya!"

In addition to an array of international treats, Robin's team recently expanded their award-winning licorice

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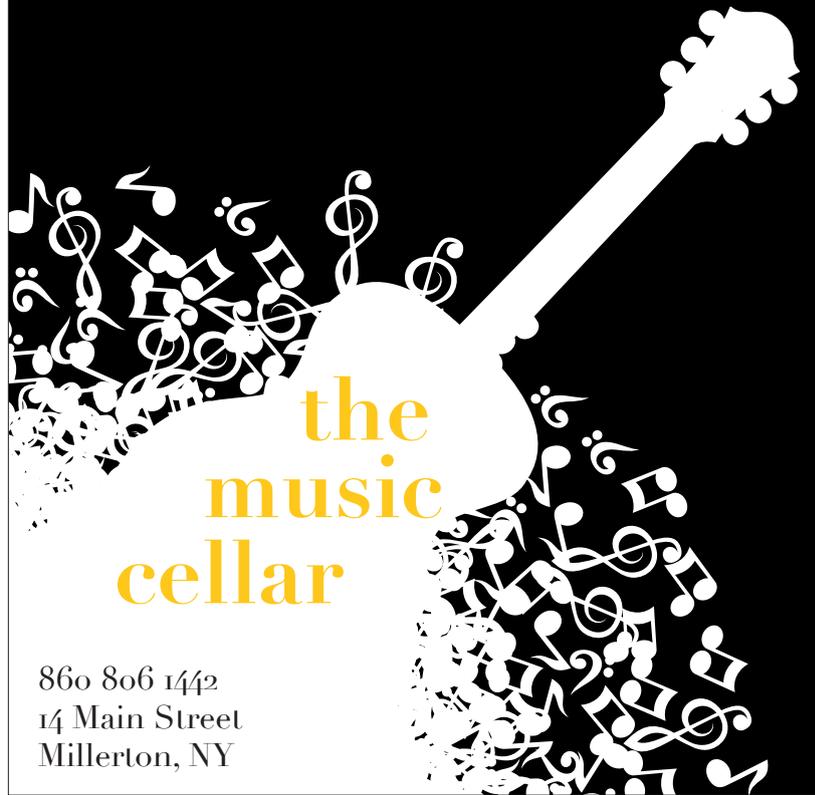
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Not a licorice lover?

Robin's chocolatier is busy hand-dipping holiday *bonbons* including intense dark chocolate gingerbread truffles, as well as her ever-popular pumpkin pie truffles. Despite the variety of new offerings, Robin has no qualms with bringing back a few holiday favorites: "We will again have genuine Israeli Gelt coins, Brooklyn-made sesame Halvah, German Marzipan, and hand-pulled candy canes stuffed with chocolate (really!)"

Robin's Candy is open daily throughout the holiday season – weather permitting. As always, they suggest a call in advance to check hours before planning a visit, (413)528-8477.

### **Oliver Kita Chocolates - Rhinebeck, NY**

There are few things that can touch the heart of our collective holiday sentimentality quite like our sense of smell. A holiday roast in the oven, whose smell permeates throughout the home and lingers around the table where we gather with those we love, the brisk smell of cold air on a December night as the snow settles, softly veiling the warm glow of holiday and porch lights, the unmistakable smell of pine, even those musty stow-away attic ornaments carry their own unique nostalgic tinge.

At Oliver Kita Chocolates, located at 18 West Market Street in Rhinebeck, NY, scent remains the soul of this artisanal chocolate experience.

Chef-owner Oliver Kita, whose philosophy maintains the principles of being, "Aware. Exquisite. Passionate. Joyful. Powerful. And Conscious" has perfected the art of cooking and baking his flavors of chocolate with distinct perfumes. For the last 20 years, the master chocolatier has incorporated unique scents like flow-

ers, herbs, citrus, exotic fruits, berries, nuts, and spices gleaned from years of professional experience spanning two continents. The result is an unforgettable mix of delicious confections using both fair trade and organic chocolate that has helped Oliver Kita Chocolates earn the title of Top Ten Chocolatier by *Dessert Professional Magazine*.

This holiday season, as it does each year, Oliver Kita Chocolates will again roll out its much anticipated Elegant Gold and Onyx Holiday Collection. Sustainability remains at the heart of each holiday confection with collections presented in recycled and recyclable packaging. Inside the alluring and eco-friendly packaging are treats worthy of sharing with generations including the Birchwood Box Holiday Collection, Luxurious Hot Chocolate, Almond Studded Butternut Crunch Toffee, and the instant classic 16-piece Gold and Onyx Tower Gift Box.

### **Vasilow's - Hudson, NY**

"The taste you remember;" for almost a century the titular family name for upstate New York confectionery has embodied the spiritual connection between taste and memory. From their choice of ingredients, and the cut of their famous Cinnamon Squares, to using the very same chocolate that brothers Louie and Jim used in 1923 when they opened their first store in the Hudson Valley. In 1969, much to the chagrin of locals across the area, the original Vasilow Brothers retired and for the next thirty years the community would wait in earnest for the opportunity to revisit and taste the delights of yesteryear. In 1999, the Vasilow name would once again return to the city of Hudson, NY, to recapture its bond with local families longing for communal spirit and a place that will forever link generations of holiday memories.

Louie Vasilow's grandson pur-



Above, left to right: Robin and her oldest daughter, Allie O'Brien. Oliver Kita. Photos courtesy of source.



chased a store just a few short blocks away from his grandfather's original location. Today, with their tradition firmly entrenched in the hearts and minds of children and those nostalgic nomads wanting to transform seasons past into holiday present, the twenty-first century Vasilow's maintains, "times may have changed, but our commitment to produce candy of superlative quality has not. Having had the privilege of observing true masters creating their finest offerings is a secret unto itself, and the endeavor to replicate the treasures crafted by them has been a tremendous undertaking, one which has not been taken lightly."

Vasilow's recipes, many of which come from the founding Vasilow brothers themselves, have happily married the taste of true homemade craftsmanship with some creative and contemporary offerings completely unique to the modern-day iteration of this preeminent family establishment. This holiday season, Vasilow's will continue to churn out holiday classics in a way that remains timeless to those in the know, while introducing local youth to a taste they will forever recall as a definition for what it means to be a child at this time of year.

"Since its inception eighty years

ago, customers have always associated the Vasilow's name with excellence in quality confections. Although our location today is a few blocks away from the shop where Grandpa and Uncle Jim started it all, the commitment to provide our customers with the freshest, finest, and best tasting candy available remains unchanged."

### **Samuel's Sweet Shop - Rhinebeck, NY**

Despite its reputation as perhaps the most recognized candy or sweet shop in the Hudson Valley today, Samuel's Sweet Shop, located on East Market Street in Rhinebeck, NY, happily maintains its classic corner store spirit while thriving on an atmosphere built by its bond with the community. For decades, Samuel's has provided the small town with a sanctuary for classic confections, creative concoctions, and locally-sourced, handmade treasures.

Owner John Traver relishes in his commitment to stay connected to the area where he has spent most of his life. Despite the popularity of his business partners, John is undoubtedly the star of Samuel's, whether behind the counter or enjoying a coffee at a table in front of the shop.

The screen door swings open and the bell attached to its hinge happily chimes as both locals and travellers step onto the hardwood floors and



Continued on next page ...

back in time somewhere in the recesses of their minds, nearly all greeting John by name, and most stopping for a quick, neighborly chat. How appropriate then, that such a visage of the American ideal began with what most consider the quintessential beginning to any American life – a dream.

In 1994, Ira Gutner followed that dream from New York City up the Hudson River Valley to open what was then called Samuel’s of Rhinebeck, a boutique candy and coffee shop. Ira’s intuition to start a candy store stemmed from his growing love of the town of Rhinebeck, and its friendly rural aesthetic, as well as the memory of his late uncle Samuel, who introduced Ira to penny candy as a young boy. The shop itself recently celebrated its 25th anniversary in 2019 and was getting ready to celebrate its 20th anniversary when Ira suddenly passed away in April of 2014. “I worked for Ira six days a week since the age of fifteen,” John says of the man who started it all. “It’s hard to even say how much he meant to me, we were all stunned and heartbroken when he passed.”

John’s preceding diligence working at the shop during summers and holidays on break from Union College, where he majored in economics and English, transformed into an unremitting passion for keeping the beloved community candy shop going. “I managed the store for years while Ira was with us, the day after he passed I had no idea what to do, so I opened the store the next day.”

