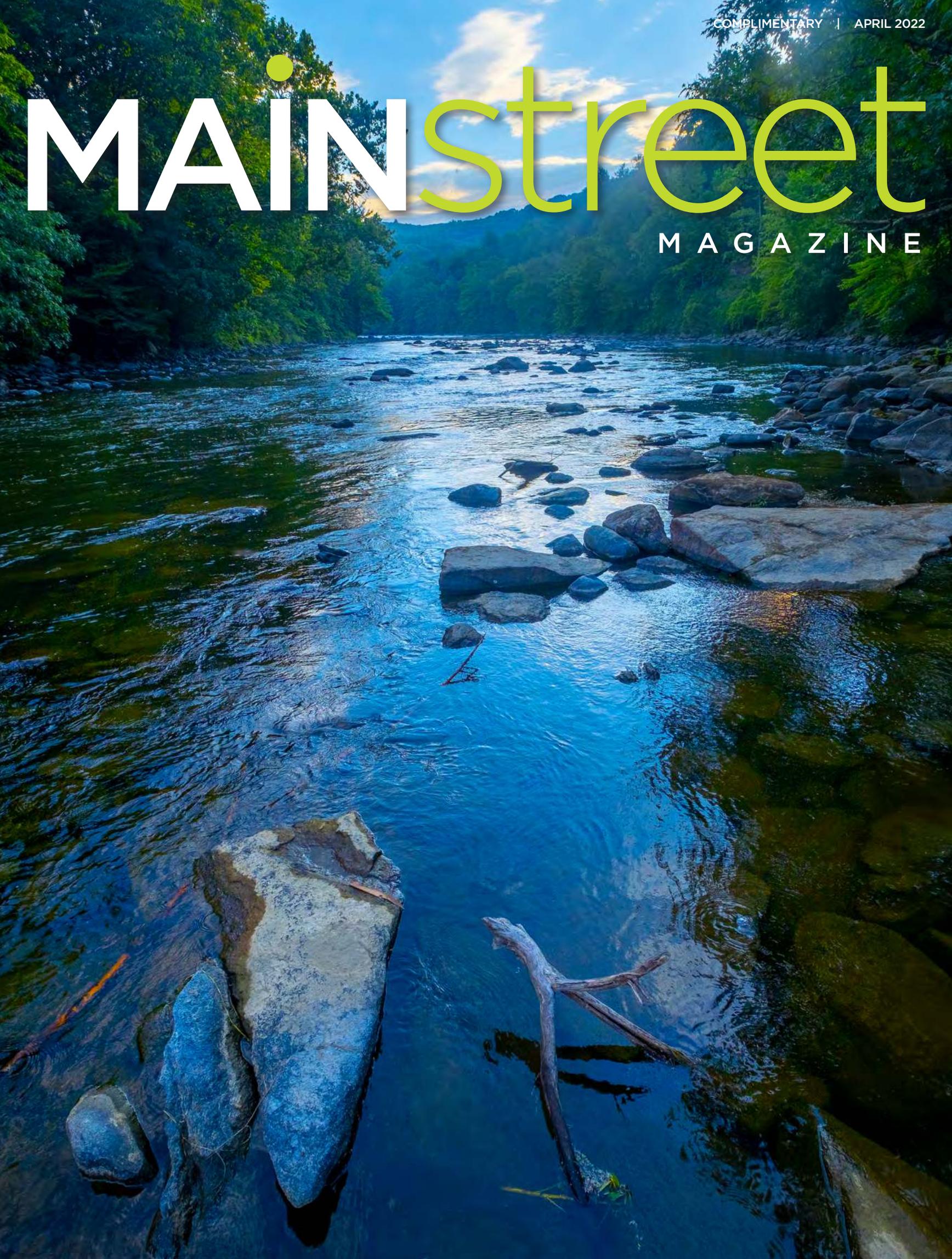


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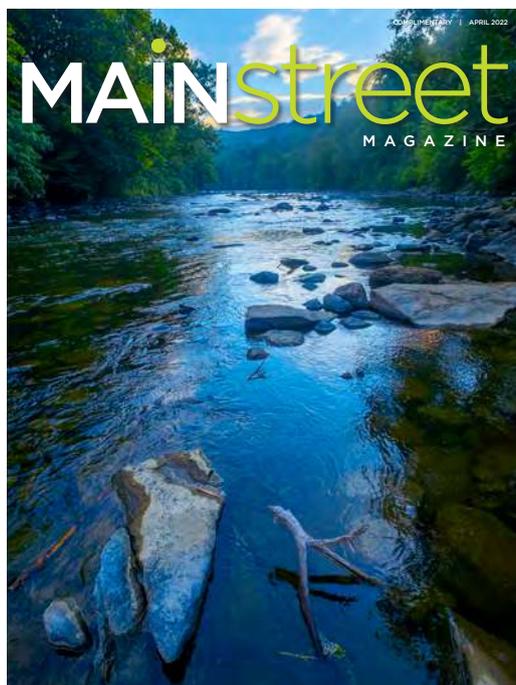
HAPPY EARTH DAY MONTH

On April 22 we will celebrate Earth Day. But frankly, we should celebrate every single day. Should we not? Perhaps you'd like to take on a challenge this month, to help take steps towards being more environmentally-friendly? These steps do not have to be all-encompassing nor all-consuming. You don't have to completely overhaul your life - unless you want to. There are so many things that each and every one of us can do to make a difference. Let me give you a "for example" and that is when it comes to gift-giving, think of gifting an experience or shopping second-hand or antiques. Do you know how many posh second-hand items there are? (Read Regina's article for awesome environmentally-friendly gift-giving ideas). Or when it comes to your home, there are so many small "tweaks" that you can make that can not only help our environment, but that can save you some serious dough at the end of the year. (Check out Laurie's article with more details on the "hows" and "whys").

I feel it is important to add that I do practice what I preach, or I try to. In my household we make sure to always shut off lights when leaving a room; we leave our thermostat at a reasonable temperature; we try to create minimal waste; over the years we have shifted more and more to a vegetarian-based diet when possible; and when I go grocery shopping, I always bring my own bags and never use the single-use plastic to bag my produce (unless it is absolutely necessary). Those are just a few of the ways that my family tries to make a difference every day. But there are so things that we can all do.

I'd be remiss if I didn't also discuss here the fact that you are most likely reading these very words on a printed magazine. I recently received a phone call from a reader in California (yes, all the way in California) and she wanted to discuss my paper and ink choices. As I happily informed her, this magazine is printed, and has been from our first issue, using soy-based ink, and my printer (Snyder Printer in Troy, NY) is always trying their best to stay as environmentally-friendly as possible. But it doesn't change the fact that this magazine is printed on paper. This is true, and I can't deny that. But this is also why we offer this magazine - these very words - in digital formats too. You can always read our magazine on our website and social media. No printing, no paper, no ink required. I think that as long as we all try our very best, and make earnest attempts to make incremental changes, they will eventually result in large-scale changes for the greater good. Together we can!

- Thorunn Kristjansdottir



APRIL 2022

The beauty, the wonder, the gift that is Mother Nature. Nurture and take care of her. Happy Earth Day month!

Cover photo by
Lazlo Gyorsok

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SIMPLY EXTRA- ORDINARY

STEPHEN GREEN-ARMYTAGE

By *CB Wismar*
info@mainstreetmag.com

Stephen Green-Armytage offers a most profound perspective on life, his career and the advice he would give to young would-be photographers. “You don’t always know what there is to learn until you learn it.”

That may be a spin on the traditional, “I don’t know what I don’t know...” but the hunger to learn, to experience and to venture into uncharted creative territory has stood Stephen well in his illustrious career.

Born in Bath, England at a time when that celebrated city was, in his words, “sleepy,” he took to photography at an early age. “We had a dark-room in our home. My brothers and sister used it as did I. I wasn’t thinking of photography as a vocation, but rather an engaging hobby.”

It was only after he became a student at Cambridge that the notion of pursuing photography as a lifelong adventure crossed his mind. It was long before the days of digital photography – the evolved form that now rests on millions of cellular phones and allows everyone to presume they are talented photographers. It was the day of transparencies and negatives ... of 35mm cameras and large format devices that allowed the creative eye to explore the world in detail.

On graduation, Stephen was off to London where he put in his time working in a studio with three profes-

sional photographers. He was the assistant – the indispensable figure doing all of the support functions required for advertising photography – curating the props, adjusting the lighting, loading film in the cameras, occasionally making the tea. The hours were long, the work far from creatively fulfilling, but the learning experience was priceless. “You continue to learn, continue to develop the skills that permit you to make correct choices quickly.”

Having absorbed as much information, technique, contacts and tips that he could, Green-Armytage was ready to venture out on his own. As a freelance photographer, he explored the marketplace he understood – advertising campaigns.

It was a course adjustment that took him into the world of magazine photography where the assignments were more vital, more engaging, and more demanding. Whether weekly or monthly, the magazines needed photographic images that were dynamic ... interesting to the readers.

America calling

His interest engaged and his skills becoming recognized, Stephen Green-Armytage took stock of the London publishing scene and realized the dream that had been ignited by American photographers he had met when they were on assignment in England. New York was the capital of the magazine world, and Stephen was ready to challenge the market.

Recognition and assignments came early in his newly adopted city. *Sports Illustrated* was a weekly publication that had a great hunger for strong photography. 160 assignments later, Stephen can reflect on the challenges presented and the vast experiences he accumulated over the years. “I did very little news coverage for *Sports Illustrated*,” he recalls. Perhaps ten of those assignments were news stories – and those focused on golf, horse racing, and fishing. I was assigned features – Wimbledon, Saratoga, St. Andrews, the Super Bowl ... not the game, but the atmospherics that surrounded the events.”

The list of publications that relied on Stephen’s keen eye and ability to capture special moments grew rapidly to include *Fortune*, *Life*, *Travel & Leisure*, *The Smithsonian*, and *Good Housekeeping* among others. The latter publication sent him to photograph celebrity homes and the unique owners who occupied them. His unique presentation of celebrity portraits gained him an appreciative editorial following.

A Terrier named Dudley

In between assignments, Green-Armytage did not set aside his cameras. There was a family pet – a Jack Russel Terrier named Dudley – who charmed the family with his antics. Stephen began recording Dudley’s various moods and postures – much the same as any dotting owner would snap photos of their revered pets. The difference for Dudley was that the portfolio of his energetic images evolved into a 36



page children’s book.

“The normal way for a photographer to get the attention of publishers was through portfolio presentations by their agents. In the case of Dudley, I went straight to the children’s division of Harry Abrams and presented my work – images and text.” Harry Abrams editors loved the idea, accepted the book and began a chain of volumes that continues to entertain and amaze. The experience began to change a portion of the publishing culture. Editors were directed to not restrict their attention to agents, only.

Then, there were the extraordinary chickens

Green-Armytage had done a piece for *Life* magazine on chickens. The subject matter may not immediately set the imagination on fire, but the images he took are stunning and the photos grew into a book – *Extraordinary Chickens* – that was very well received. Following tomes explored more exotic birds and ended up on coffee tables, the images migrating to calendars ... 20 years of them as of this writing.

Then, there was *Extraordinary Pigs*. “They may not be beautiful, but the subject is surprisingly interesting and readers are charmed by the piglets,” demurs Green-Armytage. And, although he highlighted creatures and did most of the research and writing for his books, he worked with botanist Dennis Schrader on a vibrant tome *Extraordinary Leaves*. There are currently eight of Stephen’s magical books available on the usual sources. If your tastes run more to French, several have been translated.

Incredible talent. Wide-ranging work.

From his start in advertising through the assignments with *Sports Illustrated* – “I worked with them from the days when they focused on what sportsmen did, not simply events that had scores” – Stephen was never limited by the subject matter or, for that matter, the challenge of the task. He’s done impressive layouts for resort hotels employing drone photography and shooting the interiors of properties that demanded sophisticated lighting.

His portrait photography of world



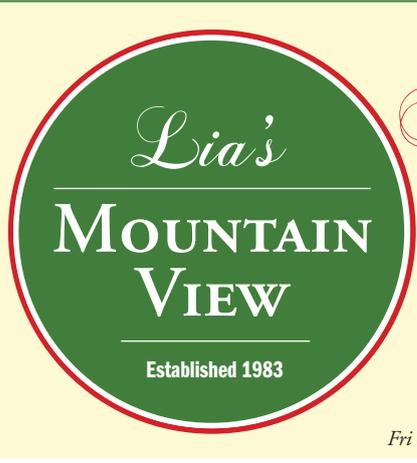
famous athletes – from Jack Nicolous and Arnold Palmer to Billie Jean King – led to portrait work for the Shah of Iran, First Ladies of the United States and, his most notable shoot, Andre the Giant. *Sports Illustrated* didn’t normally cover wrestling, but Andre was such a unique character that Green-Armytage welcomed the opportunity to capture 7’4” French wrestler Andre Rene Roussimoff in his size 58 shoes.

The road ahead

The advice to learn whatever there is to learn is a staple of Green-Armytage’s advice to young photographers. Although he followed the once traditional route of being a studio assistant, Stephen recognizes that there are excellent schools that teach not only the fundamentals of photography, but the detail needed to succeed in a highly competitive, demanding profession. “What I did was not sensible,” he asserts. “I was not attracted to fashion photography or simply studio work. I learned from experts and followed my

own path.” Concentrating on gallery presentations as his next frontier, Green-Armytage has begun reaching out to galleries across the country, sharing glimpses of his incredible talent as introduction to bringing an entirely new audience to his work. The response should be ... simply extraordinary. ●

Stephen Green-Armytage’s work can be explored and enjoyed on his website, www.stephengreenarmytage.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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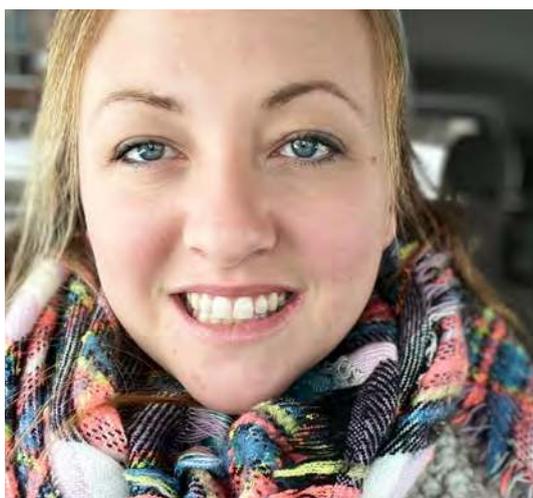

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Sari Hoy formed Native Habitat Restoration with her business partner Jess Toro in 2010. Together, they focus on restoring native habitat back to a healthy, functional ecosystem. “Often, we see native plants return within the first year of work,” Sari says. “I love coming back to a site and seeing the native plants growing where last year there were only invasive plants to be seen.” Sari is also on the board of the Sheffield Land Trust, the Planning Board, and the Housing Committee. “What I love most about this area are the hills, the skies, the woodlands and wetlands, the seasons, the colors,” says Sari. “I love the natural environment around us. I switched careers because I felt very strongly that I needed to do something to help our environment.”



Jessica Cahill is a childcare provider and has been working in the field for 16 years. “Working with children ensures every day is full of excitement and laughter.” Outside of work, Jessica enjoys gardening. She sells cut flowers from her home in Cossackie, NY. “We moved to Cossackie three years ago and have been welcomed generously into the neighborhood.” Jessica would like to advocate the importance of purchasing locally-grown flowers. “This is an excellent way to support our economy and small businesses. Roughly, 80% of flowers are shipped into the United States and may be grown in factories, full of harsh chemicals and are flown overseas. Growing local flowers also benefits the bee, insect, and native wildlife.” We hope you have a wonderful growing season, Jessica!



Matthew Hamm is the soils and compost manager at McEnroe Organic Farm and has been involved in the field for 14 years. “Working at McEnroe’s has afforded me the opportunity to be part of the bigger picture when it comes to the environment,” he says. “Food waste is a tremendous issue that our planet faces. Being part of a facility that plays a role in recycling food waste to transform it into compost which contributes to soil and environmental health is important to me.” McEnroe’s diversified approach allows Matthew to participate in initiatives for sustainable farming. We try to be as close to zero waste as we can be. We recycle our own livestock waste, vegetables, and food scraps from our market,” Matthew says. “It is our own little circle of life on the farm. We also like to educate the community on the importance of all these practices.”



