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Be thankful

At this time every year, I like to reflect on the year that we are quickly approaching the end of. We have just stepped into the eleventh month of 2026, and in another blink of an eye we will find ourselves at the end of December and facing the start of 2027. I can hardly believe it! It feels like we just started 2026, so it is absolutely bonkers to me that we're already right here, in November, about to make some decisions on election day before we start planning Thanksgiving. This time of year always feels so incredibly hectic for me, which is even more reason to take a little time to think back on the year that is passing and everything that I've done, while also making plans for the upcoming year. Do you do the same thing? Or perhaps in November you specifically like to give thanks as well as appreciate all of the amazing people and things that you have in your life? I like to do that too.

As an immigrant, I was quick to take to Thanksgiving. I really liked the tradition as well as the messaging of being together and giving thanks. It feels very wholesome and genuine. I also quite enjoy the turkey and all the fixin's if I'm being totally honest. I know a turkey dinner isn't necessarily everyone's cup of tea, but I love the turkey, mashed potatoes, stuffing, and cranberry jelly. Then follow that up with a warm Dutch apple pie and vanilla ice cream? Phew. That's a true gastronomic delight IMHO.

But I digress.

In this November's issue, you'll find a little bit of everything as our writers share stories from all parts of life. There's no specific "Thanksgiving" theme per se, because we decided to have inspiration lead the way for everyone. As you flip through the pages, I hope that you find a story or two that are of interest to you.

I'd like to leave you with one thought though, and that is, I know how busy everyone gets during the holiday season. I also know for many this time often flies by very quickly. I encourage us all to stay mindful, to take time to be in the moment, to cherish the moments we get to spend with friends, family, and loved ones. Don't let the holiday craze get to you, instead remind yourself of what is truly important in life. For me, that is being with those who I love, sharing time and experiences with them while creating new memories, and enjoying good food. Everything else is just an added bonus. So this holiday season, do what feels right for you and your loved ones. And above all else, remember to give thanks to everyone and everything that you cherish in your life.

– Thorunn Kristjansdottir

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NOVEMBER 2026

Happy nutty November!
Photo by Olivia Valentine

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SEEING THE SELF

SETH HOWE



By Leora Armstrong
info@mainstreetmag.com

I met artist and architect Seth Howe at his solo show “Architecture of Awareness” at Tyte Gallery in Millbrook, NY, curated by Sharon Bates, to talk about his practice and walk among his three-dimensional works. His minimal, formal pieces are inanimate objects, yet they come alive as you move around them. With each step, you catch fragments of yourself in the surfaces, seeing self and sculpture in the same moment through the spaces. Polished steel and mirrored finishes reflect the viewer, standing as hexagons or rectangles that are reimagined with every showing. The pieces work indoors and out, holding their own within a landscape.

What was it about this area that prompted the move here?

I grew up in Poughkeepsie. When I went to Cornell for the five-year architecture program, I promised myself I’d never come back to this area. I didn’t love the countryside back then, and I wanted a more urban life. But for my architectural thesis, we had to pick a site, and I chose the Millbrook town park, Tribute Gardens, which I remembered from growing up. The thesis was based on a cemetery. I’d spent my fourth year of college in Italy and was deeply touched by the art and architecture there. The cemeteries in Italy are monumental. Returning to Millbrook felt like coming home. My father worked for IBM, so I grew

up in a suburban, mid-20th-century environment shaped by the idea of progress, the belief that technology would save the world.

What pulled you into architecture? What made you want to make three-dimensional objects?

It’s interesting to look back and see what connected me to architecture. I loved figuring out the details of a building, but what drew me was really about space, the perception of the body, and how we move through space. That’s a huge part of architecture for me. I still have an architecture practice, but I don’t run it as a “star architect”. I want to serve my clients, so stylistically the work doesn’t stick to one trend, but it’s all driven through my own lens. Still, feeling the pull of creativity, I went back to art school at 35 for a three-year MFA at Hunter College. Robert Morris, one of my professors, became a huge influence. I left school starry-eyed, thinking I’d be showing in galleries. Instead, I ended up in an office in the Meatpacking District, one of 15 employees, working mainly on hotel projects. It was interesting, but not ideal for me. Eventually I moved to Culver City, in Los Angeles, and was bicoastal for a while. There I designed and fabricated tables, buying sheets of aluminum and using a water jet to cut the tabletop and furniture shapes. Plenty of leftover pieces piled up in my studio, which was in an old bowstring-truss building. One day, I found myself on the floor playing with leftover bars

of aluminum, stacking them. That moment in 2013 was the genesis of this work.

It’s amazing how remnants become the seed of all sorts of things. I love to walk and gather. I pick up objects and rediscover them later.

I also make things that don’t make sense until a few years later. When I pick them up again, they suddenly work perfectly for what I’m doing right now. Somehow, I’ve come to believe in a kind of time travel, that we have a sense of the future. Not in the space-time sense, but in some other realm. I’ve become rather meta-physical in my older age. If you open yourself up to that, you might make something and set it aside, knowing it will have a future use.

I agree, I feel creativity is partly about timing. You make things before they’re ready to be received, or before you’re ready to understand what they are.

A thread runs through my work from childhood to now, and it’s remarkably consistent. When you’re younger, less mature intellectually and spiritually, you catch glimpses of where you’re headed, but it’s covered over by layers of parents, culture, and convention. It takes years to strip that away. I believe we all have access to something beneath it, a kind of pure consciousness we’re made from. I’m not religious, but language and convention pile up, and the work is pulling those layers

back to find your authentic self. Some people never do. Some do it early. This show feels pivotal, a turning point in how I'm moving forward.

What motivates your creative practice?

I'm more of a philosopher who makes art. I still hold a fantasy about getting my PhD. I started reading seriously in my 20s: the existentialists, the phenomenologists, Merleau-Ponty, Bergson, and Heidegger. I'm fascinated by consciousness and perception – Merleau-Ponty's concept that we create the world through each experience, in each moment. We interface with something out there, but only through our experience of it, through the lens of the language we've created. So, reality itself is a creative act, for everyone.

Consciousness fascinates me: how we move through the world, how we have free agency, to some extent, over our own movement. Everyone takes that for granted, and I felt there was something wrong with that. There's something amazing in our capacity to know ourselves, to be aware of our own awareness. That's been a driving force in my work. It's been muddled by reality and constraints, but I've pushed out of that as much as I can. The motivating factor is figuring out what that awareness is.

I call these pieces "seeing devices". They're sculptures, material objects with aesthetic value, but that's not the subject. The viewer is the subject. The act of looking is the point, not what you're looking at. I try to peel that away for people.

I feel there's a computer aspect to this too, a sort of disjointed pixelation. I can see a shoe, a leg, parts of a whole. It reminds me of when you had to recalibrate your computer screen, pixel by pixel, to make sure everything was in the right place.

No one's ever described it that way before, but that's exactly it: the language of the image. All those dots come together to form a representation. It's a controlled explosion, one step at a time. Nudging one person slightly to see something differently is enough for me. It's not a huge statement, but there's something subversive about it, because it's trying to dismantle a system of seeing. The art world is filled with immersive projects right now, which feel like entertainment. What I'm trying to portray in my practice is more conceptual: an object within a space, where the human form is part of it and yet stands apart. In some forms of minimalism, the viewer isn't even given a clue as to how to enter the work. James Turrell and Larry Bell give you a sense of that, an entry point, which is interesting.

What artists inspire you or have mentored you?

Fred Sandback is one of my biggest influences. I used to have a studio at Mana Contemporary in Jersey City, NJ, in an old tobacco factory that had been turned into artist studios. It was right next to a permanent installation of Sandback's work at The Ayn Foundation, set up by Heiner Friedrich, who also co-founded Dia with Philippa de Menil. When I first saw a Sandback piece, around 1996, it struck me: how could this simple piece of string do so much? I'm trying to straddle that same territory. I wanted to do something minimal in my own language, with the materials I like to work with. Dan Graham and Tony Smith gave me a voice; when I was at Hunter, the main campus had a big Tony Smith sculpture outside. Some of the light artists, too, James Turrell, to some extent. Rachel Whiteread, the English sculptor who works in cement, casting negative space. And Bill Viola is there for video.

Art that's accessible and has some sort of permission to access it like Walter De Maria's *Broken Kilometer* and *The New York Earth Room*. Finally,



Above: Seth Howe with *Cylinder Sculptures, Series A* (Cobalt turquoise, Cadmium Green, Cerulean Blue). 2026. Milesi acrylic on plywood. Opposite page: *Hexagon Origins*. 2026. Digital video 5:38 min. On left pedestal, *STACK Maquette Series*. 2021. Aluminum and lacquer. On right pedestal, *Stack Sculptures, Series S*. 2023. Enamel and aluminum.