John’s modest dedication to keeping Samuel’s the centerpiece for the Rhinebeck community eventually paid off when three families, including notable actors Jeffery Dean Morgan of *The Walking Dead* fame and his wife Hilarie Burton, along with actor Paul Rudd and his wife Julie

threw their support behind John and the future of Samuel’s and helped buy the store. John recalls the moment another investor, actor Andy Ostro, explained his reasoning for providing the shop with financial hope, “Andy told me the greatest way that we can honor Ira’s legacy would be to keep this store open and ensure it thrives within this community.” Five years later the shop has been renamed Samuel’s Sweet Shop and has shifted its focus toward a wider offering of candy and other sweets.

In a short time, Samuel’s Sweet Shop has reaffirmed its presence both locally and beyond as the Hudson Valley’s premiere attraction for one-of-a-kind simple and specialty candy, as well as for an atmosphere sure to carve itself into the minds and memories of anyone stopping by this holiday season. “We aspire to be a trophy case for as many local artisans as possible,” John says of the eclectic offerings on display. “We have an exclusive on local caramels, our own chocolate maker who handcrafts our chocolate goodies, even my mom’s chocolate chip cookies are in stock here.”

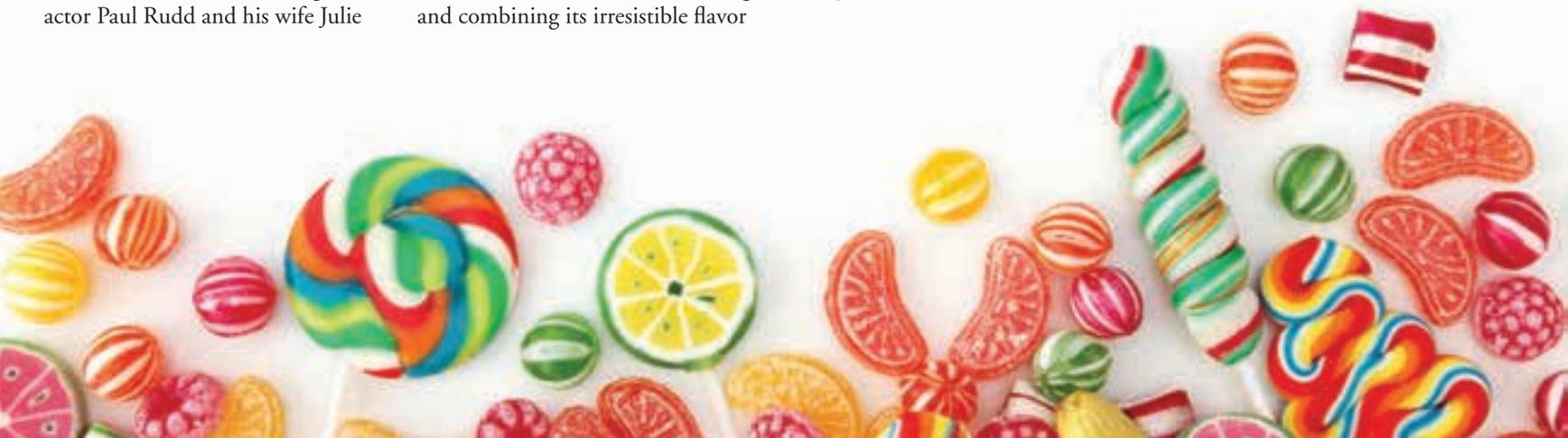
Along with offering the straightforward classics, Samuel’s does not hold back on creativity. One such hard-to-resist innovation is John’s Oreo creation, where two of the famous cookies are “unlocked” and the cream filled halves are sandwiched with a unique item like – get ready – a peanut butter cup! Or the “next level sensation” of a York Peppermint Patty, subsequently dipped in chocolate for an indulgence worth travelling miles to experience. This year, John feels compelled to out-do himself after winning best dessert in Rhinebeck two years in a row. For the 2019 holiday season, Samuel’s is incorporating their shelf-stable edible cookie dough and combining its irresistible flavor



with two unlocked double-stuffed Golden Oreos, dipped in dark chocolate and topped with sea salt, dubbing the alluring creation the “Simply Doughlicious” cookie.

Samuel’s also enjoys being an integral part of the Rhinebeck holiday Sinterklaas Festival by hosting the Teddy Bear Beauty Contest, where children bring in their favorite stuffed friends to be judged by the venerable members of the Samuel’s team. “We strive to give everyone a real authentic and awesome experience by working hard and simple. Learning customers’ names and getting to know families, turning customers into clients and clients into friends not only encapsulates our mission, but represents the heart of the holiday season in the Hudson Valley.” ●

Above, top to bottom: Samuel’s team in front of the store in Rhinebeck. One of Samuel’s partners, Hilarie Burton, depicted at the Teddy Bear Beauty Contest. Photos courtesy of Samuel’s Sweet Shop. Below: image istockphoto.com contributor egal.



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# Ohh, Christmas tree...

By John Torsiello  
info@mainstreetmag.com

There are few things that excite the senses in an appropriate Christmas fashion than the heady fragrance of a freshly-cut tree standing in the house.

Whether it is a white pine, balsam fir, or Norway spruce, a freshly-cut tree brings nature up close and personal during the holiday season. More and more individuals have turned to cutting their own Christmas trees at farms in the region. Not only does it lend an authentic air to the celebration of Christmas, visiting a tree farm and selecting a home's colorful focal point for the season has become a beloved tradition.

## The "farm experience"

"We see a lot of families coming to the farm to select and cut a tree to bring home," said Peter Sweet, who along with his sons, Christopher and Peter, Jr., operate a 21-acre farm in Great Barrington, MA, Sekonk Tree Farm, that boasts around 20,000 trees of various sizes. "Our farm sits in open country and it is just beautiful here. We have a lot of parents, grandparents, and children at the farm during the Christmas season, and there's always a lot of photo-taking." Peter Sweet, Sr. has been selling Christmas trees on a cut-your-own basis for 41 years.

Richard Philipps, owner of Evergreen Farm in Millbrook, NY, said people come during Christmas for "the farm experience." "The kids are always very excited to come and pick out a tree and everyone enjoys being

here. A fresh tree lasts a lot longer than one you buy off a lot." Philipps and his wife, Wendy, operate a 13-acre Christmas tree farm that has some 7,000 trees.

## How the tradition began

Visiting a farm and cutting your own tree (or having workers at the farm cut it for you) to take home and festoon its small branches with lights, ornaments, and garland is basically a throwback to olden days. The master of the house, or someone assigned the task, would trek into the woods, pick out a suitable tree, cut it and then haul it back to the home. A couple hundred years ago Christmas tree lots began to spring up with trees hauled in from places like Canada and Minnesota. According to a story in the *New York Times*, the practice of cultivating evergreens specifically to sell as Christmas trees dates back to 1901 when a 25,000-tree Norway spruce farm was sown near Trenton, NJ. The popularity of freshly cut trees grew and farmers saw the benefit of a new cash crop.

The National Christmas Tree Association (NCTA) is a professional organization in the United States of over 5,100 "Christmas tree professionals" in various capacities. The group focuses its work on promotion and research, Federal representation (which includes Congressional lobbying), and professional education. The association was founded in 1955 and has more than 1,800 members.

The NCTA says Christmas tree farming was once seen only as a viable alternative for low-quality farmland, but that perception has changed within the agriculture industry. For optimum yield and quality, land should be flat or gently rolling and

relatively free of debris and undergrowth.

The NCTA promotes the environmental benefits of live Christmas trees over the competing artificial alternative. The NCTA claims every acre of Christmas trees produces the daily oxygen requirement for 18 people; with 500,000 acres in production in the US alone that amounts to oxygen for nine million people per day. The NCTA also states that the farms help to stabilize the soil, protect water supplies, and provide wildlife habitat. In addition, the industry points to the reduction of carbon dioxide through Christmas tree farming.

## Being a Christmas tree farmer

If you believe that all you have to do to run a Christmas tree farm and rake in some cash is have land to plant the trees and watch them grow, you're wrong. Planting and caring for the trees is labor intensive and no different than any other agricultural undertaking, with the exception that once trees are established for several years they can subsist during periods of drought, as long as their root systems have sunk into the ground.

Bill and Mary Murphy own and operate Murphy Crest Tree Farm in Amenia, NY. "We planted our first trees in 2005 and opened the doors to people for cutting in 2011," explained Bill. He and his wife purchased 13 acres of his family's dairy farm, but they weren't sure what they were going to do with it. "Growing up, I used to help my father plant trees in pasture lots and I really enjoyed the work. I planted some trees that are now 35 or 40 feet tall. We finally thought it would be a great idea to have a Christmas tree farm, so that is what we did with the property. But it is a

lot of hard work that begins during the spring and continues through the selling season."

