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Before



Before



After



Before



After



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AUGUST HAS ARRIVED

We've made it – August has arrived. I have mixed emotions about it though. This feels like the summer that never was. Very few people took their annual summer vacations to the beach or to other summer haunts. There weren't any big outdoor summer concerts. The county fairs were all cancelled. BBQs and summer parties were either postponed, cancelled, or held at a reduced size. Nothing was really the same. On the flip side, we took more staycations, did more outdoorsy things, spent time growing a garden, and spent loads of time with family. Those are all great things, but things were certainly a little bit different this year.

August is usually the month where a lot of people are doing the "last hoorah" thing; going on summer vacations and trying to get the last bit of summer fun into their schedules before school starts. But we will just have to wait and see in the coming days if that remains true this August. And all of us will anxiously await word from our school districts to see what will happen for our children: will or won't they return to school? And if they do, in what way? There are just so many unknowns and things change daily. Isn't it stressful? I'm finding all of this to be extremely stressful and especially so as time goes on. I don't like it!

Part of the stress that we're all feeling is the uncertainty and the fact that we can't control any of these things – not really. So with that being said, perhaps this is the most opportune time to take a close look at our lives and take control of the things that we can in order to reduce our stress and anxiety about the state of our world. What do you think? I suppose the first step is to acknowledge the things that we can control and the things that we can't. The things that we can control, do you like them as they are or are there things that you want to change? Then I think it is also important to take a deep breath when we're faced with a new challenge due to this Covid world that we live in. We will figure things out – somehow we will. Things are perhaps not ideal, but they'll work out in some fashion. At the end of the day, as long as we remain healthy and safe, and we continue to be vigilant and do our part to keep our families, friends, and neighbors healthy and safe, we will all make it through this. My pragmatism about this doesn't mean that I don't have days where I get fed up too, or feel overwhelmed – because I do! But then I take a step back, take a breath, and try to find a solution to the issue that I'm faced with. Where there's a will, there's a way. But above all, let's just stay healthy, and we'll get through this.

– Thorunn Kristjansdottir



AUGUST 2020

We've certainly taken more time to enjoy and appreciate all that Mother Nature has to offer us this year.

Cover photo by
Lazlo Gyorsok

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Elegance... Grace... and Zach

Artist profile: Zach DeBisschop

By CB Wismar
info@mainstreetmag.com

2008 changed a lot of lives. The economy tanked, and people lost their jobs. Businesses closed. The prospects were bleak and those with enterprise and ambition had little time to pivot ... to find their next move.

After finishing prep school at Master's School in West Simsbury, CT, Zachary DeBisschop plied his estimable talents as a three time all-star soccer player to venture into competitive college soccer at Houghton College on an athletic scholarship. His love for the game could not overcome the injuries he endured, so realizing that physical damage when young can lead to years of painful results, he returned to Connecticut, enrolled in a local college and became apprenticed to a cabinetmaker.

And so, Zach found himself firmly settled in the chaos of 2008 ... and made a dramatic, life changing move. Working with a cabinetmaker, immersed in the fine work of cabinetry and the enticing beauty of wood, Zach used the point of inflection – he was out of work – to register at The International Yacht Restoration School of Technology and Trades, “IYRS” for short, and found himself, on very short notice, in Newport, RI. A sailing mecca, Newport was, for a century, home to the America's Cup

and continues to be a major sailing port. For Zach, it was an experience unlike any other he had encountered.

Boat building as a team sport

The experience at IRYS was constructed around the notion of teams, and Zach became immediately immersed in his first year project, working with another student to construct a 12' “Beetle Cat” – a legendary New England design that has been used for decades to teach sailing and racing. “At the end of the term, we'd launch our boats and have a regatta in the Newport Harbor,” Zach recalls with justifiable pride. “There was a real sense of accomplishment.”

After a summer plying his newfound skills at legendary Brookline Boatyard on the coast of Maine, he was back at IRYS for his second year. Zach became part of a larger team that tackled a much more complex project. The year's efforts created a Watch Hill 15' sailboat that was celebrated with its maiden voyage at the end of the term.

Then, it was off to make his way in the world. Zach needed a job, and Skip Crocker of Crocker's Boat Yard in Manchester-by-the-Sea, MA, welcomed him. Noted for its restoration skills, the boat yard became home for

Zach DeBisschop for six years. “We had some incredible restorations,” he recalls. “One Riva 27 restoration on a boat that sailed Lake Winnepesaukee was nine intense months.” The experience was remarkable.

New York calling

It is worthwhile to note that Zach DeBisschop grew up around woodworkers. His father and his grandfather maintained woodworking studios while they pursued other careers. If a deep affection for working with wood can be “in the blood,” then Zach certainly has that running through his veins. From working on the restoration of classic wooden boats to creating elegant pieces of wooden furniture was not a leap, and when Anchor & Canvass on the waterfront in Brooklyn, NY, made Zach an offer, he ventured from the New England coastline to the heart of the design and build world – New York.

“I realized that my passion was the design and building of custom furniture,” Zach allows as he reflects on two years at Anchor & Canvas and the eventual decision to move out on his own. Grace Woodworking, named after his grandmother, has given direction and purpose to Zach's talent. “I love working with clients – interior



designers or the final customers – to dig deep into what they are dreaming and to make those dreams real.”

With clients from Boston to New York, Montreal to Philadelphia and many stops in between, Zach has carefully nurtured a reputation as a perfectionist – a design and build specialist who exhibits painstaking patience in creating artworks that are also furniture.

“I’ve been able to find the specialists needed to make concepts into reality,” he reflects. His specialty is the elegant designing and fashioning of the wood that becomes chairs, rockers, tables, and accent pieces. Fabricating the metal fittings, the upholstering, the finishing work in a tightly controlled spraying environment are all elements included in his pieces. “Fuming wood has become quite attractive, yielding either a dark brown or grey finish. There’s a specialist in Massachusetts who has the ammonia gas chamber needed. Finding the right people with the right skills has been an important part of building the business.”

Welcome to Litchfield

And, the business has been building. Custom design and build requests keep coming in to Grace Woodworking, but there is more. “I’ve had ideas ... designs ... in mind for some time. It’s time to build some of those pieces and offer them for the public to see.” As a result, Grace Woodworking has

opened (as of August 1, 2020) a gallery/retail environment on Bantam Road in Litchfield.

“I’ve been driving down Bantam Road for years, on my way to Gaylordsville (CT) to buy my wood at Conway Hardwood. When I saw the ‘for rent’ sign at 503 Bantam Road, it all seemed to make sense.” Art and design have come together with the presentation of Zach DeBisschop’s furniture. Along with his wife, a first grade teacher in Winsted, CT, the gallery has come together with appeal to a very specific and welcoming audience.

“I build heirloom furniture pieces,” offers Zach. “We’re fortunate that our clients have an artistic mind and the clarity to know what works ... what meets their expectations.”

Creating fine pieces in the tradition of his influences – Maloof, Eames, Aalto – Zach has often wrestled with the age-old challenge of whether there is really an original idea ... an original thought. One look at the flowing pieces he creates, the answer becomes clear to the casual observer. Certainly, a chair is a chair ... a table is a table. But, in the hands of an imaginative and skilled artist, those pieces take on a uniqueness that reflects very original thinking.

It may be difficult to draw a cognitive line between celebrated skills on the soccer pitch and creating elegant furniture, but there are some talents that transcend the obvious. Being a

center mid fielder in soccer is a very demanding position. Stamina and skills have to be united to yield a player who truly makes a difference. Wrestling with the enormous pieces of wood that become realized as a large table or exerting the strength to bring individual components together to form a stylish chair require real stamina.



Being able to “see” the entire field, to anticipate where the play will move and to both take command of the game and instinctively know what your teammates are likely to do is all part of the complex world of the mid fielder. Understanding your client’s expectations and vision while being able to convert those impulses through the lens of your own creativity is what being a skilled furniture maker is all about.

The days of running full tilt for 90 minutes may be behind Zach DeBisschop, but the days and nights of working flat out as Grace Woodworking transitions into the competitive world of attracting knowledgeable customers while still satisfying demanding clients is very much alive.

Grace Woodworking is located at 503 Bantam Road (Route 202) in Litchfield, CT and at gracewoodworkingllc.com.

Are you an artist and interested in being featured in Main Street Magazine? Send a brief bio, artist’s statement, and a link to your work through the arts form on our “arts” page on our website.



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friendly faces: meet our neighbors, visitors and friends



As one of the Associate Directors of a summer sleepaway camp in Copake, NY, one of **Alex Almond's** many responsibilities includes the recruitment of counselors and staff from all over the world. "I also play a large part in staff training," says Alex. "I love to see our counselors develop their skills and evolve over their years at camp. Working for a small family business, I also get the opportunity to have a diverse daily workload meaning every day is its own wonderful journey." Alex is originally from Cheshire, England, and says he has lived in big cities all over the world but relishes the small town life. He says, "There are so many hidden gems, hiking trails, and waterfalls and my two border collies love to sail and spend time in the lake!"



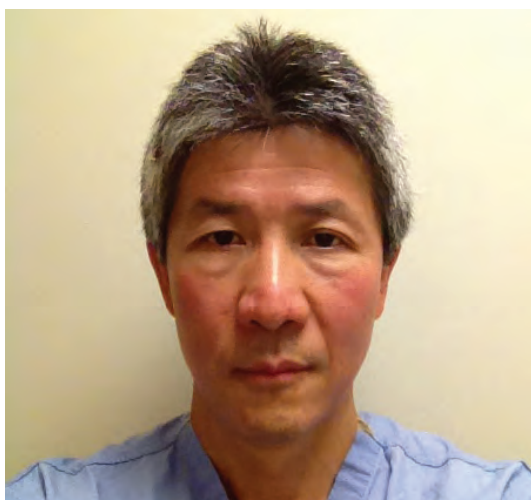
Since June of last year, Falls Village, CT, resident **Grace Cohn** has been gaining valuable experience in the world of interior design by making herself an integral part of Merwin Farm & Home in Millerton, NY. "My favorite part of the job is being able to learn and experience interior design while working for owner Charlotte Sheridan, a person who gives me the opportunity to be creative and explore my personal talents," says Grace. Outside of work, Grace says she likes to hike, swim, and do DIY home renovations. "If the weather is nice enough, I enjoy boating on the Twin Lakes in Salisbury, CT," says Grace. "I also enjoy working on my family's 'Shea Cohn Stones' Instagram page to honor my brother Shea."



Emily Armstrong is a caseworker for Representative Jahana Hayes, who represents Connecticut's 5th District in Congress. In her work, Emily connects with constituents to assist them in resolving issues they have with federal agencies. "I feel very comfortable working with people one-on-one, learning about their lives, and in the case of my current position, trying to be a positive part of what might be a challenging experience they are having." When Emily isn't busy helping constituents, she enjoys cooking, baking, hiking, reading, studying Italian, and spending time with her children. Having grown up in St. Louis, MO, Emily also appreciates living in Connecticut's scenic Northwest Corner, and she is sure to get involved in both the local and global community. "There is a lot going on in the world, and a lot of people who need help, and a lot of ways to engage – locally and beyond!"



After spending the last decade as the caretaker for Camp Sloane YMCA in Lakeville, CT, **Dave Wright** says what he enjoys most is building and maintaining those aspects of summer camp that bring children their fondest memories. He says he has a natural inclination for working with his hands and enjoys both woodworking and metalworking in his spare time. Dave has lived in the Northwest corner of Connecticut for nearly all his life and has developed an enduring bond with the landscape of Litchfield County where he enjoys hiking the trails tucked within the southern Taconic Mountain range, particularly Bear Mountain in Salisbury. "I enjoy being part of such a tight-knit community while still enjoying the wide variety of events and activities this area offers everyone who lives here," says Dave.



Dr. Stephen Yu is a board certified urologist and has served patients of the northwest corner for 27 years. He treats a wide range of conditions affecting the urinary tract in men and women, including incontinence, kidney stones, and prostate cancer. He also performs procedures for vasectomies and bladder cancer, among others. In his spare time, you can find the New Milford, CT, resident exercising or checking off his travel bucket list. "I want to see every continent," he said. He has a black belt in taekwondo and is also an avid Disney fan, traveling to the Florida theme park each year. He earned his medical degree from Rutgers University New Jersey Medical School in Newark. His general surgery and urology residencies were completed at New York University Langone Medical Center in Manhattan.



After waitressing at The White Hart in Salisbury, CT, for 13 years, **Danielle Bailey** began a new phase of her life in a career she undoubtedly has a natural gift for. In 2004, Danielle was hired to work in the dietary department at Noble Horizons in Salisbury. She would soon move onto Pastoral Care in 2011 and later to Wagner Terrace, and a full-time position working directly with Noble's residents. She says, "Noble has always been thought of as the holy grail of nursing facilities in the community. Not much has changed, we are still the best of the best and do everything possible to make residents and families feel comfortable." Danielle was born, raised and still lives in Millerton, NY, with her loving husband Albert of 14 years and their two beautiful children, Albert (10) and Emma (11).



