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MAGAZINE





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JUNE IS BUSY!

I feel like I blinked, and May had not only come, but it had already left. And now June, arguably one of the busiest months of the year, is here. This month is always a doozy for me. How about for you?

June is the gateway to summer. School is ending, it actually feels like summer because the sun is out and it's warm (we deserve it after this winter), and everything is just bursting with activity. On that note, CB is giving us a little roadmap to music and entertainment offerings in the region that kick off this month. And there are many! We most definitely weren't able to include every venue in our tri-corner area, so CB and I narrowed the list down to a handful in hopes of giving a representative sample. But that just goes to show how amazing and rich our area is in culture and activity with so many options.

Speaking of music, Dominique interviewed Taconic Hills alum, Brandon Morrison who has been on tour with the award-winning musician, Sam Smith. This interview arrives on the heels of Dominique's interview with Taconic Hills alum Imelda Muller, who's a bona fide NASA astronaut. This prompts the question: what's Taconic Hills putting in the water up there in Craryville? Talk about talent and intelligence. As a TH alum myself, it makes me so proud to see what fellow TH graduates have accomplished and are contributing to the world with their talents.

Speaking of talent, have you seen this month's artist profile? To tell you that I was blown away is an understatement. Leora interviewed Mita Bland, and if you haven't already taken a look at the art and interview, you definitely should. Wow.

In addition to these three articles, we have an entire magazine here with one great story after another, and there's sure to be something for everyone. But there's one piece that hits a little different. June is Alzheimer's Awareness Month, and Regina has written a piece highlighting this disease. Coincidentally, in our newest Main Street Moxie podcast, we interviewed our friend CB about caretaking for his late wife, Kathy, who suffered from Alzheimer's. It was beyond eye opening and humbling to talk with CB and learn about the disease from his perspective as Kathy's caretaker. We hope that our interview with him as well as Regina's article are helpful to those who are seeking more information on this disease.

– Thorunn Kristjansdottir



JUNE 2026

This one's for you, John!

Photo by
Olivia Valentine

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LOOKING INSIDE

MITA BLAND

By Leora Armstrong
info@mainstreetmag.com

When we walk into a room, we encounter a cornucopia of objects, textures, colors, and feelings. Some rooms are havens; others are places of work. To borrow a phrase from Gaston Bachelard, many rooms possess a poetic space. Mita Bland not only captures that essence and the spirit of a place, but she is also able to create new spaces that have not yet been built, giving the viewer the sense that the space has always existed. Her watercolor renderings, filled with light, energy, and the simple joy of a moment, weave together intricate patterns of fabric and furniture, taking us anywhere from an 18th-century interior to a space yet to be constructed. Each place carries the feeling of a home.

What prompted you to start painting?

It runs in the family. My sister Daisy is an artist, my father was an artist, and my aunt was also a wonderful inspiration to me – she was so free and gestural in her own work. I grew up in Italy in an old villa on a farm. I often wondered how cozy life must be in the smaller houses, with the animals living below and generating heat that rose upstairs into the small rooms where everyone gathered with no

formality at all. I dreamed about that, so I started drawing houses, imagining what I would put in them: where the bedroom was, where the kitchen was, where the bed was, and so forth. A simple farm life was my whole panorama growing up in the country. Finally, I realized what I'm doing now is exactly what I was doing at seven years old, and here I am at seventy, still doing it, still passionate.

I think it's a fascinating question to ask children: what are they drawn to at seven or eight years old? Watch the child and see what they gravitate toward. They will often come back to it.

I started mostly in watercolor. I love that watercolor moves all over the place. It's easy to transport, and when my own children were small, it was easy to work with in whatever moments I had. There's a spontaneity to it – it puddles, it spreads, it dries, and you must coax it back into place. You cannot control watercolor, and that's exactly why I love it. The unpredictability, the difficulty, that's where the magic is.

Growing up in Italy, with that ancient history of place, must have had a huge influence on you. How coming to America feel?

I went to Wheaton College, near Boston, and I had a very good art teacher. It was also the first time I had been back in America since I was four years old. My aunt lived outside of

Cambridge, and we visited museums, which felt like a different kind of art from what I was raised with, where the whole way of life involved art. In Italy, everything is touched by art: paintings in every church, frescoes on walls, and sculptures everywhere. It's interesting; you don't realize it until you travel somewhere that isn't similar.

Growing up in Tuscany in the country, we were isolated in one way, yet you absorbed all the experiences of the community. Going to church, for instance, was always extraordinary. You would fast for three hours beforehand, and then there was the whole, mysterious ritual of the Mass: the priest at the altar with his back to us, everything in Latin. That fed my imagination enormously. I was always wondering what it was all about, the vestments changing color with the seasons, the light in the churches. Having not eaten for four hours, I must have been lightheaded.

And then there was drawing. I always wanted to draw, but we were sent outside to play. So, at night I would sit at my desk and draw the stories I had in my head. I found one of those old albums the other day; it was so sweet and naïve, just storybooks I'd made up myself. Later, when my children were small, we made storybooks together: stories of Christmas, stories about them. I think that kind of thing is so important. Imagination and creativity matter deeply.

With all the talk of AI, I believe in the end it's creativity and imagination that will carry us through.

After Wheaton, I studied watercolor at the National Academy of Design for about three years. Then a friend asked if I could do a drawing of a house interior. I remember driving up thinking, I've never done a watercolor of an interior, but I'll try. So, I drove to Litchfield and sat in this beautiful room where the light was coming in on a slant. I thought, wow, this is so much more interesting than painting dead flowers in a tin can. That was the moment; I knew this was what I wanted to do. From there, I started borrowing friends' apartments to work out perspective, light, and objects in a room.

These feel like still lifes of a place, still objects in a room, a narrative within each room.

There's a narrative in the geometry; the stability of straight lines is reassuring. You have the structure of the place, and the architectural elements are always different. I've been making these renderings for 42 years, since my eldest daughter was born. It all spread by word of mouth, and I've been receiving commissions ever since, often for Brunschwig & Fils, a wallpaper company, but also private commissions for homes, interiors, and exteriors.



Above: Watercolor Rendering for Brunschwig & Fils Co.

For the most part, I have a great deal of freedom. Brunschwig, for instance, will send me a mood board and say, we want a dining room, here are the fabrics and the furniture that's going in there. So, I create a room for them using their objects, send it to them, they approve the sketch, and then I paint it. It's a muscle, and it's your muscle. What strikes me most is the light pouring into a room, bringing life to the space.

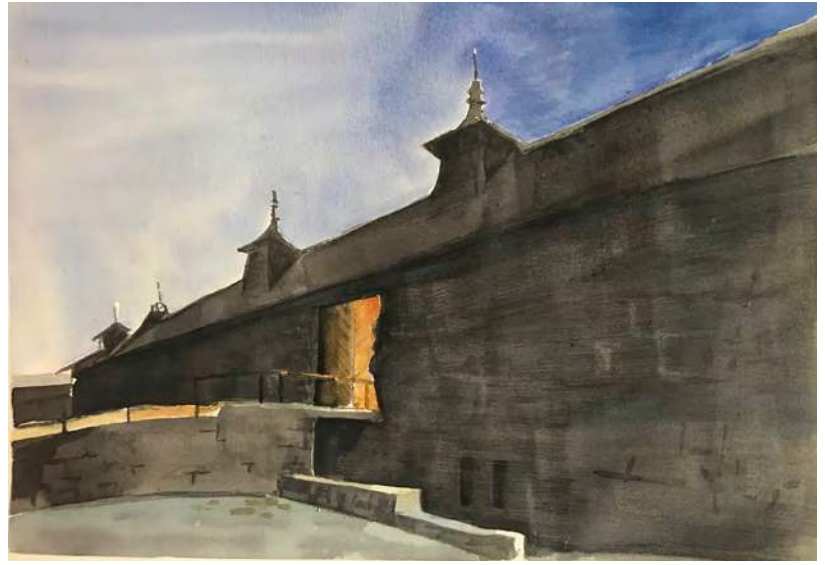
Would you say that light motivates your practice?

Yes, the light is essential to me, as well as the challenge of the space. I explained it to my brother the other day: creating art is like standing at the top of a cliff. It looks exhilarating, what you're about to jump into, and then midway through you think, oh my God, what am I doing? This is so hard. I struggle through it; then I put it down, take a walk, try to resolve the problem in my head, come back, work on it, and I always work through it. The problems get resolved, but it's hard sometimes.

My work tends to be commission-based; however, if something strikes me, whether it's in the street, in the subway, or in a space, the minute I get home, I must sketch what I remember. It could be the expression on a person's face, the light on a building, or even something small: I could be walking down the street and suddenly notice a bunch of nails with a red rubber band stretched across them. I think, wow, look at those colors, the silver and the red, they're amazing.

Have you taught watercolor? What is your approach to teaching?

I've done a few workshops in New York, and I run painting workshops in Italy that last six days. Very often, I'll hire another teacher so that I can work in the background, organizing meals, transportation, and all the



Top: Hitchcock Barn, Millbrook. Watercolor on paper.

Above: Rendering of a bedroom for David Netto's book, Watercolor.

Opposite page: Left: Rendering of David Netto's house LA Watercolor.

Right: The Altar in Magliano, Tuscany, watercolor.

things needed to keep everything flowing. But I frequently find myself teaching on the side as well, and it comes quite naturally to explain something that opens students' whole vision of what's happening around them. I aim to help my students become more aware, to look more closely at their immediate surroundings. It becomes a muscle. You must open yourself to this kind of experience; look at art, both old and new; and find inspiration from the greats.

Finally, I was in an exhibition last year, "The Persistence of Hand Drawing: Interior Rendering Today," at the NY School of Interior Design. The subject was hand drawing versus AI, where eight of us held a panel discussion on the stage. What became very clear is that despite the help of CAD renderings, everyone on the panel agreed the hand-drawn image was more immediate and spoke more clearly of the immediacy of inspiration. When you use your hands rather

Continued on next page ...

than pushing buttons, you can feel your way around a room, which is essential in the creative process.

What was the best piece of advice anyone ever gave you about your practice?

Good question. Keep your lines free. Reeve Schley, my teacher at the National Academy, where he also served as president, was a great influence. I had just begun studying watercolor with him, and I threw myself into painting the still life he had set up. Months later, I was struggling and said, "I'm not good at this. I think I'm going to give up." He went to a drawer, pulled out that very first still life I'd done, and said, "This is what you did in your first class." He gave me perspective even after I'd left school and was beginning to do my renderings. He gave me confidence. He was the kind of person who just makes you believe you can. He often said, "You can, and you will."

Amazing to receive that confidence. What prompted you to move here from New York?

I grew up in Tuscany, among those rolling hills. When I came to this area of Millbrook I couldn't believe how similar this was. Without the hilltop villages, of course, but you do have the rolling hills and the open landscape. I love to walk and climb. Gerry and I have been coming here for 30 years. We brought our children up here, and they love coming back.

Your practice covers a variety of subjects, from commission work to your own pieces. How do you manage the balance between the two?

I call it an interior rendering practice, but really, it's more of a portrait of rooms. The work ranges quite a bit: some of it is making rooms for people whose projects are going to be built. These images show their plans to investors or present a project that's under construction. With commissions, once a painting is finished, I've checked everything, and it's been proofed, I can't come back and change it. For the most part, I have a great deal of freedom. Brunschwig, for instance, will send me a mood board and say, we want a dining room, here are the fabrics and the furniture that's going in. So, I create a room for them using their objects, send it over, they approve the sketch, and then I paint it.

The current project I've just been asked to do is 12 illustrations for the Cipriani Maritime Building, downtown at the waterfront: 10 public rooms, an elevation of a building, and a map with key points, each about 20" by 20". I paint the commissions, then hand them over so the client can scan them and use them however they need. I always photograph my work as I go and send images to the client so they can see exactly what they're getting. I stay in very close contact throughout the process.

I make sure commissions are ready on time; that's the discipline of a deadline. If I have a commission due in the middle of May, I know I'll be working six days a week for the next few weeks to get it done. I find the energy of 10 o'clock in the morning is productive. And then again in the evening, sometimes; I love it, especially if I'm alone. I'll paint from six o'clock until late, when finally, I'm able to paint on my own, which is always a different kind of challenge. When you're given complete freedom, it's actually very hard. So, I'll take a big canvas, some acrylic paint, and just let it go, and something comes out. You



Above: St Vincente Bungalow LA. Watercolor.

start with an idea, and then something speaks to you, and you take a completely different route. Something emerges that you hadn't anticipated. That's the real essence of creativity; half of it comes from your head, but some of it just responds.