Kathy Chow is a volunteer and leader of the North East/Millerton Climate Smart Community Task Force. A mission she undertook in 2018 when the two municipalities took the New York State Climate Smart pledge. “Creating a Climate Smart community is timely and important work and our committee is filled with talented and committed people,” says Kathy. “Helping our environment is a complex goal and is interconnected with towns and villages everywhere.” When not volunteering, Kathy enjoys sewing and having a beer with her husband Henry and their cows. “Our area is paradise,” says Kathy. “There is so many fascinating, smart, engaged people. We came here first as weekenders in 2004, we camped for four years (in two tents and a tipi) to understand what the land suggests before building a green house.”



Millerton, NY, native **John Midwood** is currently serving his second four-year term on the Town of North East’s Town Board. He is also a local insurance agent with AssuredPartners in Lakeville, CT. “As an independent agent I advocate on behalf of my clients to seek out the best insurance markets to suit their individual needs and customize coverage for home, auto, and valuables,” he says. “I love that my job is to guide clients to the right products to protect themselves, their investments, and their families. You’re not just selling a product, but working with individuals to protect the people and things they value most.” John grew up in Millerton and lives in the Town with his wife Emily. “I enjoy spending time in Millerton and walking on the Rail Trail while taking in the natural beauty of the Hudson Valley.”



After selling her business a little over a year ago, **Julie Berkun Fajgenbaum** is now focused on non-profit work with the North East Community Council and the Millerton Community Park (aka Eddie Collins Park). “Being able to dedicate more of my time to these projects has been incredibly rewarding,” says Julie. Since she was young, Julie has loved woodworking. She has gone from building benches and tables with her father to wooden lawn sculptures with her kids today. “I’ve always loved the Hudson Valley and feel so lucky to have a home here now,” she says. “We love to be outside. In the winters we ski at Catamount and in the summers, we love bicycling on the Rail Trail. We are now working on becoming “carbon neutral” as a family and are looking to reduce our footprint in 2022.”

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A lifestyle fusion: DESIGN AND COMFORT EN LA CASA

By Griffin Cooper
griffin@mainstreetmag.com

The concept of what “home” means to people might be the most broadly defined word in modern language. Mostly because the idea of a home is so intrinsically tied to other core human values – family, personality, even morality. For interior designer Abigail Horace, owner of Casa Marcelo, throw in a bit of chaos and uncertainty in with those fundamental notions of family and individuality and you might find yourself with the perfect mix for the post 2020 idea of home life.

Weeks after moving into her new rental home in Northwest Connecticut to start a new chapter for her family and a new business venture for herself, the pandemic set itself upon the world like a winter storm cloud. Casa Marcelo itself was founded in 2018 with a mission to bring interior design to the forefront of wellness and as 2020 turned into a marathon of isolation for many, Abigail’s mission statement became prophetic. With her husband, a youth football coach, and her three-year old son, Ezekiel, suddenly home all the time, Abigail’s vision of the home and health connection became bound by experience.

The start to it all

Abigail’s own journey in interior design began as a teenager watching *Extreme Makeover: Home Edition*. After high school, Abigail earned her Bachelor’s Degree in Interior Design from the New York Institute of Technology (NYIT) in 2010. From there, she began her decade-plus year career in New York City in the interior design high-end residential field.

After starting Casa Marcelo four years ago, Abigail sought to escape creative burnout, and the lack of representation and work/life balance

of the big city and journey to the lush hills of Litchfield County. Now, after the year that was, Abigail has redefined what it means to be a busy career woman, mother, spouse and first-generation American. In other words, what home means to her.

What prompted your journey into interior design?

I grew up in the arts, playing clarinet and dancing primarily, with a sprinkle of fine arts in there. My father was an electrician and hobbyist photographer and mom was an educator and a singer. When I was in my teens I moved my room around constantly in my childhood home in Queens, NY. I didn’t realize it was a career until I watched *Extreme Makeover: Home Edition* and understood the impact of a well-designed space, for my community and beyond. It was intriguing that I could mix business and art in one field. After high school I enrolled in the Interior Design program at NYIT and the rest is history.

Your transition to Connecticut was promptly interrupted by the pandemic, how did that affect your design philosophy if at all?

If anything, the pandemic strengthened my design philosophy. Your home, the one you retire to at the end of the day, should be an oasis. It should reflect and embrace you, it should love you. And you should love it back! A well-designed home is so important for mental health – we all should have a space we don’t have to escape from. It was especially evident during the pandemic when we spent most of our time at home. It can’t be chaotic or depressing, it needs to be



All photos by Nick Glimenakis and courtesy of Casa Marcelo.

Continued on next page ...

alive and peaceful. I believe in creating homes that help you in everyday life, whether that be through beauty, function, or both.

How would you list your priorities when it comes to designing a space?

Space planning is key for me. Throughout my education at NYIT, we really studied how people inhabit a space and how to pick apart our clients' habits. We observed how they would move in a space and create around that. When you study the client first and foremost, everything else will fall into place. The fun and pizzazz is in choosing the individual pieces, but space planning and client research is the foundation to making it work. Then the accessories and finishing touches give it a little more shine and glitter.

How do you balance family-life with being an entrepreneur?

What balance?! Haha! There are ebbs and flows with everything and I think as a mother I've learned most importantly to be flexible with myself and others. Once I'm flexible, I can adjust and move forward with grace. At the end of the day, those who love me require my utmost attention, but I also have a great work ethic which puts my clients at the forefront of

my mind at all times. It's also key to have a really supportive spouse when being an entrepreneur, especially as a woman. I'm blessed to have a husband who prioritizes my life and work and fills in the gaps if I need him to. It's a great partnership and essential to running my business.

What cultural or personal influences are behind Casa Marcelo?

Casa Marcelo was derived from my maiden name "Marcelo." Anyone who's had the pleasure of meeting a Marcelo (my father's Dominican side of the family) knows they are dynamic, funny, and overall good people. When I thought of creating my business, I thought of all the working women in my family who came before me who had determined business minds, but never got this far. So it's an ode to them. I think of Casa Marcelo as an atelier, a studio with many running parts. In terms of design, I have a reference to effortless organic nature in every project, since my family is from the tropical countryside of both Panama and the Dominican Republic, which are full of beautiful natural elements. I enjoy bringing forth my clients' culture and essence in their spaces, as it's important to be reminded where you came from daily in your own home, in order to propel you forward.



Is there still room for growth in this ever-changing landscape?

Absolutely! There's always room for growth. I think interior designers have had to market themselves to be different, now more than ever before. We are being copied through blogs, software, in-house retail designers, etc. — all in an effort to create a fraction of what we can actually offer our clients. Not to mention all the competition we have with all the amazing designers out there who bring it in every project. We now have to sell why we are special and why clients should choose us above the rest or DIY. We have a lot of competition these days, but I value and believe in the expertise and essence of a professional designer above all else. ●

Discover Casa Marcelo for yourself by following Abigail on social media or visiting www.casamarcelo.co.



MONTAGE

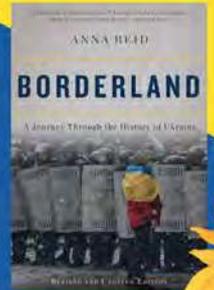
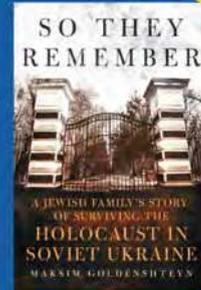
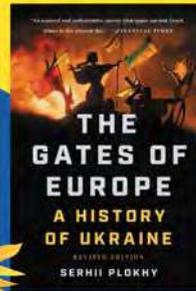
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Sugar cookie cups

WITH VANILLA CUSTARD
& CHOCOLATE GANACHE

By *Olivia Valentine &
Caroline Markonic*
info@mainstreetmag.com

Soft, sugar cookie base, creamy vanilla custard middle, and chocolate ganache topping! Who could resist these little bite sized delightful treats? These cookies seem like they require a lot of steps, but they really don't. The cookies themselves come together in just minutes with minimal ingredients. The custard just takes patience, and the ganache is super simple and again just requires about three minutes of your time. The longest part of this entire process is waiting for everything to cool so you can assemble them.

Ingredients for the cookie cups

- 1 cup salted butter, room temperature
- 2/3 cup granulated sugar
- 2 cups + 1 tablespoon all-purpose flour, spooned and leveled
- ¾ tablespoon vanilla (we always use pure vanilla extract)

Directions for the cookie cups (makes 24)

- Preheat oven to 350 degrees
- Lightly spray mini muffin tins with cooking spray
- Cream the butter and the sugar together with a handheld mixer or a stand mixer on medium speed. The mixture will appear to be a little grainy, but that is how the mixture is supposed to appear
- Add the flour to the butter and sugar mixture and combine
- Add the vanilla and mix until it all comes together. Don't over mix though. You want the mixture mixed well enough to form 1" balls
- Form the dough into 1" balls and press into the mini muffin tins. Use the back of a teaspoon to make a depression.
- Bake for 8-11 minutes or until slightly golden brown on the edges
- Remove from oven and use the back of the teaspoon again to make a depression to allow for the addition of the custard
- Let cool for a few minutes
- Remove the warm cookie cups

from the tins and place on a cooling rack

- While cookie cups are cooling make the custard

Ingredients for the vanilla custard

- 2 egg yolks
- 6 tablespoons sugar
- 1 1/2 tablespoons cornstarch
- 1 cup milk
- 1 tablespoon salted butter
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extra

Directions for the vanilla custard

- Mix the sugar, cornstarch, and milk in a medium saucepan
- Place the egg yolks in a small bowl and lightly whisk; set aside (give the whites to your dog(s) if you have any. Our dogs love this step!
- Mix the sugar, cornstarch, and milk until smooth and cook over medium heat until the mixture bubbles and thickens up a bit, stirring constantly
- Reduce the heat and simmer for 2 minutes
- Remove from the heat
- Temper the egg yolks by slowly adding a little bit of the milk mixture to the yolks and whisk, then slowly add the egg mixture to the milk mixture
- Place the saucepan back on the burner and bring to a light boil while continuing to stir constantly for 2 minutes
- Remove from the heat and add the vanilla and the tablespoon of butter
- Pour the custard into a small bowl and cover the with clear wrap and place in the fridge until cool (the clear wrap should sit on top of the custard)

Ingredients for the chocolate ganache

- 8oz semi-sweet chocolate
- 1/2 cup heavy cream

Directions for chocolate ganache

- Heat heavy cream on the stove or



in a microwave until it just comes to a boil. Don't allow it to boil!

- Pour the hot heavy cream on the semi-sweet chocolate and let sit for 2-3 minutes, then stir to combine
- Allow to cool before decorating your cookies.

We spooned the chilled custard into the cookie cups and then piped the ganache on top. If you don't have a decorating bag, no worries, use a spoon, you don't have to get all fancy with these bad boys because they will be devoured regardless. With the cookies, don't worry if they seem a little underbaked when you take them out of the oven. They will firm up a bit while they cool in their tins. You don't want a hard sugar cookie for this recipe.

Store the cookies in an airtight container in the refrigerator until ready to serve. Enjoy and think spring! •

Olivia and Caroline are enthusiastic foodies and bakers who are constantly in the kitchen, as well as explorers who create their own adventures in our area – and did we mention they are mother and daughter? Follow Olivia on Instagram to see her many creations at @oliviawvalentine.

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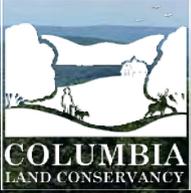
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Wetlands *what are they worth?*

By Christine Bates
info@mainstreetmag.com

I thought some guidelines existed to estimate the dollar value of wetland properties when I began to research the impact of swampy land on real estate values for this April's environmental issue. After talking to assessors, buyers of wetlands, owners of wetlands, environmental regulators, appraisers, land trusts, and realtors in Columbia, Dutchess, and Litchfield counties, I discovered that nothing is simple or consistent when it comes to wetlands – except their importance.

What are wetlands?

Wetlands are not exactly like pornography. You don't necessarily know it when you see them, but you do have a pretty good idea. Simply, wetlands are found where the water table is at or near the surface of the land for a good portion of the year. They often occupy flood-prone areas and include swamps, marshes, wet meadows, fens, woodland pools, and bog lakes. Historically, they have been seen as waste lands to be filled or drained for development or agricultural purposes.

An estimated half of the wetlands in the lower 48 of the United States have disappeared since colonial times. By the 1970s environmentalists began to recognize the importance of wetlands to control flooding, remove pollutants, filter drinking water, and host unique ecosystems of plants and animals.

Nationally, regulations and laws were enacted to protect these valuable resources from further destruction.

The Federal Government created wetland maps and each state and many communities further defined and regulated wetlands. New York's Freshwater Wetlands Act passed in 1975 requires permits for all non-agricultural activities that could change the quality of wetlands over 12.4 acres while Connecticut's Inland Wetlands and Watercourses Act of 1972 requires each municipality to establish a wetland agency to implement and enforce wetlands protection. In Salisbury, for example, this can mean submitting a survey showing wetlands demarcation before any building permit is approved. In New York, local CAC and Zoning and Planning work together to approve any building near wetlands with experts to mark the extent of the wetlands. Permission must be obtained from the state's DEC for any activities in or nearby state regulated wetlands.

Really? Property taxes on land I can't use?

New York State's assessors who establish property values for tax properties all agree assigning value to wetlands is complicated. Only one, Stephen Gotovich, assessor for the Town of Stanford, NY, had a specific approach. "I estimate wetlands at a \$1,000 per acre because they have very limited use." Katherine Johnson, assessor in the Town of North East, commented that the value depends on the effect wetlands are really having on the rest of



Above: A stately white egret is one of the many birds that frequent wetlands. Photo courtesy of John Harney.
Below, left: The Harlem Valley Rail Trail north of Millerton crosses over the wetlands feeding Webutuck Creek, which joins the Ten Mile River and the Great Swamp and eventually the Housatonic River. Photo by Christine Bates.

the property. Using Dutchess County Parcel Access it's easy to compare the assessed land values of properties with wetlands. For example, a private residence on 2.8 acres with substantial wetlands at the back of the property has land assessed at \$49,000. Another nearby property has 8.1 acres that is entirely wetlands and its value for tax purposes is only \$4,100.

Town of Washington, NY's assessor concurred there are many factors to consider but that wetlands should be discounted considerably for tax purposes. It should be noted that any assessment reductions for agriculture cannot include wetland acreage. What I discovered is that New York assessors operate very independently and each approaches the wetlands issue without specific county or state guidelines. One Columbia County assessor commented, "We may not even know that there are wetlands – only if someone brings it up."

Continued on next page ...



In the rural towns of Litchfield County wetlands are often assessed at a lower rate established by the state under Public Act 490 for farms and forests with updated values produced by the Farm Bureau. In some communities, like Sharon and Salisbury, the assessed value of wetlands might also be discounted under the Open Space provision. Kayla Johnson, Salisbury's assessor, after stressing that it is a complex issue, agreed that wetlands can have a large impact on a parcel's assessed value which is calculated on a case-by-case basis. If you own wetlands or are considering buying property with wetlands, you should always meet with your local assessor to discuss their approach.

Appraisers

Private appraisers are hired by a variety of clients: banks to establish value for a mortgage, estates to estimate values for probate and taxation, buyers to determine a fair purchase price, and owners donating land or creating conservation easements. Roger Rollins of Resource Valuation Group in Litchfield County tries to look at sales of other properties containing wetlands and has found that wetlands included in larger parcels are valued between \$3,500 to \$7,500 an acre. Rollins finds that if the wetlands area is less than 10% of the property they really don't have much impact on the total value.

Al DeKrey, an appraiser with McGrath & Company, specializes in

valuing land for natural resource and conservation lands, recently evaluated a large property in Rhinebeck with surprisingly beautiful wetlands that actually added value to the acreage because of their location. Paul Herrington, an appraiser with Farm Credit East, agreed there is really no rule of thumb in valuing wetlands because of the variability of location and quality and size of surrounding land, but estimated a wide range of \$1,000 to \$6,000 for wetlands acreage because of the limitations on their usage.