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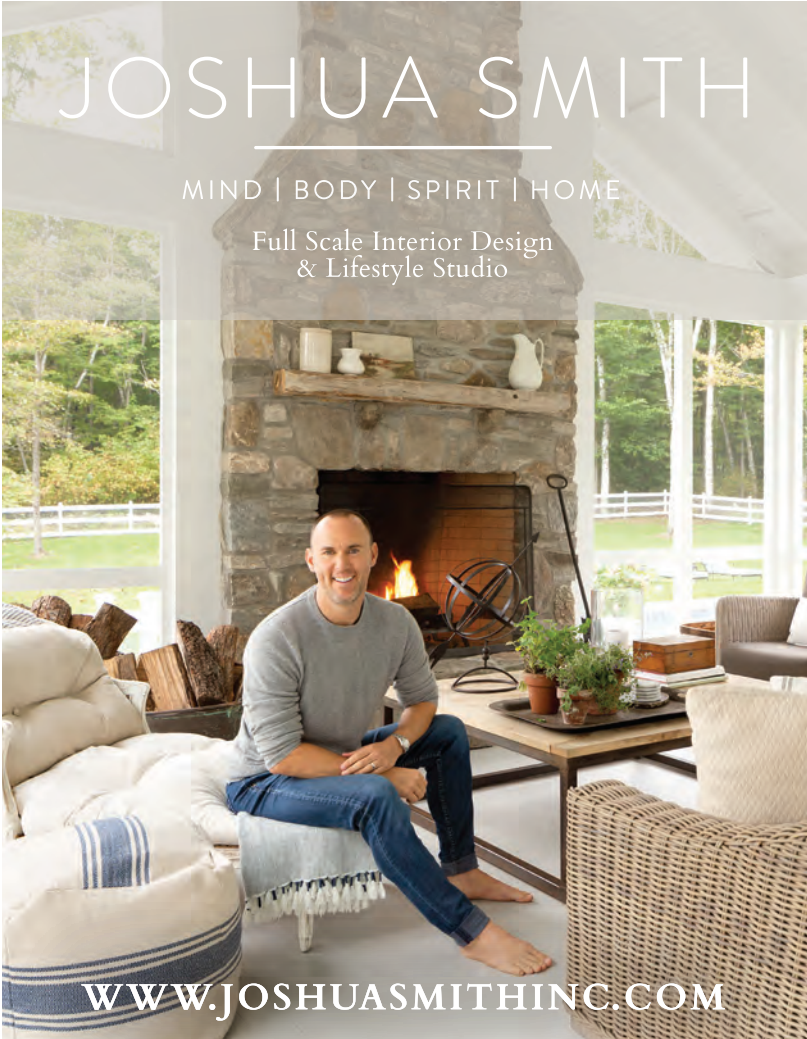
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ANDREA WESTERLIND OF WESTERLIND IN MILLERTON, NY

The return of Saperstein's

By Christine Bates
info@mainstreetmag.com

Westerlind had been open only a few days when the eponymous owner and designer, Andrea Westerlind, talked to Main Street Magazine in the retail space that was formerly Saperstein's at the corner of Dutchess Avenue and Main Street in Millerton, NY. It was a rainy, Friday afternoon and masked shoppers dropped in to look at the goods ranging from lifetime guarantee French rubber boots to colorful summer Birkenstock sandals.

How did you decide to open a store in Millerton, especially now that retail is so fragile?

We started with a pop-up store in Millerton at the suggestion of a friend two years ago. I met Fred Gold, who used to sell technical fabrics in New York, through the industry and he's the reason I came up here and discovered the area. He and his wife, Amy, have since become great friends and advisors to me – kind of like surrogate US parents. The small store was immediately and surprisingly successful, and then we followed with permanent store at the end of Main Street and Route 22. Our conversion rate, that is customers who come into the store and buy something, was higher than our New York City location. Just today, Friday, we've already done more business than on a Saturday in Soho. We knew Millerton was the perfect retail cross roads for our brand.

In June, through friends, we were put in touch with James Hendrick, who had purchased the store in 2018 from Lou Saperstein. He had already changed the façade and put in these beautiful, huge windows and retail is one of the few permitted uses of this space. We realized that the downstairs level would be large enough to accommodate our wholesale business and we would still have 6,000 square feet of retail at street level. There was even a conveyor belt in the basement. Most importantly we wanted to live in a rural setting, in the natural world. It

was a lifestyle and a business decision made partly because of Covid. It happened quickly and we opened here a week after we closed on the property. Ken McLaughlin, the village building inspector, was very helpful and even gave me his cell phone number to call with any questions.

Have you met Lou Saperstein?

We were introduced and he told me all about the ins and outs of the building. We discussed carrying some of the same brands that his store sold and we will be adding Carhartt merchandise. We also intend to put the Saperstein name back on the front of the store. He's a wonderful guy.

How did you get from Sweden to Millerton?

I'm the third generation of a Swedish design family. I grew up in the fashion business in Sweden and learned all about fabrics, draping, production, distribution, and sourcing. I came to the United States to study at Parsons in New York City in 2006. In 2007 I introduced the Fjallraven Kanken backpack to the US market and made wearing a backpack in the city fashionable. In 2008, another tough time for retail, I opened my first store on Mott Street. Nobody was opening stores then. I sold that location and then opened a store on Spring Street in Soho in 2010 under my own name. It was a big step, naming a business after yourself. We had the incredible good fortune to have Geoff McFetridge design our distinctive fox bear logo and be a very supportive mentor/investor. Westerlind made it cool to wear outdoor gear and hiking boots in the city. Simultaneously we established a wholesale business with exclusive distribution agreements with the

Continued on next page ...



Above: Andrea Westerlind is Millerton's new queen of outdoor apparel. Photo courtesy of Andrea Westerlind.



Above and below, right: Westerlind at 41 Main Street in Millerton has something for everyone with products from around the world, at every price point. Photos courtesy of Andrea Westerlind.

best international brands in outdoor wear like Vuarnet and Armor Lux and set up relationships with retailers like J. Crew, Nordstrom, and Barneys.

Next we opened a store in Powder Mountain, Utah, in 2015, Jackson Hole, Wyoming, in 2017, a new store on Mott Street in New York in 2018, and Denver in 2019. Our emphasis has always been on high quality, functional merchandize that is, at the same time, fashionable. And I just started designing my own line of clothing for our stores like this jumpsuit and a travel suit for women with 4-way stretch that will take you from plane to office meetings. *Vogue* magazine has featured the felt hat that I designed. *GQ* magazine has dubbed Westerlind the most stylish outdoor store in America and “impossibly cool.”

Personally we have moved our lives from Brooklyn to here. You don't have to be in New York to have a business and here I can ski, hike, and golf. We will be building a studio at the back of the store so we can do virtual appearances at trade shows. We have shut down our Queens warehouse and relocated everything here including key staff, but we will be actively looking for more employees.

What are your best sellers?

Right now we're selling lots of Birkenstock sandals, climbing technical pants, jumpsuits, and sunglasses. We carry over a 100 brands that I've discovered in my travels. Every country has something really cool and unique that you don't find in stores here. We have Swedish linen tablecloths, Japanese recycled denim rugs, and that foldable camping chair you're sitting in, wool sweaters from Norway, lifetime rubber boots from France,

and hiking boots. We try to have something available at many price points. Just for fun, we have these small camping items like waterproof matches and kerosene lamps. And we're always trying new things. A German popup tent is coming next.

Do you feel you've hit the market exactly right with the combination of dress-down all the time, working remotely, and wanting to be outside?

Yes, very much so. Traditionally, outdoor clothing does well in slow economic times. People prioritize differently, and look to spend on life enhancing products like outdoor gear. I think now, we have both uncertainty in the economy and the social distancing/change in lifestyle working in our favor. Selling products that make people more comfortable and have more fun outside, on top of looking great, is a good feeling.

How important are Pinterest and Instagram to your business?

It's hard to say exactly how important all the different social media platforms are, but they do help us spread the message and reach new people. I think, in our case, all the little streams lead to a big river. Word-of-mouth is one of our best marketing tools. Everyone is look-

ing for the cutest outdoor gear. When they see friends wearing it, they ask where to get it. That's how we generate most of our new customers.

Are you contemplating closing any of your other stores?

We're not closing any stores. All of our landlords have been very understanding and accommodating, allowing us to continue operations at a limited capacity until the consumers are safe and ready to return to physical locations.

What plans do you have for the store?

We're still getting settled in, but we have plans to add gallery space, and maybe have a small grocery store with supplies that people need and prepared food, like sandwiches to go. We have the space to add sporting equipment, although that is not our focus. Our full focus for the foreseeable future is to make our Millerton store into the best outdoor lifestyle center on the East Coast, full of discovery, knowledge, and style!

And what about the ping-pong table in the window?

I do love to play ping-pong and I'll play with any customer who wants to. Also, if you manage to beat me, I'll give you 10% off your purchase. ●

To learn more, you can visit them at 41 Main Street in Millerton or online at www.westerlindoutdoor.com.



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ICE CREAM

dilly bars

WITH PEANUTS
& CHOCOLATE

By Jessie Sheehan
info@mainstreetmag.com

So, a “Dilly Bar,” for those not in the know, is a frosty ice cream treat sold at Dairy Queen. It is almost like an ice cream popsicle – stick and all – made of vanilla soft-serve ice cream coated in chocolate. Truth be told, I am not sure that I have ever had the pleasure of trying a Dilly Bar, though I am a huge fan of Dairy Queen, and my favorite item (in case you were wondering) is a large soft-serve twist (half chocolate/half vanilla) served in a wafer cone and dipped in chocolate – and, yes, the similarities between my fave and a “Dilly” have not gone unnoticed. But I had never even heard of a Dilly Bar, until quite recently, and thus had no idea what I was missing. That is until my friend Kathy, a grandmother among other things, who has been baking for forever, shared a recipe with me called a “Dilly Dessert.”

Sharing is caring

Kathy generously shares her recipe collection with me on the regular, photographing those from her collection that she thinks I’ll enjoy (she and I both share a love of old-school, “Americana” sweets, and when she sent me the “Dilly Dessert” recipe, I was instantly smitten. First, I loved the name – I mean who doesn’t want

to eat a Dilly Dessert? And second, when I learned that a Dilly Dessert is essentially a tray of homemade ice cream bars that come together in no time (except the time the bars need to firm up in the freezer), I knew I was on board to make a batch. The recipe Kathy shared called for an Oreo crust, but I decided to use chocolate wafer cookies instead.

Here’s what you do:

I combined the wafers with some light brown sugar and melted butter in my food processor and pressed the crumbs into my pan and then placed it in the freezer to firm up – oh, and did I mention that a Dilly Dessert is of the no-bake variety? Another plus in my book.

You then spread softened ice cream over the chocolate cookie crust (I like to use vanilla, in true “Dilly” fashion, but any flavor you like will work. Can I just say mint chocolate chip would be amazing? As would strawberry... but I digress). Sprinkle the ice cream with salted and roasted peanuts (but you could leave them out if you opt for a flavor other than vanilla, or just aren’t a peanut lover).

You then place the bars back in the freezer while you make an easy chocolate “ganache” topping, made of chocolate and cream. After spreading the chocolate over the peanut-topped ice cream, you sprinkle with flaky sea salt and return the bars to the freezer

for a final stint. And that is it. Done and done, as they say. In short, a “Dilly” Dessert makes for an excellent summer dessert – for both kids and adults alike, I might add. And, yes: I speak from experience.

Ingredients:

12 ozs. Nabisco Famous Chocolate Wafers, or any crispy chocolate wafer cookie
3 tablespoons light brown sugar
10 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted and warm
4 pints vanilla ice cream, or your favorite flavor
1 1/2 cups roasted and salted peanuts, roughly chopped
3 cups semi-sweet chocolate chips
6 tablespoons heavy cream
3 tablespoons light corn syrup
Flaky sea salt for sprinkling, optional

Follow these steps:

Grease a 13x9x2-inch pan with non-stick spray or softened butter.

Process the wafers in a food processor until finely ground. Add the sugar and butter and process again, scraping down the bowl of the processor as needed.