There is grass to be cut around the trees to keep it from competing for moisture and to prevent insects and mold from infesting the trees. The trees must be sprayed to prevent pests, and fertilized. Perhaps most importantly, every tree must be pruned annually to insure it grows into an attractive, well-rounded tree that will entice customers. Murphy plants around 1,000 new trees each year to make up for those that are sold. It takes around seven or eight years for a Christmas tree to reach selling height (around six or seven feet), and some species of trees grow faster than others.

Murphy Crest Tree Farm is indeed a fun to place to be for the season's opening (usually the day after Thanksgiving) to closing the second or third full week of December. Said Bill, "My wife makes ornaments for sale and we have wreaths and garland. There's hot cocoa and tea. We have a fire pit for people to warm themselves and everyone leaves with a smile."

According to Philipps of Evergreen Farm, customers from New York, including New York City, Massachusetts, Connecticut, and New Jersey visit his farm, which is known for its fine firs and spruces. He also sells wreaths, opens the day after Thanksgiving and wraps things up around December 15.

"It's constant work," Sekonk Farm's Sweet said. "I have been a teacher in the past and I work from a knowledge base. I don't believe in trial and error.

Continued on next page ...



There have been people who have done this before me and they have passed their knowledge down.” In addition to cutting trees for customers, he and his staff shake the trees down to clean them of loose needles, wrap and tie them, and take them to customer’s cars for transport to homes.

Like the words a postman (well, used to) live by, neither rain, nor snow, nor sleet, nor hail keeps customers from searching for the perfect Christmas tree. Said Sweet, “Oh, a big snow storm or ice may put a damper on things for a few hours or a day, but people are quickly back out and they will tramp through the snow to pick out a tree.”

Sweet considers the Fraser fir to be “the Cadillac of Christmas trees,” and he is also fond of the Canaan fir (pronounced kinane), which was first grown in the high valleys of West Virginia. The Canaan fir is very adaptable to fluctuations in moisture and does well in damp areas that other trees may not be able to thrive in. “But we have a lot of different trees,

the concolor fir, the white fir, and white spruce. The blue spruce used to be very popular because of its color, but it is struggling because of a fungus and we don’t see them around much anymore.”

#### More than just trees

Angevine’s Farm in Warren, CT, is celebrating its 151st anniversary this year. The fields and barns are hopping during the growing and harvest seasons, but there is no time more joyous than when the air turns cold and Christmas settles into the minds of young and old alike. The farm has 35 acres of Christmas trees to choose from.

But there is so much more than trees at Angevine’s. The farm’s Christmas Barn Gift Shop is filled with paintings by Claudia Rahm, as well as Goat Boy Soap, Wren House Soy Candles, Brookview Maple Syrup, and hundreds of unique ornaments that make great gifts. If you are real lucky you’ll hear John Angevine play Christmas carols on the farm’s Robert Morton Theater pipe organ.

The farm’s “Wreath Factory” is

open weekends from 10am to 4pm starting November 16 and concluding on December 15. The farm makes its own garland, planters, and wreaths of both mixed greens and boxwood. Visitors can watch how wreaths and garlands are made. There are also fresh mixed greens bunches for sale for decorating around the house and for outdoor planters. You can enjoy refreshments at the farm’s Yellow Farm Dog Café.

“We have been a family farm for over 150 years,” said Kathy Angevine proudly. “We planted our first Christmas trees in the early 1950s, and we have customers that have been coming to us for over 50 years with their families. We don’t just sell trees, we grow memories. We always look forward to the season to see old friends and make new ones.”

#### Watch the water

Mark Burdick, owner of Big Rock Community Farms Market in Stanfordville, NY, got off to a tough start in the Christmas tree business. He planted his first crop in 2005 and lost about 4,000 trees because of a drought. Undeterred, he tried again and now has about 14,000 trees on his property. The trees are cared for by his sister and her husband, Lea and Michael McCauley.

“We have a variety of trees and the most popular always seem to be the Fraser firs and balsams. The Norway spruces grow faster than any other tree, sometimes three feet in a year, and you have to cut them back to get a nice looking tree.” The farm also sells wreaths and bows.

Sweet said one “secret” to maintaining healthy and long-lasting tree at home is to give it plenty of water. “You have to constantly keep a watch on the water. If you have a tree that has a four or five inch diameter it is going to soak up a lot of water. If you don’t keep it watered every day, you will start to lose needles quickly. Buy a tree stand larger than you think you need.”

The type of tree you select depends on what qualities your “perfect” tree must have. Color, needle length, height, shape, fragrance and the ability to hold ornaments are all traits to consider.

#### The top Christmas trees

**White pine:** Its needles are long and soft, it has good needle retention, and gives off a pine fragrance.

**Balsam fir:** The tree has soft, short, flat needles with good retention and a nice fragrance.

**Fraser fir:** A tree similar to balsam fir with better needle retention, although a little less fragrance.

**White fir:** The tree has a blue-green color, the needles are soft and more upright with fair to good retention, but the tree is not as fragrant as the firs.

**Douglas fir:** Although not a true fir it is one of the most popular Christmas trees. The needles are not too sharp with great retentive qualities. The color is deep green to blue-green. Due to demand and difficulty growing this variety in the East, it may be one of the most expensive.

**Colorado spruce:** This tree retains its needles well and has a blue coloring. It may be difficult to decorate because of its sharp needles. It has a slight fragrance.

**Norway spruce:** The tree is popular for its shape and lower price due to its fast growth. Its needles are short and sharp with a rich green color. The tree has a nice fragrance when fresh, but needle retention may be poor.

**White spruce:** The tree gives off a woody fragrance, but similar to the Norway spruce, needle retention is not good.

Christmas tree farms maintain different schedules of operation. It is best to check with the farm’s website, or visit the Christmas tree growers association in various states to find out hours and days of operation and for contact information. Most growers get as much enjoyment out of the season as their customers. “We finally close up on Christmas Eve about four o’clock. There’s always a big debate about who will be the last person to take a tree home,” said Peter Sweet. It is a magical time of the year and no one wants a customer to go home to his or her loved ones and kiddies with anything less than the perfect Christmas tree. •

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# Window on the world

## The Berkshire Museum

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

Feeling hungry for some culture? New knowledge? Diverse perspectives across multiple disciplines? Then head to the Berkshire Museum in Pittsfield, MA, where a veritable smorgasbord awaits. With something to entice even the pickiest culture vulture, there's enough to sate your appetite without feeling stuffed and exhausted.

### From paper to posterity

Since 1903, this cultural institution housed in a solidly attractive building that confidently says, "I'm a museum" has been living the vision of its founder, Zenas Crane. As the third-generation owner of Crane & Company paper manufacturer, he invested in his community through an ideal inspired by visits to notable museums such as the American Museum for Natural Science, the Smithsonian, and the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Instead of choosing one path for his gift to the region, he chose three: natural history, history, and art. He began collecting a diverse array of artifacts that would give visitors a "window on the world." Today, the Museum boasts a collection of over 40,000 items, including an Egyptian mummy, a 143-pound meteorite, and a wide variety of works by notable artists. In 2008, the museum added the Feigenbaum Hall of Innovation, dedicated to thought pioneers, inno-

vators, and inventions stemming from or influencing the Berkshire region.

Although it focuses on three disciplines, the museum actually feels like more – aquarium, eclectic curiosity collection, children's museum, learning classroom, community center, and arthouse cinema.

### CXO role

Chief Experience Officer (CXO) Craig Langlois is responsible for overseeing the museum's efforts to maintain and expand the collection, create exhibitions, and provide diverse and meaningful educational and programming opportunities for the museum's patrons. As he puts it, "My job is to make sure the museum is meeting the needs of the visitors and communities we serve both in and out of the museum. It's the coolest job ever!"

### New visions

Langlois is also responsible for heading up the implementation of the strategic plan for the museum, which includes creative approaches to the stuff we never see, like HVAC and drainage, as well as the stuff we do, such as innovative approaches and themes to displaying the museum's collection.

The strategic plan incorporated comprehensive stakeholder input. At the end of the process, five guiding



themes emerged for categorizing and displaying the museum's collection: We Shape History; Our Living World; We Perceive a Process; We Make and Create; and The Human Fabric.

These targeted areas allow for what Langlois calls a "reimagining of the permanent collection from multidisciplinary to interdisciplinary." He explains, "We're trying to break down silos as they relate to how the museum's collection is exhibited. We're now reexamining our collection to create a more expansive narrative around an item or exhibit theme."

An example of this is the museum's recent exhibit *Objects and Their Stories: Shoes*. Here, the role of geography and climate; fashion and functionality; materials, design, and use; and societal norms are examined and contrasted. This approach weaves a narrative that ties a seemingly mundane object to the larger context of art, history, and science.