Real estate agents don't agree either

Real estate agents can find themselves in a difficult situation when clients selling large parcels, which include wetlands, refuse to understand that buyers will discount their offer for "swamp" land. Andrew Gates, a broker with Houlihan Lawrence, said, "Not all wetlands are created equal, most swamps provide no monetary value, but as in the case of my listing on Boston Corners Farm, they can provide water views and an array of bird life."

On the other hand, some buyers may want a wildlife viewing platform or land to hunt or watch birds. John Harney, an agent with William Pitt Sotheby's International Real Estate, finds that wetland and vernal pools are a great asset to a property and provide excellent habitat for a variety of wildlife from amphibians to turtles,



Above: These wetlands created by beavers add an every-changing view and privacy to this historic house overlooking Hunns Lake in Stanford, NY. Below, left: Snapping turtles can emerge from wetlands in search of a place to lay eggs in the spring. Photos courtesy of Claire Copley.

mink, beavers, herons and ducks. "Wetlands are much more exciting and productive than say a lawn."

Transforming wetlands

Wetlands can be altered naturally or created through human intervention. A boggy, swampy field can be fenced and cattle introduced to graze on invasive plants like phragmites which choke out stream corridors. Working with the National Resource Conservation Service, Jim Archer in Amenia has rented out his herd of 34 Scottish Highland cattle to graze in wetlands for owners who want to slowly return their wetlands to their original beauty.

New wetlands can be created through regulated remediation programs. When developers are required to replace wetland acreage in order to build on a site, say a Walmart parking lot, wetland remediation can be stipulated by state authorities. The Wetland Trust is a non-profit organization which purchases low lying, level fields to create mandated replacement wetland acreage in another location. This process takes years and begins with finding and purchasing suitable land. A big wet cornfield with the right hydrology and soil might be a likely candidate. After purchasing the property, the Wetland Trust's biologists and construction crews go to work to create replacement wetland acreage.

Wetlands custodians

Owners of wetlands are guardians of an important community resource. Most we spoke to have come to appre-

ciate the ever-changing beauty of their wetlands and the flora and fauna they protect. They appreciate the peepers heralding spring, stately herons waiting for their next meal, and even turtles roaming on patios looking for a perfect place to lay eggs. Wetlands also offer them privacy and protection forever and there's no maintenance involved.

Buyer beware

Any buyer contemplating a property purchase which may contain or border on wetlands should investigate. There is never a property listing which specifically mentions the presence of wet areas, although a photograph of a stream may be a tip off. A survey should show the presence and extent of wetlands. If wetlands are present consider local wetland buffer limitations, typically a 100', and other restrictions by consulting with the town's building, zoning, and wetlands department.

If the property's wetland seems to be assessed at a high per acre valuation speak to the assessor about the likelihood of lowering the assessment for tax purposes given the presence of unusable acres. Most importantly buyers should become educated about the importance of these lands and welcome the prospect of being the guardian for this invaluable environmental resource described as the land that holds the rest of the world together. ●



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GOING CARBON NEUTRAL

in upstate new york

By Laurie Kerr
info@mainstreetmag.com

Carbon neutrality sounds like an impossible goal, doesn't it? The answer turns out to depend a great deal on where you live. It isn't that hard if you happen to live in upstate New York. That's because one of upstate New York's best kept secrets is that it has the cleanest electrical grid in the nation, i.e., it emits the least carbon per kWh – about a quarter of the national average. It's hugely cleaner than New York City's grid, and even cleaner than California's, that smug beacon of environmental progressiveness. And it's getting even cleaner because New York State recently mandated an entirely carbon neutral grid statewide by 2040 – the most ambitious clean power plan in the nation.

Why is upstate New York's grid so clean? Remember that photograph of your grandparents' honeymoon at Niagara Falls? Hold that thought. We'll return to it after you master the basics of becoming carbon neutral.

How can this clean grid help you approach carbon neutrality?

Let's start with where your personal emissions come from. Excluding work-related emissions, ballpark, about 40% comes from your home, another 40% from your car, and the remaining 20% from your stuff: the food you eat, the things you buy, and the waste you throw away. Let's focus on the two largest pieces that comprise about 80% of your emissions: your car and your home.

Electric vehicles

We've all read about electric vehicles and how they will help us achieve carbon neutrality. But how does that work? If you have a car that gets 25 miles to the gallon, it will emit about 80 pounds of CO₂ for every 100 miles you drive. In contrast, an average electric vehicle in upstate

New York doing the same trip will be responsible for just eight pounds of CO₂. And when New York State's grid achieves carbon neutrality – Poof! – that number will go to zero. So if you purchase an electric vehicle, you've removed most of the 40% of your emissions that came from your car.

PS: Driving an electric vehicle will also cut your fuel costs in half. The four gallons you'd need to take you 100 miles would cost you \$14 if gas were \$3.50 per gallon – and more now that gas prices are high. In contrast, an average electric vehicle would cost just \$7 to make the same trip. Electric vehicles aren't cheap, but the federal tax credits of up to \$7,500 could help fund the difference.

If you're like me, you might worry about getting an electric vehicle. What if you took a long trip and couldn't find a charging station? A plug-in hybrid vehicle – a car that can do short local trips on electricity but can run on gas for longer trips – might be the right solution for you. If most of your trips are local, such a vehicle could achieve most of the cost and carbon reductions of a fully electric vehicle.

Electric homes

OK – you've zeroed out the 40% from your car, but what about the 40% from your house? Most houses have two sources of energy – fuel and electricity. Fuel is typically used for heating, hot water, cooking, and maybe clothes drying; the electricity is used to power everything else – your lights, appliances, air conditioning, computers. Because our upstate grid is so clean, most of the carbon emissions from your home – 90% to 95% – come from burning fossil fuels, with just a small part from electricity.

How can you reduce the emissions from fossil fuels in your house? Stop using them and go all electric! It's less well-known, but conceptually the all-electric house is the stationary equivalent of the electric vehicle. And



Photo: istockphoto.com contributor Petmal

homes can go all-electric now because we have efficient electric alternatives to fuel-fired equipment: induction stoves for cooking and heat pumps for space heating and hot water.

Induction cooking heats the pan rather than the whole room and is much more responsive than the old electric resistance heating coils. Chefs even like them! But if you really love your gas stove, don't feel too guilty – it's a tiny fraction of your fuel use.

Heat pumps are air conditioners that can run both ways to provide heating in the winter and cooling in the summer. They come in two different flavors, air source heat pumps, which typically have condensing units that sit outside and ground source (aka geothermal) heat pumps, which utilize underground piping, which you won't see. Geothermal systems are more efficient but are more expensive to install.

Let's do the math on switching your home to electricity from fossil fuel. If you burned ten gallons of propane on a cold winter day, you would generate 127 pounds of CO₂. If you used air source heat pumps instead that would decline to about 22 pounds of CO₂ or 17 pounds for more efficient ground source heat pumps. And as

New York's electrical grid becomes carbon neutral by 2040, the 40% of your emissions from your house declines to zero.

Let's pause for a moment to register how conceptually simple it is for you to achieve deep carbon reductions now without changing your lifestyle. In upstate New York, if you electrify your house and your car, you will reduce your total carbon footprint by roughly 70% today, growing to an 80% reduction by 2040. Tackling that last 20% will probably entail lifestyle changes in what you eat and purchase and/or large-scale changes in agriculture and industry.

Electrifying your home will cut your energy costs, too. You might pay \$25 or \$30 for the ten gallons of propane you use on a cold day, and more this year since costs are unusually high. For the equivalent amount of heating, you would pay about \$20 if you used air source heat pumps and \$15 with geothermal. Also, your energy bills will be less volatile. Because fuel generates a small fraction

Continued on next page ...

of upstate New York's electricity, your utility prices won't go haywire with each global energy shock. The same goes for the expense of running your electric or plug-in hybrid car.

If you're building a new house or making an addition, it's a no brainer to go all-electric from the get-go. It will reduce your utility bills and eventually shrink your new home's emissions to zero. That's why 50 California cities and New York City have recently banned gas equipment for new construction.

Electrifying your existing home is a more complicated decision since it will entail removing your existing fuel-based systems and installing new electric ones. The costs pencil out better if you electrify when your heating equipment needs to be replaced, since you would need to purchase new equipment anyway. Or if you're adding central air conditioning since you can use the same system to supply both heating and cooling.

Replacing the hot water system with an electric heat pump in your existing home is straightforward – you just swap out the heating unit. But for space heating, you need to study the overall system. You could run into complications if, say, your existing baseboard radiators won't work with the temperature range that heat pumps can supply. Informed contractors should be able to advise you.

Sweetening the pot are a raft of incentives for heat pumps – federal tax credits, rebates from Central Hudson, and New York State programs.

The Power Brokers: a selective history

So how did upstate New York's power grid get so clean? A veritable who's who of New Yorkers, from Nikola Tesla to Franklin Roosevelt and Nelson Rockefeller, contributed. The story falls roughly into four phases.

Remember that I said we would circle back to Niagara Falls? In the first phase, New York harnessed two of our great natural resources, Niagara Falls and the St. Lawrence River to create power. It started with mills, built first by the French, then the



English, and finally New Yorkers after independence. Then it switched to hydropower, with the first Niagara electrical plant being developed in 1882.

In 1895, the Cataract Company held a competition to create a large hydropower plant at Niagara, capable of powering Buffalo. Lord Kelvin, the commission's leader, selected Nikola Tesla's alternating current (AC) design over Thomas Edison's direct current (DC) one because he felt AC could be more readily transmitted over long distances. This cemented AC's ascendancy, setting the terms for future power grids. The project was bankrolled by J.P. Morgan, John Jacob Astor, Lord Rothschild, and W.K. Vanderbilt, and was eventually expanded to power New York City.

Concerned about the private ownership of power generation, then Governor Franklin Roosevelt created the precursor to the New York Power Authority in 1931 to ensure public access to power. Under Robert Moses' leadership in the 1950s, the Authority built the vast hydro plants at Niagara and along the St. Lawrence.

The second phase entailed the development of nuclear power in the 1960s. Aiming to ensure that New York State's economy would benefit from the burgeoning space and nuclear industries, then Governor Nelson Rockefeller created the New York State Atomic and Space Development Authority. The development of most of New York's substantial nuclear power capacity dates from this era, since enthusiasm for nuclear power waned after the accidents at Three Mile Island and Chernobyl in 1979 and 1986 respectively.

The energy crisis of the mid-1970s precipitated the third phase, energy efficiency. In 1975, the NYS Atomic and Space Development Authority was repurposed as the NYS Energy and Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA) and was charged with reducing energy use and creating renewable power. NYSERDA became one of the best funded state energy entities in 1996, when it began to be funded through a surcharge on electrical bills.

Three years ago, the state mandated zero emission electricity statewide by 2040 – the most ambitious target in the country, and NYSERDA's ample funding – over \$1.7 billion in 2022 – is a big reason we can achieve it. The mandate effectively launches phase four, large-scale deployment of wind, solar and storage, which are now less expensive than new fossil fuel plants. Unfortunately, many New Yorkers are unaware of our zero-carbon target and our tangible progress since we all deserve to be proud of our state's leadership.

You can see the beneficial carbon impact each of these phases have had on our grid. About one-third of upstate New York's power comes from hydropower and another one-third from nuclear, with about 8% coming from wind, biomass, and solar. Just one-quarter comes from natural gas. Over the next 18 years, we should expect to see renewables grow and natural gas sink to zero, at which point your all-electric house and car will be carbon neutral. ●

Above: Schoellkopf Mills in 1900, on the lower right is the incomplete Station No. 2 next to Station No. 1. All of the old mills pictured on the left were eliminated to make way for Station No. 3c to be completed. Image courtesy of Wikipedia, to learn more visit https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Schoellkopf_Power_Station



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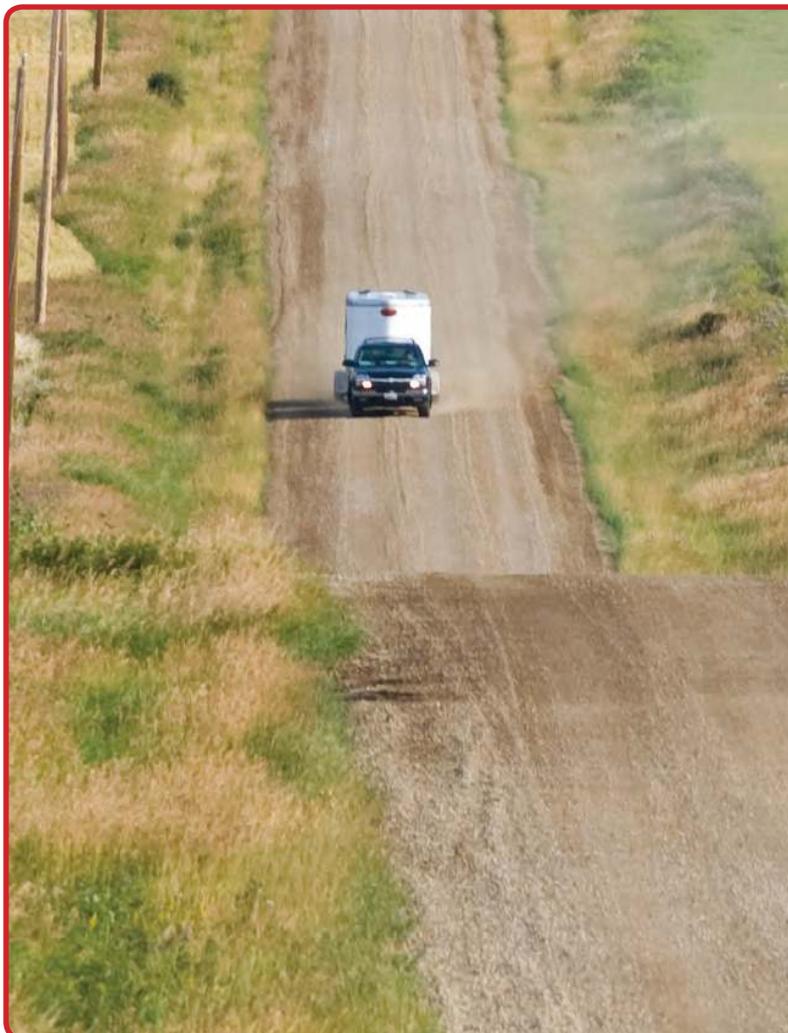
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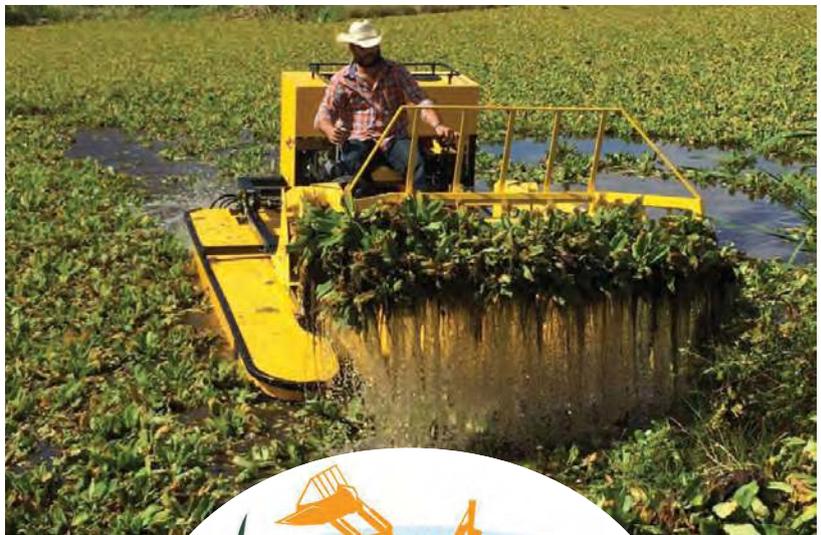
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SPEAKING FOR THE TREES:

Citizens act on behalf of old-growth trees in Housatonic Meadows State Park

By Griffin Cooper
griffin@mainstreetmag.com

We have a long, and at times, turbulent history with the trees and forests that inhabit our vast landscape. Even before Europeans sailed across the Atlantic in a vain attempt to tame the “pristine wilderness” of the New World, humans were utilizing American forests to help support their way of life. Native Americans used the wild forests that surrounded them in the Northeast to sustain themselves. The concept of fire ecologies first evolved in many forests thanks to Native American communities. As settlers arrived, the vast interior was harvested for trade, land was cleared for settlement and homes were built for growing populations. The arrival of the Industrial Revolution ushered in rapid expansion and subsequently the rate of logging exploded. The American economy, and its appetite for economic growth, facilitated the destruction of large swaths of wild forests. By the Civil War many forests in our area were completely logged out. As sensibilities changed post-war, along with growing concerns over the future of timber supplies, a number of influential Americans helped to bring on some of the very first conservation movements.