That happens with watercolor too, because of the nature of the medium, but it also happens with drawing. You start with a mark and something else appears in the mark, you develop it, and it becomes an animal, a person, a clown, whatever. And then you connect that to something else in your head. And you're free.

You make it sound so easy, but learning to be free takes time and practice. What artists have inspired you?

I love the work of Van Day Truex, Mark Hampton, John Hulse, Walter Gay, and an Italian called Luciano Guarnieri. He may not be widely known, but his work is extraordinary. I would go to see the Elizabeth Peyton exhibition in a heartbeat; I'm fascinated by her portraiture. There's something so candid and so naïve at the same time, so compelling and memorable. I once saw a Vuillard exhibition that I adored. When you think about the moment Vuillard was painting, photography had just been invented. I find such structure in the way he sees space, pattern, and figures all flattened together.

If you could borrow or steal a piece of work from anywhere in the world, what would it be?

That's a hard question. There's a painting by Pierre Soulages that made me cry; it might be hanging in the Pompidou. But we go through moments when a painting really means something to you, and then you move on to another, and that becomes your world for a while, while other artists just stay with you. And then, of course, the Renaissance: Botticelli, Raphael, and Leonardo. His drawings, I could live with any of them! •

Bland's enthusiasm for drawing is infectious. She describes the lines of a room and the shadow of light pouring through a church window. Each piece narrates a story, and it can feel like a pause in a film, time stands still as you wait for a character to walk into the room. Even in the works she has created where the walls are still part of the imagination, that sense of place feels fully formed. Bland has also illustrated books for Sister Parish Design (2009), Veere Grenney's A Point of View (Rizzoli), and David Netto (Vendome), and her upcoming book for Cathy Kincaid (Rizzoli) is due out in fall 2026.

You can see more of her work on Instagram @mitacbland and her website mitacorsinibland.com. Email her at mitacorsinibland@gmail.com.



Above: Rendering of Veere Grenney's bedroom London. Watercolor.

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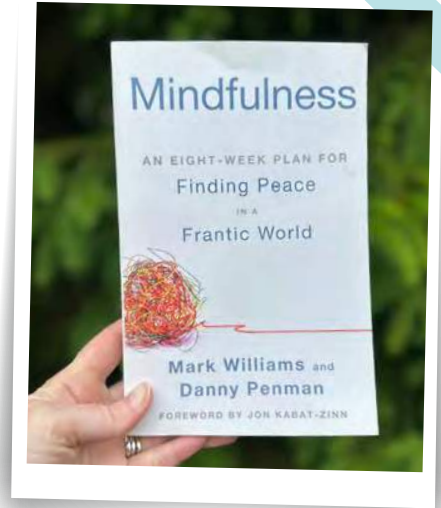


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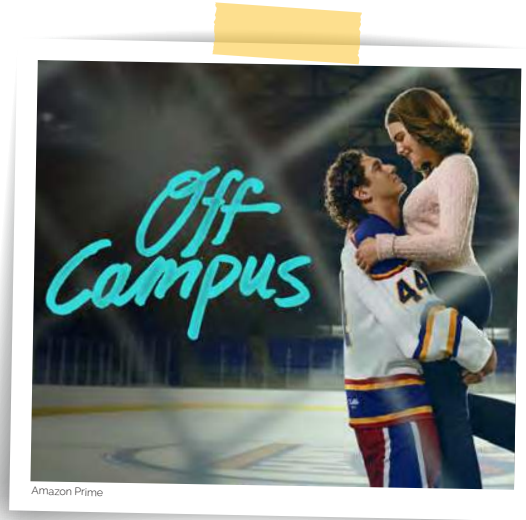


Hudson Roastery. I always feel so fancy when I venture into Hudson Roastery on the corner of Park Place and Warren Street in Hudson, NY. It almost feels like you've stepped into a Parisian cafe right in the heart of the City of Hudson. The pastries on display are always drool-worthy, while their coffee machine hisses and let's out a delicious aroma that makes your mouth water as you wait to order. I'm a big fan of their vanilla lattes and cinnamon rolls. But recently I stopped for brunch with my mom and daughter, we were having a girl's day out. I ordered my usual latte and their avocado toast. Can I count all the ways that I am obsessed with this avocado toast? First off, it is on the most yummiest sour dough bread, perfectly toasted. Topped with the avocado spread and pine nuts. Yes, pine nuts! And they add the most perfect mix of flavors and textures. You can opt in or out for the egg, but you'll also get a salad with it. Sure they have other delicious offerings, but I highly recommend the avocado toast.



GO WATCH

Off Campus. All the romance book world is a-titter over author Elle Kennedy's *New York Times* bestselling series being adapted to your TV screen. *Off Campus* premiered on Amazon Prime in mid-May and it is based on a group of college hockey playing friends and their ultimate love interests. *Off Campus* kicked off season one with eight episodes and to tell you how feral the romance book world has become over these eight episodes ... people all over the world binged the entire series in one sitting. All of the book chatter groups seem pretty pleased for the most part in how true to the book the show was, no easy feat! The portrayal of Hannah and Garrett's story was compelling and riveting all at the same time. For the non-romance genre audience who are curious about *Off Campus*, here's your warning: this show is rated TV-MA ... and for good reason.



TO READ

Mindfulness by Mark Williams and Danny Penman. This international bestselling book has been in my library for over six years, evident by the fact that my copy has an older cover graphic. But that doesn't change the content, which is remarkable. This book, as its Amazon description states, "...reveals a set of simple yet powerful mindfulness practices that you can incorporate into daily life to help break the cycle of anxiety, stress, unhappiness, and exhaustion. Mindfulness promotes the kind of happiness and peace that gets into your bones. It seeps into everything you do and helps you meet the worst that life throws at you with new courage." I think that we can all agree that every one of us could benefit from feeling happiness and peace in our lives, and being more in the moment. Mindfulness is all about that: doing things with intention and being present. I'm a huge advocate for this and love learning more ways to do this in my life, hence reading this book, which I definitely recommend.

To do

Pick Your Own. Oh my goodness – the PYO season has officially started this month! One of my favorite things to do from summer through fall is go to a farm or orchard and pick my own fruit with my family. Since my kids were little, we've been doing this. In June we usually start off by going to one of our local farms who offer strawberry picking. And can I tell you that no strawberry ever tastes as sweet as the one that you literally just picked off the strawberry plant? It's like a little piece of heaven. Last year my daughter and I picked a few pounds of strawberries; for us to enjoy immediately and then I froze the rest. My family likes to make fruit smoothies and having fresh strawberries in the freezer that we picked made our summer smoothies even more delicious. After strawberry season we have in years past also gone blueberry picking, and then apple picking in the fall. I personally love apple picking on a beautiful fall day. I know in between strawberry and apple seasons that there are lots of other picking options, depending on the farm and orchard you might go to, like peaches and cherries. This summer I'm making a point to check out even more local farms and their PYO options for fresh fruits and veggies. I encourage you as well to plan an outing with your family, make memories while picking your own healthy treats all while supporting local agriculture. Have fun and enjoy!



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85 Years Old

SHARON PACKAGE STORE,
DYLAN BAKER PARTNER,
OPERATOR



Left: Nonalcoholic wine has an expanding presence at the Sharon Package Store. Photo courtesy of Dylan Baker.



Middle: Dylan Baker, a Salisbury native, has run the Sharon Package Store since 2015. He's also a third degree black belt in taekwondo. Photo by Christine Bates



Right: Premium, collectible, allocated bourbons on display at the Sharon Package Store. Photo courtesy of Dylan Baker.

By Christine Bates
info@mainstreetmag.com

Monday mornings were supposed to be a quiet time to interview Dylan Baker, Sharon Package Store's permittee and partner since 2015. I observed Dylan as he greeted customers by name, held a small white dog while its human was writing a check, put up a flyer for a local nonprofit, ordered some new craft beers from a salesman, sent cash and checks to the bank, and sold beer from his singles cooler. Standing at the counter while taking notes, I realized the store, on Gay Street in Sharon, CT, was a community hub, an essential part of the town.

Wow, this store has been here for 85 years?

Actually, the store itself was rebuilt in 2012 when the owner of 40 years retired, but the liquor permit was first granted in 1941. We hold the longest issued liquor permit in the state of Connecticut. When I became the fourth permittee in 2015, the community embraced my wife and me, after 40+ years under the previous owner. We still operate under the original name, although occasionally “out-of-towners” are confused and come in with boxes to ship. “Package store” is a New England designation for a retail outlet selling all types of spirits. In the old days, it was illegal

to purchase an alcoholic beverage in a New England state without it being in a “package” (box or bag). The name has never been changed and won't.

What changes did you make?

We reorganized the entire store; updated the inventory to include more imported wines, craft beers, and specialty liquors; and situated the temperature-controlled wine cave to display some of the world's most fascinating wines, while they mature over time. We have also established a firm following of customers who use our establishment to cater their most important events (including weddings, fund raisers, and graduations).

How's business?

All the changes we made when we took over the store paid off during COVID. Our store remained open for business although we didn't let customers inside. We ran it like an ice cream shop. We had a table outside where we took orders, then we picked the proper items from the shelves and ran through the sales as customers waited patiently outside. It was incredibly busy.

Since then, peak worldwide alcohol sales have fallen sharply, and now our industry as a whole has been affected significantly by tariffs, inflation, health trends, and marijuana dispensaries along with the constant threat

that super markets could soon be allowed to carry wine on their shelves. Traditionally owning a liquor store was regarded as a low-risk, no-fail business. Not anymore. It's like a speed bump.

Have your customers changed?

Since COVID there has been a big change. Local, regular customers have sold their homes and moved, while new people from out-of-town have taken their place. New customers. New products. And with fluctuating tariffs, inflation, and uncertainty, customers have been switching to lower priced items, finding the best bargains for their palate, as the chaos unravels.

How do tariffs affect you?

Tariffs have increased prices on nearly everything we sell and the parts and services that go into the products, including aluminum for cans, glass for bottles, barrels, corks, transportation, and fertilizer for vineyards. All the essential stuff for our industry and, to make things worse, the uncertainty in pricing makes it nearly impossible to plan. Tariffs are constantly changing, and we struggle not knowing how much a product will cost when we order it. The frustration is not knowing what to expect.

Continued on next page ...

How are you handling the health and drinking issues?

Sharon is a hub of all types of doctors, clinics, and the hospital. Clients have frequently come by post-appointment and told us that their doctor's recommendation is for them to cut down on drinking. Which is good. We love our customer base and wish them good health always, despite the quandary. This is not just a Sharon trend; it is a nation-wide trend. Non-alcoholic wines, beer, liquor, and ready-to-drink nonalcoholic cocktails are becoming increasingly important to the health of our customers and the future of our business. We now stock a plethora of all new and upcoming NA options.

What about competition from cannabis?

Times have changed. Younger clients may be choosing between staying at home, smoking pot, and playing video games or going out, socializing, and drinking. I'm afraid that staying at home has become the direction in which many people, not just the young, are seemingly heading. Socializing on their screens rather than in person. A lack of in-person interaction has become a new hurdle for the industry and, unfortunately, a sign of the times.

Is wine important to your business?

Wine is the breadwinner in terms of volume and margins. We offer a balanced selection of domestic and imported wine from all over the world. Our 55-degree wine cave, which was built to preserve and improve wine, has over 120 types of specialty French, Italian, and US wines all hand selected, not just for their drinkability, but

also their limited availability. Gems.

What liquor is most popular?

Vodka is still number one, with gin growing in popularity along with tequila and mezcal. Specialty bourbons, especially local brands, are also hitting strong. Just two months ago Ten Mile River Distillery in Wassaic, NY was introduced into the Connecticut market. We now sell their bourbon, vodka, and gin, which has a solid following, being so local. In wines, Gruner Veltliner, Chenin blanc, Sancerre, and rosé seem to be the warm weather favorites. For wines, \$17-\$20 a bottle is the ideal sweet spot.

What are the trends right now?

The growing trend is non-alcoholic. The Wolfer "Spring in a Bottle," the sparkling nonalcoholic white and/or rosé wine from Long Island, is really popular right now. Then there's an increasing variety of new liquors that customers want. Every week I get asked for something I've never heard of – yuzu flavored, persimmon – it's crazy! Box wine, which is value driven, is also a big thing right now. There are fewer craft beers to pick from due to large brewers like Anheuser Busch, buying them up, often overpaying and then eliminating them as a threat. Kent Falls Brewery, the most local of breweries, is a consistently great beer offering in our store.

Does being on the border with New York affect your business?