Antony Gormley. I saw something of his at White Cube in New York a year or two ago. He filled it with this very delicate structure, not quite a grid. You could only walk around the perimeter. There was a human scale to it, in the sense that he's taking the human body and making it geometric. Because you were confined to the perimeter, the structure felt fast, lacy, almost delicate. His work is all about the body.

Does your work change shape?

Stack Diamond Sculpture was first shown at FIT in the fall of 2024 as a hexagon. The individual pieces of aluminum weigh around 12 pounds, with linked pins for attachment and a mirror polish on the inside. The exterior is left in a raw state, as it came from the factory; you could make a metaphor about life and its rough edges. Whenever I reset it, a new piece evolves. I live about a mile from here with an apple orchard in my garden, so I kept it outside as a 12' hexagon for open studios during Upstate Art Weekend this summer. For this show, I wanted a wider footprint, so I curated a diamond shape instead. This

one is eight feet tall; I have multiple geometrical shapes I can play with. I also like materials that patina, things that shift with time. During the installation outside, birds interacted with this work which was fascinating.

I'm wondering if you could talk about how you see color composition and how patterns play into your work. I see triangles throughout some pieces.

In some installations I paint a wall of color, or several walls in different colors, and the colors blend into the sculpture, activating the piece further. I don't want anything more than what's necessary. That's a modernist kind of ideology. I experiment with 3D printing before going large. I love technology, and 3D printing allows me to easily experiment with the proportion and scale and the way the openings work together, though not in a formal way. It's more intuitive. The smaller maquettes were my first attempts, during the pandemic. They

Continued on next page ...



Maquette Spin - Series B, No. 4, 2024. Photographic print on Dibond with wood frame. 28" x 20" x 2"

also brought color into the work. They were cut, pinned, and painted, and that grew into the larger pieces and two-dimensional works. I noticed the patterns of solids and voids. As you move around them, the voids shift, sometimes a triangle, sometimes a trapezoid. It's a record of what you're seeing, materiality, and consciousness. In some ways, the sculpture taught me how to see deeper, and how to connect with what I'm interested in: perception, movement, and the body.

The Cylinder Sculptures Series originated from working in Marfa Texas and seeing the vernacular steel and fuel tanks. The form felt conducive to that environment. These wall pieces are the negatives of those cylinders, they focus on the precise geometry revealed at a single point in the rotation. These prints are called "synchronic", a term for studying something in its present moment, transposing the three-dimensional rotation into a two-dimensional piece. It's often used in linguistics, but here it's about a single moment in time: they are what they are, as you see them.

For the Diachronic Rotation Series, I took seven prints and layered them. These are called "diachronic", the study of things through time, how they arrived at where they are in the present moment. This captures the multilayered prints from the Synchronic Series overlaid with sequen-

tial images translating moments across time.

It's an evolving process, and you're constantly rethinking a piece. The happy accident, finding bits of material on the studio floor or spilling something, becomes the work.

Yes, the work is constantly evolving. I was making videos of the sculpture on the turntable, some as documentation resulting in a 24-hour sequence, which is very slow, but I love recording on the turntable. The works change in that space. Alternatively playing with photography and allowing movement of the Square Maquettes sculptures, I spin the work on a turntable at different speeds, stop and start it, and shift the mechanism to different angles. These are open-shutter shots, many different variations. For me, they discuss time slowing it down, speeding it up, and capturing it.

In the longer video piece *Hexagon Origins*, the video starts with a formless static representing pure consciousness, shifting toward hexagon forms and solidifying, only to dissolve into negative space (which itself solidifies as objects), and finally emerging from matter splitting apart, then returning to static, a consciousness-like state. The accompanying music was from a newly released album by JARR, two composers from the UK who collaborate. I found them on Instagram, and



Above: Blue Landscape (Millbrook). Below: Stack Diamond Sculpture. 2026. Aluminum.

one of the songs, Open Water (Blue) fit perfectly in the rhythm and pacing.

So interesting to see the work as a moving object – it makes the work alive. What's the best advice you were ever given? Can you share advice for an artist starting out, and how do you define a successful show?

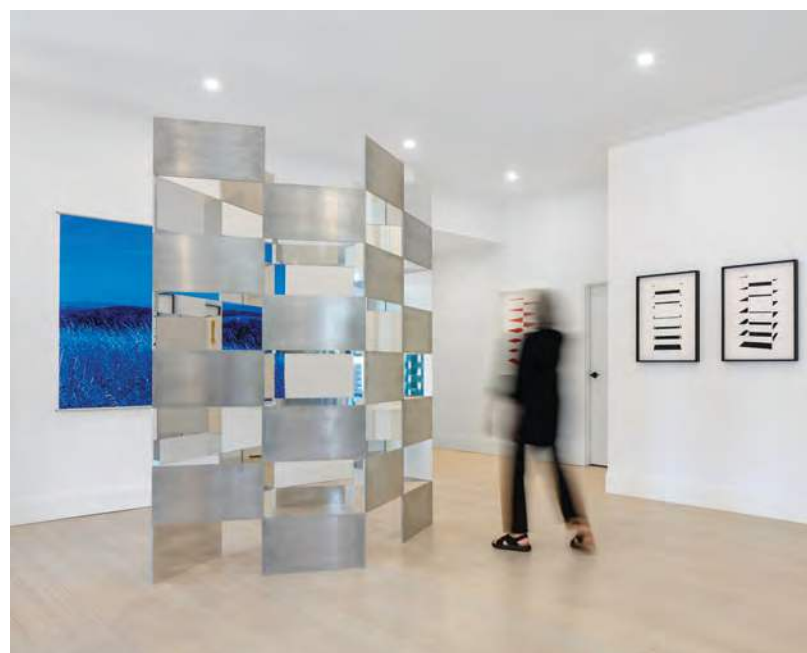
I don't know if it was positive advice so much as "anti-advice". My parents were very fearful people who played by the rules and liked the security that conformity offered. The more they conformed and told me I shouldn't do something, the more I wanted to do it. There's a teacher named Rupert Spira who teaches non-duality, the idea that nothing is material, and everything is of the mind. For me, culture complicates that: people get deeper into these little holes with their own special language, their own references, their own way of being perceived. My work takes a much broader view and speaks on a simpler level. I've always resisted being put into boxes and categories. My advice: step back a little. Don't worry, it will all reveal itself. Be patient. You must find your true self, your authenticity, and that's hard coming out of culture. The other thing is ego. I've had to let go of a lot of that, and it's still evolving in this phase of my work.

As for success, it's a couple buying something small, or someone engaging with the work in a way that moves them. I want my work in the world because of those connections. I don't need a stadium full of people.

I'd rather have one person at a time encounter the work. The success is the connection, realizing you made an impact, even the tiniest, most momentary one. Many people think that because they're not thinking in a conventional way, it's not good enough. But we do have some control over how we move through the world. I want people to see my work in person and experience what they're perceiving in the moment, without the noise of language or references to other things. The work should appeal to a five-year-old as well as to a thirty-year-old who never looks at art, something that triggers a reaction and starts a conversation.