Gateway to the human condition

Authors and poets like John Burroughs and philosophers like John Muir began to sow the seeds of conservation in the minds of Americans rounding the corner towards an uncertain 20th Century outlook. Much of what we perceive as the early conservation movement is personified by forester Gifford Pinchot and then President Theodore Roosevelt and the creation of the US Forest Service with Pinchot as its head in 1905.

The conservation legacy of Theodore Roosevelt can be found in the 230 million acres of public lands he helped establish during his presidency. Much of that land – 150 millions acres – was set aside as national forests. Roosevelt created the present-day United States Forestry Service (USFS) in 1905, an organization within the Department of Agriculture. An outdoorsman himself, Roosevelt saw the natural wilderness as a gateway to the human condition and thus was an adamant proponent of utilizing the country’s natural wonder, Roosevelt wanted to ensure the sustainability of those resources. For his part Pinchot, a native of Simsbury, CT, became the chief, or forester, of the new Forest Service shortly after the turn of the century at the behest of President Roosevelt. Pinchot worked to restructure and organize the management of the country’s national forests, ultimately increasing their area and size. The goodwill fostered by Transcendentalism would only last a few decades. After the end of the second World War, the rise of the American economy on the international stage once again saw a rapid rise in large-scale logging. This time it was the Forest Service who worked with the timber industry to cut wide-swaths of the nation’s last “virgin forests.” As a result, a new environmental movement sprang to life in the 1970s. For an entire generation of Americans who lived through the war in Vietnam, a growing mistrust in government led activists and organizations to use legal means to halt logging in forests that had existed for centuries. In the Northwest, the listing of the northern spotted owl under the Endangered Species Act dealt a heavy blow to many logging industries doing business on Forest Service lands. Still, despite its history, our relationship with trees remains one that requires advocacy, especially for those trees that can be sufficiently qualified as ancient.



Old-growth

An exceedingly rare type of forest in our neck of the woods are those called old-growth forests, or simply “old-growth.” Ironically, the term “old-growth” is somewhat new among arborists and ecologists. Old-growth forests are typically categorized by the presence of exceptionally old, typically large-diameter trees that are living, dying, and dead. In our area, the kind of familiar names that could also be considered as old-growth are the 200 year old white pines, 250 year old sugar maples, and 400 year old hemlock trees. Though scientists and experts may diverge on what specifically classifies a forest as “old-growth,” all agree that old-growth forests play essential roles in wildlife habitat, species diversity, hydrological regimes, nutrient cycles, carbon storage, and numerous other ecological processes. According to the Forest Stewards Guild, “They have unique structures and attributes that provide habitat for plant and animal species such as lichen, bats, birds, and mammals that are not found in other forest types. Old-growth forests inspire a sense of awe, offer recreation, and have spiritual values.”

These old forests are rare, and in our area these ancient trees are exceedingly so because of earlier Colonial

expansion. However, many of the State Parks in Massachusetts and Connecticut still provide shelter for these ancient giants. The presence of old-growth in the Northeast comes with good and bad news. The issue is especially complex but thankfully scholars are beginning to understand the ecosystems beneath these trees that connect them with different species in supportive relationships. It seems the broad definition of how forest systems work is finally being challenged by experts in order to maintain the existence of old-growth trees, the threats remain varied.

In a blog he wrote for rewilding.org, former Air Force engineer and local activist Robert T. Leverett says, “old-growth forests have been assaulted by invasive plants and animals, forest pathogens, drought, hurricanes, and of course, the ever-present threat of development. The hemlock woolly adelgid, emerald ash borer, Asian longhorn beetle, gypsy moth, southern pine beetle, and other pests are hammering our forests.”

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Despite the burgeoning knowledge as well as the waves of challenges, those who support sustaining the existence of old-growth trees are staunch in their efforts to keep them alive. In the Town of Sharon, CT, an effort is underway to preserve the legacy of the elder trees at Housatonic Meadows State Park, a protected wildlife area covering 452 acres along the Housatonic River in the towns of Sharon and Cornwall, CT. In January, Connecticut's Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) pushed forward with plans to cut down centuries-old trees at the park and in response, concerned citizens and public officials raised questions about the decision-making process that has already allowed for some 200 to be felled.

Housatonic Meadows Preservation Action

"There are several ways to consider trees," says Michael Nadeau of Sharon, CT, a Connecticut-Licensed and Certified Arborist for more than forty years and who has been directly involved with trees and landscapes for fifty-five years. "Considering the climate crisis and the alarming decline of bird and insect species and recent scientific breakthroughs in plant science, trees – especially old trees – are considered as essential to the restoration of natural systems." Mr. Nadeau is part of an ad-hoc group, the Housatonic Meadows Preservation Action (HMPA), consisting of concerned citizens and many environmental professionals, including botanists, arborists, biologists, and forest

ecologists who are actively rallying against further tree removal. In January, DEEP cut down some twenty-six mature trees, some well over 100 years old, from the steep riverbank of the Housatonic River. After the trees had been removed an esteemed group of arborists, biologists, and forest ecologists determined the trees were substantially sound and could have been preserved using standard arboricultural practices. The HMPA notified DEEP of their findings and tried to halt the cutting of the trees, yet it persisted.

Last month, Connecticut's Council on Environmental Quality discussed the state's process for removing hazardous trees following an HMPA protest held in the vicinity of the cutting in January. "As the tree cutting began, several American bald eagles flew from the vicinity of the work area to circle several times before disbanding," recalls Mr. Nadeau. "We then tried to work with an environmental attorney who would plead for a stop to the tree killing until DEEP considered the possible damage to American bald eagle habitat. This effort was too little, too late. The tree crew kept cutting and there was no intervention. We then staged a protest rally on Thursday, January 13, where an exuberant crowd of concerned citizens gathered with signs and chants to protest DEEP's lack of consideration for the trees and wildlife that depend on them. There were at least five DEEP Conservation Police officers on duty, prohibiting entry beyond a fenced area and to presumably protect the tree crew from us. After hearing the



Above: Photo from January's tree cutting protest. Photo by Lazlo Gyorsok. Below left and previous page, images courtesy of Housatonic Meadows State Park's Facebook.

eagle injunction had failed, we broke up the rally."

After a meeting with officials and the public on January 26, Council on Environmental Quality chairman Peter Hearn developed a list of draft recommendations for DEEP to consider. Political leaders got involved as well after State Senator Craig Miner (R-Litchfield) and State Republican Stephen Harding (R-Brookfield), ranking members of the legislature's Environment Committee, issued a statement calling for additional documents from DEEP to be released in connection with its ongoing widespread hazard tree removal at Housatonic Meadows State Park as well as the Housatonic Meadows Campground.

A lesson in activism

Though DEEP is not required by law to notify any agency before it begins a project, leaders and members of the HMPA say it should be, and that the procedures the agency follows should be changed to include public notice. According to a report from the Connecticut-based Register Citizen, "During a January 6 hearing organized by DEEP, officials were given testimony by landscape and arbor experts who questioned how the agency decides what constitutes a hazardous tree. They also discussed the impact of removing trees along the riverbank, which can cause unwanted erosion and possible contamination. Much of that testimony was reiterated at the January 26 meeting."

For their part, Mr. Nadeau and the other volunteer members of the

HMPA understand they cannot stop the cutting of every old-growth tree, but wish instead to fundamentally change the way these types of decisions are made as well as what it means for any government agency to protect the environment. "Our long-term goal is to fundamentally change the ways DEEP 'protects' our environment," he says. "For instance, DEEP does not employ even one professional hazard tree assessment arborist, who should have had jurisdiction to make these kinds of decisions, not a Parks Department employee with no arboricultural or forestry credentials; better communication and collaboration between departments that have valid input in such decisions; and an overall revision of the state liability laws that necessitate the removal of allegedly hazardous trees."

When it comes to the future of old-growth trees both locally and afar, knowledge is to become the most important tool in preservation. Until that time, it is the hope of the HMPA and other volunteer organizations that government organizations will reconsider tree removal activities until, as Mr. Nadeau says, "they meet with politicians and well-intentioned, educated and concerned citizens to work out a plausible alternative to the removal of older but still thriving trees and steer future practices toward preservation instead of destruction of our heritage trees that provide myriad ecosystem services for humankind as well as the rest of nature." •

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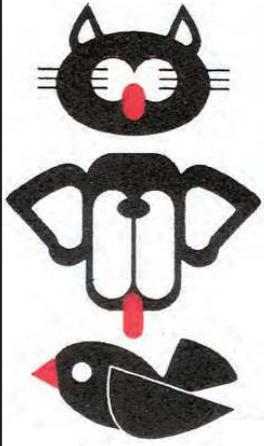
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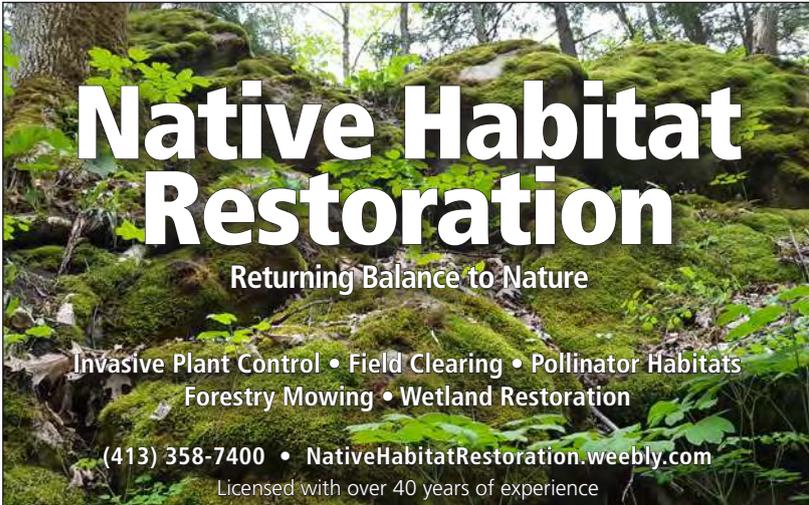
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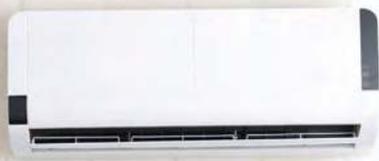
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Leigh Davis seeks to make Great Barrington a place for all:

Going home again

By Griffin Cooper
griffin@mainstreetmag.com

There's a groundswell taking place within our snug corner on the edge of the New England corridor that, despite feeling overwhelmingly personal for our area, holds a mirror up to an entire nation feeling the anxiety of living affordably. Months into the unexpected era of pandemic lockdowns, families who had been working in the upscale neighborhoods of Manhattan began their northward trek into the Hudson Valley and the Berkshires. Many bought homes over asking price or paid cash, driving home prices through the proverbial roof and making life less affordable for those who grew up living and working in the Tri-corner. Today, as one crisis seems to be waning, another anxious scene is setting the stage in the Northeast for more middle-class economic stress. Lockdown-induced inflation has been escalated by Russia's invasion of Ukraine and its impact on oil price and availability.

Beyond the rising prices at the pump, the area's housing crisis has extended itself throughout the entire region, forcing local politicians to fervently come up with new ideas and innovative approaches to alleviate the burden facing those hoping to make our area home for life. Leigh Davis, vice chair of the Selectboard for Great Barrington, MA, was in a similar struggle that many residents are dealing with herself.

From defeat to opportunity

Davis, a native of Washington, DC, moved from Ireland to Great Barrington in 2009 with her three children. Upon arriving, she penned, *Are We There Yet?*, an op-ed column for *The Berkshire Record*. After five years of working odd jobs to try to make ends meet, she found herself struggling as a single mother. Feeling defeated, she wrote in the newspaper column about her intention to leave the town she'd grown to love and return to Ireland. Then something happened. A board member for the Mahaiwe Performing Arts Center who also happened to be a fan of her column read of her intention to leave. And from that chance encounter, she was offered a full-time position at the Mahaiwe. She hasn't looked back since, but also hasn't forgotten what that time of uncertainty was like.

In the summer of 2020, Leigh was appointed development director of Construct, the leading non-profit provider of affordable housing and supportive services in the southern Berkshires. Before that, she was hired as the director of development of Eagle Mill Redevelopment, LLC where she took a leading role in the \$70 million redevelopment of the historic Eagle Mill in Lee, MA. In this position, Leigh helped to secure millions of dollars of federal and state funding for the mixed-use project



Above: Leigh Davis. Below, left: Leigh presenting to stakeholders regarding \$50 million affordable housing project in Adams, MA. Photos courtesy of Leigh Davis.

from agencies such as MassDevelopment, MassWorks, the National Park Service, and the Massachusetts Historical Commission. Leigh has served on many boards and committees, including 1Berkshire, the Berkshire Leadership Impact Council, Saint James Place, Volunteers in Medicine, the Blackshires Leadership Circle, the Lake Mansfield Improvement Task Force, Muddy Brook Elementary School Council, the Great Barrington Community Preservation Committee, and the Great Barrington Economic Development Committee. She is currently wrapping up her third year as a member of the Great Barrington Selectboard and has recently announced that she is running for reelection in May. They say you can never go home again, and for Leigh, home is what can be made with a little determination. Today, she is working for the residents of Great Barrington to try to make it a home for all once again.

finally to Great Barrington? Has your journey translated into public service at all?

I was born in Washington, DC, and raised in a suburb just over the DC border. Even though I lived and attended public school in Maryland, I regard myself as a DC girl through and through. Both my parents worked in DC and were dedicated to public service throughout their lives. This most definitely has had an impact on me. My parents are deceased. My mom was white, and my dad was black, and when they married in 1965, interracial marriage was still against the law in many states. My dad told me that when they moved into our home, two families moved off the street due to the color of his skin. Growing up as a biracial child in a white neighborhood had its challenges. I remember discouraging my

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How did you make your way from Washington DC to Ireland and



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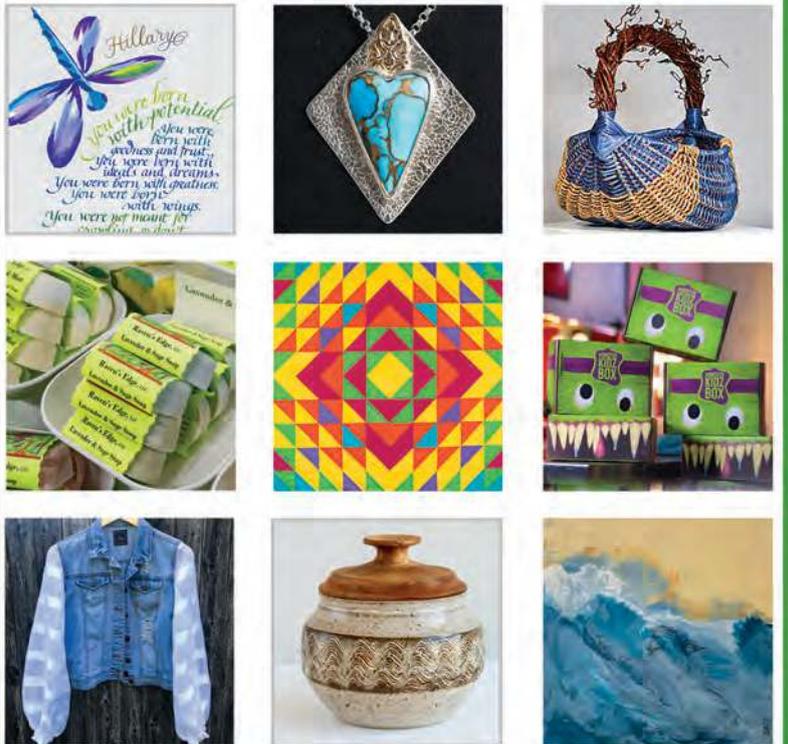
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father to come to school functions and then telling kids in my school that he was “from the Bahamas” instead of saying he was black. For some reason, I felt I had to mask his race, or try to lessen the blow. Was I teased or bullied? Was I afraid or ashamed to admit he was black? I don’t recall. Perhaps I’ve blocked that part out. But it saddens me to think I felt I needed to do that.