Liquor regulation and taxation is wacky. By Connecticut law we can sell cheese and crackers but no other food. New York allows distributors to volume price, which puts small wine shops at a tremendous disadvantage. In Connecticut, the state sets the minimum price you can charge. The primary reason this law remains in place is to protect small, independent liquor stores from being undercut by large, big-box retailers or national chains.

How did you get into this business?

When I was in high school my mother decided I needed a job, and Joe Mulligan, the former owner of



Salisbury Package Store, hired and mentored me. About a decade later I was working under Chris Battista at the new Stateline Wines and Liquor Store in Canaan, CT as the beer manager when the partners from this store approached me.

What is your personal passion?

Martial arts have been part of my life since the age of four when I was diagnosed with type 1 diabetes, over 35 years ago. It has given me focus, structure, and a different mental and physical path. The Korean martial art, taekwondo, is about making people feel better to live better. Throughout the week I teach nights and Sundays at Baker's Taekwondo Team at The Center on Main in Falls Village, CT with my beautiful black belt wife, Kirsten. We have the privilege of teaching and mentoring many incredible people who I like to call family, ranging from ages 5 to 60. I used to compete in competitions, but now I compete solely through my students, and I couldn't be prouder.

What do you enjoy about selling alcoholic beverages, and what is difficult?

I get a thrill being included in many different types of celebrations of people's lives, and we truly enjoy seeking the proper palate companion to accentuate the overall experience of an important event, holiday, honoring, or fund raiser. Also, just being involved with a business that has such a rich history in the town has been an honor. ●

Drop by Sharon Package Store at 1 Gay St, Sharon, CT, or peruse their products online at thesharonpackagestore.com.

Above and below: The 55-degree cave holds more than 120 offerings of limited French, Italian, and American wines. Photo courtesy of Dylan Baker. Dylan Baker in the wine cave.





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Apricot Orange Scones



By Olivia Valentine with
Caroline Markonic
info@mainstreetmag.com

Are these really scones? I guess that depends on who you ask. They're definitely more of the American take on a scone. The British version is a whole different experience. They are not usually filled with fruit, never topped with a sweet glaze, and just barely sweet on their own. They're softer, fluffier, and meant to be split open and piled high with clotted cream, lemon curd, or jam, ideally enjoyed while sipping hot tea.

My scones, on the other hand, break the British scone rules.

American-style scones come in all kinds of flavors, often with fruit or nuts mixed right into the dough. They tend to be a bit denser and richer, and some might even argue they're closer to a sweet biscuit than a traditional scone. Call them what you want; I just hope you call them delicious.

I've made these using a round biscuit cutter or cutting them into triangles. I can't say I truly prefer one over the other, but when I go with triangles, they definitely turn out bigger; which isn't a bad thing!

They're absolutely irresistible warm out of the oven but just as good the next day – and maybe even the day after that, if they last that long. I've brought these to work and shared them with neighbors and family. Every single time the reaction is the same: "I gobbled down to the very last

crumb." And more often than not, there's someone, myself included, licking those last little glazed bits off the plate.

Ingredients

3 cups all-purpose flour
½ cup sugar
5 tsp baking powder
1 tsp salt
1 cup cold, unsalted butter, cut into small cubes
¾ cup chopped dried apricots
½ tsp orange extract
⅛ tsp almond extract
Zest of one orange
½ cup milk (or substitute buttermilk for extra fluffiness)
1 egg
Sanding sugar

Orange glaze

1 ½ cups confectioners' sugar
1 tbsp orange zest
Orange juice (add gradually for desired consistency)

Instructions

Preheat the oven to 375°F (190°C). Line a baking sheet with parchment.

Prepare the dry ingredients: In a large bowl, combine the flour, sugar, baking powder, and salt.

Cut in the butter: Add the cold butter cubes to the dry ingredients. Use a pastry cutter or your fingertips to cut the butter into the flour until the mixture resembles pea-sized crumbs.

Add the apricots: Stir in the chopped dried apricots.

Whisk the wet ingredients: In a small bowl, whisk together the milk (or buttermilk), egg, orange extract, almond extract, and orange zest.

Combine the wet and dry ingredients: Pour the wet ingredients into the dry ingredients and combine gently with your hands or pastry cutter until you have a slightly shaggy looking dough. Turn the dough out onto a work surface and fold it into thirds with your hands or a bowl scraper. Continue to fold the dough in thirds until it all comes together. Shape the dough with your hands into a disk that is about 1" thick. Cut it into equal size triangles like you are cutting a pizza and place them approximately 1" apart on a prepared baking sheet. Sprinkle the scones with sanding sugar.

Bake the scones: Bake in the preheated oven for 30-35 minutes.

Make the orange glaze: While the scones are baking, prepare the glaze by whisking together the confectioners' sugar, orange zest, and orange juice. Add the juice gradually to reach the desired glaze consistency.

Drizzle and serve: Once the scones are baked and still warm, drizzle the orange glaze over the top.

As always, enjoy! ●

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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MILLBROOK AND MILLERTON TODAY

Two Railroad Villages

By Christine Bates
info@mainstreetmag.com

First, an important explanation about villages. An incorporated village is a municipality within a town with its own government including a mayor and elected board. Villages collect taxes and have their own zoning regulations, administrative staff, and highway departments that function independently from the surrounding town. In New York unincorporated centers of population are designated as hamlets. Irondale in the Town of North East and Mabbetsville in the Town of Washington are both examples of hamlets. Dutchess County only has eight villages; most are along the Hudson River.

Founding days

The only two villages in Northeastern Dutchess County, Millbrook and Millerton, became incorporated villages for very different reasons. Surrounded by farms and iron mining, Millerton became a major rail hub in 1851 when three train lines, the New York & Harlem, Dutchess & Columbia, and Poughkeepsie & Eastern, converged in the center of town. Three hotels were built, retail shops lined Main Street, and Victorian homes appeared on the side streets. In 1875 Millerton officially became

a village and by 1900 its population had reached 802, almost as many as today's 883 residents.

In contrast, Millbrook became more densely populated with the arrival of a single railroad line in 1869. Historically the area that is now the Village of Millbrook in the Town of Washington was bordered by huge estates of wealthy New Yorkers. It was the last village created in Dutchess County and only became incorporated in 1895 because the philanthropic Thorne family wished to officially donate the elegant school they built for the community. The distinction between entrepreneurial, commercial, scrappy Millerton and refined Millbrook continues today, a century and a half later.

Millbrook's median household income has declined to \$74,000

Demographic comparisons of the two villages today are surprising. Despite the perception of affluence, Millbrook's median income of \$74,000 is currently less than Millerton's of \$85,000. While Millbrook's median income was significantly higher in 2017, Millerton has experienced upward growth while Millbrook has declined based on US Census Bureau



Above: Millbrook's Village Hall on Merritt Avenue was formerly the village's YMCA. Below, left: Saperstein's general store, once the iconic landmark in Millerton, has been replaced by Westerlind, which offers upscale European sportswear and fresh, local bread on weekends.

data and recent projections. Millbrook is also significantly older than Millerton with a median age of 58 years compared with 36 years in Millerton. The number of families living in poverty is slightly higher in Millbrook, but both villages are above the Dutchess County average of 8.4%.

Millerton today

The liveliness of Millerton today, especially on weekends, can be attributed to the appeal of the Harlem Valley Rail Trail that runs through the village; The Moviehouse with first run studio films, independent and foreign films, and live digital broadcasts; Oblong Books; restaurants; and the Harney & Sons tea parlor.

Ed Stillman, a full-time village resident, attributes the commercial bustle and changing retail scene to "the factors that established the village almost 175 years ago – being at the literal crossroads of its surrounding

communities. The evolution of those neighboring Connecticut towns is reflected in Millerton's Main Street. Meanwhile, Millbrook feels more tucked away, which has its charm, but might make for a less dynamic village."

Clearly the Millerton retail scene has gone upscale with new stores replacing the old standards. Dutchess Trading with its Farrow & Ball paints replaced Terni's, and Westerlind, a purveyor of high-end European sportswear and gourmet food, reimaged Saperstein's, Millerton's former iconic landmark. Eddie Collins Field, Millerton's village park, is undergoing a major makeover and the return of a public swimming pool. Funds are in place to build a sewer system in the center of the village. A lot has been happening. "Millerton has a way of reinventing itself to stay vibrant and relevant for its local community and visitors alike," according to Debbie

Continued on next page ...

Middlebrook, a former village mayor, “which makes it an incredibly special place.”

Millerton home prices continue to rise

Millerton’s single-family home prices have traditionally been lower than those of Millbrook. Even in 2020 at the beginning of COVID, a buyer could find a village house for under \$300,000. Sales first rose above the \$300,000 threshold in 2023 and by 2025 reached \$420,000 with limited supply and increased demand from remote workers who wanted a walkable, village life.

“I myself am shocked,” commented the village tax assessor Katherine Johnson. “Prices are unprecedented, nothing is for sale, and everything is listed at very high prices.” Houses on desirable Barton and Simmons Street have sold for over \$500,000, an all-time record for the village. In 2025, only six houses were sold in the village and only two through April of this year. New home construction is limited by zoning requirements and the small 0.6 square miles of the village. They aren’t making any more building lots.

Millbrook today

Millbrook is a very different scene but also on the edge of change. The nonprofit Millbrook Community Partnership Inc. under the leadership of Oakley Thorne has created an expansive 32-acre gateway to the village replacing the derelict Bennett College, once a luxury hotel and then a school

for young women. Plans are also underway to develop the long vacant, elegant former school in the center of the village, the reason for its creation, into a community center.

“Millbrook wears its wealth well,” according to Leila Hawken, who covers the Town of Washington and Village of Millbrook for *The Millerton News*. “The sense of community spirit is real in Millbrook.” Unlike in Millerton, generational wealth and commitment to community supports the village life.

Millbrook home prices rising

Millbrook, which has a 64% larger population and land area, typically has double the single-family home sales of Millerton. The composition of properties sold in the two villages is very different, with condos accounting for 25% to 30% of sales in any given year in Millbrook, lowering the reported median price point.

In Millbrook, sales of higher-end homes began to rise steeply in 2020, and by 2025 6 of the 13 homes sold closed over \$500,000. The first \$1,000,000+ home sold was 89 Maple Avenue in 2020 for \$1,295,000. In 2025, two \$1,000,000 sales were recorded and the overall median price reached \$475,000. By May 2026, only three homes were listed for sale, including the renovated 42 Merritt Avenue for \$1,295,000 and 3311 Franklin Avenue for \$1,375,000 on 0.21 acres.

Both villages are changing while maintaining the distinct identities shaped by their histories. Millbrook



	MILLERTON	MILLBROOK
Median village household income	\$83,000 - \$85,000	\$74,000
Village families below poverty line	10.1%	12.6%
Population estimated 2026	881	1,441
Average age	36 years	58 years
Size	.62 square miles	1.92 square miles
Incorporated	1875	1895
Property tax rate	4.3 Mils	4.2 Mils with sewer

continues to embody privilege anchored by impressive stone churches, a large library, parks, and the Millbrook Golf and Tennis, an exclusive 69-acre club. One longtime resident said he hasn’t seen any real change in the last 20 years, “It’s still old fashioned.”

If Millbrook is uptown, Millerton with its younger, more diverse population is a downtown village that is increasingly attracting creatives as residents and seeing increased demand for homes along its quiet, historic streets. ●

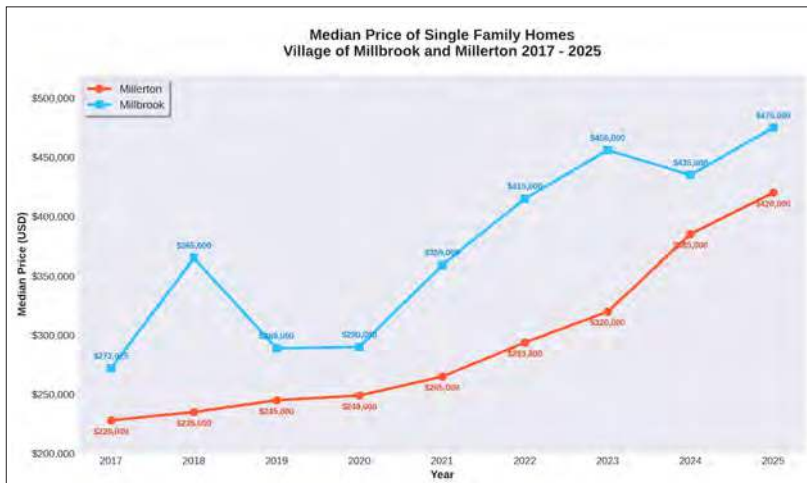
Christine Bates is a registered real-estate agent in New York and Connecticut with William Pitt Sotheby’s. She has written about real estate and business since Main Street Magazine’s first issue in 2013.