Transfer the finely ground wafers to the prepared pan and using your hands (or the back of a one cup

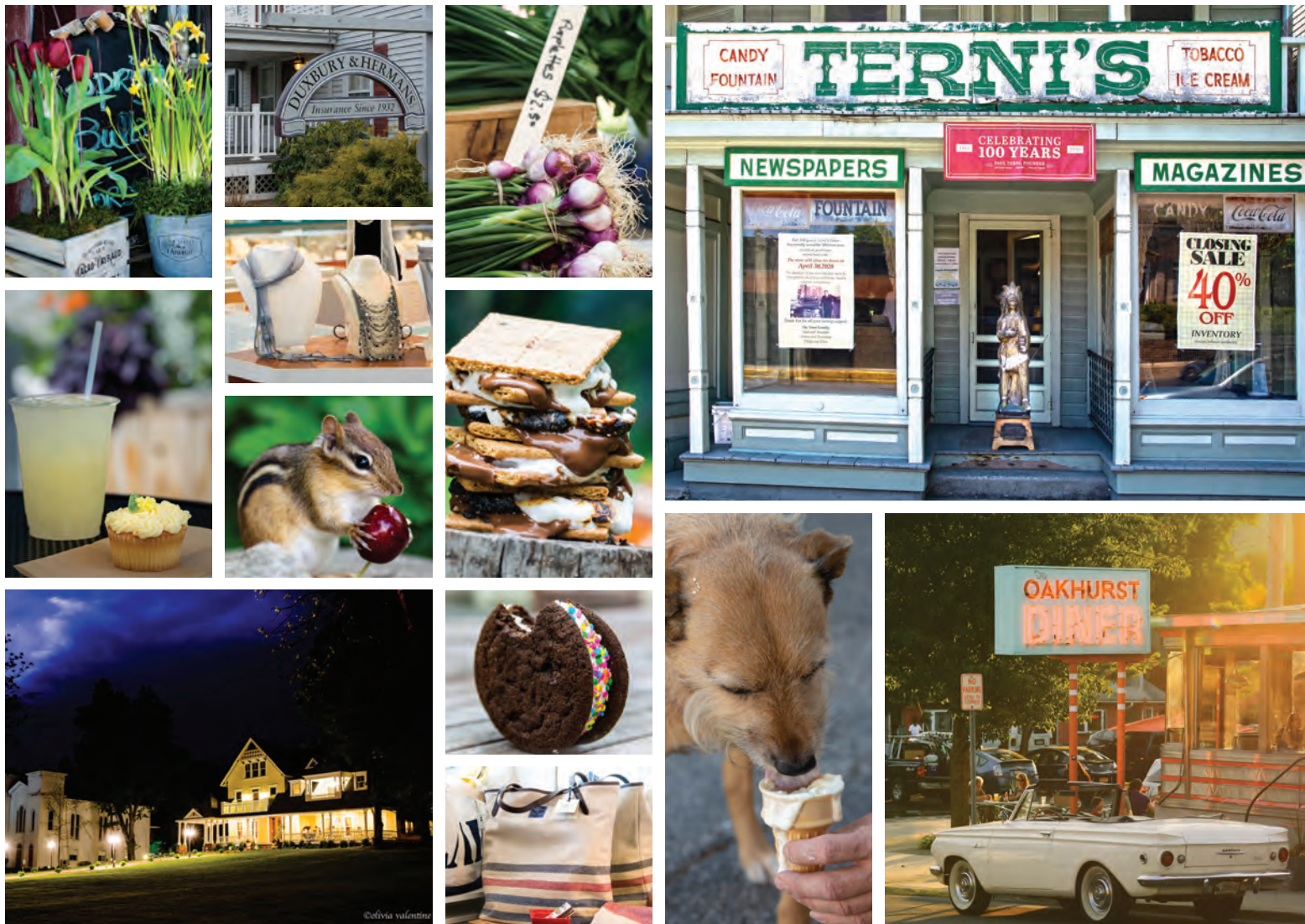
dry measuring cup) press the wafer crumbs down into the bottom of the pan, creating a solid, flat block of crumbs. Place in the freezer.

While, the crust firms up in the freezer, soften the ice cream on the counter until spreadable, about a half an hour. Once softened, spread the ice cream over the crust, sprinkle with the peanuts, pressing them gently into the ice cream and return to the freezer while you make the topping.

In a large microwave-safe bowl, or in a heat-proof bowl over a pot of simmering water, combine the chocolate, heavy cream and corn syrup and warm until melted. If using a microwave, heat the mixture in 30 second bursts, stirring after each. Cool to room temperature and spread over the peanut layer. Sprinkled with flaky sea salt, if using.

Return to the freezer and freeze until firm, several hours, if not overnight. Cut with a sharp knife into 16 or 24 squares. Store leftover bars for up to one month in a plastic zippered bag in the freezer. •

Jessie is a baker and cookbook author; you can learn more about her through her website jessiesheehanbakes.com.



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What to expect from home inspections

By Christine Bates
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Recently I reviewed an inspection report for a client that included a check “yes” by washer and dryer where none existed. It made me wonder how carefully the client had looked at this document. Inspection reports are usually a necessary part of the selling and purchasing process, but what do they really tell you? How can you get your money’s worth? You’re paying for this. A pre-sale inspection paid for by the seller will identify issues that should be addressed before putting a house on the market. A prepurchase inspection paid for by the buyer will not only alert new owners to potential problems but can also guide renovation and maintenance going forward.

Seller beware

Increasingly serious sellers and real estate brokers who list properties want to know what a home inspection might reveal before a house is put on the market. This provides the seller with the opportunity to repair minor issues that might discourage buyers before listing, or explain conditions that buyers might accept. This type of pre-inspection gives the sellers’ broker confidence in representing the property and can speed up the time to close. If the purchase requires bank financing the buyer will still have to arrange and pay for another inspection,

but a cash buyer might move forward on the basis of an initial inspection and what has been done to correct any problems. If you can correct and identify the results of an inspection up front, contentious negotiations can be avoided. Keep in mind that such a report could be a double-edged sword if it reveals material problems, which, once you have knowledge of them, must be revealed to any buyers.

Buyer be smart

Interview several home inspectors before you select one you feel most comfortable with. Usually your broker will have several to select from or check on the internet. Ask about their experience, cost, and availability. Home inspectors usually have a background in construction and can educate clients about current and potential problems with a property. Check their website. Be sure to ask for references, insurance coverage, and perhaps a sample report.

Expect to sign a state-approved home inspection agreement which details the scope and limits of the inspection – engineering, architecture, plumbing are typically not included. Radon reading and water quality testing are usually add-ons. Prior to inspection day buyers should do their own inspection walkthrough to identify issues that should be pointed out to the inspector. When the day of the inspection comes, the buyer and the buyer’s broker should be there – the seller should not be, but available by phone for any questions. Often the seller’s listing broker is there as well – both to address questions, help out, and provide security. Check the owner’s disclosure report for additional questions you might have.

Typically a house inspection will start from the outside observing conditions around the house, land, drain-



age, siding, the roof, and then move inside. After completing the assessment the inspector will normally walk through the property and explain his initial findings. All of this will take several hours. Expect to receive a written report with photographs a few days later. Any major concerns and potential safety hazards should be highlighted.

Read the report completely and thoroughly and if something needs to be clarified contact the inspector immediately and ask. Start with the summary at the front, look for the redlined conditions throughout, look carefully at photos, and read the detail. Often an element can be reported as satisfactory BUT comments and photos indicate damaged areas.

There can also be language about what was not checked.

For example, a simple sentence like this one: “Some wall, floor, and other surfaces were obscured by furniture and/or stored items, preventing a full evaluation of some areas.” You might want to ask the owner to move these

Above: Here’s an example of an old sliding door that doesn’t slide that was not noted by the inspector. Below, left: Now this is a rotten windowsill which will require replacement of the entire window. All photos by Christine Bates.



Continued on next page ...

items for a closer look. Or similarly: “The inspector was unable to evaluate the attic, and it is excluded from this inspection. The possibility of extensive costs associated with undiscovered problems exists.”

Talk to the realtor representing you about how to address any concerns you have given the report. Be reasonable and keep in mind that no inspection report or house gets a 100%. If there are major flaws that the inspection reveals you may want to back out of the deal or ask for seller concessions. It’s also a sensible idea to do a pre-closing walk through yourself with the inspection report in hand to make sure you understand the inspector’s findings.

Inspectors always find something

There is no perfect inspection, or a passed inspection. Inspectors identify potential safety and maintenance issues, which the seller may or may not be willing to address. No one is required to remedy issues found in an inspection and don’t expect an inspector to give you estimates of how much anything would cost to repair or replace. Based on their finding you might want to return with a window company or a contractor to get a sense of how much what you would like to do would cost. Further, inspectors do not comment on aesthetics or make style judgments. But there are certain findings that appear in almost every inspection report:

- Attic pull down stairs improperly installed
- Exterior door locks with improperly installed deadbolts – and they will always tell you to change the locks
- Not enough insulation in the attic
- Inadequate smoke and CO2 alarms
- Electrical issues, which can be serious or easily repaired
- Deck/porch structure, hand rails and guardrails
- Gutters and down spouts improperly installed
- Overhanging trees and vegetation, too many plants too close to the house
- Grading around the house

What don’t they check for?

There are many issues that home inspectors simply do not cover and will not be in the final report. They spot check windows and electrical outlets – not every one. They do not check for pests. So if you see signs of cockroaches, termites, squirrels, bats, etc. you should hire a certified pest inspector to take a closer look.

They are not licensed plumbers and will only identify visible issues that you may have noticed yourself like a leak under the sink, outdated plumbing or a loose toilet seal. Septic inspections and pumping septic tanks are handled separately. Some inspectors are licensed mold inspectors, but a mold inspection comes with an additional cost.

Here’s a caveat from a recent report: “Concerning mold in a home/building. While we will report any substance that appears to be mold, the only true way to determine if mold is present is to have a mold company/specialist inspect and test for mold. Any mention of mold in this report should be considered a recommendation to bring in a mold specialist.”

If your house has an in-ground swimming pool, a pool expert should check it, including pool permits and maintenance records.

Appliance performance is not part of the inspection. You may want to do a load of laundry or test the dishwasher to see if they work. The inspection



Above: Inspectors will catch water stains that indicate water seepage. Below, left: Check for any signs of damage in all cabinets. Here there has been chimney leakage.

of the roof may be done from the ground, and depending on weather conditions, roof problems may not be visible. If it’s not a newish roof you may want to have a roofer inspect it and give you an estimate for repairs or replacement. They will usually do a site visit and an estimate for free. Remember that inspectors only look at what is in plain view. They do not move furniture; look in the back of closets or into crawl spaces.

As you read the report watch out for the “not inspected.” For example exterior hose bibs because it’s winter, or gas range not tested because there’s no propane in the tank. Also remember that the inspector is looking for serviceability not the quality of the finishes. For example a kitchen counter top may have a check, but there may not be an indication of whether it’s butcher block, Formica, or marble. There probably won’t be an indication of whether kitchen cabinets are custom made of solid wood or whether interior doors are solid wood, hollow core, or plastic. If there is carpeting often you don’t know what material it is or what’s underneath.

Note that many conditions are not specified. How many windows did

they check? How many electrical outlets were actually tested? What does a random sampling mean? Does the sliding door actually slide?

How do they inspect? How much does it cost?

Every inspector works from a standard template checklist of items. Also included in the report are all the things the inspector did NOT check. Known as “Limitations of Inspection,” this is the caveat that “inspection should not be considered a guarantee or warranty of any kind.”

Standard home inspections before add-ons like radon, water quality, mold, and pests will generally run around \$500 to \$750 dollars and up depending on size and location of house. They are a valuable tool in assessing what might be the largest investment of your life. You should read them carefully, understand their limitations, and seek more information if necessary. •

Christine Bates has written monthly real estate articles for Main Street Magazine since its first issue. She is a registered real estate agent in both New York and Connecticut with William Pitt Sotheby’s International.



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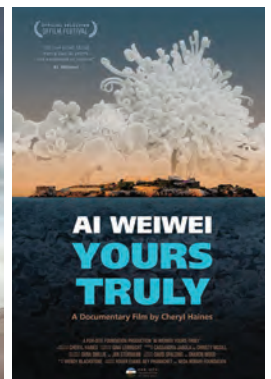
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A culture of cultures

By Ian Strever
info@mainstreetmag.com

What does an animal make of a pandemic? On various early morning bike rides this spring, I've startled foxes and bears as they saunter along our unusually quiet country roads, no doubt pleased that our iron horses have yielded such amiable byways to them. My stealthy approach catches them unaware, and they immediately scurry for the nearest culvert, but their nonchalance on the blacktop is refreshing.

I return home to transform into a whirling dervish for the next eight hours, toiling like Sisyphus after an end to emails that will never come, with data flashing like lightning from server to server. And yet, during the lull of a lunch break, I watch with fascination as a couple of ducks shuttle back and forth between the river and a hole in a nearby sycamore tree, as ducks have for millions of years.

The great paradox of 2020 is that while everything seems to be moving faster and faster in the digital world, in the natural world, nothing ever changes. Our jobs demand many of us to be data processors of one form or another, but our nature resists such reductive, streamlined

work. We were not built to be plugged into computers, so bike sales have exploded, and our trail-heads are overflowing with legions of born-again hikers renewing their connection to the outdoors.

Fertile ground

The isolation of a quarantine provides fertile ground for sowing the seeds of meditative practices, perhaps none more productive than that of cooking. Assailed by the dings, whistles, and chirps of countless alerts, the opportunity to pare life back to the simple, essential act of providing nutritious meals is one of the few luxuries we could all afford these past few months. A mantra arises from our chopping and stirring.

Those of us who like to cook have had the time to experiment with new recipes and more elaborate concoctions. In April, I made a run at homemade bagels with moderate success, but it took the better part of two days to see the recipe to fruition, even using commercial yeast to accelerate the process.