The multi-faceted philosophy for displaying the collection plays to the Berkshire Museum's smaller scale. Langlois observes, "Our size allows us to be more nimble than comparable museums with much larger collections. We can respond to current

Above: *Lost Pleiad* looking out over the Festival of Trees. Photo: Berkshire Museum. Below, left: *She Shapes History* exhibit. Photo: Mary O'Neill.



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trends or serendipitous moments. There's potential everywhere for an exhibition theme and we can create smaller exhibitions to highlight a thread that runs through the diversity of our collection. We're also able to bring in high-caliber traveling shows that we can build upon with what we own."

### Trees can be heroes

The holiday season is the perfect time to venture to the Berkshire Museum. The Festival of Trees is a beloved and bedazzling annual tradition. Each year local Berkshire community organizations, businesses, and schools donate and decorate trees in line with a theme carefully chosen by museum staff. This year, the theme is heroes – widely defined as those who inspire us. They depict characters from the Marvel Cinematic Universe who exist in our imaginations, and the local first responders who arrive on the scene just in time at our own homes.

Over 100 trees are on display through early January, with numerous special events throughout December, such as an interactive gallery, Festival of Trees After Dark, and choral and handbell concerts. Visitors can also compete in Festival of Trees Bingo, searching for a particular tree theme or a unique ornament.

### Suffragette city

Through early May, the *She Shapes History* exhibit will celebrate the 100th anniversary of the 19th Amendment granting women's suffrage. This dramatic exhibit features artifacts, stories, and personal narratives of women from the Berkshires and beyond, from the 1800s to the present day. The biographies of local heroes, including Elizabeth Freeman and Susan B. Anthony, mingle with other powerful examples of the hard-fought battle for women's right to vote.

Also traced in the exhibit is the evolution of "women's work" over the past 200 years, from rural homesteaders to officeholders in high-level organizational and political positions.

The items on display and accompanying descriptions weave how technology and innovation helped women achieve independence from the home and gain economic opportunity. The invention of the humble bicycle created freedom on two wheels and is credited with allowing women an acceptable mode of transportation that widened their geographical, intellectual, and political horizons.

The sewing machine and typewriter created a market for skills necessary for work deemed appropriate for women in that not-too-bygone

era. Fashion also evolved to be more user-friendly and comfortable, literally liberating women from the bondage of too-tight corsets, and cumbersome skirts. Early adopter and suffragette Amelia Bloomer helped give the name to the pant-like undergarment that would become the physical and metaphorical



Above: Authentic Wampanoag wigwam. Below, left: *Objects and Their Stories: Shoes*. Photos: Mary O'Neill.

symbol for the right to vote movement of the mid- to late-1800s. It provided freedom of movement for women on the move.

The exhibit also focuses on women's civic participation illuminating how their involvement has shaped society over the past 200 years. It also examines the American voting system, as well as the methods and messages used to sway public opinion in favor of the vote – as well as voices that advocated for the status quo.

### Education beyond the classroom

The Berkshire Museum offers a full array of programming to serve its tiniest patrons, families, schools. On weekends, there's Chow Time in the Aquarium where kids help prepare enticing meals for aquarium residents and Kitchen Ka-Boom for budding scientists who perform safe and zany experiments with ingredients found in any kitchen. The Wee Muse programs include Art Lab, Littlest Learners, and Parent/Child STEM Sessions.

Thanks to underwriting from Greylock Federal Credit Union, the Beauregard Family, and the wider community, classes from all public and private schools visit Berkshire



Continued on next page ...



Above top to bottom: Window on the World: Objects from the Permanent Collection. Photo: Mary O'Neill. Feigenbaum Hall of Innovation. Photo: Ogden Gigli. Below, right: Window on the World: Objects from the Permanent Collection. Photo: Mary O'Neill.

**Museum free of charge.**

Museum educators devise educational programs for school field trips across the museum's collection. Because of the museum's smaller size, Langlois emphasizes that educational programming can be more bespoke than at larger museums. Trained and knowledgeable staff can work with teachers to create field trips that complement classroom learning and take a deep dive into objects and interdisciplinary themes.

**Museum to go**

Langlois is excited about cultivating diversity of voices through what he calls mobile museums. This tradition of a portable pop-up exhibit goes back 80 years in the museum's history, when executive director Laura Bragg created exhibit boxes for community events.

Today, these mini-exhibitions bring Bragg's idea to the IKEA age. The mobile units resemble stackable and versatile cupboards to work within the host institution's space constraints. For Langlois, "These mobile museums are community curated in

that the local community institution, such as a school, works with museum staff to tell a relevant story." He explains, "A challenge and responsibility that museums have is to develop narratives from multiple perspectives. Mobile museums help us do that and allow diverse voices to be heard. They can also respond to current events and curriculum." Soon, there will be three mobile museums piloted with local area schools.

Also in the works is a program for the museum to act as a substitute teacher. Langlois envisions working with teachers to develop curriculum to free educators to create much-needed common planning times and collaborations with colleagues. "We're aware of our need as a museum to help educators use our collection and expertise to enhance their content."

Langlois is also keen to digitize items in the museum's collection along with their stories so they can be accessed online. This emphasis on storytelling is also found in the museum's partnership with the Upper Housatonic Valley National Heritage Area to collaborate on tying oral histories to the museum's artifacts.

**Little Cinema with big stories**

Housed in the museum as part of its offerings is the Little Cinema in a dedicated auditorium with comfortable seating and large-enough screen. It's an arthouse cinema in our region dedicated to bringing first-rate independent and foreign films and documentaries that you'd find in any large city.

**That's not all, folks**

Opening in January and running through May is *The Art of Warner Bros. Animation*. Kim Donoughe, the museum's marketing

and brand manager, outlines that this colorful exhibition will explore the artwork and animation process behind some of the most iconic cartoons of the 20th century.

It will include a collection of sketches, model sheets, paintings, animation cels, and completed cartoon clips. The museum curatorial team will draw out the many stories told by these objects – from ACME science and cartoon physics to the artistic, cultural, and historical elements embedded in the classic cartoons.

**Museum is the community**

Langlois acknowledges that the Berkshire Museum stands today as the vision of one man now embraced by the wider Pittsfield and regional community. He believes it's living its mission of bringing people together to spark creativity and innovation through its collection and programming. And he emphasizes his gratitude for the community that supports the institution, sponsors events, become members, and who show up at museum programs. For the Berkshire Museum, community engagement is what it's all about – collecting people as well as things. •

*For more information about the Berkshire Museum, visit [www.berkshireremuseum.org](http://www.berkshireremuseum.org).*



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# ALL ABOARD!

*Holiday train rides dazzle all-comers*



By Griffin Cooper  
griffin@mainstreetmag.com

Though the mystery of the locomotive's connection to the holiday season lingers even today, its presence in the seasonal traditions of so many around the world remains firmly rooted in the spirit of sentimentality that the holidays evoke each year. Perhaps it began a century ago when toy manufacturer Lionel introduced early twentieth-century families to the very first electric toy trains. The innovative new children's toy would soon give birth to one of America's most time-honored hobbies, constructing model train sets.

For the next one hundred years, toy trains not only became one of the most popular toy requests for children everywhere, but the image of a small, singular locomotive puffing its way silently around the skirt of the Christmas tree, gently pushing aside discarded decorative paper amidst the merriment of the most anticipated morning of the year has fixed itself onto our collective Yuletide murals.

In 1985, the holiday train added another chapter to its festive legacy when author and illustrator Chris Van Allsburg published *The Polar Express*, a children's book about the titular train's annual journey carrying those who still possess the power of belief to the North Pole and the much revered metropolis where Santa Claus himself is said to reside. Whatever the genesis of our

cathartic connection to old-time trains may be, when the calendar turns to December, it continues to live on in the hearts and minds of both young and old across the globe and in our area, the tradition is no different. From the vibrant Hudson Valley to the lush dales of western New England, holiday trains arrive each year inviting families to board their historic cars and rekindle the spirit of hope and happiness ignited by tradition. Here are two places that combine their picturesque rail cars with merry festivities fit for the entire family.

## **Railroad Museum of New England: Northern Lights Limited and Santa Express**

For the last fifty-years, operating out of the historic Connecticut town of Thomaston, the Railroad Museum of New England has been a hub for both education and seasonal fun. With its extensive collection of historic diesel and steam locomotives, passenger and freight cars, and cabooses, the museum offers visitors and families a plethora of explorable bits of American history. Throughout the year the museum also offers scenic train rides befit for each seasonal experience including the Easter Bunny Express in the spring, and the Pumpkin Patch ride in the fall, as well relaxing summer tours and spirit tasting ventures.