From the 1970s through to the 1990s, my mom was the right hand to Sargent Shriver, who was the force behind the creation of the Peace Corps, Job Corps, Head Start, and VISTA. Sarge also co-founded the Special Olympics along with his wife, Eunice Kennedy and he ran for Vice-President with George McGovern and then unsuccessfully sought the Democratic presidential nomination. I have fond memories of that time though I was very young. I remember my parents having parties in our backyard and the Secret Service being there. The Shriver family were like a second family to me growing up because my mom was with them all the time, and by default, so was I. They were hard working and full of humility, and I admired them very much. Sargent Shriver attended both my parents’ funerals and spoke at my mom’s funeral. My dad was friends with Sarge from back in their Chicago days where he, and later Sarge, served as director of the Catholic Interracial Council, a group created to advocate for desegregation in Chicago schools. I am very grateful for my parents and for the



Above: Leigh and her campaign committee during her run for Selectboard in 2019. Below, left: Leigh reads to Pre-K students at Morningside Community School in Pittsfield during National Read Across America Day. . Photos courtesy of Leigh Davis.

positive role models they brought into my life during those early years.

Talk a little about your experience in film and theater. How did it inform your life experience?

After high school, I went on to Ithaca College to study filmmaking. I was fortunate to be hired straight out of college after winning a national award for my senior film. An Ithaca College alumnus who was producing an independent film had heard of me and asked me to work with him as the assistant to writer/director Jennifer Lynch. Her father was filmmaker David Lynch and I was a huge fan of his. It was a wild first film experience with Madonna signed up to star in the film followed later by Kim Basinger (both dropped out before filming commenced). After that experience, I switched to editing and became a union film editor joining IATSE local 700. That period of my life was very intense. I worked really hard during those eight years and was employed by nearly every studio. I was super lucky to be working as a film editor in Hollywood during

the historical transition from editing actual film to editing digitally. Early on in my editing career, I was selected as one of the first apprentice editors that Paramount Studios trained on the new editing digital technology. This experience was transformational for me, and I was able to later pass it onto my film students in Ireland. The skills of editing, the ability to focus on one frame of film, 1/24 of a second, but also be mindful of the big picture, has proven to be an incredibly valuable asset. It has helped me in many aspects of my personal life and work life. I am able to stay highly focused throughout long periods of time and I handle stress well. Sometimes I wish I didn’t have this trait in me because sometimes it is hard to shut it off. I suppose that is one of the reasons why I don’t edit anymore. It triggers a part of my brain that I’d rather not wake up. Those were crazy times back when I was living in LA. I lived through the Northridge Earthquake, the OJ Simpson case, Rodney King / The LA Riots, and the Great Malibu Fire. It was quite the roller coaster ride. My last job in LA was with DreamWorks, which I ended up quitting – it was the second project that I worked on with Steven Spielberg who was the producer. The first one was at Amblin. When I think back now on quitting DreamWorks, I realize how headstrong I was. I quit the job and decided to move to Ireland because I had rescued a dog and my landlord wouldn’t let me keep him. I was over

Hollywood by that time anyway and was ready to leave the rat race.

What was it like moving from LA to Ireland?

When I left LA for Ireland, what I really wanted to do, or so I thought, was raise sheep. Well, I didn’t exactly end up raising sheep, but I did rescue and rehome sheepdogs. And even though I had sworn off editing, I ended up working for American B-movie king, Roger Corman as a film editor. Corman had opened a film studio in Ireland to take advantage of the country’s tax breaks. My rebirth as an Irish film editor came after a weird turn of events. After being in the country for only a few months, I stumbled upon Roger Corman’s film studio in the middle of Connemara. As I was walking around this barren site, an American woman ran out of this big warehouse. We struck up a conversation, and from that conversation, she asked me if I would help edit this really low-budget zany space movie because the editor had just quit. Crazy as it was, I said yes and I ended up editing three Roger Corman films over a period of a few years. I even commuted for a time between LA and Ireland. I finally truly stopped editing after the birth of my son. A college in Galway then offered me a job as a film lecturer (professor). There, I taught

Continued on next page ...

film history, screenwriting, and editing and headed their post-production department. After lecturing for ten years, I became tenured. I absolutely loved teaching and had my personal circumstances been different, I probably would have stayed in Ireland. During that time period, I had two more children, and after a relationship breakdown, I ended up taking on the role of a solo parent to three while continuing to teach.

How did you make it to Great Barrington?

A snowstorm brought me to there. I was driving through the town while on a short holiday from Ireland. I got stuck in a snowbank and couldn't move my car. I had to stay overnight in the Day's Inn on Main Street and ended up walking around town the next day. I fell in love with Great Barrington. Something pulled me in. I can't describe it. I remember having no idea where I was. I just kept walking, and I ended up at Lake Mansfield. It was snowing out and so beautiful. I watched as families skated on the lake and children dragged sleds around. It felt like something out of a Norman Rockwell painting. I was smitten. I moved to Great Barrington a little over a year later with my three children in a total leap of faith. Since I was tenured, my job was held for me back in Ireland in case it all went terribly wrong. I still needed to make money and provide for my children though so I did *The Berkshire Shuffle*. I worked a lot of odd jobs during those five years, from starting my own errand service business, to getting my realtors license, to working in a furniture shop, to writing a column for *The Berkshire Record*. My column, *Are We*

There Yet? was published every other week in *The Record*. It was essentially a blog on living in the Berkshires as a single mom. I wrote about my personal experiences and used to get stopped by people asking me about what I had written or sharing with me their own experiences. It was a great way to get introduced to the Berkshires. A board director of the Mahaiwe Performing Arts Center used to read my column. And in what I thought was my last column after five years of struggling in the Berkshires, I hinted that I was moving back to Ireland. After that column was published, I was contacted by the Mahaiwe and hired as their marketing manager. So, I stayed in Great Barrington and gave up my tenured teaching position in Ireland. I haven't looked back since.

You are in the midst of doing some pretty bold work related to short-term housing in Great Barrington. How important is this issue to you?

Housing is a fundamental human right and I am very passionate about it. The work I am doing at the moment on a short-term rental bylaw in Great Barrington is a reflection of this passion. With a decline in the available housing supply impacting residents who depend on housing for work and for shelter, something needs to be done. I definitely can trace my passion about housing to my father. He was an advocate for fair housing and equal opportunity in employment his entire life. He was employed as a senior advisor in the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) where he was credited with establishing the department's first voluntary fair housing program and the first minority business enterprise program. My father had a very interesting life. He was born in Chicago and was given up for adoption at birth. He was raised in a Chicago group home run by gospel singer Mahalia Jackson who he became very close to and regarded as a mother



figure. After working for HUD, my father ran the Martin Luther King, Jr. Center for Nonviolent Social Change in Atlanta and later became known as the architect of Martin Luther King, Jr. Federal Holiday. He was very close to Coretta Scott King and she relied on him for many things. It was an exciting time to watch my father help make the King Holiday become a reality. I have a funny memory of my dad sitting at our tiny kitchen table talking to President Reagan on an olive-green wall-mounted phone. What I remember about that moment was not what was being said, but what doodles my dad drew on his yellow legal pad as he spoke. I was probably witnessing some historical moment and all I cared about were my dad's doodles.



Above: Leigh offers testimony on Great Barrington's home-rule petition before the Joint Committee on Consumer Protection and Professional Licensure at the State House in Boston. Below, left: Leigh with her three children. Photos courtesy of Leigh Davis.

Tell us about how you came to begin volunteering in the Berkshires. How did you become involved with Construct?

As soon as I moved to Great Barrington, I began to look for places to volunteer. The first place I started volunteering for was HospiceCare in the Berkshires. I worked as a patient volunteer and spent time with hospice patients at Fairview Commons. It was powerful and very humbling. Both my parents went through hospice – they died in the living room of my childhood home in DC. The hospice volunteers were wonderful to our family and I wanted to give back in some way. The second place I volunteered for was with Construct. It's funny to think how things have come full circle with me now being employed as their development director. Working for Construct, I see firsthand the struggles people go through to find and maintain housing they can afford. Regularly I will be on the receiving end of calls, texts, and emails from people living in cars or in tents or in motel rooms. It has been a big wake-up call.

As vice chair of the Great Barrington Selectboard, what are some of the more immediate issues you deal with respect to Great Barrington?

Before being elected to the Great Barrington Selectboard, I served for three years as a member of the finance committee. During that time, I became more attuned to the importance of economic development and also became more aware of the needs of entrepreneurs and local businesses. I was happy to have played a small role in the inception of Great Barrington's successful Berkshire Busk last summer, and I am currently working on a few new initiatives which I am excited about. As a mother to three students who attended schools in the Berkshire Hills Regional School District, I support an equitable and a sustainable education system, and will again advocate strongly for the renovation of our local high school. And I stand with the customers of Housatonic Water Works in their fight for clean water and vow to continue to do all that I can to help find a resolution. •

To learn more about Leigh Davis, please visit www.townofgb.org/people/leigh-s-davis or you can reach her directly at leighdavis99@gmail.com.



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Climate Smart Communities

By Griffin Cooper
griffin@mainstreetmag.com

In an age of heightened climate consciousness, where political leaders and corporate enterprises have begun to feel the pressure of concerned citizens and scientists regarding the health of the planet, grassroots volunteerism has sprung up across communities everywhere. Residents in cities and towns across the country are coming together to identify and respond to the impacts of climate change. In Chicago for example, the city has planned or installed over four million square feet of green roofs across the city. The trees, plants, and soil used in green roofs provide shade and absorb far less heat than manufactured roofing materials while providing habitat for wildlife. In Texas, the city of Houston is preparing to deal with dangerously high temperatures, drought, flooding, as well as increasingly powerful hurricanes. In response to these threats brought on by unpredictable climate change, the city's regional planning council has suggested that Houston restore and protect wetlands and other coastal habitats. Natural features like sand dunes and wetlands are able to act as buffers to storm surge, flood waters, and rising sea levels, and maintaining them in their optimal states would have numerous benefits for people and wildlife. In King County, Washington, the National Wildlife Federation (NWF) helped prepare a tool to help landowners understand the benefits healthy trees can have for climate change mitigation and adaptation. According to the NWF, "The Forestry Climate Preparedness and Response (CPR) tool quantifies and explains complex forest characteristics (i.e. total carbon load at a particular site) using an embedded Geographic Information System (GIS). It demonstrates how trees help landowners both reduce carbon pollution and prepare for the effects of climate change by reducing

stormwater runoff and erosion and providing shade during hot summer months. The tool is being used by land managers across King County to make climate smart decisions when dealing with their forests. The National Wildlife Federation recently partnered with the Sustainable Urban Forests Coalition to present a webinar on climate-induced stormwater flooding, reducing thermal pollution in local waterways, and minimizing heat island effects, through use of the Forestry CPR tool."

Climate Smart in New York

These, and other initiatives reflect the genuine ambition from folks across the nation to fight for future sustainability. In New York, climate preparedness has become a top priority for residents and lawmakers. Launched in 2009, Climate Smart Communities (CSC) is an inter-agency initiative of New York State. The program is jointly sponsored by several New York State agencies including the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC); Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA); Department of Public Service; Department of State; Department of Transportation; Department of Health and the Power Authority (NYPA). CSC supports local governments in leading their communities to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, adapt to the effects of climate change, and thrive in a green economy. According to the state, the benefits of participating include "leadership recognition, free technical assistance, and access to grants. Local governments participate by signing a voluntary pledge and using the CSC framework to guide progress toward creating attractive, healthy, and equitable places to live, work, and play."

The CSC statewide initiative has laid its roots in our area as well. In

2018, the Town of North East and the Village of Millerton each signed a pledge to develop community-wide climate mitigation strategies and improve sustainability. As a result, Millerton and North East developed a volunteer committee dedicated to helping the municipality become a leader in climate activism. Dubbed the Climate Smart Task Force, members have spent the better part of four years initiating projects that will build environmental and economic resiliency for the residents and businesses of the rural Dutchess County town. CSC also partners with local and regional organizations including the Millerton Library, North East Community Center, Housatonic Valley Association, Cary Institute, Cornell Cooperative Extension, Webutuck Central School District, as well as neighboring towns, villages, and schools to work on climate sustainability projects together.

How to become a Climate Smart Community

Climate Smart Communities are much more than simple idealism; after taking a pledge, volunteers must be proactive in their efforts by completing specific, proscribed actions to achieve goals made by state lawmakers in order to receive funding for even larger initiatives. These include auditing municipal energy use and emissions, expanding recycling opportunities for visitors, protecting natural resources, installing LED streetlights, and involving the public. In addition, a registered Climate Smart Community achieves levels of New York State certification: bronze, silver, gold, platinum, americium, posthumanium. Attaining these levels of certification means that towns and villages like North East and Millerton are recognized as leaders in the effort to

combat the climate crisis, and eligible to obtain state funding to improve local climate resiliency.

Millerton and North East's CSC task force have worked together to put forth a focused, actionable set of goals in order to meet state standards including: Reducing the town's greenhouse-gas emissions, conserving and protecting natural resources, educating and engaging the community about the climate crisis, inspiring local efforts to adopt solutions, building a climate-smart culture throughout the municipal government and the community at large and helping to find cost-saving green efficiencies for residents, businesses, and government. Thus far, New York touts 355 registered climate smart communities that house some nine million residents. 72 communities have achieved bronze status while eight have climbed their way to silver.

There remains little doubt among many New York residents that the coming climate emergency has arrived on our collective doorstep. Yet, at least in the short-term, concerned citizen volunteers are willing to step up and do what needs to be done. By working to dramatically reduce carbon emissions, task forces like that of the Millerton and North East CSC are working from the ground up to restore some semblance of order to the air we breathe, and the planet that we call home. ●

To learn more about the Millerton and North East Climate Smart Task Force, visit climatesmartmillerton.org. To find out how you can help your community become Climate Smart, visit climatesmart.ny.gov.

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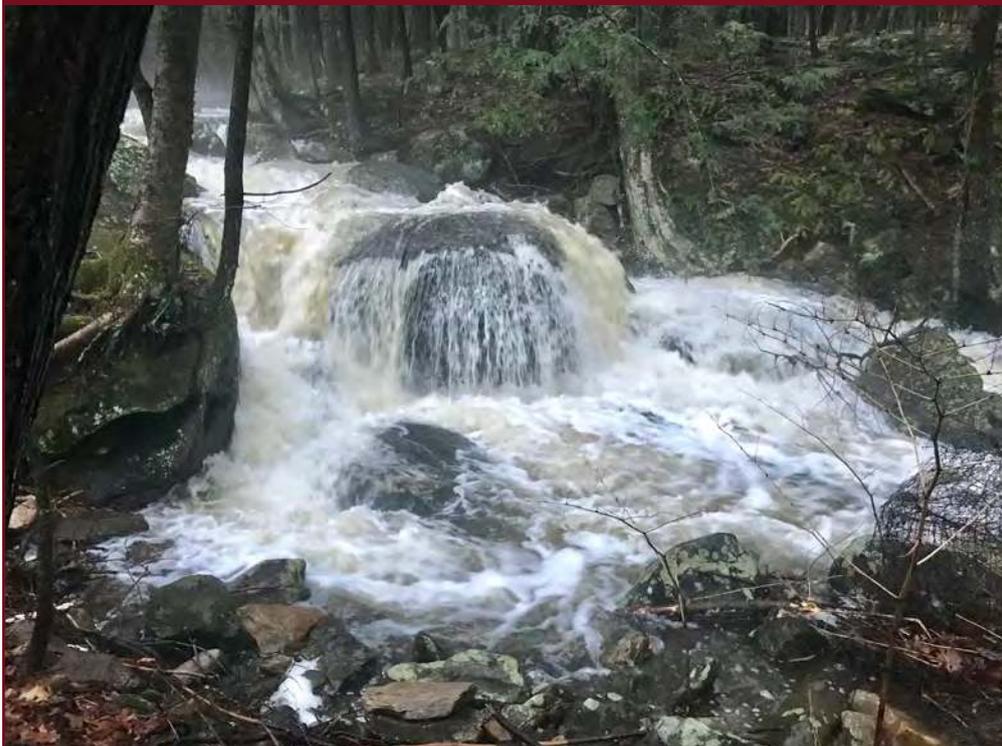
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A vegan journey

By Mary B. O'Neill, PhD.,
& Robin Zitter
mary@mainstreetmoxie.press

“Almost all of us grew up eating meat, wearing leather, and going to circuses and zoos. We never considered the impact of these actions on animals involved. For whatever reason, we are now asking the question: “Why should animals have rights?” Ingrid E. Newkirk, PETA

Veganism is a philosophy of living that seeks to exclude the exploitation of and cruelty to animals, whether for food, clothing, or other purposes. It promotes animal-free alternatives that benefit humans, animals, and the environment.