But slowing down my cooking satisfied an instinct in me to combat the fury of remote work. Just feet away from where I typed, a living, breathing organism grew. My dough respiration pensively on the counter, and if left unchecked, it would continue to feed off of the sugars in the flour until it exhausted the supply. It was



the opposite of the cyborgian reality that seemed to inch closer with each byte: this creature, born of bacteria and able to nourish or sicken.

So what if we stretched the process down even further – something more on a seasonal pace? Smoked ribs and braised short ribs benefit from overnight marinades and hours of low-temperature roasting, but what would happen over a month's time, or several months?

That is just what is happening in an unexpectedly large number of kitchens around our area. Local fermenters, bakers, and cheesemakers are employing ancient techniques to produce "slow food" that is not only delicious, but as studies suggest, is more healthful than mass-market alternatives.

Berkshire Mountain Bakery: Sourdough bread

Although my bagels took two days to make, die-hard bakers swear by sourdough starters and tend to them like plants, grooming and feeding them to preserve the active cultures that produce natural leavening and singular flavor. Richard Bourbon, owner and head baker at Berkshire Mountain Bakery in Housatonic, MA, is the Johnny Appleseed of naturally-fermented sourdough

bread, and his philosophy has literally and figuratively given rise to exquisite loaves of bread in kitchens across the country.

It works like this, in brief: mix together flour and water and let it sit for about a week. With daily stirring and eventually some feeding with fresh flour, the mixture will absorb naturally-occurring bacteria from the surroundings and begin to ferment, or sour. Unlike yeast-leavened bread, sourdoughs break down some of the peptides that are linked to gluten intolerance and can facilitate the absorption of some of the sugars found in white flour that produce spikes in insulin.

If you're pressed for time, you can experience the results of this process in Berkshire Mountain's mouth-watering "Bread and Chocolate," available at the Berkshire Co-op and at the bakery itself in Housatonic. Something between a breakfast bread and dessert, a smear of butter on a toasted slice highlights the slight sourness of the dough and the dark chocolate that rides that fine line between bitter and sweet.

Continued on next page ...





This page, above: Berkshire Mountain Bakery's "Bread and Chocolate" benefits from the slight sourness of bread and the bittersweetness of dark chocolate. Photo courtesy of Berkshire Mountain Bakery. Below, right: Aged Bethlehem cheese from the Abbey of Regina Laudis in Bethlehem, CT. Photo courtesy of The Abbey of Regina Laudis.

Previous page, top to bottom: Hawthorne Valley's colorful krauts are the result of slow fermentation that is at odds with much of our modern culture. Photo courtesy of Hawthorne Valley Farm Store. Commercial yeast will accelerate the process of making homemade bagels and breads but a sourdough starter yields a tastier product, if you're willing to spend the time.

Hawthorne Valley Co-op: Sauerkraut and kimchi

If you're willing to wait another week (or more) for your food, sauerkraut is a natural progression for slowing down your food process. As with bread, sauerkraut relies on naturally-occurring bacteria to fuel the "cooking" of cabbage in water, in the process preserving and even creating a variety of nutrients and healthful bacteria.

Recent scholarship into the benefits of probiotic foods suggests that a diet rich in fermented foods promotes "gut health," or the maintenance of the delicate ecosystem in our stomachs that relies on beneficial bacteria for digestion and processing of the nutrients found in all foods. In the last twenty years, scientists have discovered that the vast majority of the DNA in our bodies is not our own, but belongs to the microbes that reside in and on our bodies.

This fact calls into question the hysteria around handwashing and sanitary practices that prevail at this moment. One body of traditional research focuses on the dangers of unseen bacterial invaders, while another emerging body of research advocates for developing our microbiomes in ways that strengthen our immunity by promoting symbiotic bacteria.

It is admittedly hard to know which research to trust, but if you want to hedge your bets, you could do worse than Hawthorne Valley's fermented sauerkrauts and kimchis.

Available in their Chatham Co-op and elsewhere, their process relies on few ingredients (just cabbage, caraway seeds, cumin, and salt in their Caraway Sauerkraut) to preserve the crunchiness of their locally-sourced cabbage.

Looking to try it at home? Carve out a month or more to manage the fermentation process, and make a stop at New Preston Kitchen Goods in Connecticut to pick up a clay sauerkraut urn with purpose-made weights instead of scouring your house for a jerry-rigged setup.

The Abbey of Regina Laudis: Raw milk cheese

Perhaps the most convincing case for the safety of probiotic foods is the experiment of Sister Noëlla Marcellino of the Abbey of Regina Laudis in Bethlehem, CT. Documented in Michael Pollan's excellent 2013 book, *Cooked*, Sister Noëlla prepared two batches of raw-milk cheese from the same batch of milk, one using a traditional wooden barrel and paddle, and the other in

a sanitized, stainless steel vat and injected both of them with *E. Coli*.

Pollan writes, "what happened next was, at least to a Pasteurian, utterly baffling: The cheese that had been started in the sterile vat had high levels of *E. coli*, and the cheese made in the wooden barrel had next to none... the good bugs, and the acids they produced, had driven out the bad."

No pasteurization, no sterilization, and yet, an edible, even more desirable product.

Sister Noëlla's cheese is available through the Abbey itself, but call ahead to ensure availability. Like sauerkraut, beer, and whiskey, hard cheeses require time to ferment, and two months is about the minimum for the process. Claudia Lucero's 2014 book, *One-Hour Cheese*, is a guide to accelerating the process for the impatient, featuring a variety of recipes for relatively softer cheeses. None of these requires raw milk, but if you are seeking that old-world approach, many farms in the area can supply that, too.

Slow food is having a moment, and it is about much more than science. The nuanced flavor of these products invites slow tasting as well – a more attentive and mindful approach to eating that would naturally appeal to nuns. In an economy where many of us toil at work that is ephemeral, the rewards of producing something that is tangible and edible are both material and spiritual. It is an opportunity to connect with thousands of years of human experience in perfecting and celebrating our most basic need. ●



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What a trip!

By Dominique DeVito
info@mainstreetmag.com

Every thought about travel these days starts with the question, “Is it ok?” My summer day trip did, too. Questions of safety and exposure to oneself and others are always there now; the “new normal.” This trip was outdoors all the way on a beautiful summer day. With masks and hand sanitizer in the car, I was excited to get on the road.

The jaunt to West Stockbridge in the Berkshires and then to Hillsdale in Columbia County is long and winding enough so you feel like you’ve really gotten away, but it’s back yard-y enough that you don’t have to leave at the crack of dawn to get home before dark. The purpose is to discover some beautiful and unusual places, and to enjoy some very good food. Ready?

Get your party started

I corralled a couple of friends into going on this excellent adventure with me, and we met at one of their houses so we could car pool together from Columbia County. This friend has an amazing garden and a sweet spot for champagne and caviar, so we were treated to an elegant and delicious aperitif. It was also a chance to get caught up on some chit-chat and review the itinerary. Highly recommended!



First stop: Turn Park Art Space

Winding one’s way into West Stockbridge is like turning back the hands of time. It’s a sleepy little town, and when approached from the northwest (via Columbia County on Route 22), the first few places you see aren’t even open at this time. This impression changes fast when you stay straight instead of bearing left over the bridge and you come upon No 6 Depot, a coffee shop and café. With a porch that extends the length of the building, there’s lots of outdoor seating. As we drove by on this sunny summer Sunday around 1 pm, the porch was studded with couples and families. It’s a welcoming sign of normality – and it’s tempting to pull in and find a seat, so remind yourself there’s good food and coffee to come a bit later.

Go past the Depot parking lot and follow the sign for Turn Park Art Space, which is just a few yards up the road on the right. You’ll wonder if it’s even accessible, as the gravel parking lot is looking a tad unkempt. Fear not. Park, put on your mask, and enter under the arch of the closed exhibition space by the donation box.

The first thing you’ll notice when you come into the park is a rock face that juts out like a cliff on what appears to be – and is – the other side of a stream. The Art Park property was a former quarry, and in addition to this striking feature, the topography is quite diverse. Follow the bank across from the cliff and you’ll come to a whimsical sculpture of Don Quixote. It’s by the artist Nikolay Silis, who’s the inspiration behind the entire park.

Founders Igor Gomberg and Katya Brezgunova said of Silis, “His studio in Moscow is a unique place bursting with creative energy, a meeting



place, a melting pot. Silis inspired us by saying that ‘art is the only way to recapture cosmos from chaos.’ We loved this audacious and joyful motto of his.” Uniting and inspiring people with art was the impetus behind the park.

As you set out to explore, you have to climb up some rocks that are fairly steep and intimidating if you’re not in comfortable shoes, so be forewarned. As you wander the park, the natural beauty is as marvelous as the art that is displayed there. The paths are sometimes narrow through weedy woods, then open up onto fields cloaked in wild flowers. Once the three of us had climbed the rocks to explore the rest of the park, we didn’t see anyone until we came back around to the entrance along a lower path.

If audacious and joyful are what the founders were after, they succeeded. The works range from bands of linen painted red wrapped around a series of trees to an igloo constructed from branches to a set of giant colored pick-up sticks protruding from the ground to a quiet and elegant mini amphitheater. There was a piece that scared some of us – a bright yellow figure hanging from a tree surrounded by large, dark pods – and a piece that beguiled us called *Loose Ladies*, a trio



Above, top, L-R: Lynn, Sharon, Cathe, and Dominique at Little Apple Cidery. It’s hard to social distance in a selfie, but rest assured that we were careful and conscientious all day! Above and left: The works at Turn Park Art Space are provocative and varied and allow for exploration from all angles.

Continued on next page ...

of floating female-esque forms set just off the path in the woods. Around every turn and path was more to look at. We were also delighted to find sets of small tables and chairs that beckoned visitors to sit, enjoy, linger. We all agreed that we would come back with a picnic and spend more time here soon. It was hard to leave, but we were hungry.

Next stop: CrossRoads Food Shop

If this had been 2019, we probably would have gone into No 6 Depot after the sculpture park and had a leisurely lunch. But gone is the ability to linger on a meal indoors at a restaurant. This is something we all miss, but it gives us the opportunity to take food on the road, too, and find a place to picnic. Because looking at menus online is challenging no matter what, I had printed out the menus from No 6 Depot as well as CrossRoads in Hillsdale, NY, as that was the area we were headed to next. Both menus offered lots of yummy choices of sandwiches and salads and other specialties. Both offered great coffees. We decided it would be best to order from CrossRoads so it would be fresh when we were ready to eat at our destination.

It was an easy and scenic drive from West Stockbridge to Hillsdale on Route 22 West. (Except for the detour because of fire trucks in the road, but GPS saved the day as always). When we got to CrossRoads at 2:30 they were getting ready to close so our timing was perfect. We went in to collect and pay for the food – masks up! – and it was a special treat to see a big brown bag with my name artfully drawn on it. David Wurth's spot is a fixture in Hillsdale, where his 5-star reviews are earned by using super-fresh ingredients from local



farms and turning them into mouth-watering meals. We scampered off with a couple of chicory Caesar salads, a chickpea patty sandwich with yogurt dressing, zucchini and ricotta tarts, a raspberry crisp, and some coffee concoctions. Happy!

Last stop: Little Apple Cidery

If you're looking for an idyllic place to land on a weekend afternoon, this is it. Little Apple Cidery is the dream of Ron Bixby and his wife, Alane Bearson. An orchard of heirloom trees was on the property when they found and bought it decades ago, and it's been cultivated as a NOFA-NY certified organic orchard. Ron has carefully and deliberately honed his craft, and produces delicious ciders. He recently brought on Hayley Shine to assist. She's a longtime brewer and cider maker who helped start Roe Jan Brewery (another great idea for a stop on this road trip).

Pull into the cidery driveway off Orchard Lane and there's parking in a big, grassy field. At a designated entry point out of the parking lot toward the Orchard Bar there is a big bottle of hand sanitizer and instructions about wearing a mask and maintaining distance. At the Orchard Bar, which is a single-level building that does indeed feature a bar inside but is now selling cups and bottles from what would have been a large window,

the offerings are clearly marked. I chose a flight so I could try Ron's Orchard Reserve heirloom cider, the Taconic Gold, and the Nobletown whiskey barrel-aged cider. My friends chose glasses of Taconic Gold. There was a pop-up tent with a large table under it where we sat and spread out our picnic. Another friend joined us. It was heaven.

The ciders were clean and crisp and paired perfectly with our salads. The views were of a hillside of tall grass leading to a tree line on the horizon, and of course, the orchard. There were lots of seating options, and the atmosphere was low-key and comfortable. We stayed til closing at 5, which came too quickly, but we had Little Apple bottles to go. Very Happy!

We were back where we started by early evening, sharing photos and planning to get together again soon – in a safe and socially distant way. Happy Summer 2020. We're lucky to live where there are so many Staycations to plan and enjoy. •



Above, top to bottom, L-R: It was delightful to come upon what looks like a set of pick-up sticks for giants! The charm of the sign for Little Apple Cidery reflects the experience you'll have there. Hayley Shine was the hostess with the mostest at Little Apple Cidery, and she's an equally talented cider maker. "Loose Ladies" was one of our favorite pieces at the Art Park.