The museum's most popular

ride of the year however is hardly in doubt. Beginning on the last weekend of November, the Railroad Museum of New England has split its holiday celebrations into two separate seasonal train rides. On Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays in the month of December and up until Christmas Eve, the museum plays host to both the Santa Express and the ever popular Northern Lights Limited. For approximately an hour and a half on each ride, children are whisked away on what can only be described as a "magical journey" of seasonal sights and sounds.

The Santa Express takes place earlier in the day and promises a trip that will leave as enduring an impact as the trains themselves. Families hop aboard the museum's 1891 Rutland combine car and travel through the New England landscape joined by Santa's elves in hopes of meeting Father Christmas himself. First class passengers also enjoy warm hot chocolate served as carols echo joyously throughout the museum's fully realized holiday model train.

In the evening, the museum runs the beloved Northern Lights Limited, with the added holiday flare that only a cold December night can provide. Passengers delight in a car fully illuminated with holiday

Continued on next page ...



Above: Northern Lights Limited. Photo courtesy of The Railroad Museum of New England. Below, top to bottom: Guests on the Polar Express train. Photos courtesy of Catskill Mountain Railroad.

lights. Bathed in the warmth of the Rutland's decorative interior, the night's odyssey continues, with the moon on the breast of some perhaps new-fallen snow, to the North Pole once again to pick-up two of the most venerated guests of the holiday season. Santa and his better half board the train to visit with children, join in the songs of the season, and hand out gifts to expectant children brimming with wonder and anticipation.

For more information on the Railroad Museum of New England and its schedule of year-long events, visit [rmne.org](http://rmne.org).

**Catskill Mountain Railroad: The Polar Express Train Ride**

What better way to step into the holiday season while enjoying the unique history of the Hudson Valley than riding the very tracks that have connected the people and

communities of upstate New York for nearly a century and a half.

What began with the successful charter of the Rondout and Oswego Railroad in 1866, the very first physical expansion of steamboat tycoon Thomas Cornell's vision to connect the Hudson River to the Great Lakes, became the Ulster and Delaware Railroad in 1875. In

the intervening years up until the start of the twentieth century more railway connections were acquired including lines connecting towns like Hunter and Tannersville, NY. Eventually the eastern terminal of the railroad connected Rondout to Kingston Point creating a direct link for shipping boats from New York City to Albany. The successful interstice into the interior of New York's frontier at the turn of the century opened the passage for not only important textiles, but a wellspring of tourist traffic as well leading to the construction of a number of grand hotels on the cliffs of the Catskill Mountains.

After the Great Depression plagued New York's railroads and tourist destinations, New York Central purchased Ulster and Delaware Railroad and immediately began consolidating the Catskill Mountain lines, finally ending passenger service in the spring of 1946. Nearly forty-years later, at the behest of a community of volunteers, the Catskill Mountain Railroad (CMRR) was chartered in 1983 and began a new tourist passenger service.

Today, CMRR continues to churn forward with community interaction and service presenting themed rides including the Great Train Robbery and the Catskill Mountain Fall Flyer. Each year, the Catskill Mountain Railroad brings the pages of aforementioned author Chris Van Allsburg's children's classic *The Polar Express* to life during the holiday season. With assistance from the sights and sounds of the popular film adaptation, passengers' imaginations become reality while they ride one of CMRR's historic locomotives and read along with Van Allsburg's book. Instead of dreaming of what it might be like to feel the wonder of a magic train arriving at our front door at midnight Christmas Eve, stopping only to pick us up on its mythical journey to the North Pole and Santa's city under the Northern Lights, pas-

sengers get the first-hand experience of their golden tickets being punched by the conductor while being served hot cocoa and freshly baked cookies. Upon arrival at the North Pole, Saint Nicholas and his diminutive helpers climb aboard *The Polar Express* and, just as in the film, passengers each receive a silver sleigh bell, the honorable first gift of Christmas.

For information on ticket availability and seating, visit [catskill-mountainrailroad.com](http://catskill-mountainrailroad.com)

When we recall the morning of December 25 from the recesses of seasons gone by, each of us possess our own unique senses of those sights, sounds, and even smells that somehow fit snugly into the collective landscape of this time of year. If there is any human experience that is near collectively ethereal, ambiguous in a way that enralls us all to enjoy the mystery, lets the reality of our lives slip gently behind the comfortable fabric of the closeness of friends and family, it is the holiday season. The presence of trains in our pantheon of holiday tradition is in many ways a microcosm for the season itself. Though the locomotive may have little to do with the time of year, and even less to do with the orthodoxy of it all, its legacy endures and the season's spirit welcomes the train with open arms as it does with every person regardless of faith or creed. Perhaps that is what truly lies at the heart of why the little toy train chugs merrily beneath our tree, belief.

From Lionel's belief in its innovative electric toy, to the American ideal and the belief that hard work and perseverance can connect us all – the very symbol of the story is the railroad itself. As it is said, seeing is believing, but each holiday season, as families board trains that explore the imagination, sometimes, "the most real things in the world are the things we can't see." •



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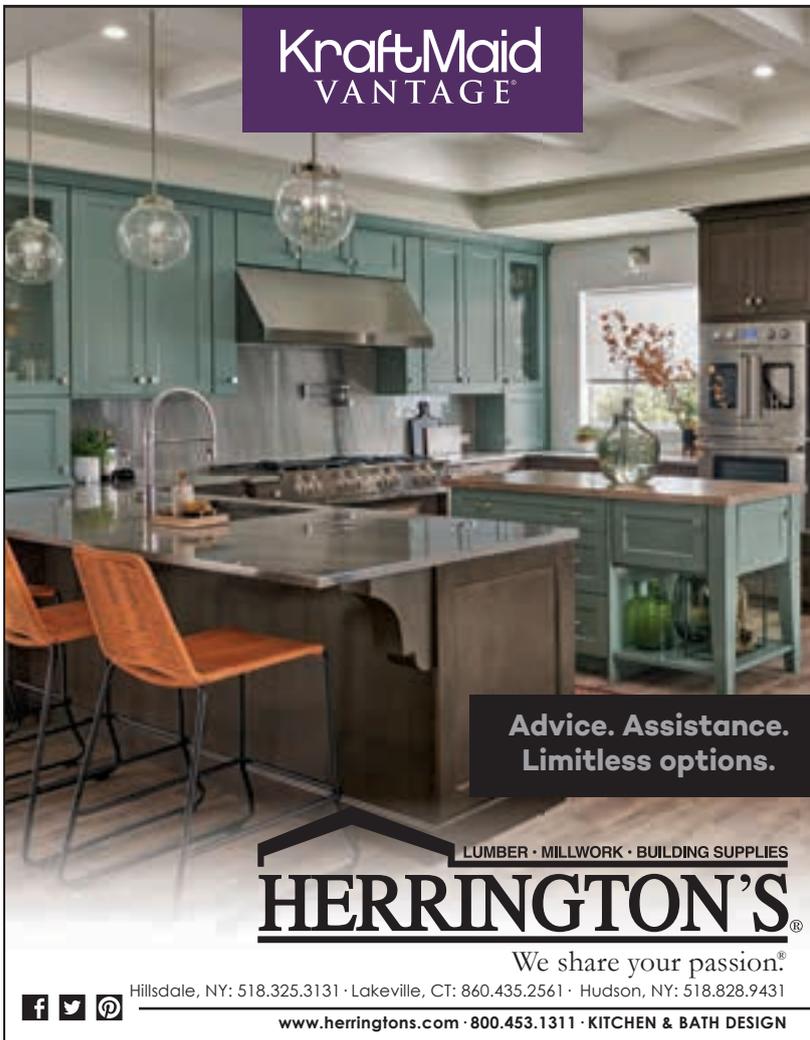
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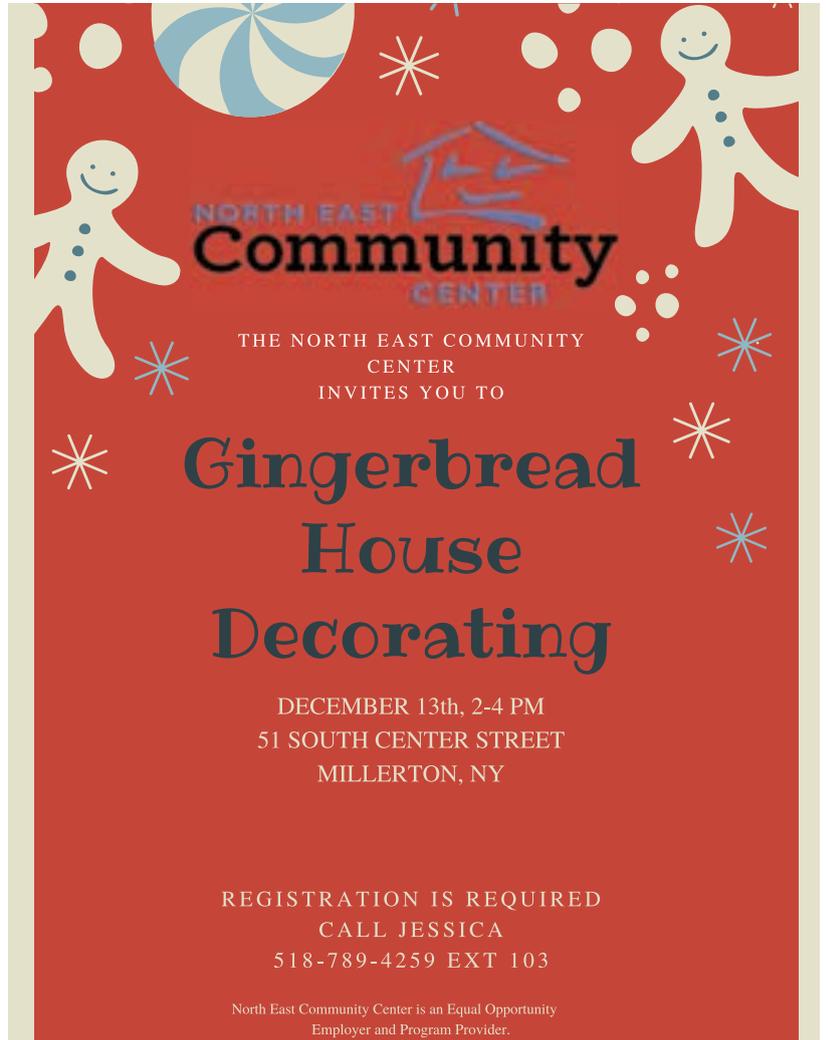