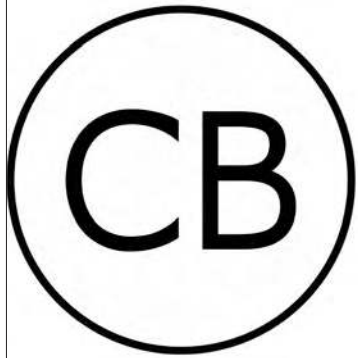
Top: Recently listed for \$535,000, 15 South Maple Street in Millerton, is an example of a home purchased during COVID. It was extensively renovated and is now back on the market.

Above, left: 42 Merritt Avenue in Millbrook has been renovated and is now listed for \$1,295,000.

Above, right: Vacant for years, the Thorne building in Millbrook will become a vibrant community center.

All photos by Christine Bates.





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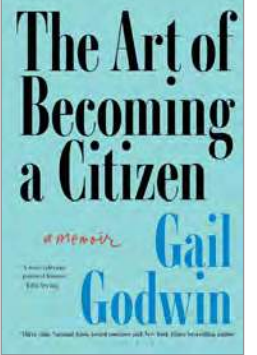
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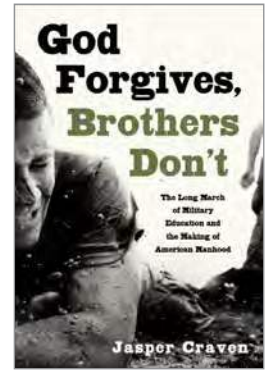


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Homegrown National Park: Cooperative Conservation

By Regina Molaro
info@mainstreetmag.com

It's spring, and it's finally warming up. Many of us are eager to get outside in the dirt and plant the flowers, trees, and shrubs that we will be enjoying for seasons to come. When it comes to selecting varieties, we should choose wisely.

According to Doug Tallamy (pictured to the right), co-founder of Homegrown National Park, "Native plants are the foundation of all terrestrial food webs. From the tiniest insect to the largest mammal, energy from native plants sustains their populations and nature itself. Plants are more than decorations; they can be the lifeblood of our ecosystems if their ancient relationships with local animals are respected. This is essential to safeguarding the natural systems we all depend on, such as clean air and water, food production, and climate stability." Homegrown National Park teamed up with a trio of local garden centers to promote native plantings and highlight Tallamy's Keystone Native Plants, which are the most productive ecologically of all the native plants.

Regenerating biodiversity

The non-profit organization, founded in 2020 by Tallamy and Michelle Alfandari, is a science-based grassroots movement to regenerate biodiversity by planting native plants. The total measure of private property including yards, woodland plots, and community land in America, is collectively much larger than all the land that spans America's National Parks. Via this garden center initiative, HPN aims to empower individuals and communities to take small or large tangible actions that add up to transformative change.

In early June, the garden centers, including Ward's Garden Center and Nursery in Great Barrington, MA; Paley's Farm Market in Sharon, CT; and Salisbury Garden Center in Salisbury, CT, will dedicate space in their

shops to host a Homegrown National Park Native Plant Center. These sections offer pussy willows, black-eyed Susans, and other native species.

Keystone Plants

"Keystone plants are the most productive of the native plants that provide essential ecosystem services to the environment, without which the area's inhabitants would struggle for survival. Planting these species in your yards benefits the butterflies, birds, and native animals that support all life, including ours," said Tallamy. He is an entomologist who studies insects and their interaction with humans, the environment, and other organisms. He is also a conservationist, *New York Times* best-selling author, professor, and public speaker.

The retail spaces at these garden centers are marked with a Homegrown National Park Native Plant Center banner, and the keystone plant signs include a QR code that educates customers on the different plant species. Beyond illustrating what the plant will look like when in bloom, the signage teaches shoppers about the wildlife that relies on these very plants for survival.

"Planting natives not only adds to the life support nature provides us all, but it also enables you to share your little piece of the earth with myriad fellow earthlings. Perhaps the best feel-good action of all," said Tallamy.

Restore the environment while beautifying your surroundings

"HPN aims to make it easier for people to get started with native plants, and to shop for productive native trees, shrubs, and perennials. The leaders of these garden centers are all catalysts for positive change. They are passionate about making a difference and are spreading the facts about native plants to their customers. By using innovative cues that allow customers to see what the plant will



look like in bloom and understand the wildlife that relies on the plant for survival, they are encouraging consumers to purchase plants that restore the environment while beautifying their surroundings," added Michelle Alfandari, co-founder of HNP.

When a person plants native plants, they're also simultaneously helping to remove the invasive plants that are taking over much of our native habitat. "This will restore habitat lost to development faster than any other means. What is most rewarding is experiencing the results of our plantings with new wildlife appearing almost immediately. Individually and together, we are creating a Homegrown National Park that will build back the biodiversity that all animals – humans included – rely on for food and for health."

Within each garden center's native plant area, customers will also

be prompted to add their property to a HNP Biodiversity Map, which documents the number of people and acreage being transformed. To date, the map has almost 50,000 people committed to 170,000+ acres of native planting. HNP and these garden centers are certainly doing their fair share to make native habitat restoration mainstream. Let's all think about the ways that we can help make a difference, too. ●

For more information about Homegrown National Park, to join the Biodiversity Map, and to contribute to its important work, visit homegrownnationalpark.org.

In March of 2024, Mary O'Neill interviewed Doug and Michelle about HNP; you can read that full interview on our website, just search "Homegrown National Park" on mainstreetmag.com.



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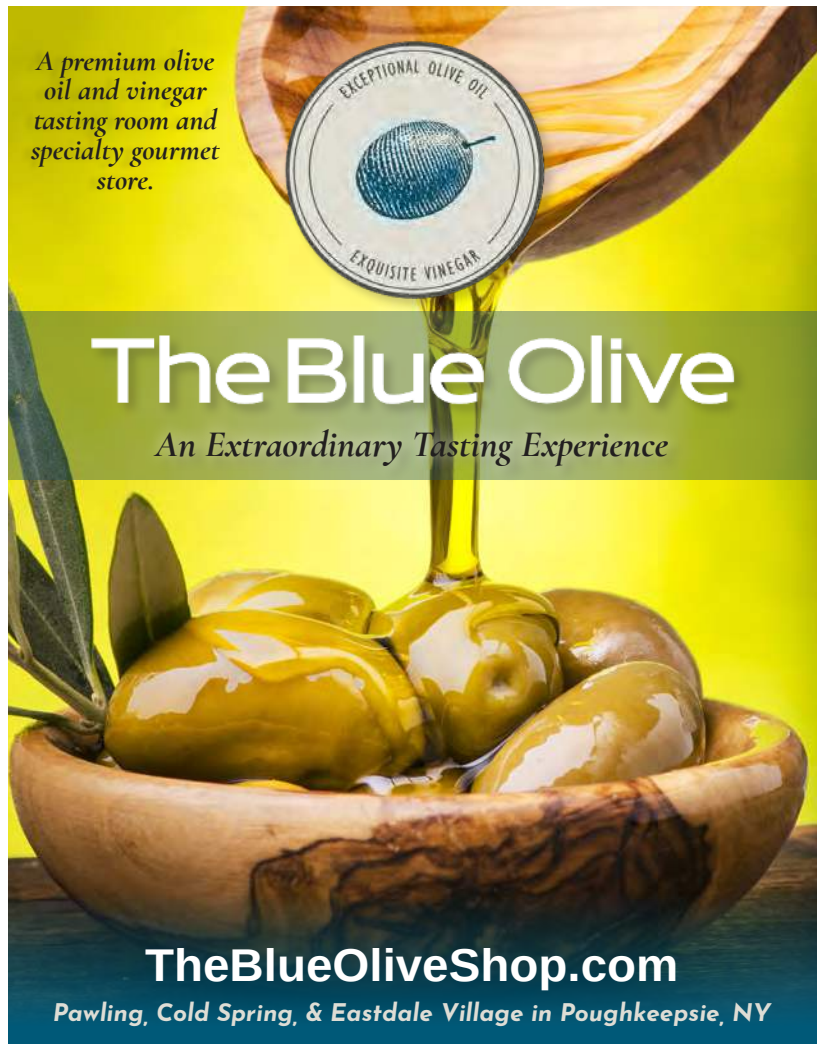
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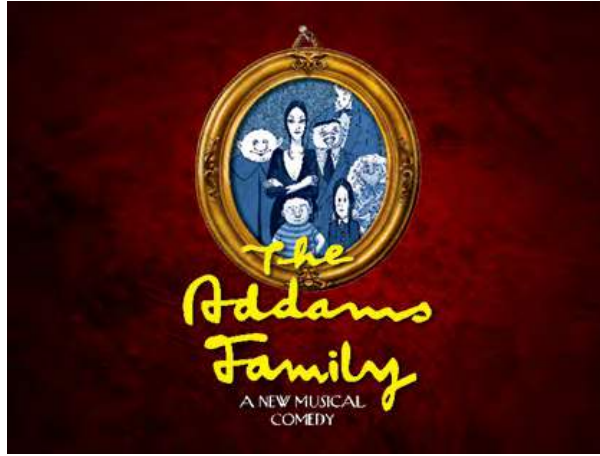
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Ahh ... Summer



A

nd so ends “the winter of our discontent.”

Perhaps, not entirely, but the blossoming of the cultural scene in the area as summer is upon us is cause for celebration – and for planning. The bountiful offerings about to explode in the area not only deserve a quick review, but also some very quick decisions.

By *CB Wismar*
info@mainstreetmag.com

Some of these offerings are nearly sold out, so if the thought of a Paul Simon concert, becoming enthralled by the mastery of Yo-Yo Ma, or seeing Karen Allen on stage pique your interest, then consider yourselves duly warned. Act now!

We offer these previews not by date, but by venue for easier reference. In all cases the presenting venues have robust websites that ensure acquiring tickets can be done easily and safely. They also offer driving directions and links to nearby establishments eager to serve dinner or lunch with an eye to getting you to the performances on time.

So, in no specific order:

Berkshire Theatre Group

The summer season has arrived on the stages of Berkshire Theatre Group, and once, again, creative director Kate Maguire has fashioned a schedule of productions not to be missed. The run for *John & Jen* continues at The Unicorn Theatre in Stockbridge, MA through June 7. It’s a “laugh out loud

funny and quietly poignant” musical and a great way to begin the season.

The regional premier of *The American Five* is next on the Unicorn’s boards, exploring critical moments in the lives of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Coretta Scott King, Bayard Rustin, Stanley Levison, and Clarence B. Jones. From July 22 through August 23, the Stockbridge venue welcomes back local actor/director Karen Allen (*Raiders of the Lost Ark*) who joins Broadway veteran David Garrison, Rebecca Brooksher, and Shawn Fagan in the emotionally engaging *Lovesong*.

For those who long for big stage, big musical productions on The Colonial Theatre stage in Pittsfield, MA, the July 31 through August 23 presentation of *The Legend of Georgia McBride* will satisfy that longing with panache. Eric Hill returns to direct a musical that joyfully includes *I Will Survive*, *Don’t Cry Out Loud*, and *Born This Way*.

The 2026 season ends back on The Larry Vaber Stage at The Unicorn Theatre with *Summer, 1976*. As the country is immersed in the recognition of a 250th birthday, this tender TONY-nominated play by David Auburn looks back 50 years to focus on the inner lives of two women, connected during that bicentennial year.

Musicals at the Mac-Haydn

On the southern edge of the town of Chatham, NY, the Mac-Haydn

Theater has happily sustained the reputation of bringing rousing musical theater to the summer season. Rest assured, the 2026 offerings uphold that reputation with panache.

The Addams Family launches the season with its strange but loveable cast on stage from June 11–21. The night after that closes, the theater holds its annual gala celebration.

With the presentation of *9 to 5* from June 25 to July 5, the season begins an almost break-neck run with dark nights between shows only as required to turn over the stage scenery and give the company a chance to rehearse in place before throwing the doors open for eager audiences.

The Secret Garden runs from July 9 to 19, followed by *Newsies* hawking newspapers and changing corporations from July 23 to August 9.

Dancing slips into the run as *Daddy Longlegs* takes the stage for three nights – July 29–31. Musicals return in force as *Beautiful: The Carole King Musical* fills the theater with King’s classic hits. Feel free to sing along. The dates are August 13 to 23.

The season closes with the outrageously entertaining *Hairspray* on stage from August 27 to closing night, September 6.

Continued on next page ...

Left: Berkshire Theater Group’s upcoming performance of *John & Jen*. Image courtesy of their website.