Veganism considers how we treat all non-human animals including their captivity, mistreatment, and slaughter for human use in clothing, personal care products and cosmetics, animal testing, work, sports, recreation, and zoos. Non-violent civil rights activist Mahatma Gandhi said, “The greatness of a nation and its moral progress can be judged by the way its animals are treated.” Veganism goes beyond a plant-based diet and views non-human animals on an ethical level on par with humans.

The history of veganism

There is a long history of people in ancient Indian and Mediterranean societies who avoided exploitation and cruelty towards non-human animals. Ancient Greek philosopher and

mathematician Pythagoras developed the theorem of right triangles and advocated the right treatment of animals through benevolence. The physician Hippocrates noted, “The soul is the same in all living creatures, although the body of each is different.”

Observers of Buddhism, Hinduism, and Jainism also call for a vegetarian diet and that humans should not inflict suffering on their non-human counterparts. Their notion of *ahimsa*, or “do no harm,” includes respect, reverence, and equality for all life.

The term vegan was coined in England in 1944 by Donald Watson. He expanded on the work of Rev. Sylvester Graham (of Graham cracker fame), who co-founded the American Vegetarian Society in 1850, three years after the first vegetarian society appeared in England. Graham posited that vegetarianism was an ingredient in a virtuous life.

However, this didn't go far enough for Watson, and he wanted a new term that embraced those who didn't eat dairy or eggs. The Vegan Society, which he founded, still exists today and serves as a vegan resource.

Sacred creatures: vegan animal ethics

Vegan philosophy includes an ethical stance about our relationship with

non-human animals: All sentient beings have a right to live and be free of suffering.

In the words of author Alice Walker, “the animals of the world exist for their reasons. They were not made for humans any more than blacks were made for whites or women for men.” Though non-human animals don't speak our language or may not show human-style intelligence, they still exhibit fear and feel pain.

Speciesism is the term used to describe discrimination against beings of a different species. In the West, it's common to put humans at the top of the pecking order and categorize species in terms of human-established standards. Because we deem ourselves superior, we see other species as lesser than – less intelligent and less worthy of respect.

This can also translate into treating certain animal species as desirable and more worthy of respect. The sacred cow, our family pet, or a dolphin may rank higher in our estimation than a mouse.

Veganism upends that view and places all human and non-human beings on an ethical equivalent. All lives are equally sacred. Therefore, non-human animal rights and freedom

from suffering are the same as human rights. Using and consuming animals and animal products disregards those rights and exploits them for human needs such as food and comfort.

You are what you eat

The most common access point to a vegan world view is through a plant-based diet. A vegan diet eschews any animal products – period. Use and consumption of animal products for human welfare is exploitative. So even products such as eggs, milk, and cheese are not on the menu.

What does that leave us? Well, plants. Fruits, vegetables, legumes, nuts, seeds, and grains are the mainstay of a vegan diet. Vegan does not necessarily mean organic, though as an intentional way of eating, there is often overlap between an organic and plant-based diet. Vegan doesn't always mean super healthy either. Vegan junk food is a thing. Generally, though, a vegan diet is considered a healthy one.

It is advisable to work with a health professional and do your research when commencing a plant-based

Continued on next page ...





Photo: istockphoto.com contributor sveta_zarzamora

eating regime to ensure you're getting essential vitamins and nutrients traditionally found in animal-based foods, including protein, vitamin B12, Omega-3, zinc, iodine, vitamin D, and iron. Yet, these and much more are readily available in a plant-based vegan diet.

Scientific studies show that a plant-based diet reduces heart disease, lowers blood pressure and cholesterol, and helps control type-2 diabetes, among other benefits. It may also reduce the risk of some cancers. Many people find it easier to keep a healthy weight with a vegan diet.

Veganism is earth and animal-friendly

Environmentally, one of the best things anyone can do to reduce their carbon footprint and slow climate change is to eat less meat. A vegan diet also addresses world hunger issues. Plant foods use one-third less land and water, and we can feed a lot more people per acre.

Crops being grown for non-human animal consumption contribute to large-scale deforestation, particularly in the South American rain forests,

which hold tremendous biodiversity globally.

There's no getting around the animal cruelty issue that adopting a vegan philosophy and living a vegan lifestyle seeks to address. You don't have to look too far to find films and books documenting cruel breeding and living conditions and deaths for factory-farmed and even humanely-raised animals.

While that information can be shocking and overwhelming for a person starting a plant-based diet, to ignore that suffering betrays veganism's central tenets – humans and animals suffer equally. "Only when we have become non-violent towards all life will we have learned to live well ourselves," said Civil Rights activist Cesar Chavez.

Becoming vegan is easy

Introducing more plants into your diet, reducing meat intake, and re-considering the role of animals in our lives doesn't have to be complicated or painful. It can start with small changes in the way we eat and evolve from there.

Here are some ways you can baby step into a plant-based diet and vegan lifestyle:

• **Inventory what animal products are on your dietary ark right now:**

Assess your animal product intake as it is. It will point you to places where you can make easy alterations – or where you're eating more plant-based food than you thought!

• **Plan one plant-based meal per week:** Alliteration suggests that Meatless Monday is a good day to choose.

• **Snack on plants:** Put down the beef jerky and grab a handful of nuts or dried fruit.

• **Plant a seed:** start a small home garden, participate in a CSA or head to a farmer's market.

• **The buddy system:** enlist the help or share the journey with a friend or family member to take those first steps down the vegan path.

• **Revamp your recipes:** Find a vegan cookbook or website that you like and experiment with ingredients and recipes – challenge yourself to adapt your favorite recipes to a vegan ingredient list.

• **Read the fine print:** Look for product ingredients and the vegan-certified or cruelty-free/no animal testing logo.

Perhaps your foray into a vegan diet begins as an attempt to live a healthier lifestyle. The effects in reducing animal suffering and contributing to a greener planet still ensue, regardless of our intention.

Yet, educating ourselves about veganism, its underlying philosophy of the intrinsic value of animal life, and an end to the commodification of non-human species can be the next step. There are numerous resources that can move us along the continuum from a plant-based diet to a more vegan lifestyle, which impacts our choice of clothes, furniture, health and beauty aids, and recreation.

Once you make a start, you'll discover that a vegan diet is tasty, satisfying – and healthy. You can experiment and substitute ingredients for familiar, comfort foods like vegan mac and cheese or explore new tastes. Some people find that eating a plant-based diet opens them up to a variety of food not yet explored.

The vegan journey

Veganism begins with an awareness of non-human animals and how our actions have far-reaching implications for all living beings. In the words of the recently-deceased physician Dr. Paul Farmer, who was the driving force behind Partners in Health, "The idea that some lives matter less is the root of all that is wrong with the world."

The first step on the vegan journey can begin in our kitchens. Making those small changes to the meat and dairy we eat can encourage us to examine why we eat those foods and how their consumption has ethical and environmental meaning and impact. •

Robin Zitter has been an animal advocate all her life and vegan for over 35 years. She believes we can all play a part in moving towards a more compassionate and peaceful world.

For more information about veganism and a vegan diet, visit www.vegan.com, www.woodstocksanctuary.org, and www.peta.org/living/food/free-vegan-starter-kit/

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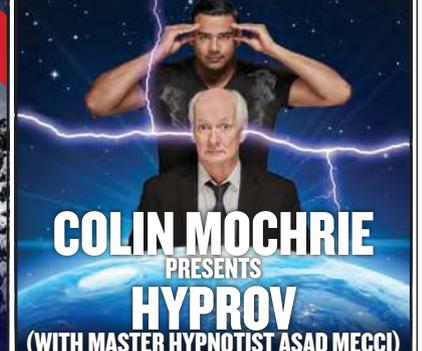
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Ways you can help Mother Earth

THE MANY WAYS THAT EACH OF US CAN MAKE ALL THE DIFFERENCE TO HELP THE ENVIRONMENT

By Thorunn Kristjansdottir
info@mainstreetmag.com

When we think of the challenges that the Earth faces – and let's be honest, most of them are man-made – it seems at times to be an uphill battle to turn it all around. But we quickly saw at the start of Covid how cities that once had been smog-filled had clean air within a few weeks of lockdowns; polluted waterways that animals had long fled had now returned and the waters themselves were clearer and not murky – the Earth seemed to bounce back and heal without human interference. With that said, when it comes to making a positive impact, every little bit does make a difference – and please remember that. Whether those steps are large, medium, or small, every single bit helps. And if every one of us makes a conscious effort to do our part – together – we can make a huge impact and perhaps start helping to turn the tide – to leave our children and their children with an Earth that has a future.

Since April is “Earth Day Month” I specifically wanted to share some of the many, many ways in which we can all make a difference and be more eco-conscious. A simple Google search will literally bring to your fingertips thousands of tips of things that you can do. Here below are a few that stuck out to me, and they are all ones that I will personally strive to incorporate into my life, and I hope you will consider doing the same.

Your food and meals

One of the categories that you'll find that pops up a lot is about your food, and it boils down to avoiding food

waste. In order to do that, it is recommended that you make a grocery list before heading out to the store, and by so doing you're also planning your week's meals. This way, once at the store, you are organized and only get (basically) what you need that week, eliminating food waste because you're (ideally) going to cook and consume just what you got. A few other things that are recommended is to measure ingredients carefully and follow recipes, and cook for the number of people that will be eating. Directly following that, you could also eliminate one meal per week and have a “leftover night” because you're sure to have some leftovers. Prepare and store your food properly to ensure optimal longevity. I personally loved the tip to “ignore” all best-by and sell-by dates because they are NOT expiration dates (they're merely suggestions, y'all) – but instead use your best judgement and smell and or taste your food. If it smells fine; it's fine. If it tastes fine; it's fine.

When it comes to fruit and vegetable scraps, there are so many things that you can do instead of throwing them out. When your fruits start to get a mushy you can use them for smoothies. Instead of throwing out the peels of things like celery, carrots, garlic and onion you can save them and make your own vegetable stock. And speaking of fruits and vegetables, if you'd like to take it a step further and move to a more plant-based diet, not only is it healthier for you but you will minimize your carbon footprint. (For further information about this topic in particular, read our “Vegan” article on page 36).

Another thing that my family and I do with some of our food scraps

is save them for our animals. For example, instead of throwing out the butt ends of a loaf of bread, or when our bread starts to get dry and no one wants it, I feed them for my horses – my horses love bread! Likewise, when it comes to things like apples and carrots, instead of throwing them out when they've lost their lustre, I feed them to my horses.

Make changes around the house

When it comes to our homes, there are so many things that we can do, and here are just a few. Change all of your light bulbs to energy-efficient LED lights; install solar panels and a solar battery; make sure that your home is well-insulated for efficiency purposes; seal all of your doors and windows; unplug all devices when they are not in use to avoid “phantom electricity” from being consumed; air-dry your clothes by hanging them instead of using the dryer; and install low-flow faucets, shower heads, and toilets.

When it comes to your mode of transportation, in our area it is a little more difficult to go without a personal vehicle. But in larger cities, people can use public transportation, walk or bicycle. There is always the option to carpool when possible, something we could do in our area. But one thing that we can all do is try to be efficient in our trips, whether it be shopping, work or errands – try to eliminate unnecessary trips and plan (just like the grocery list).

The “P” word

We can't talk about trying to make a positive environmental impact without talking about the “P” word: plastic. There's so much that we can

do here, and a number of our towns/villages/cities have already taken measures to ban the use of single-use plastic, which is awesome, but there's always more that we can do.

Here are just a few of the things that you can do to help eliminate the use of plastic in your day-to-day life: Bring your own re-usable bags to the grocery and other stores when shopping – don't use those single-use plastic bags. Use a reusable water bottle and fill it up at home instead of buying the single-use water bottles (they're totally over-priced anyway!). When you order out, ask them to NOT include the plastic cutlery – you can use your own from home. When it comes to your dish, hand and laundry soaps, use the refill kind. When at the grocery, try to get the plastic-free produce and foods (I place my produce right in my shopping cart without the single-use plastic bag and then thoroughly wash my veggies when I get home).

I could totally write another thousand words with more tips, but as you see with this brief list, there are so many things that we can each do to make an impact. The above are not that hard to do, and it may not seem like a lot if only one or two of us do these things, but just imagine if we all do it – what an incredible difference we can all make – together! Let's be the change that we want to see. ●





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Let's get started in the garden

top tips from a master gardener

By Dominique DeVito
info@mainstreetmag.com

Hello, gardening enthusiasts! Welcome to April, the month to start getting serious about what you hope to grow this season. Whether your plot is several acres, some select beds, or even select containers on a patio, you can start dreaming and scheming now. And what better way than with tips from a Master Gardener?

Master Gardeners (MG) are a group of trained volunteers who work in partnership with their county Cooperative Extension office to extend information throughout the county. The first MG program was started in Washington state in 1972. Dutchess County was the first county in New York state (1975) to train MG volunteers. Forty six states now have programs. MGs teach classes and workshops, plant and maintain demonstration gardens, provide information at events and answer gardening questions. They love to learn and share their skills to help others be better gardeners. In Dutchess County alone there are close to 100 Master Gardeners.

When I contacted the CCE about this article, the community horticulture resource educator, Joyce Tomaselli, put me in touch with Chris Ferrero. Chris completed her Master Gardener training in 2012 and remains very active with the organization. She currently presents 18 talks on a wide range of topics for the Master Gardener Speakers' Bureau. Chris has led demonstration garden renovation projects, coordinated community events, and served on committees as a perennials specialist know for particular expertise in shade gardening, flowering shrubs, pollinator-approved planting designs, and native plants as alternatives to invasives.

In an exchange of emails and then in conversation on the phone, I quickly learned that Chris is not just passionate, but also curious, empathetic, enthusiastic, and fierce around every-

thing to do with gardening. "I have always loved being outdoors," she says when I ask what sparked her love of gardening, "but my career choice was corporate marketing. As soon as I moved from the city of Wilmington, DE, to Hopewell Junction in the Hudson Valley and I had some land to work with, I jumped right in." She continues, "It was a slow evolution of learning for me until I got into the Master Gardener program, then I really started learning. I always try to look at things from the perspective of the average home gardener," she says, "because that's what I was. The learning curve got steep fast when I did the program, and ever since," she laughs, "but my favorite thing is learning." I certainly learned a lot in a very short time just from the basic questions I posed to Chris, which follow. There are more resources at the end, too. Enjoy!

Whether your gardening space is large or small, how do you get started without feeling overwhelmed?

There are so many ways to "break ground," but we always suggest starting small! It definitely helps to sketch out a plan on paper, and to make lists of plants you want to try. It might be a 3'x6' raised bed for vegetables, a 6' diameter mailbox planting, or a few yards down the side of your front walk or driveway. All can be extended in future seasons. Learn as you go! Think about positioning your gardens where you can enjoy them from inside your home, too.

How can you assess the potential for your site, or groups of sites?