I enjoyed the almost dismantling quality of Howe's three-dimensional works: the viewer never really sees the whole self. We catch glimpses of ourselves in a mirrored surface. The work disarms viewers even as it entices them into the space. There's a great sense of connection and disconnection in the work, with pieces held together by just a thin, almost imaginary line, or a line that's perceived, because there's a gap or even a pin holding everything together. Sometimes you only see the negative spaces on the wall or the shadows falling on the floor crossing our own shadow. Looking through all of them, you find connection in the moment. •

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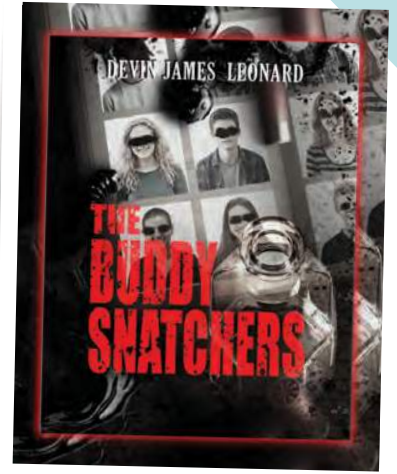
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Anthony van Dyck, *Portrait of Margaret Lemon* (detail), c. 1638, oil on canvas. The Clark, Gift of Aso O. Tavitian Foundation, 2025.1.56

NOVEMBER MUSTS

to eat

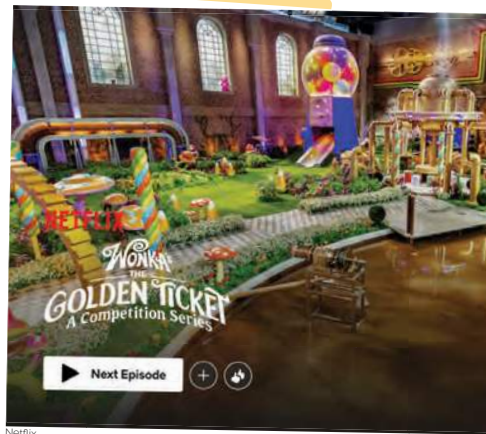


Via Cassia. I was delighted to discover a cute little Italian restaurant on lower Warren Street in Hudson, NY recently. On a gorgeous Saturday evening, we arrived promptly at 5pm, without a reservation, but they invited us to have a seat at the bar. Our seats provided a bird's eye view of the entire restaurant that was quickly filling up. Going by the recommendation of our bartender and server, I ordered a Cosmo. Yum. We shared two apps, which included their Buffalo mozzarella and can I just say double-yum? For our mains, I opted for a house-made pasta that had mushrooms and butternut squash. It was the best pasta I've ever had. For our second main we tried their steak, which was excellent. While chatting with the bartender, we learned that Via Cassia opened a little over a year and a half ago, and by all accounts is pretty popular considering how quickly every table filled. The service was amazing, the ambiance is really welcoming and cozy, while the food was excellent! We look forward to going again and trying other dishes from the menu.



to watch

Grab some leftover Halloween candy and step into a world of pure imagination as Netflix opens Wonka's Chocolate Factory for a new competition series titled, *Wonka's The Golden Ticket*. Over the course of nine episodes, you'll watch twelve golden ticket winners and their partners, navigate their way through the factory full of tricks and sweet surprises in a series of physical, mental, and moral challenges. Nostalgia will set in instantly when you hear the show being narrated by Gene Wilder's voice. Also appearing in the factory are special guest hosts Nick Cannon, Howie Mandel, Wayne Brady, and let's not forget the famous Oompa Loompas (one of which is Rusty Goffe from the original 1971 Willy Wonka film). From gumballs to lickable wallpaper, Gobstopper to Wonkavision 2.0, ultimately only one contestant will earn Wonka's life-changing prize...but who will it be, and what will they have to do to achieve the prize?



to read

***The Buddy Snatchers* by Devin James Leonard.** We love supporting local authors! Devin James Leonard is a local author who just published his debut, *The Buddy Snatchers*, this past October. We interviewed Devin about the book, his inspiration, as well as his journey to becoming an author during his release week. (To read the full interview, please visit our website, arts – literature – author profiles.) What's *The Buddy Snatchers* about? As both Devin and Amazon describe it, it is a "paranoid, character-driven small-town horror novel about addiction, identity, and the terrifying possibility that the people you used to know might already be gone. Perfect for readers who love *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*-style dread and horror that hits as hard emotionally as it does viscerally." Hearing Devin's inspiration for the story and how a real encounter with an old friend actually sparked the idea for the story... it is quite something!

To do

Stay fit during the holidays. There are so many awesome holiday-related things that you can do during this time of year, and we all get so busy, so I thought: what better time to stay on top of your fitness and get ahead of the New Year's resolution? We are truly blessed with tons of fitness and wellness options in our area, so I have picked a few options from around the area. There are a number of gyms and fitness centers around, but we also have quite a few studios. I have been working with Peter Donohoe of Donohoe Training in Lakeville, CT for a few months now and I love it – I feel amazing after every class. For Pilates there are quite a few options including the Danica Center for Physical Therapy & Movement Integration in Sharon, CT; Masha's Fitness Studio in Millerton, NY; and Body Be Well Pilates in Red Hook, NY. More into yoga? Oh my goodness, we have so many options! Danica and Masha also offer yoga. I recently spotted Lava Hot Yoga in Hudson, NY and I'm curious to check it out. Not interested in going to a class? Well, in that case, you can always go out for a hike or walk on the many trails and nature preserves that we have access to. No matter how you decide to get your fitness in, enjoy it and stay healthy!





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By Christine Bates
info@mainstreetmag.com

It was a rainy, chilly Sunday night when I sat down in a striped booth with Bill Colgan at his Grasslands Café in Lakeville next to the post office. Older couples, groups of students, mothers with kids, tradesmen, and visitors to the Salisbury Fall Festival were happily devouring ice cream sundaes, sipping hot chocolate, and licking soft-serve swirls in a festive, friendly ice cream parlor. Everyone was having a good time. Bill admitted that with winter coming, a coat rack would be a good idea and wrote it down on his to-do list.

What business are you in?

We're in the community business. We want to provide a happy space for people to relax, meet neighbors, and make friends ... and while they're here have a dessert or a latte. Everybody comes here. (Note that *Main Street's* publisher says the latte is one of the best around and one of the least expensive.)

Why the name Grassland?

Grassland was the name of the historic Scoville Farm on Hammertown Road. Buying it and renovating the barns was my last project. In deciding on a name, I wanted to emphasize the local connection and the link to dairy and ice cream.

Is this your first time running a retail business?

Yes, it was born out of naivete and the fact that I really, really like ice cream.

I have many vivid memories of going to our neighborhood ice cream parlor at the end of the block in Forest Hills where I grew up. It's still there! I enjoyed everything about it and figured, "how hard could it be?" I'm an entrepreneur; I founded two successful software companies – the first one in 1985. But I had never really cooked anything and did not understand how much effort this would be. It requires hard work and stubbornness seven days a week.

What is your goal for Grasslands?

My goal is to build a sustainable business that will be here for 20 years. To be a mainstay in Lakeville run by young people. Emily Thompson, our oldest employee at age 22, is our manager and worked beside me before we opened in April 2025. We needed someone older to run things; Emily recruits and trains our young staff. The "kids" are great. They listen, they're great with customers, and they propel our active social media presence. My hope is that we provide the social and practical skills that will let them stay in our area and have their own businesses someday. So far, we are doing just fine.

How large is your staff?

In the summer we hire about 15 to 18 part-time employees and teens who like the idea of working here. They are primarily local public and private school kids home for the summer.



We have learned the truth that they lie about being available to work all summer and take off for Spain and Italy for four weeks. We lose about a third of them but encourage them to see the world. They still come back on vacations and holidays to work. In the winter we have about eight or nine part time staff, and three full timers all year.

Training is key. On the first day we want a new employee to feel comfortable. We teach them about the items on the menu. Next comes practice scooping ice cream and understanding serving sizes and the point-of-sale system. Most important is developing people skills, which requires coaching them on how to greet customers and respond to questions.

What were the biggest obstacles to starting this business?

It's a process. I do not regard the various regulators, like the Torrington Health Department or the

Above: Grasslands obviously has plenty of ice cream options including ice cream sandwiches and sundaes, but they also have a lot of smoothie, acai bowls, coffee and baked good options. Photos courtesy of Grasslands' Instagram.

Left: Bill Colgan, owner, and Emily Thompson, manager, sat down with *Main Street* to discuss the business of running an ice cream parlor. Photo by Christine Bates.



Continued on next page ...



Above: A sampling of the offerings and posts from Grasslands' Instagram. Not only do they look delicious, but the posts are engaging.

Below: Owner, Bill Colgan, behind the ice cream counter.

Photos courtesy of Grasslands' Instagram page.

fire department as adversaries. They are helpful in making sure we are doing things right, not just obstacles to get through. Selecting purveyors for a new, untested business required research. We needed an ice cream supplier that could flexibly supply us with a quality product at a reasonable price and, very important, a broad range of flavors. We want families to be able to spend less than \$20 and become repeat customers.

Who designed the store? Did your early experience as a stagehand help?

I grew up in a family that built Broadway sets. During high school and college, I worked backstage. A show creates an imaginary world to enter, and I have tried to achieve that here through design. A friend who is a well-known interior designer helped pick the color palette. The curvy booths are made from Wacky Wood and built by Mike Sinclair, our carpenter.

The hillside in back of the parking lot just evolved by itself. Children love playing back there.

What flavors are customer favorites?