Center and right: The Mac-Haydn Theater’s upcoming performances of *The Addams Family* and *The Secret Garden*. Images courtesy of their website.



Top: A previous season's performance at The Sharon Playhouse. Image courtesy of their website.

Above: The upcoming performance of *Legally Blonde* at The Center for Performing Arts in Rhinebeck. Image courtesy of their website.

Below, right: Upcoming performers at Music Mountain. Image courtesy of their website.

Summer fare at Sharon Playhouse

Nestled in the northwest corner of Connecticut, the Sharon Playhouse has been bringing light fare to the area for decades. The season on the main stage this year is no exception. Three award-winning musicals make up the summer season.

Swingtime Canteen opens on June 19 and brings its collection of World War II classics set in wartime London through July 5. TONY Award-winning *42nd Street* appears from July 25 through August 9, closely followed by the heart-warming story of hospitality and friendship in *Come From Away*, August 11–27.

The Playhouse presents a variety of children's programs through the summer, and The Launchpad Company offer activities, training, and performances worth considering for the aspiring actors in the family. It's worth scheduling a visit to get a glimpse of the emerging talent around us.

The Center for the Performing Arts

True to its charter as a magnet for the performing arts, The Center for the Performing Arts in Rhinebeck, NY offers engaging main stage performances as well as a robust educational program for both "Kids on Stage" and "Teens on Stage."

Two main stage programs anchor the 2026 schedule, beginning with Laurence Olivier Award-winning *Legally Blonde – The Musical* on stage from June 5–28 and the Tony-winning Stephen Sondheim musical

Company being presented from July 10–26.

Music Mountain and the Litchfield Jazz Festival: Music in the air

Music performances are always part of the regional offerings. We'll cover Tanglewood below, but the offerings of such classic programs as Music Mountain in Falls Village, CT and the Litchfield Jazz Festival in Washington, CT, offer a bountiful selection of genres from which to choose.

Year after year, artistic sirector Oscar Espina Ruiz expands and amplifies the offerings at the Music Mountain concert hall. Classic string quartet programs on Sunday afternoons offered by internationally celebrated groups have long been a staple, and the addition of a jazz programming on Saturday evenings has attracted some local luminaries as well as Grammy award-winning performers over the last several years.

On the classical side, the season begins with Benjamin Hochman and Friends from the Metropolitan Opera in a benefit concert on June 7. A quick visit to the Music Mountain website will provide the rest of the Sunday season, which includes returning favorites, the widely anticipated annual appearance of Espin Ruiz playing clarinet, and the season-ending appearance of the Julliard String Quartet. Of special note is the June 14 appearance of Simone Dinnerstein and her supremely talented group "Baroklyn" playing a program that spans centuries from Bach to Philip Glass.

The Saturday programs venture into new, refreshing territory when the

Paul Winter Consort appears on July 4 at 7pm, a performance of Gilbert & Sullivan's *The Mikado* charms the audience on August 8, and in what should be an amazing evening, Donald Sosin and Joanna Seaton will perform a live score to the presentation of Buster Keaton's silent classic, *The General*.

Stepping back a few weeks, the fabulous *Bob Parker's Five By Five* will take the stage on July 25 featuring local celebrities Wanda Houston and trombonist Peter McEachern in appearance.

This year's Litchfield Jazz Festival runs from July 24 to 26 on the campus of the Frederick Gunn School in Washington, CT. Celebrating 40 years of both performance and education – the jazz camp is a great incubator of young, aspiring talent, the festival attracts musicians from around the world to offer a striking array of concerts.

The Play's the Thing – Shakespeare & Company

In his 10th season as artistic director, Allyn Burrows, joined by a brilliant core group of returning actors and directors, continues to offer a dazzling assortment of plays and ... call them "experiences" ... that range from premieres to Shakespearean classics to song, Shakespeare, and dance reviews.

The Lenox-based season begins with *Fireflies* from June 19 to July 19. The annual gala pops in for one afternoon and evening on June 26 with cocktails, performances, dinner, and dancing on offer, all benefitting the company's richly diverse educational and performance program offerings.



A wonderful addition to the campus has been the outdoor theater, considered one of the 10 best outdoor venues in the country. *Twelfth Night* takes the stage on July 4 and runs through July 26.

And, if the light side of the Bard appeals, the review *Circus and the Bard* will amaze and amuse from July 16–26. An intimate contemporary piece, *Frankie and Johnny in the Claire de Lune* will captivate the audience from July 30 to August 23.

Music and unbridled energy combine in *Shake It Up – the Remix*, which invites the audience to dance in the aisles from July 31 to August 3. Then, there's *Hamlet*. The play's the thing. The classic conflict of the prince of Denmark returns to Lenox August 13–30, followed by another, more contemporary play of deep emotions: *The Norwegians* closes out the summer season, appearing from September 4 to October 4.

Artistry, access, and acrobatics at Jacob's Pillow

After a 2025 season was cut short by a tragic workplace accident, Jacob's Pillow in Becket, MA has returned with a full schedule of performances on two indoor stages and the outdoor stage that overlooks the Berkshire Hills. In addition to performances by internationally recognized dance ensembles, classes, "Pillow Talk" lectures, family classes, and a West African and spiritual well being class offer totally immersive experiences throughout the summer.

Beginning June 24 with the triumphant return of the Paul Taylor Dance Company and continuing

through visits by the Urban Bush Women; Australia's Circa Contemporary Circus; the San Francisco Ballet; America's oldest dance company, Martha Graham Dance Company; and concluding with Hubbard Street Dance Chicago at the end of August, the Ted Shawn Theatre will celebrate world-class performances all summer.

The newly reconstructed Doris Duke Theatre will present notable solo artists, and the Henry J. Leir outdoor stage will present family-friendly, very modestly priced programs. The Pillow is back, grander than ever, with a comprehensive summer program that invites audiences to drive the "Jacob's Ladder" road up the hill to be welcomed, entertained and enriched.

And, the sheer, overwhelming magic and majesty of Tanglewood

The crown jewel of Western Massachusetts has been the summer home of the Boston Symphony Orchestra and the Boston Pops for generations. From its inception in 1936 with visiting members of the New York Philharmonic to the juggernaut that brought Serge Koussevitsky and the BSO to a giant tent on the grounds of Tanglewood in Lenox, MA, the series has grown to attract well over 350,000 music lovers each summer. And, with good reason.

A careful stroll through the BSO Tanglewood website offers the opportunity to witness performances by both of the Boston musical giant companies with guest appearances by no less than Yo-Yo Ma and Joshua Bell. Whether the choice is evening tickets or sunning with a picnic lunch during open rehearsals, the musical experience at Tanglewood is unparalleled.

The program elements that have grown, exponentially, over recent years are the concerts by the Popular Artists Series performers, whose body of work can not only fill the expansive "shed," but also in many cases, fill it two nights running. Rather than violins, cellos, and tympani, these performances feature guitar, bass, and drums. Comedian and social commentator Jon Stewart gets the series going on June 20 followed by a veritable tsunami of talent that stretches through the summer.



Top: Upcoming performance at Shakespeare & Company. Image courtesy of their website.

Above: One of the unique things at Tanglewood is being able to enjoy their performances on their lawn with a picnic. Image courtesy of their website.

Below, left: Upcoming performance at Jacob's Pillow. Image courtesy of their website.

** This article is simply a sampling of cultural offerings that our region has to offer and by no means a comprehensive list. We are fortunate to be rich in cultural offerings in our area.*

** The images accompanying this article are likewise just a sample of each venue and their summer programming, and are taken from their respective websites.*



The Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra under the direction of Wynton Marsalis appears on June 26, followed by two nights with Paul Simon – June 27 and 28. July begins with the now-traditional two-night appearance of James Taylor on the third and fourth. In an homage to contemporary music and humor, Weird Al Yankovic takes the stage on July 21.

After a three-week interlude of classical performances, Hugh Jackman commands the stage on August 11, followed by Brandi Carlile July 18, Cynthia Erivo July 21, Carrie Underwood July 29, and Judy Collins, who first appeared on this stage in 1968 on her farewell tour with Mary Chapin Carpenter and Roseanne Cash, on July 30. Into fall, the Tedeschi Trucks Band appears September 2, followed three days later by the Alabama Shakes with Mavis Staples. A final "pop" concert will present John Fogarty and Steve Winwood on September 6.

Exhausted? That's quite understandable. The sheer number of plays, musicals, dance performances, and concerts available requires a discipline to choose wisely, plan accordingly, and get ready for a summer of creative delights – enjoy! ●

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Brandon on bass. Photo by Shane Timm.



Brandon sharing a backstage moment with Sam Smith and others in the band at the Castro. Photo by James Marcus Haney.

“MUSIC IS A WILD LIFE”

By *Dominique DeVito*
info@mainstreetmag.com

For Brandon Morrison – who shared this truth with me as we talked about how he came from growing up in Columbia County to going on tour with the multiple Grammy-award winning artist Sam Smith – it may be wild, but it’s clearly wonderful.

Brandon grew up in Philmont, NY, and graduated from Taconic Hills in 2006. He remembers the influence of music in his life from early on. His maternal grandmother was a classical pianist and gave him piano lessons. “My dad had a big record collection,” he recalls, “and he often played them at breakfast time. It’s how I fell in love with the Beatles.”

In addition to the piano, Brandon played the saxophone in the school band, and when his younger brother, Tim, got a drum set, he got a guitar. They started playing together, and as Brandon realized he gravitated to playing on the low strings, he figured he should play bass. It’s the instrument he’s best known for today.

Musical roots

“Music became a deep, deep passion for me as I was growing up,” he says. “I wanted to play rock and roll.” He watched lots of documentaries about music and musicians, studying how and why they did things. His music teacher at Taconic Hills, Robert (Bob) Bates, regularly performed “unplugged” shows for students. He invited Brandon and Tim to join him, and Brandon was bit hard by the performance bug.

“Through middle school and into high school,” Brandon says, “my brother, Scott Watson, and I played in a band doing gigs at parties and even bars. Our parents would take the money at the door for us,” he says laughing.

When he graduated from the College of St. Rose, he landed a gig as a musician on a cruise ship for six months. He appreciated it but realized he didn’t want that lifestyle, and he returned to Columbia County. He lived in Hudson and started to play with musicians there. “They are now some of my closest friends,” he says. Lee Falco is one of them. Lee’s father, Tony, founded and owned The Falcon in Marlboro, NY, a venue notorious for its line-up of super-talented musicians of all genres. “Tony was a beautiful man,” Brandon recalls, “like a dad to me. He exuded a love for people and music.” A rehearsal space there morphed into a recording studio now called The Building. That’s where Brandon frequently found himself playing and recording with Lee and Will Bryant. The three of them run the studio today.

Making music

The guys formed a band called The Package – “because, well,” Brandon says, “we came as a package.” They all played instruments. They all sang. They all wrote music. Local managers encouraged them to change the name, and they settled on The Restless Age. “Lee came up with it,” Brandon says. “It’s from the song *Life is a Carnival* by The Band. We liked the name, and it wasn’t taken.”

The Restless Age played all over, including in the UK and Australia. In 2024, they wrote and recorded five original songs for a Korean TV show soundtrack titled, *A Midnight Romance in Hagwon*. They’re currently writing and recording more music for another Korean TV show. (Follow The Restless Age on social media to learn where they’re playing next.)

Home in the Hudson Valley, Brandon says, “This area is a deep well for musicians.” One of them is Donald Fagen of Steely Dan, who lives in Woodstock, NY. He saw Brandon playing with Will, Lee, Connor Kennedy and Zach Djanikain and, needing band members to go back on tour, reached out to them to consider joining him. “We did a jam session/test run in Levon Helms studio,” Brandon says, to see if things clicked. They did, and Brandon dove into “the deep and complex music of Steely Dan. I learned so much from Donald,” he says, adding, “there’s so much nuance in his music and his art. It was an amazing experience.” Brandon, Will, Lee, Connor and Zach were part of the Donald Fagen and the Nightflyers Tour in 2017.

“The music business is very much word of mouth,” Brandon shares. “I always thought I’d have to move to New York City, Los Angeles, or Nashville to make it as a musician, but it has happened for me in the Hudson Valley. My career blossomed here,” he says.

In an interview with *Billboard Magazine*, Fagen said of Brandon and the others, “They have a real sense of tradition and soul. ... We all see

music in a similar way, and that’s the main thing that matters.”