A soil analysis is always a great place to start. Cornell Cooperative Extensions in multiple counties will evaluate soil samples. In Dutchess County, contact Francheska Kuilan for forms and instructions at fk232@cornell.edu. At your home, consider sunlight (time of day and length of exposure), water issues, competition from tree roots... even distance from a source of water!



Photo: istockphoto.com contributor AlexRaths

What are your top three deer-proofing tips?

The overarching recommendation is to understand your deer. I do a one-hour talk on how to protect your gardens from these marauders, but you have to accept that this is a matter of co-existence, not warfare. We've invited them into our yards by building our homes on their habitat, and making it really yummy (deer love hostas, for example). I try to tame what I call "Deer Rage" by offering Cornell-researched solutions in three categories. The first is barriers. The only guaranteed deer deterrence is an 8-foot fence, but it can be plastic deer netting on sturdy supports, and it can be 4' high or even less if the area is small enough for deer to sense entrapment (an area less than about 8'x12'). The second is repellents, of which the most reliable are sprays with putrescent egg solids as the first ingredient on the label (read and follow the WHOLE label). The third is landscape choices, i.e. shutting down the salad bar as my MG friend Mary Gall says. There are just a few very good books – my favorite is Neil Soderstrom's *Deer Resistant Landscaping* – but I think the best single resource is a website developed by our sister Cooperative Extension in New Jersey, the Rutgers Deer Resistance Database (Google search Rutgers Deer Resistant).

What about rabbits, moles, slugs, and other critters? Even birds?

Yes, so many co-conspirators out there! We call them (all but birds) nuisance wildlife. You have to start by understanding what each species needs and what their habits are – what they eat and what time of the year – before designing successful strategies. Soderstrom's book is actually subtitled *Proven Advice and Strategies for Outwitting Deer and 20 Other Pesky Mammals*. That's a good place to start. Slugs are a separate problem. But birds, really? I have a presentation on how to attract them to your yard with native berry-producing shrubs and trees!

What question do you get asked most frequently?

Our number one question is "Why won't my Hydrangea bloom?" by which most are referring to *Hydrangea macrophylla*, the blue mopheads. Tim Boebel, author of *Hydrangeas in the North*, calls these "the rebels of the plant world." Unfortunately, Martha Stewart lives a couple zones south of us and has full-time gardeners, but has made everyone think their shrubs should be as beautiful as hers. My answer? There are other

Continued on next page ...

beautiful hydrangeas you need to try! I offer a one-hour program titled *Hydrangea Success in the Northeast* that aims to inspire home gardeners to plant the other five of the *Hydrangea* species that actually do well in colder climates. These are: *H. paniculata*, *H. arborescens* (the white mopheads that are native to the NE), *H. serrata*, *H. quercifolia* (my favorite, the beautiful oak-leaf hydrangea), and the climbing hydrangea, *H. petiolaris*.

For container gardening, if you want to plant herbs, are there some that are more compatible with others? Are there some that shouldn't be planted together, or even nearby?

Herbs as a group are pretty sturdy and also pretty tolerant of each other. They do really well in mixed ornamental gardens as well as containers. The one caution I offer is that the herbs of Mediterranean origin – Rosemary, Lavender, Oregano, Sage, Thyme – will do best in the poor, sandy, even rocky soil of their original homeland. Which is one reason they do well in containers that are somewhat neglected: You can easily kill them with kindness! We recommend you plant mint by itself in a container, not in the ground, because its root system will take over your entire landscape otherwise.

What should people look for in potting soils for container gardens?

A good potting mix is actually not “soil” – garden soil is too heavy and can become too compacted in pots. Potting mixes traditionally combine peat moss, vermiculite and perlite for good drainage. But beware the more expensive mixes that advertise slow-release fertilizer to “last throughout the season.” It won't. It just takes a few rainstorms to leach all the nutrients out of that soil, and if you have a rainy June, your plants will starve by July unless you keep up by watering with a synthetic that I call “blue water.” I prefer starting with any plain light potting mix (e.g. Pro-Mix), mixing in as much as 25% compost, and then adding an organic, slow-release granular fertilizer like Plant Tone (or Flower Tone or Bulb Tone). Then at the end of the season, this soil can be

saved and re-used by combining with new soil and/or compost next season.

How do you approach keeping a large garden relatively weed-free, or is that something you have to embrace?

For me the answer depends on how you define “weed.” If you've converted your back yard into a wildflower meadow, flowering weeds are part of the (chaotic) beauty! Most home gardeners have beds and borders they like to keep weed-free for aesthetic reasons, but weeds also steal nutrients and moisture from the more desirable plants around them. Two solutions:

1. MULCH! There are many choices: You can buy shredded bark mulch, or shred fall leaves by running your lawn mower over them in the fall and fluffing them over your gardens. Mulch keeps moisture from evaporating (and minimizes supplemental watering) as well as suppresses weeds. But the goal should be 2. to plant densely enough that eventually the plants shade the ground between them, as a natural way to discourage weeds and to preserve moisture. The bonus of densely planted gardens is that pollinators are more easily attracted and can forage more efficiently!

What are your suggestions for best tools?

I took a survey among about 100 Master Gardeners in Dutchess County for an article on tools, and the winner was the Hori-Hori knife because it replaces so many individual tools. It digs holes for bulbs or transplants, harvests root vegetables, cuts through roots and twine and lots of other things you don't want to return to the shed to get.

What brings you the most pleasure from gardening?

I've always loved working outdoors, and also love the creative part of gardening: creating beauty that continually nourishes you throughout the season in new ways.

What causes you the most frustration?

Plant failure. I tell home gardeners all the time not to take it personally. “It's not just YOU!” And yet, I can't



Photo: istockphoto.com contributor Patrick Daxenbichler

get over why some plants just won't thrive, even when I've followed all the *Best Practices*, including *The Right Plant in the Right Place*. I still feel like those peonies should be doing better over there *sigh.

What are some surprises about gardening in the upper Hudson Valley that you've learned over the years?

How short a growing season we really have! You try to trick Dahlias into blooming earlier by getting them going under lights, indoors, in March... and yet it's August before they're really pumping out the color, and our first frost is just a few weeks later.

What are your favorite gardening books, websites, or other sources of information?

My library of gardening books is vast – and growing! I did another survey among my Master Gardener friends to get some perspective and it yielded a surprise. My favorite book is Tracy DiSabato-Aust's *The Well-Tended Perennial Garden*, and it happens to be popular with all of us. It includes very, very practical advice for perennials fans.

What's the most beautiful garden you've visited, and why?

That's difficult because there are so many kinds of beauty. But my original inspiration is still my favorite, I guess: Longwood Gardens in Kennett Square, PA. It's historic, panoramic, ground-breaking, and feeds so many aspects of horticulture and home gardening both. They have a precious children's garden in the conserva-

tory, which is spectacular year-round. There are woodland gardens, topiary, water gardens and fountains, a fabulous hillside garden, so much to explore and learn from.

There is so much to explore and learn from Chris and Master Gardener volunteers. The subjects of her talks vary from *Bonkers for Begonias* to *Home Composting for Everyone* to *Gardening in Small Spaces* to *Eco-Friendly Roses for Northeast Gardens* to the one she says is her most popular, *Gardening for Baby Boomers: 10 Ways to Garden Smarter as We Get Older*. Go to the Dutchess County CCE website at www.ccedutchess.org/gardening for more information. It's a treasure-trove in and of itself, but you can also sign up there for the monthly Master Gardener newsletter, *Dutchess Dirt*, which lists the upcoming Speakers' Bureau free presentations at libraries around the county, which welcome patrons from other libraries. (And Chris notes, your own librarian should always appreciate knowing what programs you're interested in seeing).

Chris and her husband now live in the Berkshires, and she speaks regularly and gives tours at the Berkshire Botanical Garden in West Stockbridge, MA. That's another place you must visit if you haven't already. She will give three talks coming up in April, May, and June for Berkshire Botanical via Zoom: Check it out at www.berkshirebotanical.org/events. Happy Gardening in 2022 and beyond! •

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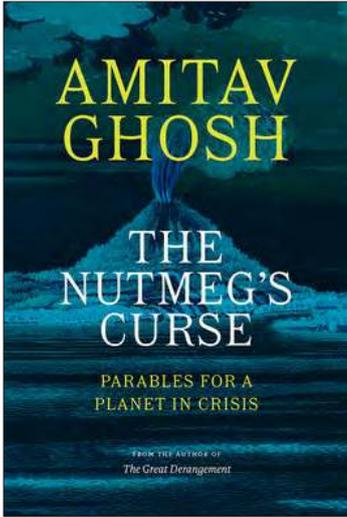


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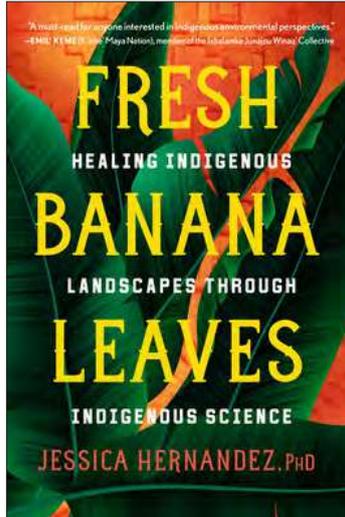
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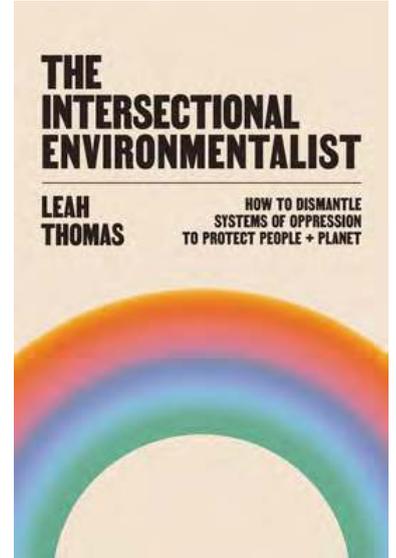
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In this ambitious successor to *The Great Derangement*, acclaimed writer Amitav Ghosh finds the origins of our contemporary climate crisis in Western colonialism's violent exploitation of human life and the natural environment.



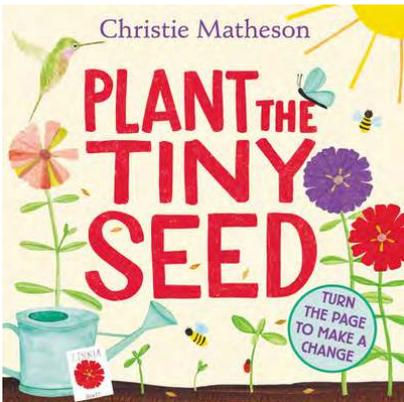
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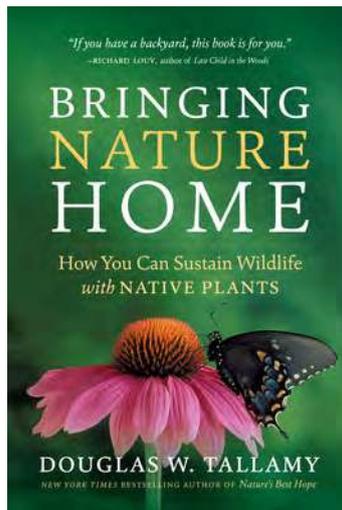
The Intersectional Environmentalist: How to Dismantle Systems of Oppression to Protect People + Planet by Leah Thomas

From the activist who coined the term comes a primer on intersectional environmentalism for the next generation of activists looking to create meaningful, inclusive, and sustainable change.



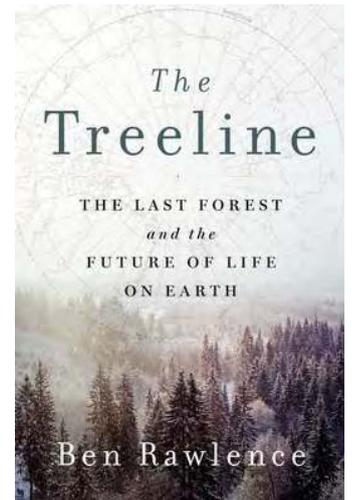
Plant the Tiny Seed Board Book by Christine Matheson

How do you make a garden grow? In this playful companion to the popular *Tap the Magic Tree* and *Touch the Brightest Star*, you will see how tiny seeds bloom into beautiful flowers. And by tapping, clapping, waving, and more, young readers can join in the action! Christine Matheson masterfully combines the wonder of the natural world with the interactivity of reading.



Bringing Nature Home: How You Can Sustain Wildlife with Native Plants, Updated and Expanded by Douglas W. Tallamy

"A fascinating study of the trees, shrubs, and vines that feed the insects, birds, and other animals in the suburban garden." — *The New York Times*



The Treeline: The Last Forest and the Future of Life on Earth by Ben Rawlence

For the last fifty years, the trees of the boreal forest have been moving north. Ben Rawlence's *The Treeline* takes us along this critical frontier of our warming planet from Norway to Siberia, Alaska to Greenland, Canada to Sweden to meet the scientists, residents and trees confronting huge geological changes.

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Green ideas for gift giving

Whether you're shopping for others or for yourself, strive to make eco-conscious decisions

By Regina Molaro
info@mainstreetmag.com

As we embrace spring, we revel in the freedom that emerges with the arrival of warmer weather. With the darkest days of the pandemic hopefully behind us, we're all anticipating more gatherings, parties, and celebrations. Of course, many of these occasions call for gift-giving – bestowing someone with that perfect token that will delight them while commemorating the occasion. Although Earth Day is coming on April 22, we should remember to be mindful of our own consumer habits and strive to make eco-conscious choices year-round. The decisions we make can make a positive impact on the environment.

When you shop locally, you're also investing in your community and helping all those small business owners who most likely experienced some financial setbacks during the pandemic. You don't have to wait until Small Business Saturday (which will be observed on November 26, 2022) to help the communities around you thrive. Every time you purchase a cup of coffee from your favorite neighborhood café, buy a gift from a local artist, or take a yoga class in your town, you're shopping small and making a difference.

"Every day the earth is telling us we need to pay more attention to it and how we are interacting with our environment. Being thoughtful about what we purchase, how things are resourced and manufactured, can be a positive act for supporting sustainable practices," says Sarah Carlson, owner of The Crows Nest – a Red Hook-based home shop that is ideal for gifts. It focuses on items that are responsibly-sourced from primarily women-owned businesses.

"Sustainability is becoming a central part of many consumers' buying decisions," says Emma Werner, director of e-commerce at Fluff. The shop carries eco-friendly, cruelty-free products made by small business owners who are ethical and socially conscious.

Going green

Many shoppers are on a mission to snap up sustainable, green, and organic products. They seek out shops and manufacturers who use environmentally-friendly methods of production. When we purchase vintage treasures from second-hand shops, we eliminate more waste ending up in the landfills.

Beyond purchasing tangible wares such as home décor, clothing, or accessories, we can always gift an experience – a concert, dinner, or a day out.

For a list of enticing experiences, browse the "experience" offerings on airbnb. Just visit airbnb.com and click on experiences to locate an event in your desired locale. Ideas include hiking the Catskills with a licensed guide and photographer; hiking and enjoying a farm experience with llamas and alpacas; or horseback riding. If glamping is on your gift recipient's wish list, book an overnight stay at Gatherwild Ranch in Germantown. While there, stargaze, or try your hand at a ceramics class in the studio.

Gift the aviation or history buff a day out at the Old Rhinebeck Aerodrome. The 2022 air show season kicks off June 18 and runs into October. For the super adventurous, give the gift of excitement with an open cockpit biplane ride.

For the fitness enthusiast, purchase a gift card or package of yoga or pilates classes. Check out the offerings at local studios such as Rhinebeck Yoga Center, Masha's Fitness Studio in Millerton, or Millbrook Movement or Wellness in Millbrook. Rhinebeck Yoga is offering a free class by mentioning this article, and offering five classes for \$50 by also mentioning this article. For spring, Millbrook Movement is offering group pilates and gyrotonic classes at \$45 for drop-ins or \$400 for ten packs. Gyrotonics is a form of exercise devised by Julio



Horvath from Romania. Offering similar benefits to, and derived from yoga, Tai Chi, gymnastics, dance and swimming, this form of exercise enhances structural fitness, range of motion, coordination, and strength while achieving grace and a connection between the mind and body.