Older people, like us, remember malteds, ice cream sodas, and egg creams – our least expensive item. Sophisticated customers convinced us to offer espresso and made sure we

got it right. We have old-fashioned flavors like pistachio, butter pecan, and vanilla, my favorite. Emily likes peanut butter. Mint chocolate chip seems to be the overall favorite. Little kids pick ice cream for bright colors and toppings.

What happens in the winter?

This will only be our second winter, and we're learning as we go. We introduce desserts that are warm and cozy, like hot fudge brownie sundaes. It's the season to experiment. Our super-rich hot chocolate made from Ecuadorian cocoa is always on the menu. Every month we introduce new specials, and customers come in year-round to see what's new. Special events, especially birthday parties with interactive themes, are frequent in the winter. This winter instead of being open seven days a week we may close one day – we haven't decided yet.

How much have your costs risen since you opened?

Surprisingly, prices were very stable until about a month ago when everything went up 20%.

What happens when the electricity goes off?

On the Fourth of July weekend we lost power and all of our inventory. Insurance covered the cost of the ice cream but not the cakes. Cleaning up the machines and getting rid of ruined ice cream was a huge task. The ice cream was refrozen and then carted out.

What are your busiest days and times?

Our peak season is from early April until the end of September. Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays are always our busiest days plus holidays and parent weekends. The busiest times are after school and 7pm until our closing at 9pm. People have dinner at home and come here after or eat at The Boathouse and Fern and walk over for dessert. We can tell by their parking lots if it will be a busy night.

What community efforts do you support?

We make an effort to purchase locally. We buy cases of blueberries and strawberries from LaBonne's. And we try to not compete with established businesses, which is why we don't serve breakfast or lunch. If Project Sage, the Salisbury School, or the Democratic Party asks for our help, we are always there. •

To sample Grasslands' offerings for yourself, visit them in person at 343 Main Street in Lakeville, CT. To get them on the phone use (860) 596-4067. Or you can virtually visit them at grasslanddessertcafe.com or follow them on Instagram @grasslanddessertcafe.

Editor's note: I love stopping at Grasslands in the mornings to grab my morning latte along with one of their fresh-baked muffins or scones, all of which are delicious. They also have fantastic smoothies. I felt it important to include these offerings as they weren't mentioned in the article but are some of my personal favorites at Grasslands.





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By Olivia Valentine with
Caroline Markonic
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If you have a brownie lover visiting for the holidays, please make these for them. The combination of rich chocolate and caramelized banana is so good, and the addition of cream cheese makes them extra special. And aren't we all supposed to be a little extra over the holidays!

We think these would be the perfect dessert to bring to any holiday party. Rich, chocolatey, with a little bit of banana and a creamy swirl of cream cheese – what's not to love? Bonus: they look really pretty, too! Heck, you can even wrap them up and put a big bow on them for the holidays!

Two notes: There are a few steps involved in making these, but none of them are difficult. We added a little rum to the caramelized bananas, but you can absolutely leave it out. It's just enough to enhance the banana flavor without overpowering it, but we completely understand if rum in recipes isn't your thing.

We do highly recommend adding the espresso powder, though. As we've mentioned many, many times, espresso powder enhances the chocolate and makes these brownies even richer.

As always, enjoy!

Caramelized bananas

2 very ripe bananas
2 tablespoons butter
3 tablespoons brown sugar
1 teaspoon cinnamon

1 tablespoon rum
Pinch of flaky salt

Melt the butter in a frying pan over medium-low heat. Stir in the brown sugar and cinnamon.

Peel the bananas and cut them in half lengthwise. Place them flat-side down in the pan, and let them cook undisturbed for a few minutes. Once they begin to caramelize, gently smash them with a wooden spoon until they become nice and mushy.

When the bananas are well caramelized, carefully add the rum and a pinch of flaky salt. Always use caution when adding alcohol to a hot pan.

Stir to combine, then set aside to cool slightly.

Cream cheese mixture

8 ounces cream cheese, softened
1 egg, at room temperature
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
Pinch of salt

Beat the softened cream cheese in a mixing bowl until smooth. Add the egg, vanilla, and salt, and mix until fully combined and creamy. Set aside.

Brownies

1 cup butter
2 cups sugar
2 teaspoons vanilla extract
4 eggs, at room temperature
1 cup cocoa powder
1 cup all-purpose flour
½ teaspoon baking powder
¼ teaspoon salt
1 teaspoon espresso powder

Preheat the oven to 350°F. Grease an 8"x8" metal baking pan or line it with parchment paper.

Melt the butter in a saucepan over medium heat. Remove from the heat and let cool for a few minutes. Stir in the sugar, vanilla, and espresso powder.

Add the eggs one at a time, beating well with a wooden spoon after each addition. Stir in the cocoa powder until fully combined. Add the flour, baking powder, and salt, and stir just until everything is incorporated.

Pour the brownie batter into the prepared pan.

Drop spoonfuls of the caramelized bananas over the surface of the brownie batter. Fill in the remaining areas with spoonfuls of the cream cheese mixture. Using a toothpick or the tip of a knife, gently swirl the banana and cream cheese mixtures into the brownie batter.

Bake for 35-45 minutes, rotating the pan after 20 minutes. Keep a close eye on them toward the end of baking. The center should still have a slight jiggle but should not look wet or raw. The brownies will continue to set as they cool.

Allow the brownies to cool completely before cutting. •

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 @olivaiwvalentine.



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ZOMBIE HUNTERS

SCARY REAL ESTATE



Above, left: With a failing roof, boarded up windows, and paid taxes, Wakeman House in Millerton continues to decline.

Above, right: Listed for sale by River Realty for almost a year, 245 Hicks Hill Road in Pine Plains is now listed for \$149,000 after foreclosure.

Photos by
Christine Bates.

By Christine Bates
info@mainstreetmag.com

Previously, “Mystery Houses” have been featured in *Main Street*, each with their own story. Subsequently, many have been torn down to make way for something new. Others have been renovated into million-dollar homes while the rest have fallen into the “zombie” category – no one lives or could live in a zombie house. These properties are completely abandoned, structurally decaying, and entirely vacant, but their property taxes are paid in full every single year. In a low-density, tri-county market where property valuations are influenced by a limited pool of home sales, these “tax-paid zombies” drop into a permanent legal twilight zone, sometimes for decades, and present a frustrating roadblock to real estate professionals, neighbors, and local town governments ... as well as a potential opportunity.

The paradox of the tax-paid zombie

Local tax collectors and code enforcement officers in towns like North East, Ancram, Pine Plains, and even towns in Litchfield County have been confronted with the zombie paradox: a home that is physically rotting to the ground, but its municipal property and school taxes are paid by an absentee owner or financial institution. Eventually bank foreclosure can



revive a zombie property by finding a new buyer, but the process can take years. The auction of the Drover’s Inn in Dover for \$325,000 by TD Bank, which held a \$900,000 mortgage on the 10-acre historic property, is a notable example of a property acquired and restored by a local business and the questionable lending practices by banks.

While local officials can make an owner of a derelict building board up the windows or fence off the property there is little else they can do. Very few towns in our region have “blight laws,” which would allow them to take control. It’s an extremely costly legal process for a municipality to condemn a building, and officials are reluctant to interfere with private property. “I don’t believe that the condition of a house is anyone’s business but the property owner’s,” observed Curtis Rand, First Selectman in Salisbury, CT. “I am pretty uncomfortable with the concept of a ‘zombie’ house – it still might be someone’s home.”

How does a home become a zombie?

Unlike in the movies, death is not the only origin of zombies – absentee or multiple inheritors, procrastinating dreamers, unrealistic sellers, overly ambitious real estate investors, hardship, and unpaid mortgages can also be the start of a decline into zombie land. In all cases, taxes continue to be

paid in order to avoid a municipal tax foreclosure that would seize the land and then auction it off.

Most often upon an owner’s death, a potential zombie is inherited when it is already in poor condition. A single heir may be unconnected emotionally or physically and simply pays the taxes and puts the property on the list of decisions to make in the future. Overwhelmed by the logistics of managing a property, the new owner ignores the house entirely rather than exploring options to renovate or put the house on the market. They figure that the value of the property can only go up so why do anything.

The owner of the Wakeman House in Millerton, NY inherited a house that was already in poor repair and appears to be waiting for the structure to fall down by itself rather than invest in demolishing it or selling a very distressed property.

When multiple heirs and lengthy probate are involved, the house can become trapped in legal limbo, and weeds grow in the gutters. When a grandfather or matriarch passes away, dozens of descendants may inherit fractional shares of the home. The heirs cannot agree collectively to incur the up-front financial burden of repairing a collapsing roof or installing a

Continued on next page ...

new septic system to prepare for sale, but a few family members continue to chip away at the property taxes to prevent the government from seizing their family land.