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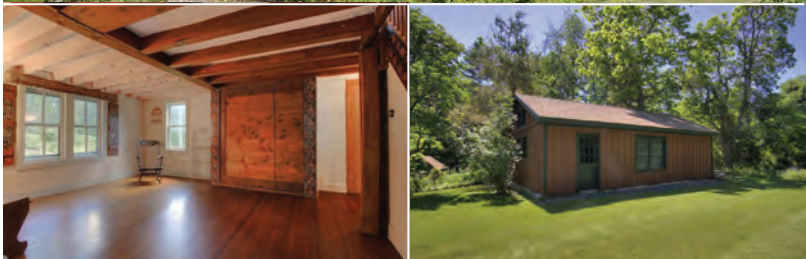
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Making something old new again

A FRAGMENT OF THE NATION'S PAST MAKES A TRIUMPHANT RETURN

By Griffin Cooper
griffin@mainstreetmag.com

In May of last year, I wrote a story on the forgotten treasure that is the American drive-in movie experience. How this bit of the country's flawed but authentic mid-twentieth century culture had been quietly capitulated by the easily accessible digital grab-bag of the modern moviegoing experience. Still, the story revolved around the enduring legacy of the drive-in theatre through the decades and how its distinctiveness between movie watching, and movie outing has forged an ineffable bond between cinema, the outdoors, and our desire to seek out what is different and unique. Particularly in the Hudson Valley where what once was, has, and in some ways, always will remain.

It is uncanny how the gears of time turn imperiously to change our perspective. Just one year later, the nature of going to the movies has been fundamentally uprooted from our collective conscience. Not long ago, the prospect of a crowded theater meant a charged evening of anticipation among groups of strangers ready to collectively lose themselves together for 90 minutes of adventure, thrills and drama. In 2020, that same idea would fill many folks with feelings of fear and nervous anxiety, and unfortunately it has nothing to do with any story being told on screen. The hu-

man experience, history, and thus fate never fails to carry with it an enduring sense of irony.

In a time when daily life seems to have been immeasurably altered by a persistent sense of uncertainty and small business owners across the area continue to defiantly push the boulder of financial hardship uphill, entertainment has become as critical as it is elusive. The confluence of the summer season – one of the most beautiful and beloved in our area – and the oppressive nature necessitated by our new walled-in existence has many longing to reconnect with the outside world. Add our lingering sense of escapism and a newfound persuasion for socially distancing – and just like that – the drive-in has shaken off its rusty shackles of yesteryear and become the contemporary moviegoing experience once again.

The social media age has attempted to redefine what the American culture has been and could be at the productive behest of some, and to the detriment of others. Yet miraculously, one of most enduring visages of the nation's popular culture past has regained its strength on the back of classic American ingenuity, inventiveness, and its communal sense of commonality.

In Amenia, NY, a band of broth-



Above: The Four Brothers Drive-In is located right behind the restaurant on Route 22 in Amenia, NY. Below, left: And as you can see, the young brothers have set up all the fix'n's with concession stands and all for an authentic drive-in experience. All images courtesy of John Stefanopoulos.

ers has brought one local drive-in to prominence as the go-to destination for those longing for that classic cinematic adventure that we accord with one another – while maintaining a safe distance.

A vision of the past

"When my brother and I began this adventure in Amenia, we had no knowledge of the drive-in movie industry – in fact, I had never been to a drive-in in my life," says owner John Stefanopoulos who, along with his brother Paul, started entertaining the ideas that would eventually become the Four Brothers Drive-In Theatre.

The young Stefanopoulos brothers may have had little knowledge of drive-in culture, but their local lineage gave them the distinct advantage of generations of entrepreneurial ambition. The first iteration of the Stefanopoulos brothers emigrated from Greece in the early 1970s and their strong family unity and unique ambition prompted the opening of their first restaurant in 1972 in Connecticut. By 1974, the brothers owned five restaurants and their soon-to-be famous pizza recipe was founded at the Brothers Pizza location

in Lakeville. Today, the elder brothers have expanded to nine Four Brothers Restaurants while adding The Boat-house in Lakeville, CT, and in New York both The Millerton Inn and The Chatham House. The family uses their local farm to supply the restaurants with certain dairy products and their olive orchards in Greece for olive oil.

Backdropped by the incredible success story of their father's uniquely American immigrant ambition, John and Paul, sons of William, have captured their familial drive to carve out their own niche in a market formed by something distinctly Americana. "My brother and I started an ice cream shack that was essentially a shed on the property juxtaposed to an empty lot outside our family's restaurant here in Amenia," says John. "It wasn't until we were interviewed for an article in the local paper about the ice cream shack itself, where I casually mentioned the idea of a drive-in, that things began to get serious. Our customers simply wouldn't let us forget

Continued on next page ...



about it, they really drove the impetus for what it has become today.”

From long shot to close-up

Fueled by their own market research, the young entrepreneurs began designing the drive-in in 2013. “Everything was very primitive in the beginning,” reflects John. “We had an undersized projector and cables running through the field that customers would occasionally run over with their vehicles and disrupt the signal. Generally speaking we had no idea what we were doing.”

Aside from the technical difficulties of having temporary screens and projectors that only ran second-run films, the brothers were uncertain if the town itself would serve Hudson Valley moviegoers the way they intended. “Honestly, Paul and I had no idea how things would work out in Amenia either,” says John. “We had been lucky enough at that point to have done some traveling around the world and we had acquired a certain aesthetic style that interested us and felt if we could mold the drive-in to fit that aesthetic, it would set us apart.” What has come from that vision is a style that has made the Four Brothers Drive-In Theatre a veritable destination for travelers everywhere.

With a genuine mix of retro decor and a folksy, down-to-earth presentation that coincides with a strong sense of the Main Street bohemian vibe that has surfaced in many small towns across the area, the Four Brothers Drive-In offers a unique boutique-like

experience and atmosphere.

“I feel incredibly lucky to have been raised in a family of business owners that have passed down the value of honest customer service,” says John. “Nothing works without a genuine sense of hospitality and the understanding that every customer can teach you something that will help you grow.” Surely that principle has come to life in the wide variety of attractive options the drive-in offers. From camping in the perfectly situated Airstream trailer that nestles in repose on the corner of the treeline facing the screen complete with an outdoor firepit, to car-hop service, creative food options from the former ice cream shack, live music, graduations, weddings, fundraising, and charity events – the drive-in has become an all-inclusive experience.

“In order to survive in our growingly competitive area of the Hudson Valley, you must fully commit to what makes you unique,” says John. “It must become a destination, rather than a pit-stop. Some of the most motivating things to hear is when a customer tells me they feel like they’re on vacation or they feel as though they have been transported to a different time period.”

An unlikely comeback in a changing world

As the winds of change began to blow upstate in early March, driven by an uncertain future and a changing cultural paradigm, like many local businesses, Amenia’s drive-in became



Above: John Stefanopoulos and his brother Paul. Below, left: There’s more to the drive-in than just movies, other events like this wedding have taken place under the stars, using the big screen. All images courtesy of John Stefanopoulos.

nervously anxious. “It was a gut-punch,” says John. “We were open for three weeks, and then the first week of March hit and we had to close down. It was heartbreaking because we have always striven to be the first drive-in to open and the last to close.”

As the impossibly long weeks slowly crept by, John and Paul applied for a waiver from the State and waited nervously for nearly two months through the spring. “The entire time my crew and I held out nervous hope because we knew we could make things work if we were allowed to re-open,” recalls John. “Mostly because the drive-in experience is organically designed for folks to enjoy themselves at a distance.”

Another aspect that undoubtedly buoyed the hopes of the beloved drive-in was the seemingly endless stream of inquiries from locals and travelers alike who all seemed to collectively sense the time had come to return to the sentimental American experience. “We were inundated with emails and social media messages from people throughout the area longing to get outside and as a result, begging us to open – consequences be damned,” says John. “Clearly the demand was there and we understood that when we reopened we would be busy, but the response has been overwhelming.”

Indeed, the cautious re-opening of the drive-in while only featuring second-run movies and only permitting guests to leave their vehicles for the bathroom in the beginning, opened the floodgates to the people of the Hudson Valley, making the Amenia

drive-in the surprise smash hit of the summer. “It ended up being one of the most exciting productions I have ever experienced despite our nervous anxiety about ensuring everyone’s safety,” says John. “We were ready to endure this pandemic without even knowing it.”

Perhaps it’s John’s determined optimism that reflects the nature of the drive-in’s cultural comeback nationwide. The patient endurance of an industry and a people to withstand a barrage of growing technology and withering attention spans in favor of remaining simply what it is – a fully engaging experience.

“I’ve felt for awhile that mainstream American commercialization has been coming to the end of its life cycle,” says John. “At this moment, we could fill the drive-in three times over because of the demand, but we like being tucked in by the Hudson Valley landscape. This area is a gateway for everyone searching for unique and interesting finds and the film industry itself represents the desire for people to interact with each other and share something in common. Our foundation here is built by being outdoors. Going to the drive-in is about more than the film, it’s about coming here to feel the experience of an evening together.” ●

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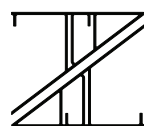
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Positive transformation

**JOSHUA SMITH DESIGNS
WITH HEART AND HOME
IN MIND**

By Joseph Montebello
info@mainstreetmag.com

Growing up in Crosby, TX, a small town near Houston, interior designer Joshua Smith knew he wasn't like the other boys and it caused him much pain and grief. He recalls his "pink sock" moment as an example.

"I had these new socks," Smith explains. "They were actually a salmon color and matched my polo shirt. I thought they were pretty cool, but this one kid gave me such grief for wearing girl-colored socks that I never wore them again."

Somehow Smith knew he had an affinity for being creative and expressive, but he had no idea how to pursue that aspect of his life.

"The first time I was called a 'faggot' I was in sixth grade and it was painful," says Smith. "This was all way before the internet; there was nowhere for me to go to ask questions and get answers. I kept praying to be fixed. But then I decided that maybe there was nothing to fix. When I was old enough, I spent a lot of time going to gay bars to get attention and feel that I was a worthy person."

Home is everything

But it didn't all work out at the onset. Somewhere along the way, Smith crossed the line and fell into drug and alcohol addiction, which then led to

homelessness. He eventually recovered and began selling real estate.

"My mother loved the home," Smith says, "and she instilled that in me. In the South home is everything. It's not just where you live, it's where memories are made. It's the backdrop for your entire life. Whenever I closed a deal on a house I would always help the new owners decorate. At the age of 27 I finally bought my first home. I had to design it and I had no idea how to do it for myself. I immersed myself in studying design. My heart started to sing. As I started to see things that resonated with me, I started to see a connection between the things we love and how they make us feel. I started to get the power of the home. Once that home was created and I walked in at the end of a stressful day, I would exhale and realize that there was something really magical happening. In the conversation of body, mind, and soul we forget about how our environment plays a role in this wellness dialogue."

A new state and a new career

Three years later Smith decided it was time to move out of Texas and start another career, one that he seemed destined to pursue. He sold everything and moved to New York to study at the New York School of Interior Design.

"One summer I was lucky enough to work as an intern for Steven Gambrel, one of my favorite designers, and I learned so much. When the summer was over I let the studio manager know that I would be interested in an apprenticeship should one ever become available. That same week-



end she e-mailed me that one of the project managers had given notice and if I'd like the job it was mine. It was a sign from the Universe that I was on the right path. I worked for Steven for 18 months on projects around the world. I was working on one with Arianna Huffington and Steven said he was amenable to my taking on freelance work, and business started to take off for me. That's when my Joshua Smith brand was birthed. My first year out, I was recognized as a rising star by *House Beautiful*."

Philosophy and approach

But Smith is more than just a designer who creates beautiful rooms. His approach is unique and emphasizes the belief that our homes should be our sanctuaries. Moreover, he takes a holistic approach to design to inspire



All photos courtesy of Joshua Smith



Continued on next page ...



five people for a nourishing experience of body, mind, and soul,” Smith explains. “You can relax and enjoy the beauty and comfort of a charming farmhouse on 13 acres surrounded by 100 acres of protected land. The property offers private hiking trails, a swimming pool, yoga, guided meditation, healthy meals, a gym, and an oversized screen porch with a stone fireplace. Our retreats explore themes such as Designing Your Life, Spiritual Reboot, and Enhancing Connection to the Divine.”

As if he wasn't busy enough, Smith has recently opened a storefront at 50 Main Street in Millerton, NY.

“I signed the lease on the space a week before Covid hit. Originally it was to be an experiential studio, a place that engages the senses, a place to nourish body, mind, and spirit. Everyone who has walked in says the interiors look pretty in pictures but it feels even better when experienced in the flesh. That's where some of my magic lies. The second room will be a workshop meditation studio, teaching people how to live better in a pleasing environment every day. And perhaps we will host specials as well. It's all part of my mission to help people live better and feel better about themselves.” ●

To learn more about Joshua Smith, his work, and philosophy you can visit him in person at 50 Main Street in Millerton, NY, or online at www.joshuasmithinc.com.



wellness and to encourage the essence of who we are and how we want to live. He strives to create a conscious home “that nourishes your spirit, inspires your mind, and enhances your connection to yourself.”