Enter Sam Smith

Should you not know who Sam Smith is, they’re a Grammy-, Oscar-, and Golden Globe-winning singer-songwriter from the UK who, as summarized on the site samsmithtour.org, “has become one of the defining voices of modern soulpop, blending gospel-rooted vocals, sleek electronic textures, and confessional lyricism. Since breaking through with *Stay With Me*, they have delivered global hits like *I’m Not the Only One*, *Too Good at Goodbyes*, *Dancing With a Stranger*, *How Do You Sleep?*, and the chart-topping *Unholy*, all unified by rich melodies, towering choruses, and an unmistakable falsetto. Their catalog shifts gracefully between intimate torch songs and club-ready anthems, making every concert feel both cathartic and celebratory.”

In a hybrid word-of-mouth/this-is-a-test scenario, the music director for Sam Smith was gathering recommendations for musicians to go on tour with them. Lee Falco recommended Brandon and Connor Kennedy. “I got called to audition in New York City,” Brandon says. “I didn’t know what to think; it was the first time for me doing it that way.”

He went. He played. He waited. “Five days later I got the okay,” he says. “I didn’t know if Lee or Connor would be chosen, and that was

Continued on next page ...

weird,” he says, adding quickly with clear pleasure, “Turns out we were all picked at the same time.”

That was in the fall of 2025. Smith would be doing a residency of shows at the Warsaw in Brooklyn between mid-October and late December 2025, and from there the tour was going to the Castro in San Francisco for another residency in February and March of 2026. Rehearsals started right away.

“What was most surprising,” Brandon says when asked about this experience, “was how everyone that was part of the tour felt like a family. It was a high-profile situation, but we were so welcomed, seen, and valued. In the first few days of rehearsals it felt like we’d known everyone for years. We were all allowed to be ourselves,” he shares, “and to be creative with respect to Sam’s music. They’re a brilliant singer and songwriter, and it’s been great,” Brandon says with obvious humility and pride.

“Brooklyn was intimate and special. You could connect with the fans. The Castro was recently renovated. A wonderful space. Sam started the shows there with their song *Lay Me Down*. What an incredible voice.”

If you’re like me and you’re not a musician but you’re an enthusiastic and often star-struck fan, do you wonder what that life is like? I had to ask Brandon.

Show after show

“It’s a beautiful, beautiful life,” he says, “and it can look easy, but it’s hard work. You have to keep yourself healthy. Get sleep. Eat well. Every nuance of a performance has a purpose, and when you’re performing for an audience,” he continues, “there’s a mutual exchange of energy that makes every night unique and accentuates the purpose.”

Brandon appreciates that the shows with Sam Smith were both residencies so they didn’t have to continuously travel while on tour. “I could even come home from the shows in Brooklyn,” he says.

Home is where the heart is

Home for Brandon is now Kingston. He lives there with Sarah, “an incredible artist,” he gushes, and their four-legged family, Cash (a dog) and Penny (a cat). Brandon and Sarah were married in 2025. As for his childhood home? “My parents, Gary and Ellen, were incredible,” he says, “a great support. As you grow up,” he adds, “you feel you want to move, and that happened for me. But I realize now how beautiful Philmont and Columbia County are. I swam in lakes and ponds and creeks. ...” He pauses to remember. “Every experience there has led to today.”



Top: Brandon with Donald Fagen and The Nightflyers. Photo by Rachel Brennecke. Above, L: A high school gig with his brother Tim on drums and Scott Watson. Right: Enjoying a bass-playing moment on the Rachael Yamagata China Tour.

What does he do when he's not making music?

“I like to garden,” he says, “and I love fishing. I used to go with my dad.” Brandon worked at B&G Wines in Hillsdale once upon a time, and he and Sarah enjoy going out for nice dinners. “There’s no lack of great restaurants in the Hudson Valley,” he says. (True!)

And what does he like to listen to? This might be the toughest question he’s been asked, and he takes some time to answer. “I love old-school music,” he says. “Jackson Brown, ELO, Wings & Paul McCartney, Supertramp ... and blues and R&B,” he adds, “Stevie Wonder, Marvin Gaye, Freddie King, the Allman Brothers, Cream.” The bands roll off his tongue. “Dawes, an American folk-rock band,” he says, “and The Lemon Twigs from Long Island. They have a sound like if the Beatles and Rundgren had a baby,” he laughs.

Does he have a favorite Steely Dan song? “*Doctor Wu*,” he says fairly quickly. A favorite Beatles song? This one takes a bit longer, but he finally says, “*In My Life*, which I sang at my high school graduation.”

How about a Sam Smith favorite? “Oh,” he muses, “they’re all classic. The song *Him* on their second record is beautiful and powerful. It’s so easy to be inspired and moved by their music.” He’ll be accompanying Smith on the next part of their tour in

Mexico City in August.

During COVID, people were putting together playlists that represented who they were, just in case. I asked Brandon if he had a playlist that reflected who he is as a musician, an artist, a husband, a man of today’s Hudson Valley. He gave it some thought and put one together. Here it is:

For No One, The Beatles. *Better Days*, Graham Nash. *Telephone Line*, ELO. *A Tear Fell*, Ray Charles. *Late for the Sky*, Jackson Browne. *Long Distance Love*, Little Feat. *Tales of Brave Ulysses*, Cream. *Magnolia*, J.J. Cale. *How Lucky Am I?*, The Lemon Twigs. *Lighthouse Keeper*, Sam Smith. *You Didn’t Have To Be So Nice*, The Lovin’ Spoonful. *Time Can’t Go Back Now*, The Restless Age. *The Best Of Everything* (Alternate Version), Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers. *This Will Be Our Year*, The Zombies. *That Western Skyline*, Dawes. *Pale Shelter*, Tears For Fears. *I’ll Play The Blues For You*, Albert King. *Hold Me*, Fleetwood Mac. *Doctor Wu*, Steely Dan. *I’ll Remember You*, Bob Dylan. ●

Go to YouTube to search for concert clips from Sam Smith’s performances in Brooklyn and San Francisco. Learn more about Brandon on his website, brandon-morrison.com. Follow Brandon and The Restless Age on social media or – better yet – get a taste of his wild life by going to see them in concert right here in the Hudson Valley.



Top: On tour with Sam Smith at the Warsaw. Photo by Cole Gentry. Above, L: A close-up while playing at the Castro. Photo by James Marcus Haney. Right: Brandon and Sarah on their wedding day. Photo by Adrian Etheridge.

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ART APPRECIATION



By Regina Molaro
info@mainstreetmag.com

Sometimes we need a pop of color, an updated piece to awaken a tired space, or something inspiring to appreciate as we move about our homes. While some of us are drawn to serene landscapes emboldened with hues of green, blue, and orange, others gravitate toward abstract or surreal works.

Regardless of personal preference, artwork has the power to speak to us, connect with us emotionally, elevate an interior's aesthetics, and express our personal identity and vision. A work of art may spark conversation or evoke a fond memory of the city, town, shop, or gallery it was purchased in and who we were with when we decided we needed to take it home. Beyond bringing joy and inspiration, artwork can instantly usher a bold brush of color into space – and make a house feel more like a home.

Throughout the Hudson Valley are many great destinations for browsing art collections. From shops and galleries to pop-up venues and auctions, there's certainly no shortage of artists or artworks. It's up to us to get out there and take it all in. Get inspired!

It's auction time

Stissing Center for Arts & Culture, a non-profit in Pine Plains, NY, and Mad Rose Gallery in Millerton, NY,

are teaming up to host the Second Annual Art Auction Fundraiser. The silent auction and reception will be held on Saturday, June 13, from 5pm to 7pm at Stissing Center.

The event, which will spotlight a collection of approximately 50 works, supports Stissing Center's mission to unite people through the shared experience of art and culture. By supporting creative expression and expanding access to the arts, Stissing Center is pitching in to help build a vibrant and sustainable community – one that celebrates imagination, strengthens the cultural heart of the region, and contributes to local revitalization.

Its partner for the event, Mad Rose Gallery is renowned for its collection of contemporary artworks that challenge the intellect and stir the spirit. Representing both established and emerging artists, Mad Rose Gallery serves as a cultural hub for the Hudson Valley region and beyond. It also offers creative workshops and classes for those interested in dabbling in the arts or polishing their skills.

Stissing Center's board chair, Gwen Greene, is credited with conceiving the idea for the auction. She was inspired by Stissing Center's holiday Doodle Auction, which is currently in its fifth year.

"These small, low-cost doodles are great for holiday gift-giving. Gwen saw an opportunity to do a fundrais-

ing event on a larger scale with local, regional, and national artists. Last year, we partnered with Carrie Chen of the Carrie Chen Gallery in Great Barrington, MA, and art curator Manon Slome. This year, the committee expanded, and we have the incredible benefit of a partnership with Mad Rose Gallery in Millerton," said Patrick Trettenero, executive director, Stissing Center for Arts & Culture.

"Last year's auction was our first attempt, and we truly flew by the seat of our pants, yet we still managed to sell nearly 40 pieces and raise over \$40,000. This year, we've expanded to a larger committee with deep connections to the art world and tremendous expertise. The revenue goes directly to help us fulfill our mission while keeping our ticket prices affordable to make the arts accessible to everyone," he added.

What to expect

Art enthusiasts, collectors, and community members are welcome to view the collection at the Stissing Center and attend the reception. Tickets are required. In addition to light bites by Champêtre, Rosenthal Wine Merchant will keep the wine flowing, and musician Alec Sisco set the

Above, left: *Cow Portrait*. Tony Henneberg. Oil on canvas.

Right: 2025's art auction

Continued on next page ...



Above: View Towards Stissing from Hill Top Road. Shane Neufeld.

Below, right: *Tout ce qui Existe*. Judy Pfaff.

tone playing Stissing Center’s 1910 Steinway Model A piano. Guests who are interested in decking their walls and halls will have an opportunity to bid on artwork.

The collection spans a variety of mediums from photography and painting to ceramics and sculpture. Works also cross several genres, from abstract to realism and beyond.

All works were generously donated by collectors and celebrated artists from studios in our corner of the world to far-flung galleries, studios, and museums around the globe. All proceeds will benefit Stissing Center’s vital arts and culture programming.

The auction

The auction collection includes *Robert* by American painter and visual artist Chuck Close, whose works have been exhibited at The Museum of Modern Art in New York, the National Gallery of Art in Washington, DC, and the J. Paul Getty Museum in Los Angeles. The collection also includes a large mixed-media drawing by celebrated folk artist Robert E. Smith. A gift from the collection of Academy Award-winning film producer Charles Wessler, it is a vibrant piece of chaotic detail, from a whimsical yet satirical, childlike perspective.

Other standouts in the collection include the epic *Climberscape* by local artist Gail Rothschild. Career highlights include Think Big! at Berlin’s Bode Museum; “Peru – ein Katzensprung” (Peru – A Stone’s Throw), a major exhibition of pre-Columbian textiles held at the German Textile

Museum Krefeld; and “From the Desert to the City: The Journey of Late Ancient Textiles,” a 2018 exhibition at the Godwin-Ternbach Museum at Queens College, City University of New York.

Also included is *Shape of Water XII* by Leora Armstrong – a multidisciplinary artist raised on the Isle of Islay, Scotland; she currently works in Connecticut [and is a regular contributor to *Main Street Magazine*. Shout-out to Leora!].

An online preview is live now through June 13, the collection can be viewed at thestissingcenter.org/art-auction-2026. A live preview will be on display at Mad Rose Gallery from May 29 through 31 and from June 4 through June 7; hours are from noon to 5pm.

“We’re excited for this year’s Art Auction Fundraiser, grateful for the incredible art being donated by artists and collectors, and thrilled to be collaborating with Mad Rose Gallery and a committee deeply connected to the art world, whose expertise and commitment promise an exciting and meaningful event,” said Trettenero.

“Why should a visual artist care about a performing arts center? Because dancers, puppeteers, musicians, and filmmakers have all inspired my practice. Because the Stissing Center

has brought together a dynamic arts community that I am truly proud to be a part of. Because who knows what collaborative adventure the Stissing Center may have in store for me next? Bring it on,” said Gail Rothschild, a Brooklyn-based artist who has a large format acrylic painting in the show; it was inspired by rock climbing and the work of Eadweard Muybridge.

The curators

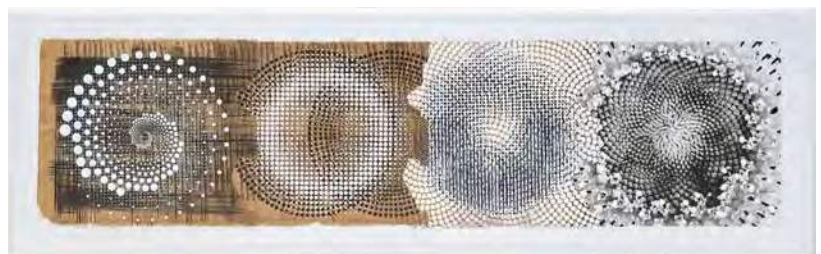
The collection was curated by the Art Auction committee, an accomplished group of professionals with extensive experience across the art sector. The committee is chaired by Neal Rosenthal of Mad Rose Gallery. He is also an author, entrepreneur, and wine merchant.