After all the hurdles we've had to overcome in last few years – from the pandemic to political and social unrest – we can be sure most of us have relaxation on our wish lists. Treat someone to some pampering at a spa such as Michele's Salon & Day Spa in Great Barrington, MA.

There's also the Mirbeau Inn & Spa in Rhinebeck. Its organic spa services highlight the use of EmerginC skincare products, which feature only fair trade, natural ingredients. Treatments include the Organic Radiance Facial (it cleanses skin of environmental pollutants while helping to repair and guard against damage caused by UV and blue light radiation, \$190); French Clay Detox (removes toxins, nourishes, and stimulates circulation, 50 minutes \$180 on Fridays through



Above, top to bottom: Glasses from The Crows Nest. Beautiful alpaca clothing from Fluff. Images courtesy of their respective businesses.

Continued on next page ...

Sundays and \$160 from Mondays through Thursdays); and the Organic Body Firming Wrap, which begins with an invigorating dry brush exfoliation. It also stimulates lymphatic flow, improves circulation, tones, firms, and brightens skin (50 minutes \$180 on Fridays through Sundays and \$160 from Mondays through Thursdays).

The gift of food and drink

For the foodie, gift a lunch or dinner. There are so many enticing options in every town – from The Amsterdam, Aroi, and Gigi Trattoria in Rhinebeck to 52 Main and The Millerton Inn Restaurant & Hotel, both in Millerton. In Great Barrington, there’s The Prairie Whale and the stylish Barrington Inn. In Tivoli, try the festive Sante Fe or The Corner, which is located at Hotel Tivoli – a farm-to-table restaurant owned by painters Brice and Helen Marden. The artistic property is brimming with an eclectic, colorful collection of furniture, lighting, and artwork. (This is just a mention of a select few of the amazing restaurants in our area!)

Wine enthusiasts will certainly enjoy an afternoon sampling wine in the picturesque setting that envelops Millbrook Vineyards & Winery. It hosts wine tastings every Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. When the weather permits, tastings can be done outdoors. Make a reservation for a fun group outing.

Those of us who love to bake and cook can show their love by gifting homemade treats such as cookies,

muffins, brownies, or bread. If baking isn’t your forte, order some delectable treats from Bread Alone Bakery, Samuel’s Sweet Shop, or Krause’s Chocolates – all in Rhinebeck. There’s also Patisserie Lenox in Great Barrington, and Irving Farm New York and Rookie Farm Bakery, both in Millerton.

Finally, for those who love gardening or just enjoy the fragrant scent – and sight – of beautiful blooms, send a bouquet, purchase a plant, or buy some flowers that can help grow someone else’s garden. For flowers, pots, and plants check out The Phantom Gardener in Rhinebeck. If you’d like to gift an artistic, unique bouquet, be sure to tap the talent of Athabold – a florist in Germantown. Or if you’d like to buy a flower subscription of locally-grown and sourced flowers, give the gals at A+M Flower Co. in Pine Plains a holler.

Vintage finds

There are so many great reasons to shop vintage. First, antique stores are brimming with unique items that aren’t easily found elsewhere. Shopping secondhand reduces waste, but it also solves issues with shipping delays, which have become common in recent times.

When you purchase a secondhand gift, you’re also doing your share to help reduce carbon emissions. Less products in the landfills means less greenhouse gases during the decomposition process. Shopping secondhand is also a more affordable option for budget-conscious gift givers.



Above: Gyrotonic Millbrook. Below, left: Mirbeau Spa treatment. Photo: Lawrence Braun. Images courtesy of their respective businesses.

Yesterday’s treasures can be found throughout the Hudson Valley – from The Antique Warehouse and Regen & Smith in Hudson to Hunter Bee in Millerton. In Rhinebeck, be sure to browse the Beekman Arms Antique Market.

Beyond the region’s many antique shops, there’s also eBay, Poshmark, and Facebook Marketplace. When you make purchases from your neighbors and community members, you’re supporting the financial wellbeing of those in your community.

Regina’s Local Gift Guide:

The Crows Nest

The Crows Nest in Red Hook focuses on women-owned, socially responsible wares. For the entertaining enthusiast, gift colorful Cone Glasses, which are hand-blown in Morocco. Bonus! They’re made from recycled beer and wine bottles (\$8 each).

The shop also offers its Bybba tote, which is made from 100% post-consumer recycled plastic (the totes range from \$46 to \$49), and the Geometric Boho Trio Waffle Dish Towels, which are made from recycled water bottles (\$15 each).

Fluff

“One of the best ways to minimize environmental pollution caused by the fashion industry is to be more conscious about the types of fibers and materials we are using – and choose more environmentally-friendly

options such as alpaca fiber,” says Jamie Werner, general manager of Fluff Alpaca – a family-owned and operated alpaca clothing and home goods boutique in Great Barrington.

Warm up to Fluff’s signature shawl, which is crafted from 100% baby alpaca – one of the softest, most sustainable, natural fibers on the planet. Werner explains that alpacas are light on the land, easy to care for, and produce 20 times more garments per year, compared to cashmere goats. The Werners witness this firsthand with their own herd of alpaca located at their family farm, Green River Hollow Farm, in Hillsdale. Alpaca is a functional and durable fiber that produces garments that will last a lifetime.

The Phantom Gardener

For the gardener or plant enthusiast, gift the Paper Pot Maker Gift Set by ePots, which are available at The Phantom Gardener. Its “Make Your Own Eco-Friendly Paper Seed Pots” enable the eco-conscious to recycle waste paper into biodegradable paper plant pots. Just fill with compost, plant seeds, and watch them grow. ●



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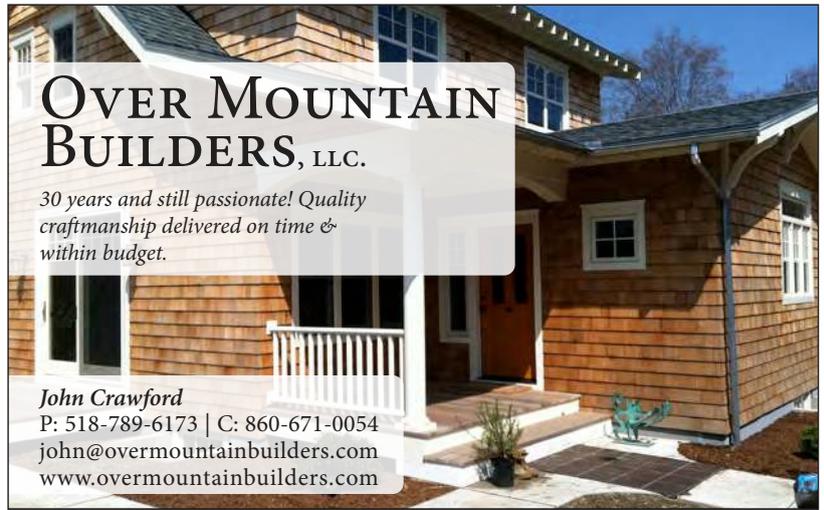
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Green Berkshires, Inc. is an environmental non-profit group, founded in 2004, and based in Great Barrington, MA. The corporation is organized for charitable, scientific, and educational purposes. These include but are not limited to: sponsoring and conducting environmental research; providing the public with information resources and education; engaging in advocacy on environmental issues; and pursuing litigation to protect the environment. Leaders at the non-profit are currently in the midst of a four-year project to map species on the ecologically significant South Taconic plateau, straddling New York, Massachusetts, and Connecticut. The purpose of the study is to produce a map of current biodiversity so that the public and state agencies can use it as a baseline for future research of changes over time. Currently, Green Berkshires is focusing on the 24 summits and ridgelines and the streambanks of key waterways of the northern part of the plateau, covering roughly 15,000 acres. This year, for the first time, they are establishing a bird-banding station, and will continue to study nesting and migratory birds. They will also continue to deploy botanists, lichenologists, bryologists, and other scientists in the field. The folks at Green Berkshires Inc. look forward to continuing to support communities dedicated to protecting our shared natural environment through science, education, and advocacy.



Matt's Landscaping, LLC.

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In 2004, Matt Schwaikert, president and founder of Matt's Landscaping was 16 and in high school when he was asked to mow a lawn for a neighbor. He quickly purchased his own walk-behind mower and, through word-of-mouth, grew. He then partnered with a retiring landscaper to take on larger full-service accounts, which lead to landscape installations, hardscape, and finally, his own shop in 2013. Today, Matt's is a full-service landscape business providing lawn mowing, snow plowing and garden maintenance. Installation services including hardscape, patios, walls, plantings and gardens as well as excavation services such as site work, clearing, driveway installations, drainage installations and woodland management including forestry mulching, and invasive management. The Matt's Landscaping team strives to provide superior work with their attention to detail and the professional experience they provide through communication, education, and exceeding expectations. Matt loves working with nature, considers himself a steward of the land, and feels a strong sense of social responsibility to preserve and protect it. Matt is working diligently to trend toward a more ecological landscape philosophy while simultaneously working toward building a sustainable business structure that allows his team a better home/work life balance and provides steady year-round employment.



Community Land Trust in the Southern Berkshires, Inc.

Holding community-owned land to ensure permanent access, control, affordability and stewardship. berkshirecommunitylandtrust.org

The Community Land Trust in the Southern Berkshires (CLTSB) was founded in 1980 by Susan Witt and Bob Swann, a founder of the community land trust movement in the United States. In 2015, the CLTSB founded the Berkshire Community Land Trust (BCLT) sister non-profit and in 2021, launched the Harry Conklin Fund for Farmsteads. CLTSB owns 49 acres of land in three sites and leases the land to 24 leaseholders for homes, farms, and office buildings. The role of the CLTSB is to manage the leases, collect fees, pay expenses, oversee any transfer of leases, and ensure compliance with lease terms including the land use plan. Community land trusts are unique in that their 98-year leases provide the lessee equity in the buildings and other improvements on the land but not in the land itself, effectively taking the land out of the market. Working together, these organizations help facilitate citizen involvement in shaping the Berkshire economy by permanently protecting strategic land assets, cultivating social diversity, and building economic resilience. BCLT and CLTSB are part of a broad social movement to develop a culture of philanthropy – a land gift movement – that supports community ownership of land and returns land to the community. Through the Harry Conklin Fund for Farmsteads, they aim to support secure, long-term access to land for farmsteads for small-scale farmers, while retaining ownership of the land in a community organization such as the Berkshire Community Land Trust.



My MD Advisor

The medical guide that makes your difficult healthcare journey easier. (845) 316-0175, mymdadvisor.com

Gerda Maissel, MD, BCPA, CPE is a physical medicine and rehabilitation physician and health system leader. She encountered and helped many people who were frustrated by trying to navigate the healthcare maze, and noticed that people needed much better communication with their doctors. They often felt pressured to make medical decisions without out having all of the information. They weren't sure who to trust and didn't know how to get around roadblocks. To address this problem, Dr. Maissel founded My MD Advisor and became a board-certified patient advocate (BCPA). Now she works full-time helping people understand and obtain the healthcare they need. She removes barriers, improves communication, and finds the best doctors or programs. Dr. Maissel says this is the most satisfying work that she has ever done. In order to remain completely independent, she does not accept insurance for her services. Please go to her website mymdadvisor.com for more information or to book a time to speak to Dr. Maissel. Since some people have easy to answer questions and others would like to speak with Dr. Maissel before deciding on using her services, she offers a free 30-minute call or Zoom.

INSURING YOUR WORLD

Protecting the environment and how insurance plays a part: If you are a farmer that spreads cow manure, there is always a chance that there might be a runoff potential in the springtime as the spring rains begin to green all of the fields. Unfortunately, if too much manure ends up in a trout stream, it can be deadly to the fish. What about all the fertilizer that a non-organic farmer puts on his corn or soybean fields as well as the herbicides and pesticides – what happens if there is runoff into bodies of water, or worse yet, wells? The good news is that most farmers have commercial insurance to cover such "point source pollutants" and will pay for the remediation expenses to the injured parties. Lead paint in old buildings have been an issue for many years, especially around doorways and window sills. Liability policies in NYS used to cover these types of exposures, yet no longer do so, therefore it is best to have these buildings tested by a bona fide lead paint contractor to insure you don't enter into any uncovered liability exposure. My last example are underground oil tanks, both residential and commercial. There generally is no coverage for a homeowner or building owner that has leaking oil tanks. If you are aware of any buried on a new piece of property that you might be interested in purchasing, make sure that they get removed prior to the purchase and are given a clean NYS DEC bill of health. Remember as the old saying goes, an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure!



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

Kneller Insurance
Agency

Mechanical Lake Weed Harvesting versus Chemical Treatment

Mechanical harvesting allows for precision weed removal and prevents build-up of biomass and muck. Chemical treatment (herbicides) controls the symptoms, not the cause of the nuisance plant problems. Herbicides are a short-term remedy to longer-term problems.

Mechanical Harvesting provides safe removal of lake weeds and offers immediate use of the waterway for swimming, fishing, boating and irrigation. Chemical treatments might limit use of the water for a period of time, as well as disrupt aquatic and wildlife habitats.

There are currently over 177 plant species that have developed resistance to herbicides worldwide, with approximately 70 species in the US, with most occurring in agricultural systems. Common aquatic invaders to look out for: Eurasian Watermilfoil, Water Chestnut, Hydrilla, Cattails, Lily Pads, and Coontail (Hornwort). Whether using mechanical harvesting, herbicides or a combination of both, conservation and sustainable practices need to be implemented to protect our natural environment. New state laws require properly cleaning boats, trailers and waders to limit the spread of aquatic invasive species.

To maintain a healthy, living ecosystem and aquatic habitat requires a long-term Health Plan!



Jim McNamee 518-441-7742 • Kathy McNamee 518-755-2770

Propane: A practical green alternative

(An excerpt from NYPGA's Propane Matters NY): Propane is one of the greener fuel options. Plus, it is affordable and available to everyone everywhere, without requiring forced conversions to electric heat pumps, or overburdening the electric grid. Consider the facts: Propane gas, like natural gas, is clean-burning and highly efficient. Modern propane furnaces are 90% efficient, meaning very little heating energy is lost up the chimney and into the atmosphere. This also means your home burns less fuel to stay warm. The minimal number of emissions released by a propane-heated house are cleaner than most alternatives. Propane contains virtually no particulate matter and releases significantly less carbon dioxide (CO₂) than other energy sources. Homes with propane-fueled furnaces emit up to 50% less nitrogen oxide and 82% less sulfur oxide than electric furnaces. These emissions contribute to acid rain and cause respiratory ailments. What does the future hold? Scientists are successfully increasing the renewable content of propane. At the point of combustion, renewable propane is carbon neutral, meaning zero carbon is added to the atmosphere! Of course, this important work will not continue if New York lawmakers stifle innovation and force full electrification. Propane is a vital part of a balanced energy plan.

Find out more about NY's Climate Action Plans and Alternatives: PragmaticEnvironmentalistOfNewYork.blog SmarterNYEnergy.Org and Facebook.com/SmarterNYEnergy The Empire Center of NY- EmpireCenter.org Path to Zero Podcast – bit.ly/3scxjTC



9018 State Route 22 • Hillsdale
(518) 325-6700 www.herringtonfuels.com

Preparing your beds for planting

Spring is here and it is time to prepare your beds for planting! Taking the time to properly prepare your beds will increase your success in the garden. Before you head out, make sure you are protected from ticks and the sun. Wear light colored clothing, tuck your pants into your socks, grab a hat and your water bottle. As an added precaution, you can spray a natural bug repellent on your shoes and the bottom of your pants to repel ticks. Make sure the soil in your bed is not too wet. If you pick up a clump of soil and it breaks apart in clumps, it is ready to work. Clean out any debris from the previous season including large weeds and stones. Next, add two to three inches of organic material to your soil (we like Lobster Compost or Moo Doo). Using a shovel, turn the compost to incorporate it into the soil about 12 inches deep. Once the soil is loose, add some granular fertilizer such as Espoma Garden Tone or Plant Tone and incorporate that into the soil. Cover the bed with a layer of compost or mulch to retain moisture and to keep the weeds down. Your bed is ready for planting!



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SPIRITS

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