This is a philosophy that has evolved for Smith as he has garnered respect and recognition in the interior design world.

“I started to see my role in people's lives as more than creating a beautiful space – but to show how one can aspire to live better. When we live better we feel better. The home is the starting point for that. But I am not going to tell you what I think is beautiful and have you accept it as your style. ‘How do you want the space to feel when you walk in the door?’ That's what is important for me to pull from you so I can do the best for you. I want to express the personalities of the owners.”

“Everyone comes with a different agenda, but my process as a designer begins the same way for every project. I present the client with 50 questions, such as favorite books, favorite hotels,

fondest childhood memory, when you felt most proud of yourself. After they answer these questions, I do a written analysis and present the results. ‘This is what I heard you say and who you are, and what you find beautiful and from there we can go on to design schemes.’”

Smith seems to have come up with a unique formula that works. In addition to creating beautiful rooms, he conducts a variety of one-on-one coaching experiences and online group workshops. He also offers opportunities for a country retreat at his home in the Litchfield Hills.

“It's a small gathering of four to



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Simple pleasures

Enjoy the serenity of the Hudson Valley by indulging in a Pick-Your-Own experience

By Regina Molaro
info@mainstreetmag.com

Summer is the season for celebrating our freedom. It's the time for long leisurely days, exotic getaways, and cooling off under the refreshing splashes of a cascading waterfall. This chill time of year is also ideal for lounging poolside or lakeside, taking to the trails for hiking or biking excursions, and lots of other fun summertime activities. Although many of our Summer 2020 plans have been curtailed due to the Covid-19 pandemic, there are still lots of simple pleasures to indulge in.

Renowned for its bounty of fresh fruits, veggies, and blooms, the Hudson Valley is brimming with Pick-Your-Own destinations. They offer everything from fruits and veggies to colorful flowers. Explore these destinations and snap up some healthy eats or fresh-cut bulbs to adorn your home. Beyond being an ideal and memorable experience, handpicking produce also allows for social distancing and a fresh air experience with family or close friends. Here are a few destinations worth visiting for summer and autumn 2020.

Brittany Hollow Farm, Rhinebeck, NY

Rhinebeck's Brittany Hollow Farm boasts three acres of vibrant blos-

soms. Add a dash of color to your home by arranging a bouquet of colorful flowers. They're perfect for embellishing the dinner table or bringing to a friend's home as a hostess gift. Brittany Hollow's sprawling fields are filled with more than 30 varieties of blooms. Due to the pandemic, Brittany Hollow provides guests with single-use buckets, sanitized scissors, and water. Pre-picked bouquets are available every Friday through Sunday through Labor Day weekend. The farm also offers pre-picked buckets for fetes and other events through special order.

Visit brittanyhollowfarmflowers.mystrikingly.com for the farm's policies during Covid-19.

Greig Farm, Red Hook, NY

There's always plenty to experience at Greig Farm in Red Hook. For more than 70 years, this enticing destination has been offering the bounty of Pick-Your-Own fruits and vegetables. In August, blackberries will be ripe for picking. Blueberry season will run through mid-August. Come September, over ten varieties of apples will be in abundance.

Summer 2020 marked the debut of a new community garden and

online farm market. The garden is the locale for growing flowers, veggies, and sharing gardening tips. It's located next to the koi pond by Grandiflora Garden Shop and The O Zone Sustainability Center.



There are also new walking trails, which offer two loops – a 0.9 mile loop that heads west from the homestead, and a 2.1 mile loop that heads north into the scenic orchard. The walking trails are adjacent to the farm market, so be sure to stop in to re-energize after your walk or run.

For those who prefer to order online, the online farm market entices with local goods and quick, healthy meals. Beyond the on-site art gallery, which was closed at press time due to Covid-19, several steel sculptures by artist Wilfredo Morel bring an artistic aesthetic to the farm. When tractors and equipment inevitably break throughout the year, those pieces are donated to Wilfredo, who welds (and recycles) them into impressive sculptures.

Greig Farm is actively monitoring recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and Cornell Small Farms Program.

Continued on next page ...



Above, top to bottom: Simple pleasures abound at Brittany Hollow Farm. Locals gather to trade gardening tips at the new community garden at Greig Farm. Left: Get creative at Brittany Hollow. Fashion your own bouquet of blooms and bulbs. All photos courtesy of the farms.

It has also modified its picking and checkout experiences. For more, visit greigfarm.com.

Mead Orchards, Tivoli, NY

Tivoli is home to Mead Orchards, which dates back many decades to 1916. Blueberries and tart cherries are the sweet, tasty treats available this time of year. It's easy to make Mead a day trip for the entire family. The destination offers picnic tables, which are scattered throughout the orchard. As a safety precaution during Covid-19, the tables are thoroughly sanitized after each group vacates. Hand washing sinks are also located on the premises and the orchard encourages cashless payments at this time.

Be sure to check the Covid-19 guidelines before venturing out by visiting meadorchards.com.

Rose Hill Farm, Red Hook, NY

Head to Red Hook's Rose Hill Farm for fresh fruits such as apples, cherries, blueberries, peaches, raspberries, pumpkins, and winter squash. In 2001, the New York State Agricultural Society honored this historic farm, and its previous owners Dave and Karen Fraleigh,

as the only fruit orchard among the state's ten Bicentennial Family Farms. Its history traces back to 1798 when Peter Fraleigh initially purchased the land. In 1812, he founded Rose Hill Farm. Dave and Karen are credited for launching the Pick-Your-Own business that is widely enjoyed today.

In November 2015, Bruce and Holly Brittain and Chris Belardi purchased the farm. Their shared vision includes being effective stewards of the land and preserving the natural beauty of the picturesque region. Rose Hill Farm is proud to employ environmentally sound, humane and sustainable farming practices.

This year, due to Covid-19, the farm discontinued its fruit picking buckets. Rather than picking into their own bags/containers, guests are asked to pick fruit into three sizes of single-use containers. They include small (2-quart containers that hold 3lbs of fruit); medium (4-quart containers that hold 6lbs); and large (8-quart containers that hold 12lbs).

Before visiting the farm this season, check the website for updated guidelines and best practices for health and safety. Visit pickrose-hillfarm.com.



Above, top to bottom: There are a few weeks left to enjoy blueberry picking season at Greig Farm. Rows of flowers create some serenity at Brittany Hollow Farm. Left: Summer and autumn weather are ideal for leisurely strolls. All photos courtesy of the farms.



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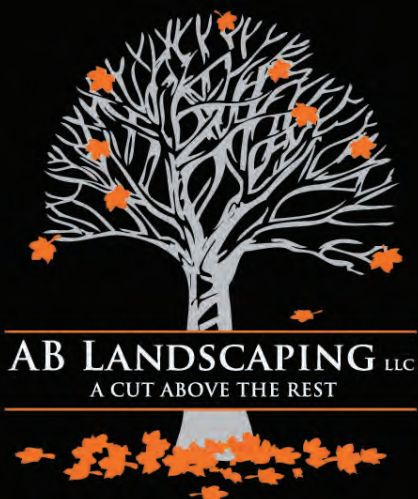
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A summer re-imagined

VIRTUAL EVENTS KEEP TRADITIONS ALIVE

By Griffin Cooper
griffin@mainstreetmag.com

If nothing else, the summer of 2020 will be remembered as the year where the season itself didn't feel like summer at all in our area. Once Memorial Day has passed, the Hudson Valley typically becomes a landscape of bustling summer camps, beaches humming with families looking to beat the heat, and local venues opening their gates and lawns to fans across the Tri-state for an evening under the stars and a selection of music and entertainment that has made the area wildly renowned. This year, in the face of a health crisis that has caused mass amounts of uncertainty and social upheaval, summer attractions have been replaced by vacant campgrounds, forlorn beach fronts, and ringing silence from concert halls and stages.

Despite the dizzying changes that have consumed daily life this summer as well as those that have prompted questions about the future, the summer of 2020 might also be remembered another way – perhaps for our adaptability. The ability of area small businesses to brook the oncoming tidal wave of hardship by adapting their models through delivery, pickup, spacial fine-tuning, and glass shields has been a cautious return to normalcy for many. Similarly, the venues whose events we mark on our calendars each summer have re-imagined their offerings by adapting to digital formats in order to allow folks to enjoy the eclectic arts and educational experiences that have come to be revered in the Hudson Valley. Here are two places who have decided to persist in their endeavor to enthrall, excite, and educate in new ways that reflect the fertile traditions of summer in the Hudson Valley.

Tanglewood

From its sprawling 529-acre campus, Tanglewood's near century-long history of world-class music and theatre productions in the foothills of the Berkshire Mountains has been the driving force behind the explosion of performing arts in our area. From high-powered musical acts like James Taylor to the Boston Symphony Orchestra, Tanglewood draws over 350,000 visitors every year. This year, the hallowed Berkshire County music venue presented a ground breaking digital series of audio and video streams dubbed the *Tanglewood 2020 Online Festival*. The online festival included newly curated content recorded at Tanglewood's Linde Center. The first-of-its-kind digital offering featured artists and programs of the originally announced 2020 Tanglewood season and were designed to capture the beauty and spirit of the Tanglewood grounds.

In addition to brand new online productions, Tanglewood has also brought its archives back to life. Tanglewood's never-before-available retrospective online content includes Boston Symphony Orchestra encore performances, a series of weekly Sunday afternoon Boston Symphony video streams, Tanglewood Music Center Orchestra encore performances, and the Tanglewood Family Concert with Circle Round with conductor Thomas Wilkins. Music legend James Taylor also makes his return to Tanglewood when he hosts and performs online in *The Best of Tanglewood on Parade*, featuring The Boston Symphony Orchestra, Boston Pops, Tanglewood Music Center Orchestra, and Boston Symphony Children's Choir with conductors Andris Nelsons, Keith Lockhart, John Williams and James Burton.

For more information on the Tanglewood 2020 Online Festival or to purchase tickets and make a donation, visit bso.org.

Noble Horizons

Situated in the charming, historic New England town of Salisbury, CT, sits one of the area's forebears in premiere elder and rehabilitative care. Since its founding in 1972, Noble Horizons has been no stranger to change and adaptability while remaining firmly on the leading edge of the latest and best ideas in residential care, setting a standard that few other retirement communities can match.

One of the aspects that sets Noble Horizons apart is the organization's inherent ability to connect with the surrounding community and it has become known for opening its doors to the public for a variety of events and seminars. From performances from celebrated local artists to discussions and presentations led by world-renowned and locally active social leaders, Noble Horizons has built an educational foundation that has stretched as far as the hills, valleys, woods, farms, and streams of Litchfield County and beyond.

In one of the most stinging realities of the past few months, nursing homes across the nation have felt perhaps the most devastating and tragic blow delivered by the spread of the coronavirus. As a result, the State of Connecticut Department of Public Health precipitated full restriction mandates on all visitors to nursing homes as far back as March. Noble Horizons has since postponed all in-person community events until further notice. Still, restriction mandates have not stopped the Noble community from extending its highly-regarded event offerings to the public via Zoom and a digital format.

Events in July included Hotchkiss School instructor Carita Gardiner who partnered with Noble Horizons to offer a "virtual book club" in which participants read the Pulitzer Prize-winning novel, *Less*, by Andrew Sean Greer. *Less* was a national bestseller, and on the *New York Times*, *Washington Post* and *San Francisco Chronicle*

top book lists for 2017.

Studio Lakeville's Leslie Eckstein has reached out to those in the community who may not be able to be active by offering a free digital Senior Workout Class. The class takes place each Wednesday from 1-1:30pm and focuses on enhancing strength, flexibility, and balance. In a show of educational strength, Noble Horizons welcomed community leader Dr. Mary O'Neill who hosted a four-week Zoom series on the pillars of Stoicism and how its themes provide the tools needed to examine central questions of life, especially in the time of COVID. Dr. O'Neill used her own lauded philosophical approach to guide class members in a participant-led discussion of Stoic themes to examine questions of death, adversity, and virtue – themes very present in our COVID world.

Noble also hosted four-time Noble Peace Prize nominee, global humanitarian, executive director of the Albert Schweitzer Institute, and author, whose book was just nominated for a Pulitzer Prize, David Ives in early July. Ives shared his incredible and moving story with participants.

In August, Hotchkiss instructor Dr. Thomas Fisher, PhD will host a digital course on Civil Disobedience courtesy of Noble Horizons. Also, as the summer presses on, Charlotte Sheridan, owner of Merwin Farm and Home, an eclectic home furnishings and interior decor shop in Millerton, NY, will host a live Zoom workshop dedicated to crafting artful items designed to enhance the look of most any country home or cottage.

For more information on Noble Horizons' variety of online event offerings, visit noblehorizons.org/events-calendar.html. •

Please go to our website, www.mainstreetmag.com to read about other businesses and organizations who are offering virtual events at this time.



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By CB Wismar
info@mainstreetmag.com

The images with this article show hikes and the woods from our region. Photos courtesy of Anna Martucci.