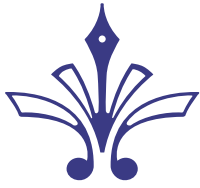
The group includes Jack Banning, founder of Ubu Gallery in Manhattan; Didi Barrett, assemblywoman and trustee emeritus of the American Folk Art Museum; Gwen Greene, a philanthropist and retired financial advisor; Yael Meridan Schori, a painter and board member of the New York Studio School; L. Parker Stephenson, a private art dealer and former gallerist on Madison Avenue; Dorit Straus, a former fine art manager at Chubb; Natalie Tyler, a sculptor and director of Mad Rose Gallery; and Douglas Walla, an art dealer, curator, and historian who founded Kent Fine Art and was CEO of Marlborough Gallery, both in New York.

Tickets are \$100 and are available at thestissingcenter.org or call (518) 771-3339. •

To learn more about Stissing Center for Arts & Culture, they are located at 2950 Church Street in Pine Plains, NY. Call (518) 771-3340 or visit thestissingcenter.org.

To learn more about Mad Rose Gallery, they are located at 5916 N Elm Ave. in Milerton, NY. Call (518) 592-1085 or visit madrosegallery.com.





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YES, AND ... AND TOM

By CB Wismar
info@mainstreetmag.com

There's a fairly standard line in detective shows scattered across the stream-o-sphere. "There is no such thing as a coincidence." It usually arises when the writer needs to insert an inflection point in the script. This past weekend was not a detective show. So its events were either a coincidence ... or a "cosmic intersection of realities." Take your pick.

Over the years, I have had many chances to collide with performers, thought leaders, and celebrities while working behind the scenes to build events. There were always the mandatory photos ... the "grip and grin" moments backstage when the event photographer felt compelled to memorialize the meeting of the headliner and the person behind the curtain. Those were moments gone in a flash. With great resolve the smiling faces in those images knew that should we meet again, there would be no recognition, which was fine. We were doing our job ... and they were doing theirs.

And, Tom

So, it was mildly amusing when on a recent weekend two of the names and

faces from my past created an inflection point that caused a bit of head scratching followed by a wan smile. As Harry Chapin (who was not one of the participants in this moment) sang so eloquently – "All my life's a circle."

The sound track for this life lesson was, in fact, delivered by a revered, resilient singer-songwriter who has been writing and performing for 65 years. Yes, Tom Rush is a man of the "elder persuasion," but when he takes the stage, humor, wisdom, and talent continue to radiate from his mustachioed face. The man "has game." Music lovers of a certain age may remember his appearance under the tent on the Berkshire Theatre Group parking lot in Pittsfield, MA when artistic director Kate Maguire managed an impossible miracle during the COVID epidemic and brought music and theater to carefully placed, masked audience seating ... and brought hope out of darkness to patrons. Tom will be performing at the Guthrie Center in Great Barrington, MA at the end of the summer, and truly, "the juice is worth the squeeze."

And, Kelly

The second force in the moment was a legend in improvisational theater – Kelly Leonard – currently titled vice president, creative strategy, innovation and business development at The Second City in Chicago. That may be the kind of title that requires a gate-fold business card, but Kelly's bona fides deserve the recognition. As producer of The Second City troupe, he brought a few notables to the stage: Steven Colbert, Tina Fey, Amy Poehler, Keegan Michael Key, and Seth Meyers to name a few.

It was a re-read of the book *Yes, And* (New York, Harper Collins, 2015) written by Kelly and Tom Yorton, also a Second City alumnus, after producing a podcast with him that was the underlayment for the weekend's "Aha!"

We're not sure Rush and Leonard have ever met. It's certainly possible, but neither has mentioned it in their resumes. Cosmically, however, they seem to run on parallel tracks. The moment of connection is at the often-baffling moment when spontaneity becomes improvisation becomes the

way forward through the perpetual fog of aging.

From *Yes, And*:

"While no one is ever capable of being in the moment twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, it is essential that we recognize the moments in our workday when we must make our full selves fully present. In short, if you are in a space where you are expected to bring your creative voice it is vital that you stay in the moment."

Tom Rush, 86 years old for his Guthrie Center performance, was "in the moment." He had the audience with him for every song lyric and every guitar lick. He was following Kelly's mandate, and the crowd rose to meet him.

Growing old is not easy. That bit of hackneyed wisdom comes as no shock. The encouragement – from both Kelly Leonard and Tom Rush, however, is quite simple. As you age, be "in the moment." After all, there is no such thing as a coincidence. ●



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Left: Donna Staron amidst the wares at Staron's farm stand, located off Route 203 in Valatie.



Center: Stanley Staron out in the fields.



Right: Shelly Staron Mossman and mom, Donna, at the farm stand.

STARON FARMS

By Jesse DeGroot
info@mainstreetmag.com

“Shopping with us keeps farms alive and operating – buying from local farms is beneficial to everyone,” Donna Staron said recently. “The land stays open and free of development, such as solar farms. And, if you don’t cultivate your land, it goes back to trees, so then you’re not looking at open space. Know your farmer, know where your food is coming from: good, fresh food.”

Locally-sourced

An added, perhaps oftentimes overlooked benefit: no recalls. No manufacturer shenanigans. “We keep our product clean. It’s all locally grown. If I source out, I’m sourcing out from other farmers I know, and I know their practices,” added Staron. Currently, counting the land they own and land they rent, the Starons have around 225 acres in cultivation.

Had it not been for farming, Donna thought she’d like “to do something with kids. Now that I’ve farmed, my dream is to teach kids about farming, to try to raise kids’ interest in farming, because then people would know where their food comes from. It kills me when people don’t know where their food comes from.”

A farming family

Instead of embarking on a career with kids though, she and husband, Stanley, received their own, up-close and personal education. Stanley, a Chatham High 1975 graduate, and Donna, CHS Class of ’78, started dating and farming potatoes as teenagers. While farming, dating, and still living at home with her mom and dad, Donna recalls, “Stanley would pick me up in the morning in Spencertown, and we’d go farm. We’d sell veggies at the auction in Hillsdale and go to the Chatham auction with veggies and potatoes.”

The couple married in 1980. “Stanley wanted to farm,” Donna explains. “I fell in love with a farmer, and this is where I got. See what happens? For our 25th anniversary, we went to Pennsylvania and bought an irrigation pump. We still have it. It was our first vacation in 20 years. We stayed overnight and were on the road by seven the next morning.”

The farming life did not arrive out of the clear blue sky for Donna and Stanley. For more than a century, it’s been a family affair for the Staron clan in the truest sense of the phrase, beginning in 1922 with Stanley’s grandparents, Thomas and Mary Staron, working 150 acres in East Chatham, on to the ensuing generation of brothers Ed, John, and Stanley Sr. farming 360 acres in Valatie, and now involving daughter, Shelly Staron

Mossman, and a granddaughter, Emily Gaylord.

7 days a week, all year long

Were either of them aware they’d wind up doing this forever? Early on, Donna said she told her father, “Stanley can farm five days a week, but I still get my weekends.” Her dad thought that was amusing. And it didn’t take long for Donna to learn how that would (not) work out.

In the early days, Stanley would say he didn’t want to be tied down to farming. Nonetheless, there are beef cows to tend in the winter and the stand to keep humming in the summer. “We plant a crop in the spring and harvest in the fall, so I’m not sure where the not-being-tied-down part comes in. Every day it’s something,” said Donna.

And then there was a farm stand

In the early 1980s, the couple decided to take a shot at selling some of their goods themselves. Initially that came in the form of a self-serve operation in the front yard of Donna’s uncle, Frank Whiteman, across from Wind-ing Brook Country Club on Route 203 in Valatie, NY. From 1984 to ’88, Donna spent her days at the stand with daughters Sandy and Shelly in tow. The permanent farm stand, the

Continued on next page ...

one that operates today at 4 Merwin Road, Valatie, just off Route 203, opened in 1988. Three additions to the original structure later, it is now a fixture on the landscape.

“I enjoy being at the stand,” said Donna. “I got to raise my kids at the stand. We didn’t have any daycare.”

After college, daughter Shelly took different jobs, yet found she “wasn’t as passionate about them as I was about farming. I love watching everything grow. I do more field work than stand work lately. First, I pick flowers early in the morning. Then I help open the stand, putting out all of the fruits and veggies. After checking for that day’s order, I go pick in the field. I pick more delicate veggies, such as lettuces and greens, in the morning. Depending on where we are in the season, I weed, put out irrigation, fix irrigation, lay plastic mulch, plant, replant, dig potatoes, do animal control, start seeds, check crops, and do a lot of picking.”

Growing up, said Shelly, who started driving a tractor at the age of eight, “Farm life didn’t interfere with any school activities. I still played sports: soccer, basketball, and cheerleading. It actually made me better. I was in good physical shape from doing farm work. Preseason was never that hard. I remember being taken out of school once to dig potatoes, but that was fun.”

“Mom and dad are such hard workers – that’s what has kept the operation going. Mom has great relationships with her customers. She knows the name of everyone that comes into

the stand. It’s amazing,” added Shelly.

At times, the Starons have been known to have their dinner in the field, mainly while irrigating late in the day. “I’d take a Hibachi, and we’d grill hamburgers,” Donna said. She then added, “The food we’ve eaten, we’ve produced – and we’ve never starved.”

Community Supported Agriculture

Some years back, the Starons became involved in Community Supported Agriculture, which they say has worked out well for them. CSA customers pay for their shares in the spring, which helps with the beginning-of-the-season cash flow and provides participating farmers with a better idea of what to plant.

Prior to the CSA, extra goods would be wholesaled, but that’s no longer as much of a thing. During the season, the Starons travel three times a week to market in Menands, where they sell their wares and purchase things they don’t grow that can be sold at the stand. Those days tend to start around 4am.

A sense of community is far from lost on the Starons. Over the years, Donna has been involved in Keep Farming and the Chatham Agricultural Partnership, served on the Town of Chatham’s planning board and the town’s Comprehensive Plan Committee twice, and helped rewrite the town zoning code. The Chatham Agricultural Partnership awarded her the first Farmer of the Year Award to thank her for 20 years of service to the town.



Top: Stanley and Donna Staron, winners of the first annual Victoria Simons Locavore Award in 2013. Bottom, L: Shelly Staron Mossman and daughter, Emily. Right: Stanley takes a break.

The climate

The change in climate in recent years has presented its own set of challenges to the Starons. Said Donna: “We have had more extremes in recent years – from really hot to cold or vice versa. Springs are warmer, which pushes strawberries to blossom, but then a late frost hits and kills the blossoms. It can be really dry and then rain constantly, which creates disease and bugs.” Over time, hail, flooding, and wind damage have afflicted the Starons’ efforts.

“They can’t predict what it’s going to do from one day to the next anyway,” she said, “so we don’t pay attention to a lot of that. Last year started out really wet, but then the faucet turned off and never turned back on, and the year wound up hot and dry. One thing I’ve really noticed is we get those ups and downs. When we were kids, when the temperature changed, you would get rain. We don’t get that now. It just changes, and you don’t get the rain. You don’t get the thunderstorm. I don’t want really bad thunderstorms because they bring a lot of issues, but now when you’re thinking it’s cooled off and is going to rain, it doesn’t. And one thing we very rarely got 30 years ago were tornadoes, but

now how often do we get a tornado watch or warning? When I’m at the stand, if we get a tornado warning, I’m out of there.”

“Farming is about loving the land, enjoying the animals we raise, and having a sense of pride in what we produce,” Donna says. “It’s a way of life. It’s not about being money-rich. We are rich in other ways. It’s a sense of accomplishment growing a crop every year. It’s about watching a thunderstorm and praying it doesn’t destroy the crop but still being thankful for the rain. About enjoying the seasons and what each one gives us.”

Donna’s voice sounds wistful when she says, “We’ve been farming for 48 years. It would be nice to not work so hard. In order to farm we bought land over the years. Our land is our retirement. We struggle with how to retire but still keep the land open. We are not ready to give up what we have worked so hard for. We want to have time to enjoy the land we treasure so much.”

In the meanwhile, however, “There’s always fun on the farm.” ●

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Leader of the pack: *Copake Veterinary Practice*



By Regina Molaro
info@mainstreetmag.com

With corporate consolidation on the rise, many families with pets have struggled to provide their fur babies with the top-notch, compassionate care they deserve. Many pet owners feel that the level of care has suffered while prices have escalated.