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# 'Tis the season

## Hudson Valley mansions open up their doors for seasonal festivities

By Regina Molaro  
info@mainstreetmag.com

### Christmas at the Clermont State Historic Site

This holiday season, the Clermont State Historic Site is adorned in its holiday garb and open for tours. Beyond the Candlelight Holiday Tours and Christmas Open House, activities include A Child's Christmas and the Harvesting History Family Workshop: Bird Seed Ornament Workshop.

The Candlelight Holiday Tours, which will be held on December 15, will present a *Tableaux Vivant* (French for "living picture") of Christmas traditions through the ages. The ages-old tradition traces back to Victorian times. The actors that portray this special tradition are completely still. The space will be embellished with glittering decorations, and will include *wassail* (mulled cider) and traditional holiday goodies, which will be served in the historic kitchen. Adults \$12/ Friends of Clermont \$10. Children 12 and under \$5, 3pm to 6pm. Reservations are required.

On December 21, the stately home will host a free, festive event that is ideal for families. Guests can explore the sprawling mansion at their leisure while taking in the splendor of the holiday decor. Docents will be on hand to answer any questions. Cider and cookies will be available in the visitor's center. Guests will feel as though they're traveling back in time – the docents and volunteers will be dressed in historic costumes. 11am to 4pm.

### A Child's Christmas

Stop in for story time on December 7 and 8. The engaging stories will be read by Ollie – Janet and Honoria Livingston's nurse. The story session will take place under the twinkling Christmas tree. Yummy treats will be offered to children ages 3 to 10. Admission includes a stocking-foot tour of the picturesque mansion, stories and singing with Ollie, delicious snacks in the historic kitchen, and a few holiday surprises for kids. \$4 per person, 10am to 12 noon.

Get creative! The Harvesting History Family Workshop: Bird Seed Ornament Workshop will be held on December 7. Join Clermont's crew and learn how to make lovely bird seed ornaments. They're ideal for decorating the yard or gifting for a friend. Children must be accompanied by an adult. \$10 per person, children 12 and under free. 1pm at Clermont Cottage, reservations required. To learn more about any of these activities, visit [www.friendsofclermont.org/events](http://www.friendsofclermont.org/events).

### A Gilded Age Christmas at Staatsburgh State Historic Site

Catch the holiday spirit while stepping back in time with a visit to the Staatsburgh State Historic Site. Through December 31, guests can enjoy lavish turn-of-the-century-



style holiday decor while touring the mansion. Staatsburgh State Historic Site was once the elegant country estate of Ogden Mills and his wife Ruth Livingston Mills.

Perched atop a grassy hill overlooking the Hudson River, the home captures the lifestyles of Mills and Livingston, as well as other prominent residents who enjoyed life during the Gilded Age. The Staatsburgh estate reflects the time of the American Renaissance – a period marked by America's rapid economic growth and emergence as a world power.

The elegant mansion, which has been restored to its turn-of-the-century appearance, is open for tours. Through December 31, the Staatsburgh home is open every Thursday through Sunday from 11am to 3pm. The last tour is at 2:30pm. On December 20, evening hours run from 5pm to 8pm. The mansion is closed December 24 and 25, and is open every day from December 26 through 31.

Continued on next page ...

Above: Vanderbilt Mansion decked out for the holidays. Image courtesy of National Parks Service. Below, left: The Christmas tree at Staatsburgh State Historic Site. Image courtesy of Karl Rabe.





Above, L-R: Each year the Staatsburgh mansion is lavishly decorated in turn-of-the-century style, including a unique design for the formal dining room table. Photo courtesy of Karl Rabe. The Wilderstein dining room is also beautifully decorated for the holiday display. Image courtesy of Wilderstein. Below: In the Holiday Whodunit at Staatsburgh State Historic Site, children become detectives, and tour the house interviewing "servants" and "houseguests" to solve a history mystery. Image courtesy of NYS Parks.

Throughout December, there are a host of other activities and craft workshops – from Christmas Cracker Craft Workshops (December 14) to Crafty Christmas Preparation (December 6) in which guests create cards or small gifts.

There's also a mystery Holiday Whodunit (December 1, 8, 15, 22, and 29), Children's Story Hour & Holiday Craft (December 11), and Kids Craft Workshop Make A Mouse House (December 27, 28, 31). For more information visit them on Facebook at [facebook.com/StaatsburghSHS](https://facebook.com/StaatsburghSHS)

#### **Vanderbilt Mansion Holiday Open House**

Through December 31, the Vanderbilt Mansion will impress with its holiday attire. Historically known as Hyde Park, Vanderbilt Mansion

National Historic Site is one of the region's oldest Hudson River estates. For nearly two centuries, it has been home to a lineup of socially prominent New Yorkers. The lavish home represents the domestic ideal of America's elite class in the late nineteenth-century.

Visitors are invited to travel back in time to experience estate life, the social stratification of the period, and the world of the American millionaire during the Gilded Age. Guests can see the original furnishings, manicured landscapes, natural woodlands, and beyond. The centerpiece of the estate is the decadent mansion – a stately American Beaux-Arts design created by architectural firm McKim, Mead & White.

While the Vanderbilts often visited the estate on or near the Christmas holiday, there's no indication that they dressed Hyde Park up for the holidays since the mansion would have been closed during the winter season while they were enjoying life in New York City.

Open daily, tours are offered at 10am, 12pm, 2pm, and 3pm. On Sunday, December 8, there will be a fee-free day with self-guided tours. Holiday music will be played from 2 to 4pm on December 14. Regular admission applies. Please note that the park is closed on December 25 and January 1. For more information visit [nps.gov/vama/index.htm](https://nps.gov/vama/index.htm)

#### **Victorian Holiday House Tours at Wilderstein**

Wilderstein's holiday tradition continues for 2019. For more than 30 years, the estate has invited top-notch designers, floral designers, and artists to come deck out the mansion for holiday time. Each visionary is assigned a room, which showcases their creativity and artistic flair. Every year, there's an interesting mix of styles – some rooms boast traditional décor in keeping with the estate's history and aesthetic while others offer a mod, whimsical approach.

During the festive holiday season, Wilderstein tours are self-guided, but each room will have a docent on hand to share information and answer questions. Complimentary cookies and hot mulled cider are available for visitors who are welcome to explore the grounds outside.

The holiday events will run every Saturday and Sunday from 1 to 4pm through December 29. On December 14, Wilderstein will host its annual Yuletide Tea. Fine tea, finger sandwiches, homemade cakes, and cookies will be served. The festivities include a tour of the mansion. Reservations are necessary, as seating is limited. Admission is \$35. To purchase tickets, call (845) 876-4818 or register online at [events.r20.constantcontact.com/register/eventReg?oeidk=a07egbj9jlu2681dea2&oseq=&c=&ch=](https://events.r20.constantcontact.com/register/eventReg?oeidk=a07egbj9jlu2681dea2&oseq=&c=&ch=), [wilderstein.org](https://wilderstein.org).