The overgrown property at 86 Upper Main overlooking the Sharon Green in Sharon, CT is a long-standing example of a tax-paid zombie inherited by multiple heirs surrounded by historic, million-dollar homes. Over time Brendan and Roxanne Lee, the new owners, purchased five shares from a deceased uncle who had lived there, one share from an uncle in England, and another share from an aunt. They expect to renovate the Victorian house to its former, almost forgotten, glory.

“Project interruptus” can also create zombies. A new owner with ambitious plans purchases a dream house, begins work, and then stops – for years. The sheathing is left exposed to the elements, the pipes freeze, and the porch sags, while the owner considers the next step and pays taxes. Typically, they are reluctant to let go of their dream.

Unrealistic sellers also contribute to zombie inventory. Often, they have acquired a distressed property at a low price with a low tax assessment and list the property for sale for years with one real estate broker after another at steadily declining prices in the hopes of eventually making a profit or at least getting rid of the property.

There are even giant zombies that

are particularly difficult to get rid of because of their size and environmental hazards. Empire State Development has been attempting to sell the 330 acre Wassaucott Development Center since March of 2017 without luck.

The speculator or real estate developer is distinctively different. Investors buy rural acreage or distressed older homes in increasingly valuable locations in Dutchess or Columbia County solely for long-term appreciation. They have little interest in renting or making structural improvements to the property. To them, paying a few hundred to thousands of dollars a year in property taxes preserves their speculative asset, while the actual structure is left to rot.

Bennett College in Millbrook, NY which was condemned for years before being purchased and converted into a community park is a grand example, while the holdings of Philip Gellert in Boston Corners in the Town of North East, NY represent a more modest, rural scale.

Hunting for zombies

How do you find zombies? In order of difficulty the easiest way is to search Zillow or Realtor.com by county, sorting for lowest price. Zombies will often be listed by brokers like River Realty, who are known for working with foreclosures. Next easiest is checking with your county’s auction sites for properties with unpaid taxes. In New York visit nysauctions.com to determine when properties in various counties are being auctioned off. One bidder secured a home on 0.44 acres on Rudd Pond Road in the Town of North East for only \$11,000 at auction. Also check with USDA for auctions on delinquent mortgage payments. Contact local lenders and ask them about any REO (Real Estate Other in bank lingo) or properties heading to foreclosure. Paid subscription sites like foreclosure.com and RealtyTrac.com offer more complete and accurate information on distressed real estate including zombies.

Identifying properties that aren’t on the market requires more work and imagination. Do you have what it takes to find a zombie and give it



Above: 5 Mountain Edge in Boston Corners is an example of a tax-paid unoccupied home with a beautiful view falling into disrepair. Below, top to bottom: Now being demolished: 145 Farnum Road in Lakeville was purchased in 1964 for \$7,000 and after foreclosure eventually sold for \$227,000 in January 2026. 86 Upper Main in Sharon, CT will be renovated by new owners. Photos by Christine Bates.



a new life? Perseverance, curiosity, patience, and vision are necessary skills. Check town assessor records to determine the history, assessment, and legal owner. Speak with building and zoning officials to determine limitations on building, open permits, or citations. The tax collector will have information on any unpaid taxes. Explore the county clerk’s database to spot existing *lis pendens*, notice of pending lawsuits. Title should be screened for old, forgotten second mortgages, possibly from predatory collector groups.

Check Google Earth for a satellite view of the property and surrounding area. Scan local publications to gather any information on the specific property – drug deals, sex offenders, fires, or issues in the surrounding area. Explore the vicinity of the house and ask the neighbors what they know or how to reach the owner. Try to gain interior access and take a trusted contractor with you to determine the soundness of the structure and foundation.

As you would with any real estate transaction determine what investment is required and what your return would be. 145 Farnum Road was recently purchased for \$227,000 and after receiving permission to rebuild from the Town of Salisbury is in the process of demolishing the structure.

Zombies will always be with us
Since *Main Street’s* “Mystery House”

articles were published, many zombies have had happy endings. The Thorne Building in Millbrook is no longer in legal limbo and will house a community center, and the old Sear’s Gas Station in Millerton has become a perfect 1950s Mobil Station and an iconic entrance to the Village. Wanda Landowski’s house in Lakeville, CT dazzles and the property extended with the demolition of a zombie next door, and the long-vacant, dilapidated Chinese restaurant in Lakeville has become Grasslands Café with the best soft serve ice cream around. Only a few “mystery” buildings remain as zombies, including the Wakeman House in Millerton; others have simply vanished.

Zombie houses are dying, disappearing, reappearing, and reviving. Their continued presence is a reminder that property ownership means responsibility and stewardship, not just asset holding. Paying property taxes satisfies a basic legal obligation to the local government but does nothing to protect the physical fabric of a rural neighborhood. Zombie hunters who have a vision, experience, and capital protect the equity of neighboring property owners, restore housing inventory, provide jobs, and preserve the rural beauty of our shared landscape. •

Christine Bates, real estate advisor with William Pitt Sotheby’s International Realty, Licensed in CT and NY. Opinions expressed are those of the author alone.



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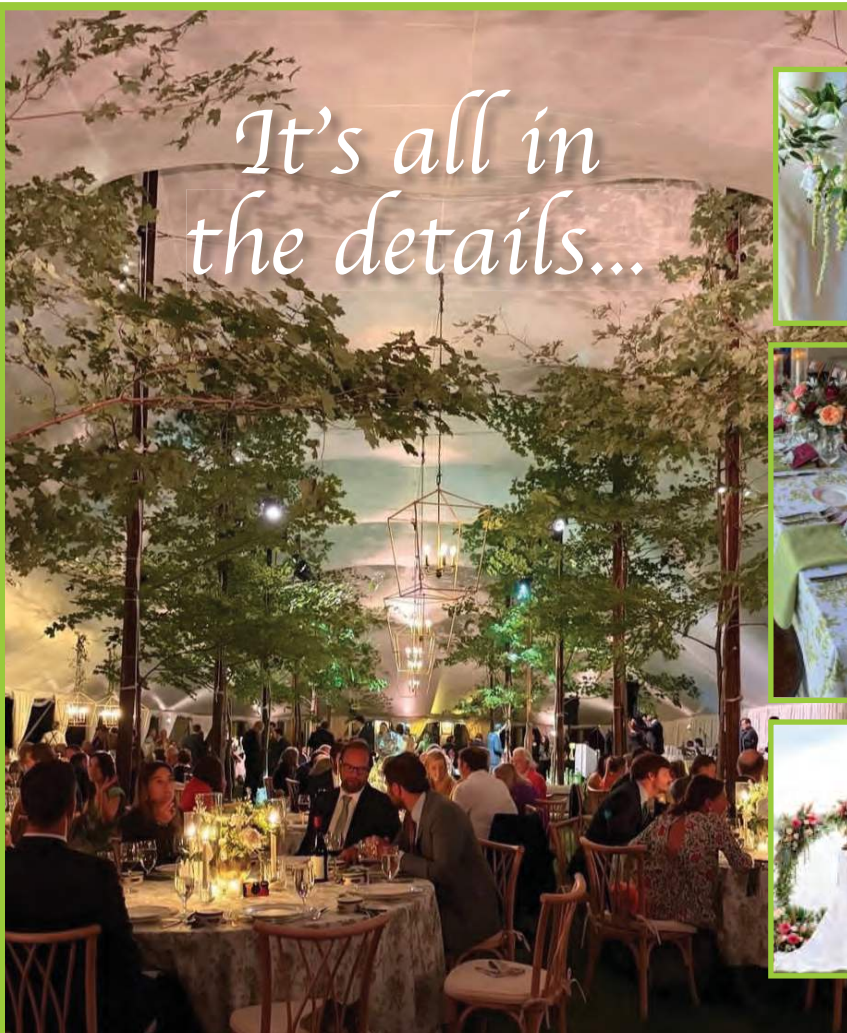
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An Evening of Art & Community Health to be held on November 6 at Sharon Hospital



Photo: Northwell Health



Vintage custom 1947 Chevrolet Stylemaster Coupe by Lazlo Gyorsok

By Regina Molaro
info@mainstreetmag.com

Beyond sprucing up a room and sparking conversation, artwork has the power to heal, inspire, and bring the community together. Those are just a few of the reasons why the Sharon Hospital Foundation and the Housatonic Camera Club teamed up to present “An Evening of Art and Community Health.”