“To truly accomplish a mission, you must own it.” That was a mentor’s advice to Dr. Tyler Hotaling, owner, Copake Veterinary Hospital in Copake Falls, NY. Dr. Hotaling’s journey to acquiring the hospital, which was founded in 1948 by Dr. John Mettler, was forged by his deep desire to align his work with his core values. After witnessing clinical cultures elsewhere deteriorate, Dr. Hotaling made the leap. That was in March of 2024.

Because it is privately owned and operated, Copake Veterinary Hospital has the freedom to practice medicine that mirrors its values. “This independence gives us the flexibility to make the best clinical choices for your pet and maintain fair, transparent pricing without the interference of corporate politics. By allowing clinical excellence to drive our success, we ensure that our medical decisions remain focused solely on the patient,” said Hotaling.

Services

Copake Veterinary Hospital’s team continually expands its services to better serve the community. While prioritizing wellness via annual exams, vaccinations, and parasite prevention, the hospital is also fully equipped for urgent care. It features an advanced in-house laboratory and diagnostic imaging suite, including X-ray and ultrasound.

“We are especially proud to offer general surgery, comprehensive dentistry, and an expanding range of orthopedic procedures. By performing these complex surgeries in-house (these services are often reserved for specialty clinics), we aim to provide clients with high-quality, accessible options when faced with the high costs of emergency care,” said Hotaling.

Although the practice’s mission remains the same: to expand service, welcome new families, and continue serving the community with quality, compassionate medicine, several new developments are underway.

On May 18, Copake Veterinary Hospital welcomed Dr. Lauren Scanlon. “Her expertise and passion for animal care make her a perfect fit for our hospital.” Dr. Scanlon earned her BA from Simon’s Rock at Bard College in Great Barrington, MA with

a double major in chemistry and political ecology in 2013. She graduated from Cummings School of Veterinary Medicine of Tufts University in 2021 with a doctorate in veterinary medicine and earned a post-graduate certificate in international veterinary medicine. Dr. Scanlon will be a welcome addition to our practice, and we hope you’ll join us in welcoming her,” said Dr. Hotaling.

Another change includes expanded surgical capabilities in the orthopedic department. The update, which will be complete by late summer or early fall, will include TPLO (tibial plateau leveling osteotomy) cruciate repair. Cruciate injuries are among the most common orthopedic injuries in dogs. By providing this advanced procedure in-house, the hospital offers clients a more accessible and cost-effective alternative to specialty surgical centers, ensuring continuity of care with a team the pet owner already trusts.

Making the distinction

Of course, there are other marks of excellence that set Copake Veterinary Hospital apart from the pack. In July 2025, the hospital achieved American Animal Hospital Association accreditation – a distinction held by only 15% of veterinary practices nationwide.

“To earn this, we met or exceeded hundreds of rigorous standards covering every aspect of clinical care and business management. This accreditation is a testament to our staff’s dedication to remaining at the forefront of veterinary medicine,” said Hotaling. Beyond welcoming new fur patients, the practice is now accommodating client and non-client emergency appointments during regular business hours. Whether you’re looking for a long-term veterinary home or facing an unexpected medical crisis, the team at Copake Veterinary Hospital is ready to provide the expert support and care your pet deserves.

“While high clinical standards are non-negotiable, we lead with the heart, believing that while people may forget our words, they will always remember how we made them feel. This commitment to empathy is matched by a culture of accountability, where we hold ourselves to the values we live by every day,” said Hotaling. ●

Copake Veterinary Hospital is located at 7915 State Rte. 22, Copake Falls, NY. You can reach them via phone at (518) 329-6161 or email: info@copakevethospital.com, or find out more at their website: copakevethospital.com.



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It's Alzheimer's Awareness Month

By Regina Molaro
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During the month of June, healthcare organizations are working to promote brain health and raise awareness of Alzheimer's disease.

Mayo Clinic defines Alzheimer's disease as a biological process that begins with the appearance of a buildup of proteins in the form of amyloid plaques (abnormal clusters of misfolded proteins that build up in the spaces between nerve cells in the brain) and neurofibrillary tangles (abnormal, thread-like aggregates of a protein called tau) that build up inside nerve cells (neurons) in the brain. Over time, this causes brain cells to die and the brain to shrink.

Dementia

Alzheimer's disease is the most common cause of dementia, a decline in mental ability, including memory, language, reasoning, and problem-solving, severe enough to interfere with daily life. It's important to note that dementia itself is not a disease; it's a term used to describe these symptoms, which can also include loss of judgment and other intellectual functions.

The national numbers

Mayo Clinic cites that about 6.9 million people in the United States, age 65 and older, live with the disease. Among them, more than 70% are over age 75.

Of the more than 55 million people worldwide with dementia, 60% to 70% are estimated to have Alzheimer's disease. There's a common misperception that Alzheimer's only affects older people, but younger people can develop Alzheimer's, too.

In short

Although medicine may improve symptoms or slow the decline in cognitive function, unfortunately, there is no cure for Alzheimer's. In advanced stages, loss of brain function can cause dehydration, poor nutrition, or infection, which may result in

death. Luckily, there are programs and services to help support those with Alzheimer's and their caregivers, who are often family members.

Signs and symptoms

Everyone has occasional memory lapses such as forgetting where they placed their keys or cell phone, but the memory loss associated with Alzheimer's persists and declines over time. Beyond causing serious memory loss, the disease impacts a person's ability to do everyday tasks.

According to Mayo Clinic, increasing forgetfulness or mild confusion may initially be the only recognizable symptoms, but Alzheimer's gradually deprives people of more and more of their memory, especially recent memories. Those who have the disease may continuously repeat statements and questions; forget conversations, appointments, or events (and not remember them later); or routinely misplace possessions by putting them in illogical locations.

They may also get lost in familiar places; forget the names of family members and everyday objects; and have difficulty finding the words to identify objects, express thoughts, or take part in conversations. Multitasking becomes especially difficult.

Those suffering from the disease may also experience changes in personality and behavior such as depression, social withdrawal, irritability and aggressiveness, distrust in others, and delusions.

A thief

One woman shares her feelings on this disease, which affected her closest friend: "Alzheimer's disease is like a thief that robs people of their personalities and lifetime memories. Family and friends can no longer reminisce and laugh together about the shared highlights of their lives together. To

Continued on next page ...

cover up the signs of their minds slipping, many people become more and more distant from friends or family. It's very painful to watch.”

Risk factors and diagnosis

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention references several known factors that may elevate the risk of dementia. They include lack of physical activity (especially aerobic), uncontrolled diabetes, and high blood pressure. Excessive alcohol use, depression, obesity, and hearing loss are also linked with the disease.

The CDC cited a study that found that certain racial/ethnic groups, including African American, Hispanic, American Indian, and Alaska Native adults, were more likely to have these risk factors. Those same racial/ethnic groups are also more likely to develop dementia than other groups.

There's hope. Nearly 45% of all dementia cases may be prevented or delayed. Adopting healthy habits is a good place to start. Stay active; experts recommend that adults get 150 minutes of physical activity weekly – at least 20 minutes per day. Make sure you manage diabetes and blood pressure; high blood pressure can damage

blood vessels and limit blood flow to the brain.

Researchers also believe that hearing loss may make the brain work harder at the expense of thinking and memory. A decline in the ability to hear can also lead people to be withdrawn from social engagement, which is important to remaining intellectually stimulated. Finally, drink moderately and quit smoking.

Keep challenging yourself

The Alzheimer's Association recommends continually challenging the mind, learning new skills, protecting your head by wearing a helmet when biking, and wearing a seatbelt. Older adults should take precautions to minimize the risk of falls. Of course, eating healthy food (more vegetables and leaner meats/protein, along with food that is less processed and lower in fat), maintaining a healthy weight, and getting enough sleep also go a long way towards prevention.

Getting help

If you suspect a loved one is having memory or other cognitive issues, get an evaluation from a geriatrician who can provide the necessary assessment to determine the best course of action. To diagnose Alzheimer's disease, healthcare professionals test memory and other thinking skills. They also test functional ability and look for behavior changes. A series of tests can rule out other possible causes of symptoms.

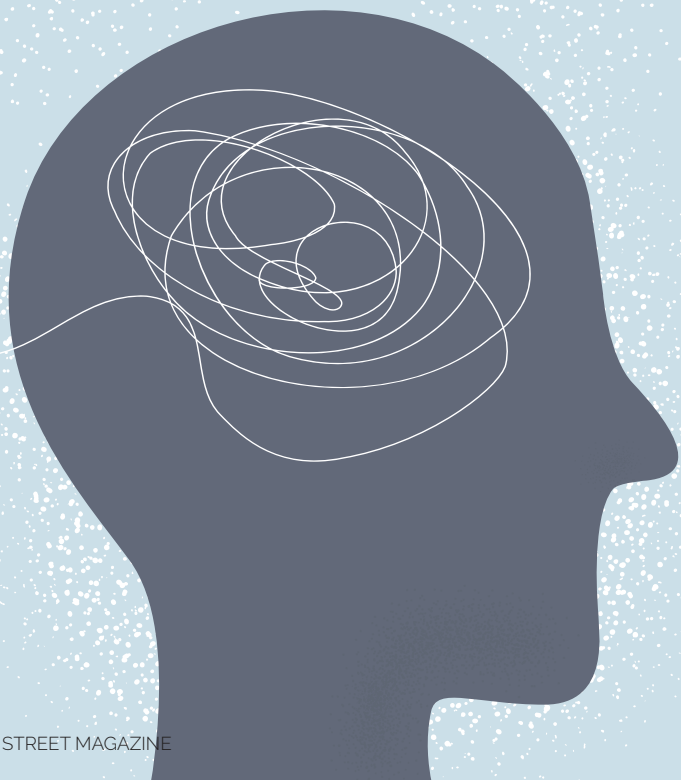
According to Alzheimer's Association, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration has approved medications for the disease. They fall into two categories: drugs that change disease progression in people living with Alzheimer's, and drugs that may temporarily mitigate some symptoms. Treatments may be available in different forms (for example pills or patches).

The Alzheimer's Association Hudson Valley Chapter serves seven counties in New York, including Dutchess, Orange, Putnam, Rockland, Sullivan, Ulster, and Westchester. It has offices in Poughkeepsie as well. In addition to providing education and support, it advocates for the needs and rights of those facing dementia, and advances critical research to develop new treatments and, ultimately, a cure. To find out more, visit alz.org/hudsonvalley.

Alzheimer's Association also offers support to caregivers. It's in-person and virtual caregiver support groups are free and open to the public. To register to join one of the groups, call the Alzheimer's Association at (800) 272-3900 or visit alz.org/hudsonvalley/support/hudson-valley-caregiver-support-groups. •

Main Street's podcast, *Main Street Moxie*, recently interviewed CB Wismar. In the interview, CB shares his story of caretaking for his late wife, Kathy, who battled Alzheimer's. CB gives a very open, honest, and raw account, but he also provides a lot of insight and resources for those battling Alzheimer's as well as for their caretakers. All of the resource links are available on the website mainstreetmoxie.press. You can listen to the podcast on the website or anywhere you stream podcasts.

**Disclaimer: All medical claims made in this article are based on the organizations cited and information provided by the cited sources. The information is general in nature and not specifically meant for any particular individual. You should always seek out medical assistance from a medical professional based on your individual needs and circumstances.*





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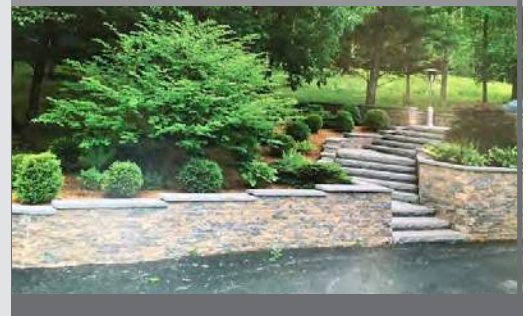
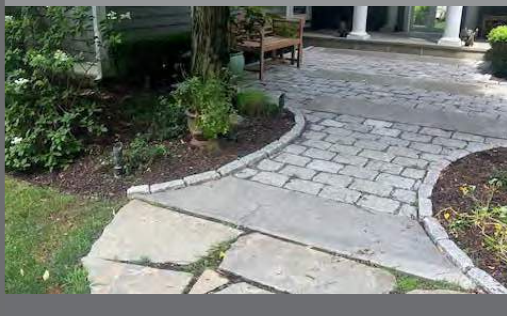
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