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# An ode to winter

By CB Wismar  
info@mainstreetmag.com

Make no mistake. It's in the air. The "white stuff" is coming and, with it, the prospect of all that winter holds for this part of the world.

For many, the appearance of winter is not simply a time to withdraw – or, even more radically – to head south until April. It's a time to sample the rich offerings, both indoors and outdoors, that spice up the season. Skating, skiing, getting the rust off the sled runners so the grandchildren can laugh all the way to the bottom of the north field hill, gathering by a roaring fire with a hot buttered rum, or digging through the attic to pull out the ornaments for the tree. There's a magic to the season that is both bracing and nostalgic.

## Wonders of winter

Two intersecting experiences await the winter-lover in the region this year, and the confluence is to be celebrated. It will be both bracing and nostalgic.

From December 14 this year to February 9 of 2020, The Salisbury Association will celebrate the Salisbury Winter Sports Association (known to locals as "SWSA") and the annual fascination with ski jumping that has enveloped the area since the first local ski jump was constructed in 1927. Eagerly anticipated are the Eastern National Ski Jumping Competition and Jumpfest 2020.

It's an art exhibit ... but not just

any random collection of paintings by well-intended hobbyists. *Wonders of Winter* has been organized by Gerald Stanton, Sarah Morrison, and noted local artist Allen Blagden to include internationally celebrated and collected artists who have been invited to submit pieces that are keyed to the event and the season.

Historic art will be on display – from Arthur Getz, noted cover artist for *The New Yorker*, from Beatrix Sagendorph, the co-founder and cover artist for *Yankee* and from Ellen Emmet Rand, portraitist whose painting of Franklin Delano Roosevelt is in the collection of The National Archives.

Contemporary artists will be well represented as well, with local luminaries like Sandra Boynton and Eric Forstmann joined by Robert Andrew Parker, Warren Prindle, and Susan Rand, among others.

"The wonderful thing is that most of the exhibited paintings will be for sale," offered Sarah Morrison. "A portion of the proceeds will benefit both The Salisbury Association and SWSA." And, with prices starting at "\$350 to the mid-thousands," novice collectors should not be intimidated by the all-star roster of artists.

## Ski jumping - phase 1 - in run

The first part of any successful jump is the accumulation of speed accomplished by sliding toward what might seem oblivion since the end of the jump obstructs a view of the hill, below. But, those first efforts to encourage gravity to help gain speed are critical.

Stanton, whose imagination was prompted by



*The Skier*, a 1927 portrait by Rand, nurtured the notion of an art show to benefit the region and enlisted the support of Morrison and Blagden to identify noted artists who have treated winter, the outdoor life, and the dramatic marvels of ski jumping – to reach out to them with the invitation to be part of the exhibition – then to curate the selection of over 50 works.

Works have been forthcoming from a much wider area than New England and the Northeast. European artists, including UK Artist of the Year Valery Koroshilov and winner of L'Institute de France Prix David Weill, Cecile Fourcade are also represented in images that will hang in The Salisbury Association's Academy Building, Johnnycake Books, NEO Restaurant and Bar, William Pitt/Sotheby's International Realty office, Sweet William's Coffee Shop and Bakery, and The White Hart Inn.

Continued on next page ...



Above: Valery Koroshilov, *Salisbury Ski Jump*. Below, left: Warren Prindle, *Skier on Logging Road*. Images courtesy of artists.

**Ski jumping - phase 2 - take off**

It's the moment of elation, trepidation, of simply letting go to let physics and inherent athletic ability take over. At the end of the jump – there is air. There is hope. There is anticipation. There is a moment that one anticipates that is gone in the blink of an eye.

The Wonders of Winter art exhibition will step off with the “Winter Wonder Walk” scheduled for Saturday, December 14 from 4–7pm. With so many works of art to appreciate and the opportunity to purchase many of them, the preview excursion through Salisbury will be a joyful lift-off to the show ... and to winter.

Since many of the participating locations offer food and beverages for sale, the Walk is expected to be more of a traveling party than a winter hike.

**Ski jumping - phase 3 - flight**

It's the incomparable elation of being able to fly. We have watched the hawks lazily circling in the afternoon sky. We have seen hummingbirds motionless in mid air. Ski jumping offers those unique moments to humans normally tied to earth. These are moments to be savored ... and remembered.

*Wonders of Winter* will be on display from the December 14 “Walk” through the Salisbury Winter Sports Association “Jumpfest 2020” scheduled to end the weekend of February 9. With artwork appearing in several venues throughout Salisbury, it will be possible to appreciate the collective work through the end of the year holidays and throughout the month of January, 2020.

Several of the submitted works of art capture the magical moment of flight. It is quite in keeping with his history of elegant paintings of birds that co-curator Allan Blagden would offer *On Eagle's Wings* as his submission in *Wonders of Winter*. Candidly offering the fact that “I can't look down from the top of the ski jump in July, let alone be on skis and heading into the empty air,” his painting combines a skier well “out over his skis” with great, soaring wings. Art imitates life. Jumpfest celebrates the anachronism of humans flying, and *Wonder of Winter* memorializes those moments in enduring art.

**Ski jumping - phase 4 - soft landing**

The overwhelming sense of accomplishment in a successful ski jump is the moment when the skier, having flown as far as possible, softly lands on the snow-covered hill and glides safely to a stop with a triumphant, snow-spraying turn.

If the past is any prologue to the Eastern National Ski Jumping Competition and Jumpfest 2020 agenda, there will be several activities proximate to the Satre Hill 70m

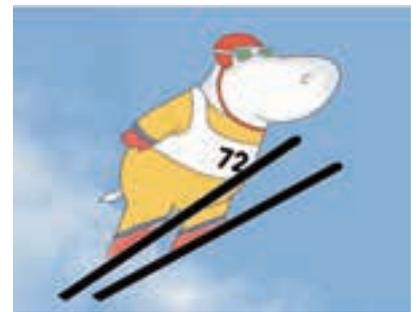


jump, culminating with the ski jumping competition ... a critical qualification event for competitors looking to become US Olympians.

Media coverage is always good, with noted publications *SNOW* and *Skiing History* promising related articles. In addition to the presumed illustrative photos of jumpers in mid-flight, this year's coverage will include images of the art exhibit, tying the community closer to the annual celebration.

The presentation of over 50 works of art that will mirror that winter celebration presented by The Salisbury Association, whose motto is “Serving our Community since 1902,” welcomes locals and visitors, alike, to this celebration of winter. •

*More information and a map of participating locations is available at [www.salisbury-association.org](http://www.salisbury-association.org). Information is available as well on the SWSA website, [www.jumpfest.org](http://www.jumpfest.org).*



Above, top to bottom: Arthur Getz, *Moonlit Ski Hill*. Sandra Boynton, *Ambition*. Left: Robert Andrew Parker, *Ski Camp*. Images courtesy of artists.

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### Millertonmade

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How much can be said on behalf of generations of family craftsmanship and design passed down over the course of more than three centuries? Perhaps it's best left to Catherine Stirling, owner of Millertonmade, one of the newest additions to Millerton, NY's artisan design team housed in the former Saperstein's. To explain her gifts passed down by a skilled passion and a desire to express the truest form of distinction, "My mother's family has been living and making things in Dutchess County for more than 300 years; I love being an advocate for locally-made products by making my product locally." Catherine's practiced desire to marry the natural world with handmade designs has given birth to a plethora of offerings, "Millertonmade is essentially a store that sells things that I sew, design, and make. I hand-sew silk lingerie at the store using antique and modern machines. I also make pants using natural dyes and local leaves, block-printed T-shirts, tea-towels, greeting cards from hand-carved linoleum blocks, and sometimes soap, too!" Though it opened recently in May of this year, Millertonmade has already made a clear impression on locals and visitors alike, "I love interacting with customers and creating in Millerton, and I really love people's reactions to what I do. There is pride and wonder that Millerton has such a bizarre, goofy store. I feel privileged to be the insane force behind that."