The charity event will be held from 5 to 7pm on Friday, November 6, 2026, in the main lobby at Sharon Hospital in Sharon, CT. The event is open to the public, admission is free, and all are welcome. The hospital is located at 50 Hospital Road in Sharon.

The special evening will showcase a fine art photography exhibit spotlighting the works of some of the top talents at the Housatonic Camera Club. This year’s theme is “My Collection.” It will present a grouping of related images. The photos will be displayed in the hall between the lobby and the physical therapy area. The evening will include live music and refreshments. As guests mingle among the collection, hors d’oeuvres and wine will be shared in support of expanding access to quality healthcare in the region.

Proceeds from the event, direct donations, and the Housatonic Camera Club’s generous commitment to donate 50% of all sales will support a \$12.5 million capital project to renovate and expand the Sharon Medical Arts Building. The addition of 5,000 square feet will help facilitate the recruitment of much-needed primary care physicians and specialists, providing expanded healthcare services directly to the community.

Celebrating 75 years of artistic excellence, the Housatonic Camera Club represents a lineup of photographers who hail from New York, Connecticut, and Massachusetts. For decades, the club has enriched the tri-state community by sharing fine art photography in local galleries, libraries, town halls, and healthcare facilities.

Creating a state-of-the-art primary care facility

“At a time when rural access to healthcare is disappearing across the country, we see this as an opportunity to create a state-of-the-art primary care facility that will support continued access to quality care in our community. We hope others will join us to make this vision a reality,” said Dr. Mehrdad Noorani, Board Member of Sharon Hospital, which has received five-star CMS ratings by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid for seven consecutive years.

The funds raised at the event will help open a primary care and multispecialty center for healthy aging. The crew will be breaking ground this fall; completion is anticipated in the 2027/2028 timeframe.

“Sharon Hospital is honored to host this extraordinary exhibit by the Housatonic Camera Club, whose generosity extends beyond the artwork on our walls – proceeds from sales and outright gifts will directly support our primary care expansion project, enabling us to recruit top clinicians, broaden access to specialists and integrated care, and establish a dedicated center for healthy aging right here in our community,” said Christina McCulloch, MBA, BSN, RN, President, Sharon Hospital. “At Sharon Hospital, we believe health and wellness extend far beyond the walls of a medical facility and art has the remarkable power to heal, inspire, and bring people together. We invite the community to join us and experience this intersection of creativity and well-being firsthand.”

With the holidays quickly approaching, the event is a great destination for purchasing original art for those on your gift list.

In Focus: The Housatonic Camera Club

The Housatonic Camera Club has a long history in the Connecticut, Massachusetts, and New York region. The

club’s history can be traced back more than 75 years. Its 59 members meet regularly to share their love of photography as well as their experiences, travels, and expertise, and to educate one another and the public.

The photographers’ work spans from prints and film to digital, color, and black and white mediums. Its members range from beginners to advanced amateurs and professionals. The Club offers annual programs, which are open to the public. The programs range from exhibits at town halls and libraries to slide shows, field trips, and workshops that teach the basics of photography to cutting-edge technology and techniques.

The Housatonic Camera Club meets the third Tuesday of the month from September through June at Noble Horizons in Salisbury, CT. •

To learn more about the event at Sharon Hospital, please visit housatoniccameraclub.com/program.html. To learn more about The Housatonic Camera Club please visit housatoniccameraclub.com.



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Vincent Esposito is waiting for you

By Dominique DeVito
info@mainstreetmag.com

I've known Karen Martin long enough to know that she is never short of ideas and that she is always supporting creative expression. What she has lined up as a fundraiser for the Art School of Columbia County this month is just one example, but wow is it a good one.

Karen is the current Director of the Art School of Columbia County in Ghent, NY, which will be celebrating its 15-year anniversary in 2027. It takes a lot to keep any non-profit going, as we are all aware. And fundraising season is upon us. What to do at this difficult time both to raise funds and to generate enthusiasm?

Something Special

Turns out Karen saw an offering of art through an estate sale on Facebook Marketplace this summer. When she went to look at it, she found a collection of 250 paintings by one artist. When she saw the works, she knew that there was not only something special about the art and the artist, but also that there was an opportunity that could benefit the Art School and the artistic community for which she is an ardent cheerleader. She bought the lot.

The artist is Vincent Esposito (1927-2018). After the passing of his wife, the family had an estate sale.

Their three sons each kept some of their father's work and agreed that the rest could be offered for sale as a lot. The collection includes works that Esposito did throughout his lifetime. There are watercolors, pen-and-ink drawings, landscapes, studies of wildlife, and a remarkable group of egg tempera paintings. And the paintings are in perfect condition – some framed, some loose, all sizes.

Karen's idea? "When I learned that this body of Vincent Esposito's work was available," she says, "I saw an opportunity to honor an artist who had passed while helping to support the future of the Art School. I'm a gardener, a seed collector and a scatterer of seeds," she continues, "and I think growing an art school is a lot like growing a garden. You nurture what's already there, plant new things, and give them room to grow, and sometimes you're surprised by what takes root. Both bring beauty into the world, and both bring me tremendous joy. I love the idea that Vincent Esposito's art can continue to do that – finding new homes while helping the next generation of artists grow."

First, Karen contacted the family to be sure they were comfortable with the works being exhibited and offered for sale. Not only were they comfortable, they were enthusiastic, understanding that this was a way for the works to bring others joy and for his talent to be further recognized.

On With an Exhibition

Karen and the team at the Art School started planning the event. It's called "Rediscovering Vincent Esposito: Celebrating a Life in Art, 1927-2018." The exhibition opens on Friday, November 13, with a reception "buy and bid" from 5 to 8pm. It continues Saturday and Sunday, November 14 and 15, from noon to 5pm. Attendees will be able to make purchases to take home with them that day and will be able to bid on select pieces that will be part of a silent auction.

About Esposito

The 250 pieces that are part of the exhibition tell infinitely more about the artist than the words in this article can, and they are well worth looking at and experiencing. Vincent Esposito studied briefly at New York University and trained as a draftsman during his service in the US Marine Corps. He became known for his extraordinarily steady hand and meticulous attention to detail.

Esposito and his wife owned and operated family restaurants for over 30 years. Their son, Joe (one of three sons), followed in their footsteps – with the help of Vincent. According to Joe, when he wanted to open his own place, his father helped him search for the right location, which



This page and next: A sample of the depth and breadth of Vincent Esposito's art, including a self-portrait (next page). The works are available for sale through The Art School of Columbia County.

Continued on next page ...

turned out to be New Milford in Connecticut.

Joey's Seafood Restaurant became a New Milford area fixture for over 30 years, and Joe said he would have failed without his father, who had promised to help for a few years and ended up staying for over a decade. He was disciplined and hard-working.

When did Vincent have time for art? He did it as time allowed. His family recalls that he was always looking at the world with a keen eye, finding beauty in ordinary places and nature. Landscapes, wildlife, old barns, weathered farmhouses – all were inspiration for him.

Art All the Time

When he finally retired, Vincent was able to devote himself almost entirely to painting. He and his wife moved to North Chatham, NY where inspiration abounded. He was a big fan of Andrew Wyeth and of Albrecht Dürer, who both worked in the demanding medium of egg tempera, and he took it on, as well.

Vincent was represented by the Harrison Gallery in Williamstown, MA, a community-oriented art space that represented contemporary American artists. Founded by Jo Ellen Harrison, it thrived from 2001 to 2015. Vincent sold a number of pieces through the gallery, some for several thousand dollars. He worked well into his later years, and his family feels some of his best pieces were created in the final two decades of his life.