It was as if, one morning, without any warning, we arose to find the world a different place.

Because, it was.

Almost overnight, we acquired a new lexicon of terms and a distant geographic awareness that crash landed at home. Wuhan. Bergamo. Social distancing. Shelter in place. Virtual ... everything.

It was March, after all, and the notion of being house-bound seemed inconvenient, but somehow tolerable. The stores were open, so there was food. There were some shelves that were often empty, but the essentials were there.

The streaming services on our television sets offered up series to binge and the newly quaint way of communicating known as “Zoom” seemed to facilitate keeping in touch ... with the office, the family, and cultural and religious institutions desperately trying to stay afloat.

It was only going to last for a few weeks. Or, was it?

...Life in the Woods

After a month of numbing television, we glanced through the books on our shelves looking for something that would engage, then crawled up into the attic to see if – perchance – the boxes of volumes from high school and college might yield more than clouds of dust and a few squirming silverfish.

There, near the bottom of the pile was the paperback. *Walden, or Life in the Woods*. Henry David Thoreau. A quick read. Might be good for a few pithy quotes and some solace from the Concord, MA, philosopher who lived in a tiny cabin by a pond for a year ... not because he had to social distance ... but because he could.

“I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived.”

March turned into April. The days crept a bit longer with Daylight Saving Time and the barren trees of winter began to display their buds, then mint green leaves. We

ventured out – for more than a furtive drive to the local market to get frozen pizzas and milk and, if we were very lucky, paper towels and toilet paper.

And, the scenery flowing by our car windows offered an invitation to engage in activities that many of us had left behind years ago.

“Let’s go for a walk.”

“Do the bikes in the barn have air in the tires?”

“The parks are closed ... but the trails are open.”

A network of...

The Tri-state area is laced with hiking trails and networked with roads that entice bikers ... not just the intensely concentrating quartets and trios resplendent in Italian and French cycling team jerseys and helmets that come to a point in the back ... but those who pumped up

Continued on next page ...

the tires, put a few drops of oil on the chain and set out to spend a few hours going from Lakeville to Salisbury on the Railroad Ramble or trying their luck on the Harlem Valley Rail Trail.

We stepped out of the house, laced up our walking shoes and discovered mystical nearby places with names like High Falls, Bash Bish, Umpachene Falls, Pine Knob, and Lion's Head, to say nothing of the more familiar Appalachian Trail and Mohawk Trail that ribbon through the region.

"Heaven is under our feet as well as over our heads."

Of course there are considerations. There always are.

Considerations

Pedaling on back roads requires a sense of surroundings and awareness of the approaching pick-up or SUV or, it seems more and more, the silent Tesla. Riding in single file and keeping to the right edge of the road is highly recommended as a well-used Roadmaster with a wicker basket on the handlebars is no match for a 2500-pound motorized vehicle.

When hiking, comfort is essential – good shoes and socks and, perhaps a hiking stick to assist and steady. And, don't forget the insect repellent. Doing a thorough check for ticks this time of year is highly recommended. We may be avoiding COVID-19, but in so doing, it's not advisable to emerge with Lyme Disease or the associated "-osis" maladies.

But venturing out has bountiful rewards. Eliminating the couch-burn that has come along with mainlining *Downton Abbey*, *NCIS*, and *Arrested Development* is certainly one of them. Breathing deep the crisp New England air is another. Discovering the placid beauty of the fierce majesty of Kaaterskill Falls or serenity of Cream Hill Lake certainly makes the list.

"A lake is a landscape's most beautiful and expressive feature. It is Earth's eye; looking into which the beholder measures the depth of his own nature."

So, arise! If there are no bicycles in the garage, there are sales and rental stores throughout the region that will gladly help you regain the confidence you had as a 13-year-



old, pedaling through the neighborhood with abandon. There are even "electric bicycles" designed to provide the assist that aging knees would welcome on hills.

As for hiking, find your way to the various websites provided by the local counties throughout New York, Massachusetts, and Connecticut. Trails are not only detailed and documented, but rated for difficulty and, in a time when everyone can be a critic, evaluated by those who have gone before.

And when the adventure is done for the day, take a moment to reflect on the wisdom and clarity of the bard of Concord, Henry David ...

"I left the woods for as good a reason as I went there. Perhaps it seemed to me that I had several more lives to live and could not spare any more time for that one."



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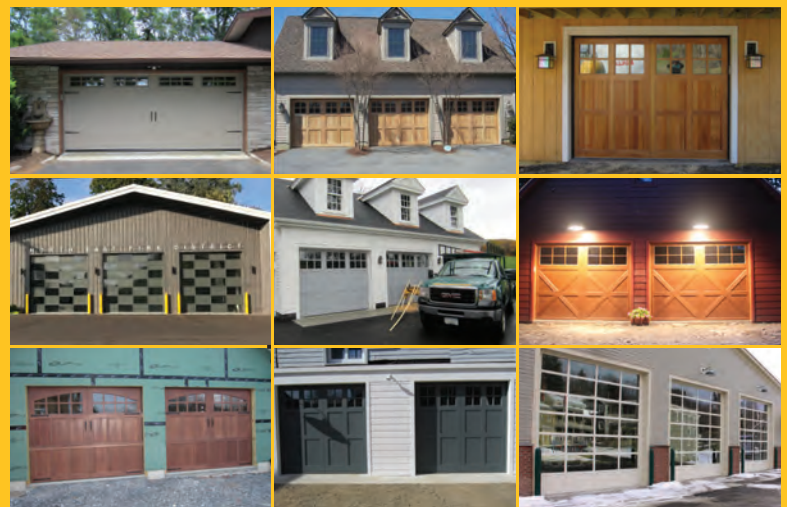
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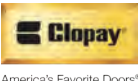
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Art Revival

THE STISSING CENTER'S ARTS CENTER HAS A LONG HISTORY OF SERVING THE COMMUNITY

By Regina Molaro
info@mainstreetmag.com

Many Hudson Valley businesses and locals eagerly embrace and celebrate culture, the arts, and the community. It's in that same spirit that the late Mary Ellen Lapham Saunders – who was once a resident of Pine Plains, NY – planted the seeds for what would later evolve into The Stissing Center, an arts center that sits in the shadow of Stissing Mountain.

Raised by her grandparents in Pine Plains, Lapham Saunders shared many of the values and ideologies that currently guide Hudson Valley residents. She eventually married an affluent architect who hailed from the Bronx. Upon her passing, the philanthropist left an endowment to the Pine Plains community.

"The endowment was intended to be used for entertainment, as a town hall, Masonic temple, and a center of civic life in Dutchess County," says Brian Keeler, executive director, The Stissing Center.

Creating history

The building, which was initially called Memorial Hall, was built in 1915 and presented to the community in honor of Lapham Saunders' grandparents John and Elizabeth McIntyre. The generous gift was intended to serve as a destination for hosting social functions.

Although Lapham Saunders' left a considerable amount of funding for ongoing maintenance of Memorial Hall, an unfortunate accident that occurred on the premises claimed the

lives of two construction workers. "The money went to the families of the people who died and the town took the hall over," says Keeler.

From 1915 to 1935, the building housed a movie theater that presented silent films. In fact, it was one of the first in the area to offer sound. Nearly 200 guests attended the opening show, which presented *The Wedding Night*, which starred Gary Cooper and Anna Sten. The theater also served as a testing site for first-run films before they made their splashy debuts in Manhattan. The theater's showing of *Gone with the Wind* in 1940 was one of the first in the area.

During WWII, the movie theater was used as an armory for the 1st and 2nd platoons of Company G, 1st Infantry, New York Guard. It was later divided into rooms, which local organizations utilized as meeting spaces. Unfortunately, the various groups and churches fled over the years and Memorial Hall lost most of its financial support. The movie theater remained in existence until 1965.

In 1975, the building was converted into the Pine Mall shopping mall. After nearly two decades, it ceased operation and the property remained abandoned for 35 years.

New beginning

In 2015, three visionaries from the community – Jack Banning; the late Christian Eisenbeiss, who owned the Stissing House; and Ariel Schlein, co-founder of Dutch's Spirits distillery purchased the property at auction. The 501(c)3 non-profit organization, Pine Plains Memorial Hall, Inc. was created to renovate and operate the building.



Photo by Paul Clemence

Above: The façade of The Stissing Center in Pine Plains. Below, left: Many talented artists create music on this lovely piano. Photos courtesy by Paul Clemence, courtesy of The Stissing Center.

In 2019, it was unveiled under the current name, The Stissing Center. Its mission: "To Impact. Partner. Create. The Stissing Center seeks to positively impact the community by partnering with individuals, organizations, and artists to create meaningful programs, events, and opportunities."

It has been a labor of love. During the past five years, The Stissing Center has hosted various fundraisers to raise revenue to renovate and create a performance space and kitchen to be used for community needs.

It's inaugural Benefit Concert debuted September 7, 2019 with American Jazz artist, Wynton Marsalis who has created and performed an expansive range of music from quartets to big bands, chamber music ensembles to symphony orchestras, and tap dance to ballet.

Although 20 events were planned for 2020, The Stissing Center shifted gears in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic. After cancelling its performance schedule, The Stissing Center unveiled *The Chair Series* and *LIVE! From The Stissing Center!* – both on-line virtual concerts series.

"We took that time as an opportunity to continue construction. Our Plan B includes doing limited video-taping of performances to share with

our community and supporters," says Keeler.

The Chair Series, which is sponsored by Nuvance Health and their Safe Care Campaign, invites a wide variety of artists to come to The Stissing Center and sit in a chair to host a short performance in an empty space. *The LIVE! From The Stissing Center!* performances, are full-length chamber music recitals are live streamed.

A new performance of *The Chair Series* debuts every ten days. Past performances include Eugenia Zukerman, Natalia Zukerman, Jake Holmes and Bruce Molsky. At press time, the next *LIVE! From The Stissing Center!* livestream performance was scheduled for July 25.

"Like all small towns across the country, Pine Plains can be very economically and socially diverse. Our goal is to have a place for people of all different backgrounds and ideologies, to gather and share the human experience. They can come to laugh, cry, dance and celebrate together," concludes Keeler. Tickets are priced affordably and range from \$3 to \$30. The tickets for fundraising events are offered at a higher price range. •



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Sowing the seeds of Local economic regrowth

By Andrea Simmons
info@mainstreetmag.com

Let's be honest, the last few months really gave us an opportunity to think about our lives and our communities in a way many of us never have before. If we can agree on one thing it's that we have a strong will to survive and rebuild the path to support our local small town economies.

To support one another is the best survival tool we have.

We went from embracing our beloved normality and behavior to having to make drastic changes overnight. It felt like time stood still. Everything was put on hold until "further notice." Small businesses were closed in the blink of an eye. People couldn't get transportation, medical supplies, and many other necessities weren't easily obtainable any more.

Will we need water? What about food or money; even toilet paper?!

It was scary to think how much we depended on companies and big business outside of the United States when in reality, our small town shops and individual-owned businesses carried many of the supplies we use every day.

How did it come to this? Was it more convenient for us? Cost effective? Or just, easier?

Every one of us experienced the effects of COVID-19 in a unique and personal way. It is easy to find a paral-

lel with family members, friends, and colleagues on the similarities of the many different practices we utilized. For example, we checked on the neighbors next door whom we never really talked to much before; just to ask if they were OK, or if they needed anything. Younger family members shopped, delivered, and completed errands for our elderly relatives. We phoned, texted, Zoomed, made rainbows, educated our children, turned parts of our homes into offices while we turned others into gyms, and learned to adapt to a different way of life. We knew our dogs and cats were very confused as to why we were home so much, but they didn't seem to mind the extra treats and attention. What seemed like endless days turned into endless weeks... Sometimes I still have to ask myself, "Is this real life?" It is a scary and uncertain time for all of us. But, how we begin to rebuild our lives and support our community is a priority.

Buy and shop local

I have always been a supporter of buying and shopping locally. I didn't move to Columbia County in New York by accident. I chose to make my life here. My children are what I like to say "locally grown." It is a place of community, peace, and belonging. It motivates me to keep moving forward by finding ways to expand my knowledge of what our community really has to offer and sharing that information with others. When we put our money into locally-owned and independent businesses, a larger portion of that money stays within our community and it strengthens our local economy.

So I ask you to think about some ways you were able to support the community while in quarantine. Was it ordering take-out from restaurants?



Above: The Turtle Tree team sowing peas. Below, left: Robuschka beets. Photos courtesy of Lia Babitch.



Was it purchasing a share from a CSA in advance? Did you buy those everyday items that local shops and grocers were still able to mail out or deliver while desperately trying to keep their businesses afloat? Whichever the route you chose, it was important to you - and to our community.

I'm no saint here. While my family supported local as much as we could, there were the months when farm stands were not open, gardens weren't ready to be planted, and sometimes money was just - well - tight. Most of the time options were limited and big business usually won, especially when it came to produce and other foods.

I remember looking at every-day items and foods that I used, and scanning the labels to see where they were from. I was astonished by how many of them were from overseas, and I was very surprised to find many things that were made in the USA. It made me want to research exactly what products were made in the USA, and where I could find those products locally. I quickly realized this would take some time and that starting in a

specific category was the way to go. So if I have to start somewhere then food was the place.