### Ward's Nursery

Your complete lawn and garden resource. (413) 528-0166. 600 S Main St., Great Barrington, MA. wardsnursery.com

For over sixty years, Ward's Nursery in Great Barrington, MA, has provided one of the most beloved lawn and garden resource locations in the Tri-state area. Donald J. Ward, Jr. started Ward's Nursery and Garden Center in 1957 with two small greenhouses and a potting shed. Today, Ward's offers over 700 types of trees and shrubs, and more than 1,400 perennial varieties. In addition, you'll find seasonal annuals, house plants, tools, soil, amendments, and accessories year-round. Much to the delight of local families everywhere, each year in November and December, Ward's transforms its greenhouses into a Holiday Decorating Center filled with fresh-cut and life-like greenery, seasonal flowers, and holiday decorations. Ward's Holiday Decorating Center is unique to our area and offers decorating styles from Country Christmas to Urban Sophisticate. Families return annually to choose ornaments, enjoy the lights, feed farm animals, and visit with Santa. Donald Ward Jr.'s sons Greg and Mike, and the entire staff enjoy meeting customers of Ward's Nursery and that means offering a relaxed, professional, and personal customer service while helping to maintain the natural beauty of the Berkshires. To help, they provide advice for success through free classes, demonstrations, tips online, and in regular e-newsletters.



Photo: Cynthia Delconte/Day For Night Productions

### Rhinebeck Department Store

Timeless fashion, yet contemporary and stylish. (845) 876-5500. 1 East Market St., Rhinebeck, NY. rhinebeckstore.com

The Rhinebeck Department Store was founded in January of 1992 and for the last 27 years, their knowledgeable staff has helped residents of Dutchess County, Ulster County, and beyond make the best decisions regarding their purchase. In fact, the staff at Rhinebeck Department Store are so astute in their skills regarding the best clothing purchase when it comes to the customer, they are confident enough to even recommend a neighboring store if they don't have what you are looking for. The steady Rhinebeck, NY, mainstay, which sits on the corner at 1 East Market Street, has become well known for going the extra mile and keeping a close eye on current inventory as well as keeping its staff informed of future shipments. Though its website is informational, staff sometimes take pictures of special items and sends them to customers for consideration. The Rhinebeck Department Store is part of the PTISO shop local initiative and honors veterans with a discount when the cards are presented. After being in business for nearly three decades, the veteran local business knows that in order to stay relevant, it must explore new opportunities and present a cohesive collection of clothing for men, women, and children. The store has evolved since 1992, from an old-fashioned dry goods store to what some now call country chic, but its mission remains maintaining quality merchandise with a more contemporary expression.



### Ann Hunter

Wreaths, swags, boxwood trees, and table arrangements. (518) 672-7398. 901 West End Road, Hillsdale, NY.

What began as a determined hobby born out her love for the floral aesthetic quickly became a not-so-well-kept secret destination for shoppers and crafters alike. Former Taconic Hills educator Ann Hunter began her decorating adventure with the advent of a vegetable garden, but soon realized the garden game was more than leisurely fancy. "After a few years of canning and freezing, I realized I was wasting my time, so I threatened to grow flowers." With that, Ann's foray into the floral world began to bloom. "After I had half my garden in flowers I didn't know what to do with them. This started me in the dried flower business. I made arrangements for quite a few years and sold them at craft fairs. Finally they were going out of vogue so I started growing fresh flowers to sell." After Ann retired from teaching, her family built her a greenhouse where she lives in Hillsdale, NY, and her roadside attraction was born. Ever since, Ann's attractive, down-home stand attracts locals from around the area. It isn't just flowers that draws the discerning eye to Ann's country stand, her business now evolves with the seasons: "Next comes the Christmas business. My friends and I start in November, decorating wreaths, making boxwood trees, and arrangements. I do two shows and sell from my shop across the street from my house."

## INSURING YOUR WORLD

Two interesting insurance issues came to me this past month that I thought worthy of sharing with you. The first relates to those folks renting their homes through an Air B&B service. We recently had a client that had informed my office of his rental intentions and we added the appropriate endorsements to his homeowner's policy. He also rented through a major service that afforded coverage through their rental agreement for damage done to the home being rented. Fortunately coverage was in place when a rental turned into a "rave party" where over 1500 kids trashed his home! The fact that coverage was in place certainly made the situation much better, so call your agent and make sure that you have the necessary insurance in place if you are renting. The second situation involved a client who rents cars on an as-needed basis yet does not actually own a vehicle of their own. In a situation like this, one should still have automobile coverage under what's called a "non-owned auto policy." These are typically a few hundred dollars a year yet give coverage while operating a rented, borrowed or company vehicle. If this applies to you, contact your agent and obtain a policy for peace of mind!



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## TIPS TO ENSURE YOUR CAR IS READY FOR WINTER

It's that time of year again, the leaves are almost down, Thanksgiving has come and gone, Christmas will be here before you know it, and so will winter! Now is the time to start thinking about preparing for the winter months. In the Northeast most people seem to either love or hate the snow, but everyone should be prepared for it. Preparation is the key to a safe and enjoyable winter, especially when it comes to your vehicle. You need to be prepared while on the road, and if you should find yourself off the road! Start by having your vehicle serviced by your local certified service center. In most cases a routine oil change will include a "multi-point inspection." The inspection is a good overview of the vehicle's overall health and is provided at no charge. Coolant levels, battery health, wiper blades, washer fluid, tire condition, tire pressure, belts and hoses all become that much more important in the winter months. It's extremely important to get these items checked out and fixed if necessary. Failure to address recommended service issues can significantly increase your chances of mechanical failure and accidents. Let's remember its winter and its cold; you don't want to get stranded! You are also going to want to be prepared should you find yourself off the road, broken down, etc. It's a good idea to keep an emergency kit, an ice scraper, gloves, a blanket, and whatever else you may need should emergency services not be able to get to you. Spend the time and money to be prepared and have a safe and enjoyable winter driving season!



(845) 876-1057 • 3692 US - 44, MILLBROOK, NY  
WWW.RUGESCHEVROLET.COM

## FARMHOUSE HOLIDAY DECORATING TIPS:

1. Use a simple color scheme. I like to stick with green, off-white, and red. Removing the red after the holiday can move you straight into winter without having to take down all your decorations.
2. Work in antiques or family heirlooms to add your own personal touch. Vintage toy trucks or antique glass ornaments gathered in a bowl look great, but also hold so much meaning. Or how about decorating the entryway with wooden skis, snowshoes, or your parent's childhood sled instead of a wreath?
3. Use a signature touch to tie everything together without making it too matchy. Your common denominator could be a favorite ribbon or farmhouse fabric used in various ways. Red and white ticking fabric or burlap are always my go-to for a cohesive holiday look.
4. Bring the outside in! Using lots of mixed greens will add such a rich and natural touch. Mantels, garlands, bowls: the more places you can add fresh greenery the better! Go into the woods and forage some red willow twigs, berries, and pine cones to add an even more natural feeling to your décor.
5. Never be afraid to DIY something. Handmade gifts and décor are the best! Whether it's a natural wreath or a unique advent calendar, thoughtful handmade items are forever my favorite.



518 567 6737 • 20 MAIN STREET, MILLERTON, NY  
MERWINFARMANDHOME@GMAIL.COM

## Keeping cut greenery lush and luxurious through the holidays

- Buy as fresh as possible:** The fresher your greenery upon receiving it, the longer it will last. Investigate retailers to learn where their fresh-cut greenery comes from, and how long it has been cut before you purchase it. If you can cut your own greenery at a local farm or from your own yard, your results can be even better.
- Soak to save greenery:** Give your fresh greens a thorough soaking to rehydrate the stems and plants before you craft decorative arrangements. Dunk the plants in cool, clean, fresh water and completely immerse them for at least 24 hours to be sure they have absorbed as much water as possible. If complete immersion is not possible, at least give all cut ends a thorough soaking.
- Make misting a must:** Regular misting every 1-2 days will help keep them properly hydrated and if your home is very dry, adding a humidifier near the decorations can also help keep them moist. If your arrangements include ribbons or any faux accents, however, remove those accents before misting to avoid any running colors or other water damage that can spoil the look of your decorations.
- Try anti-transpirant sprays:** Using anti-transpirant or anti-desiccant sprays can help keep your fresh wreaths and other seasonal greenery from losing moisture. These sprays are developed to protect plants in drought-prone areas, and can be used to prolong the freshness and vibrancy of cut greenery as well. Spray the plants well before arranging them, coating the leaves, needles and branches from every angle for the best results.
- Keep them cool:** Cooler air will help keep your fresh evergreen arrangements from drying out as quickly. If possible, avoid putting these decorations in a room with an active fireplace, and avoid positioning them in direct sunlight or near heating vents or other breezes or drafts. Moving the decorations outdoors or into a cooler area at night, such as into an unheated basement or garage, can also help them stay fresh for much longer.

Phone 518-789-4471  
Route 22 Millerton, NY  
www.agwayny.com



# Happy Holidays!

Love, Millerton 



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