Back at the Art School of Columbia County, Karen reflects on the

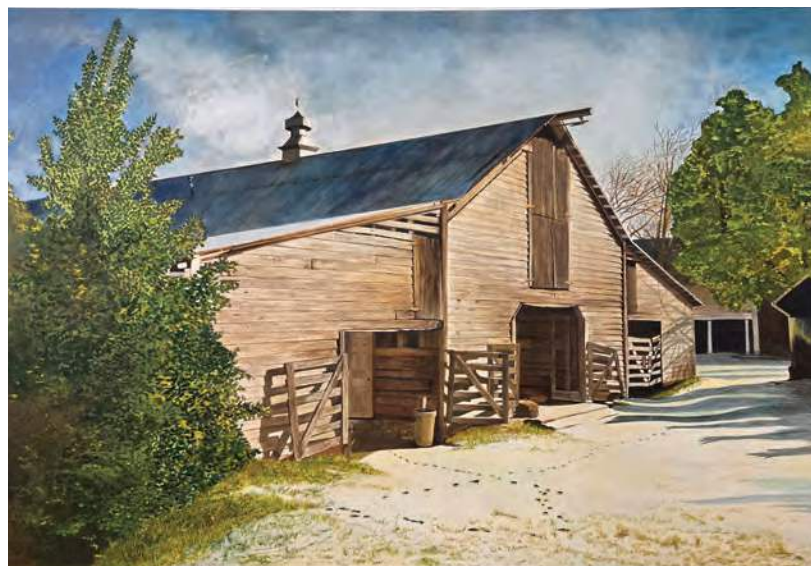
opportunity of exhibiting and selling Esposito's collection. "I love that it's an artist of the past helping artists today," she says. "This event is intended to place Esposito's artwork into new homes where it can continue to be enjoyed and appreciated," she adds, noting that 100% of the proceeds will benefit the Art School of Columbia County's Capital Fund. The money will go toward preserving the future of the historic building, including replacing the aging HVAC system and other essential facility improvements.

Gotta Love the Art School

The Art School of Columbia County was the vision of Nicole Furnee and Thomas Chulak, who purchased the building in 2005. Nicole originally ran Red Maple Books out of the building, but she and Tom always imagined it as a great space for artists to meet, take classes, exhibit their work, and eventually take their talents out into the community. They imagined it as a home base for "art for everyone," and that's how it got its start in 2012.

Karen first became involved in 2018 when she joined the board, becoming in short time the board president. She has been with the School through COVID, through transitions in executive directors, and as the current director since January 1, 2025. The Art School is humming along, guided by its reimagined vision of "Transforming Lives Through Art Since 2012."

The School offers a variety of classes, from traditional painting and



drawing to working in fabrics and other mediums. It also hosts a "Creative Table" gathering, where a guest speaker presents something art-related followed by a potluck dinner. The School also works with St. Catherine's Center for Children in Albany to bring art to children, families, and young adults living in temporary housing due to financial hardship or domestic issues. (Learn more at artschoolofcolumbiacounty.org and follow the School on social media.)

At its heart, of course, is art, and this is where the upcoming Esposito exhibition and fundraiser bring things full circle. A local artist's works available for purchase to support the work of artists today – and tomorrow. Karen and I reflected on the randomness of recognition for artists (in any medium) and the fact that she basically stumbled upon Esposito's stunning collection. "If the right person had 'found' him," she says, "I believe he would have been a famous artist."

The exhibition is everyone's opportunity to bring an original Esposito into their world. Don't miss it. •



Rediscovering Vincent Esposito: Celebrating a life in Art, 1927-2018. Nearly 250 original works spanning six decades. Watercolor, gouache, egg tempera, pen, and ink. Opening Reception Buy & Bid: Friday, November 13, 5 to 8pm. Exhibition & Benefit Sale: Saturday and Sunday, November 14 and 15, noon to 5pm. The exhibition will feature a selection of framed and unframed display-ready works throughout the historic Art School building. Additional original drawings, watercolors, and studies will be available for visitors to browse in archival museum-quality sleeves. There will also be a link to an online auction through the School's website. Art School of Columbia County, 1198 Route 21C, Ghent, NY. artschoolofcolumbiacounty.org.

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November focus:

Men's health awareness

By Regina Molaro
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November marks National Men's Health Awareness Month – a time that is dedicated to raising awareness for critical physical and mental health issues affecting men. Beyond general wellness – encouraging routine primary care checkups, monitoring blood pressure, doing cholesterol screenings, and getting bloodwork done – there's also a focus on mental health, suicide prevention, and men's cancers.

Mental health

As for mental health, many tend to struggle in silence. Because of stigma, cultural expectations, or the belief that asking for help is a sign of weakness, men are significantly less likely than women to seek professional treatment.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the suicide rate among men in 2024 was nearly four times higher than among females. The Anxiety and Depression Association of America cited that although men account for nearly 80% of suicide deaths in the US, many men never tap the help of mental health care experts.

For generations, many have been told to “man up,” “stay strong,” or “deal with it.” These messages can make it harder for men to speak openly about emotional pain, physical pain, stress, grief, or anxiety, leading many men to suffer alone.

Cancer education, prevention and treatment

This month, the healthcare community also highlights the cancers that affect men, notably prostate cancer and testicular cancer. According to Weill Cornell Medicine, testicular cancer is the most common cancer found in men aged 15 to 44. It's fairly rare and very treatable. With early diagnosis, testicular cancer can be cured. With treatment, the risk of death is small.

Weill Cornell Medicine also shares the facts about prostate cancer, which is the second-leading cause of cancer deaths among men in the US, behind lung cancer. The earlier the cancer is caught and treated, the more likely the patient will remain disease-free.

In fact, treatment success rates are high when caught early compared with most other types of cancer in the body.

Join the Movember Movement

All the important topics, from general wellness to mental health, testicular cancer and prostate cancer, are part of the Movember Movement – an annual event that encourages men to grow mustaches in an effort to raise awareness for men's health issues.

Using the visibility of the mustaches to raise awareness, Movember aims to “change the face of men's health.”

Founded in Melbourne, Australia in 2003, Movember is a portmanteau of the Australian-English abbreviated word for moustache, which is “mo” and “November.” Now a worldwide movement, the Movember campaign emerged from a simple idea to recruit men to grow moustaches and kickstart a much-needed conversation about men's health.

According to the World Health Organization, in places where men and women face the same disease, men often seek health care less than women do. They also tend to die younger than women, a factor that is heavily driven by their tendency to delay or avoid visiting a doctor when symptoms appear.

This Movember, men are encouraged to “Make a Growment” to help change aspects of men's health. The campaign asks supporters to start clean shaven on November 1 and grow their mustaches as part of this month-long mission. Participants then donate the expenses they typically spend on hair-maintenance products and tools to Movember's cancer and health research charities. It's a win for all.

All are welcome to join the campaign. In addition to participating, invite your friends to participate with you, or host a Movember event. Other

Continued on next page ...

ways to get involved include signing up to raise funds or make donations through movember.com. The revenue raised via the campaign benefits the Movember Institute of Men's Health, which unites researchers, clinicians, and partners worldwide. It focuses on prevention and early action and invests in cutting-edge research. It also uses its knowledge and data to create real-world solutions, which in turn, provide men with the tools they need to stay healthier. From improving health services to challenging cultural norms, the Movember Institute of Men's Health ensures that the valuable dollars raised translate into real, year-round impact for men's health.

Men's Cancer 101

Since this month's men's health initiatives focus on testicular cancer and prostate cancer, November is a good time to get the facts about these diseases. The Testicular Cancer Awareness Foundation wants you to join the November men's health movement by encouraging the men in your lives to learn the facts, perform monthly self-exams, and speak openly about men's health.

Some facts: Testicular cancer, which is on the rise in the US, can strike at any age. Every hour a male in the US is diagnosed. About 1 in 250 men will develop testicular cancer at some point in their lifetime. Last year, it was projected that approximately 600 deaths would occur in the US from this disease. The good news: testicular cancer is 95% curable when detected early.

Warning signs and symptoms include a painless lump of any size or swelling in either testicle; enlargement of the testicle, change in shape, size, how the testicle feels, or any irregularities; pain or discomfort in the scrotum or testicle; a dull ache or sense of pressure in the lower abdomen or back; a feeling of heaviness or fullness in the scrotum; or an enlargement or tenderness of the breasts due to elevated hormone levels.

Advanced signs and symptoms include significant weight loss (due to the growth of tumors and/or enlarged abdominal lymph nodes); low back pain; chest pain, coughing or difficulty breathing; coughing up blood (due to tumors in the lungs); or enlargement of the lymph nodes in the abdomen and/or neck.

It's time to act. Take some time out to perform a self-exam and remind your friends and relatives to do theirs.

Prostate Cancer

Although there are many different types of prostate diseases, men tend to have two common issues: an enlarged prostate and prostate cancer. First, let's recap what the prostate is. The prostate is a gland that sits below the bladder and surrounds the urethra – the tube that carries urine from the bladder. The fluid in semen is made in the prostate.

According to Weill Cornell Medicine, men may be at a higher risk of developing prostate cancer if they are 50 years old or older; are African American; or have a close family member who has prostate cancer, breast, or ovarian cancer.

Enlarged prostate is also called benign prostatic hyperplasia. The prostate naturally grows with age. As it grows, it can press on the urethra. The older a man is, the more likely he will have BPH. Some men may start having symptoms in their 40s. Nearly all men who live to be 80 or older will have BPH.