Made in the USA

As the cold winter days dwindled and temperatures became ideal, many of us started gardens because it was an opportunity. It's an opportunity because it is our hobby, an opportunity to teach our children sustainability and cultivation of the land, and even another opportunity to help flatten the curve by not leaving our homes and going to our backyards or patios for nourishment. There is no wait line in our backyard garden, no wondering if what you need will be on the shelf that day, and not wondering how many hands have touched your food. Most of all, you know *where* your food is coming from.

Have you looked at the stickers on your fruits and vegetables? I found myself staring long and hard at a spaghetti squash that was gently nestled next to a bunch of bananas and avocados in awe of how far they traveled to reach their destination to

Continued on next page ...

my kitchen, and the carbon footprint that was left after that trip.

Starting with seeds

Growing my own food gives me peace of mind knowing where the food that will nourish my family and me is from. I can say the same when buying from farm stands, Farmers Markets, and CSAs. Even opportunities like Field Goods are great options. I'm no gardening expert; in my earlier growing days, I didn't have much luck or patience. Every year I try my hand at growing a small garden. These days my plants are usually bought at the same local greenhouse that I've been using for several years. Sometimes I have luck and grow beautiful produce and sometimes its trial and error. I have tried seeds bought from packets at the usual big business stores, but I never thought about paying attention to where the seeds were from. I guess I'm guilty of putting too much trust into the colorful, easy-to-use and convenient seed packets set out before me. I decided what better way to start the "growing your own" local journey than to start with the seed.

In the quaint lake town of Copake, NY, you can find a life-sharing community called Camphill Village, USA, and nestled within the village is Turtle Tree Seed. I had the opportunity to speak with farmer Lia Babitch.

Who is Turtle Tree Seed and what is your mission?

Our mission is to improve the quality, variety, and availability of biodynamic seeds and to promote and provide a

seed supply from diversified biodynamic farms and gardens. We work with our own garden team at Camphill Village and with small biodynamic growers across the country to improve the quality and availability of biodynamic and organic open-pollinated seeds. We are a part of Camphill Village, and all our seed growing and cleaning includes people who have developmental differences.

Are all seeds created equal?

Because we and our other seed growers are growing relatively small batches of each variety, we are able to give them a lot of individual attention. Growing them on an organic and biodynamic farm or garden means that they aren't overly coddled – we don't dump on lots of chemical fertilizers. Our plants need to learn to get their nutrients on their own from the soil. It's like the difference between eating fast-food take-out and making home-cooked meals. It takes more effort, but we all know what's ultimately better for our families! The same applies to seeds. If you don't want to use a lot of chemicals in your garden, then you should definitely buy seeds that haven't been grown to expect them.

What are the benefits of knowing where your seeds come from and growing your own food?

Aside from the reasons above, knowing that your seed comes from a place with similar growing conditions to your garden means it's already adjusted to your climate, so it should do better for you. And by knowing that you are buying seeds from organic and biodynamic sources you can be certain that you aren't buying GMO contaminated seed (organic and biodynamic = no GMOs) and that you aren't causing "upstream" pollution from toxic chemicals. Because seeds are not classified in the same way as food crops, more harmful chemicals are allowed in their production.

Do you find that many of your customers are local farmers, first time farmers, or other?

Most of our customers are home gardeners, but many farms and CSAs (Community Supported Agriculture



Above, top to bottom: One of the favorites to grow in any garden are tomatoes. Photo: istockphoto.com contributor Denisfilm. Glass gem corn. Below, left: Calendular flowers, immature and mature seeds. Photos courtesy of Lia Babitch.

farms) buy seeds from us as well. Our biggest customer base is right here in New York State, but our second biggest is California – and we have sold seeds in all 50 states and most US territories as well.

What is the most beneficial part of using biodynamic and organic practices for your business and your customers?

There are so many! Your plants will already be used to life without chemical dependency, so you won't need to buy those, you will know that your seeds haven't caused pollution, and you know that they have been actively beneficial to the earth – protecting pollinators, sequestering carbon, building topsoil, creating habitat, and healthy ecosystems, and also creating great and healthy working environments for those who have grown them.

It's August; is there still an opportunity for individuals to grow

a garden to be ready for harvest in the fall?

You can definitely grow lots of greens like arugula, lettuce, spinach, herbs like dill and cilantro, and even radishes and peas in your garden starting in late August. These will give you things to enjoy well into October, or even November with a little row cover to protect them from frosts.

It was a great opportunity to learn more about Turtle Tree Seed and all it has to offer for gardeners and farmers in the local community. I look forward to exploring other local individual businesses and small town shops in the journey to expand my knowledge and share all our local community has to offer. •

You can learn more about Turtle Tree Seed at www.turtletreeseed.org or email turtle@turtletreeseed.org. As of September you can also request a 2021 paper catalog, available in late November, by calling (518) 329-3037 and leaving your postal address.



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Old Rhinebeck Aerodrome

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After its founding in 1958 and subsequent establishing as a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, the Old Rhinebeck Aerodrome in Rhinebeck, NY, has proven the history of human engineered flight is alive and well in the Hudson Valley and the surrounding area. The Aerodrome's mission remains preserving, restoring, and flying the aircraft of the Pioneer, WWI, and Golden Ages of Aviation. "We specialize in capturing imaginations," says Mike Fisher, secretary for the Aerodrome. "We've welcomed folks and fellow aviators from as far away as Europe, Asia and Australia. We have decided to resume air shows in 2021. To help us get there, we are fundraising at oldrhinebeck.org/2020. The Museum is open and we are doing biplane rides." Rhinebeck's historic flight museum is a rare find indeed for all comers in the Hudson Valley, for it is only one of a few flight museums across the globe that actually hosts airshows with the historic planes on show. The Aerodrome hosts thirty shows a year and folks can even fly in 1929 bi-plane and participate in chartered lighthouse tours. "Everyday our mission remains the same, to keep our historic artifacts flying," says Fisher. "The greatest joy comes in watching people rediscover flight." Though for many of us today, flying can be purely a mode of travel, historic destinations like the Old Rhinebeck Aerodrome revive the myth and magic of flight as well as its phenomenal history.



Native Habitat Restoration

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Business partners Jess Toro and Sari Hoy started Native Habitat Restoration in 2010 because of their passion and commitment for improving the health of the environment. Jess, a biologist, brought 11 years of experience as a land manager for a conservation organization focused on rare species and biodiversity conservation. After receiving a Master's degree in Ecological Landscape Design from the Conway School, Sari gained hands-on experience with traditional and organic invasive plant removal techniques. Jess and Sari combined their complimentary expertise to form a unique business specializing in invasive species management and the restoration of rare, endangered, and compromised habitats. Many of our wetlands, floodplain forests, woodlands, and open fields have been overwhelmed with invasive vines, shrubs, and trees reducing the health of these areas and their ability to support native plants and animals. The concept of how to successfully steward land, combined with the expense, can be daunting for landowners. Native Habitat can help! With 40 year of experience, they offer free site visits to discuss appropriate land management activities, match landowners with grant opportunities where possible, and implement the work. Appropriate land management helps improve the health of our forests, wetlands, grasslands, and the wildlife.



Silver Mountain Builders

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Owner Kevin Rooney began what would become his life-long career as a mason's tender at the age of 16. After moving to Vermont in 1976, he landed a job with a great builder who did everything from the ground up – from excavation to framing to finish work. It was an experience that allowed him to acquire a wealth of knowledge and an invaluable range of skills. Within two years he became foreman and began working with master craftsman making furniture, cabinets, and classic architectural millwork. In 1981, Kevin started his own business after moving back to the Hudson Valley. After 40+ years, Silver Mountain Builders has the experience and proficiency to provide any service in the construction process from excavation and foundations to the finest finish work, as well as property management and landscaping. Kevin's specialty is authentic restoration of period homes and reproduction of classically designed new homes. That being said, the company happily takes on small jobs to accommodate residents' needs. Rooney's three sons, Brendan, Kealan, and John, work with him on projects and each brings different talents and skills to the table. They are all passionate about design in all areas which has given birth to specialty subsidiary companies – All-Season Roofing & Siding and Stonehenge Artisan Works which offers exceptional stonework and masonry services. The Rooney's enjoy incorporating traditional designs for modern living.



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INSURING YOUR WORLD

Covid-19 has caused many to rethink the way their businesses are conducted. Many workers have been forced to work from home on their computers which, as the pandemic continues, seems like it may be establishing a new norm for many industries as well as how we personally conduct business. As is the case whenever there is a change in common practices, there are inherent liabilities. The increased telephonic and internet use opens all businesses, as well as individuals, to CYBER LIABILITY! Did you know that small businesses fear cyber incidents over 50% more than any other type of claim when considering business income loss? What are the five main causes of economic loss after a cyber incident? The number one cause is business interruption caused by the impact on digital supply chains that causes revenue loss. Number two is loss of reputation due to a data breach whereby individuals lose faith in the businesses that they are doing business with. The number three cause of loss is a liability claim after a data breach due to a bodily injury type of claim or personal injury. Number four is the restoration and or reinstatement of data loss which can be very difficult to restore to original condition as well as extremely expensive. And lastly, number five are fines and penalties levied by State and Federal agencies which can be enormous. So, as we always advise, give your agent a call and have a discussion about purchasing a cyber liability insurance policy!



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FINDING YOUR STYLE: TIPS FOR FINDING ITEMS THAT DEFINE YOU

The right decor can say a lot about us, our passions, influences, and overall style. Whether modern or vintage, unique items have a story to tell and can add to the distinct theme or motif of your favorite spaces. With this in mind, here are a few helpful tips for the next time you decide to venture out on the hunt for the perfect accent to your unique style.

Have a Plan: Shopping can be an overwhelming experience for even the most savvy browser so it can help to start out with a rough outline of what you're looking for. Develop a strategy, make a list of the types of items you are in search of whether they are specific or simply genre-related, i.e. rustic or modern. A list will not only help you stay focused, it can also prevent overspending on items that may not fit your style.

Patience is a Virtue: Though life is always hectic to some degree, giving yourself enough time to explore antique and thrift stores is advantageous for any decorator. Walk slowly and walk through twice are two great shopping principles to live by. Use your list as a reference but keep yourself open to design exploration – this will typically lead to the best finds.

Cash is King: Even when we find a piece to fall in love with, we still want the best price. Most area businesses want to work with you in this regard – simply asking is the best strategy. Bringing cash will often yield the better deal, not to mention it will keep you within your budget. Most of all, enjoy the experience and have fun finding your style!



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The Best Financial Advice in a COVID World

The world has taken dramatic turns due to the Coronavirus, and personal finances for millions have been affected. Financial advisors have been fielding questions from investors ranging from market gyrations to lost income to retirement insecurity. Of all the advice given to their clients there is one insight that is universally applicable, and that is to have an ample emergency fund. Shockingly, people from all income strata seem to fail at this financial planning basic.

Families living paycheck-to-paycheck is sadly not news, however many that can avoid this problem. Pre-Covid, most financial advisors suggested at least three months, preferably six months of living expenses banked. In a Covid world, increasing that to 12 months is becoming the new standard. Nearly every consumer and investor can look at their budget and reallocate expenditures from nice-to-haves to their emergency fund. The experts encourage looking literally at every expense for possible reductions, from housing to the cable bill to rarely used subscriptions. As they say, every penny counts and even looking at items that you have not used or worn in years can be sold and proceeds deposited to the emergency fund. The Coronavirus will not be the last time an outside event wreaks financial havoc, but your emergency fund is something you can control to better cope with the next occurrence.

Nicholas W. Stuller is the Founder and CEO of www.MyPerfectFinancialAdvisor.com, the premier matchmaker between investors and financial advisors and author of "The Truth Shall Set Your Wallet Free: Secrets to Finding the Perfect Financial Advisor."

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Community Support for Animals and Pet Owners in Need

The Hudson Valley is one picturesque vista after another, many including views of rolling hills, farms, and all kinds of animals. Well-meaning passersby might see two horses in a field with swaybacks, so the spine and ribs protrude. They also see that same golden retriever running along the road again. Once home, their neighbor's dog barks incessantly from inside the house. Obviously the owners of these animals are neglectful, right?!

Sometimes, it's not easy to tell if an animal is being neglected or abused. The swayback horses just might be old and despite a good diet, their body is naturally aging.

What to do if you suspect a case of animal neglect or abuse:

- Try to find the owner and talk with them. Maybe the owners of the loose dog don't realize that the electric fence is not working. Maybe the barking dog has separation anxiety.
- Call the Dutchess County SPCA Community Relations Director. A field team can be sent out to assess the situation and determine how best to help the pet owner.
- If you believe it is truly a case of abuse or neglect, call the DCSPCA humane law office, your local animal control officer, or the police to open an investigation.

The Dutchess County SPCA provides services to the community including a pet food pantry, free rabies clinics, pet retention assistance, low interest loans for pet medical care and safety-net pet housing.

For more information: www.dcsPCA.org



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