BPH is not the same as prostate cancer. Although it is not life-threatening, BPH can decrease quality of life. It may cause bladder incontinence; difficulty emptying the bladder; or frequent nighttime trips to the bathroom. It may also cause pain when urinating, create difficulty in starting the stream of urine, or result in the weak flow of urine.

It is usually diagnosed based on medical history, a digital rectal exam, and a blood test that looks for high levels of prostate-specific antigen, which is a protein produced by the prostate.

The US Preventive Services Task Force recommends that men aged 55 to 69 make individual, informed decisions about prostate cancer screen-

ing after talking with their clinician. Prostate cancer tends to be very slow growing, and screening has pros and cons.

Today's youth and Looksmaxxing

There's another topic impacting the wellbeing of young men. Referred to as "Looksmaxxing," it is a growing online movement that pushes young men to take appearance obsession to unhealthy and sometimes dangerous extremes.

According to Nebraska Medicine – a non-profit academic health system in Omaha, looksmaxxing encourages young men to maximize their physical appearance. What started about a decade ago in Internet spaces often referred to as the "manosphere," has grown through social media. A key feature of the trend is its community-driven nature. Young men post photos of themselves and solicit online feedback about how to elevate their looks.

Nebraska Medicine also mentioned that looksmaxxing exists on a spectrum. While "softmaxxing" refers to lifestyle changes that fall within a generally healthy range – getting better sleep, eating well, exercising, and following a skincare routine, "hardmaxxing" involves more extreme, potentially harmful measures, including plastic surgery, and in some cases, the use of dangerous substances.

Nebraska Medicine referred to "bone smashing," which involves hitting the jaw with a hard object, as one of the more extreme practices associated with looksmaxxing. It is based on the false belief that this can reshape the jawline. There's also "mewing," an unproven technique focused on tongue positioning that is intended to alter the jaw's structure.

Leah Jesse, MD, Nebraska Medicine, a child and adolescent psychiatrist, explained why looksmaxxing is resonating with young men. "The biggest developmental task of adolescence is identity formation," said Dr. Jesse. "A big part of that is when a boy pulls away from his family and looks to peers to understand his sense of self, his identity and his place in the world."

She explained that technology has changed how that process unfolds. Instead of working through those

questions with friends and peers in person, many young men are turning to online communities. Looksmaxxing can offer a sense of purpose, peer connection, and social belonging. Much of this content shows up on TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube, where algorithms are designed to keep users engaged.

"Once a young man starts looking at this content, it's going to feed him more and more," added Dr. Jesse. She explained that the "like" function reinforces continued engagement in much the same way gambling does. Unpredictable rewards trigger dopamine surges and drive young men to return.

Dr. Jesse noted that there is nothing wrong with wanting to look and feel your best, but concern arises when self-improvement becomes an obsession. She worries about body dysmorphic disorder – a condition in which a person becomes intensely preoccupied with perceived flaws that others around them cannot see or would not consider significant.

She pointed to some warning signs that may signal parents or loved ones that looksmaxxing has crossed into unhealthy territory. They include significant amounts of time spent on appearance-related routines, to the point that skipping them or doing them imperfectly causes distress; noticeable changes in eating habits or a shift toward highly restrictive eating; increased time spent online and withdrawal from in-person activities and friendships; radical changes in peer groups; spending significant money on grooming products, procedures, or supplements; and persistent preoccupation with specific physical features, particularly ones others don't notice.

Dr. Jesse recommends approaching these conversations with curiosity rather than judgment. Ask about what they're noticing and what they're searching for. Rather than using an accusing attitude, Dr. Jesse suggested using a "Hey, I've noticed this change" kind of approach. If you are concerned, speak with a mental health professional. ●



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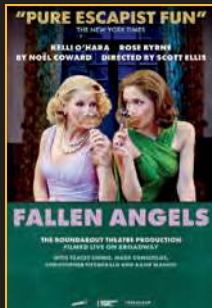
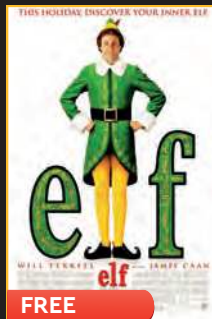


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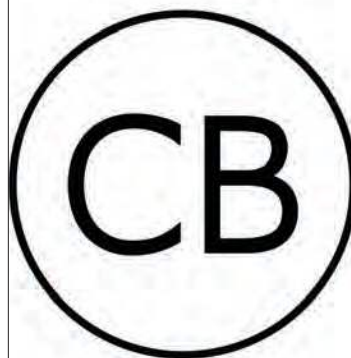


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My Thanksgiving table

By Thorunn Kristjansdottir
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This is one of my favorite times of year. As I mentioned in my editor's note, as an immigrant I quickly took to Thanksgiving because I loved the tradition as well as the messaging of being together and giving thanks. It all feels very wholesome and genuine. I also really love turkey and all the fixin's. Thinking about Thanksgiving food is what inspired this article.

As we near turkey day, my mother, my mother-in-law, and I have been talking about the menu, who'll be coming, and who'll be bringing which dish. I love it when we have a big gathering and we divvy everything up: everyone brings a dish, or three. When we do that, it doesn't fall onto just one person to buy and make everything. And let's be completely honest: putting on a dinner party, especially a holiday party, is a lot of work! First, there's all the planning, prep, cleaning, and grocery shopping. Then leading up to the day, the host begins preparing all of the food, culminating on the day of the event, followed by all of the cleanup after. It's a lot easier to share the work along with the fun.

Thinking about this Thanksgiving and ones past, I wanted to share some of my favorite places to source the food and drinks that have graced our tables. This is by no means a complete list, but just a little roundup of local places that always have incredible offerings.

Appetizers

Depending on who is hosting and how the division of dishes has gone, there's usually a vegetable platter. My brother and sister-in-law most often take this on. They have, on a couple of occasions, pre-ordered a veggie platter from Fresh Town in Hillsdale, NY, and it was both beautiful and delicious. But for full disclosure, my brother has also taken it upon himself to make his own platter. I told him

if his day job doesn't pan out, maybe being a veggie platter designer and creator could be his calling.

My mother-in-law always puts together an incredible cheese platter that's filled with local cheese, crackers, and other items that pair nicely. When it comes to cheese, I love just about every kind, and we have many awesome local stores that offer a huge variety of quality cheeses to choose from. Guido's in Great Barrington, MA has an amazing selection. I love sampling their cheese before picking just the right one(s). But an honorable cheese mention must go to Chaseholm Farm in Pine Plains, NY because they are *deeeelicious*! If you haven't tried them yet, go find them right now.

In addition to your standard cheese, cracker, and grape platter, I quite enjoy other items that pair nicely with the above. Drizzling fresh, local honey over certain cheeses is divine! I am a huge fan of Uncle Gee's Bees honey, which is available in a few stores in the vicinity of Millerton, NY. Nuts and dried fruit often pair nicely too, and Tierra Farms in Valatie, NY is a local company that makes amazing ones. If you haven't tried their products, you are missing out.

Main course

For Thanksgiving, you of course have to have turkey! Quattro's in Pleasant Valley, NY is a must-stop. Joyce and her staff grow their own turkeys and many moons ago, Joyce invited me to photograph them. They are quite something. In addition to fresh turkeys, Quattro's also has numerous items that are made fresh on their farm and are available in their gourmet market. You'll easily be able to pick up a bunch of treats in addition to your turkey at Quattro's.

For the main course sides, I always remind my mother that I want mashed potatoes, gravy, stuffing, and cranberry jam. She doesn't have to get too fancy with any of it, just give me the staples. But she loves to make sweet potatoes with the marshmallows on top (and yes, my brother still steals

the marshmallows), a three-bean dish, and a handful of other side dishes that fluctuate depending on the year and product availability at the grocery stores/markets that we frequent.

But some people don't love turkey. I know, I don't quite understand this either, but apparently they exist, and they'd prefer other main course options like ... lasagna. I mean, don't get me wrong, I love a good lasagna too. My mother-in-law has bought a few lasagnas from GioBatta Alimentari in Tivoli, NY, and they are always delicious. They also have a number of other items that you can purchase in their front-of-house store, or you can also call and order salads, meatballs, chicken parmigiana, baked ziti, and more from their catering menu.

Quality bread is always an important part of the meal. You have to have fresh bread. Fortunately there are many great places to get fresh-baked bread. Since my job every Thanksgiving is to order and pick up the pies, it's a pleasure to also grab bread from the best pie place in the area. Yes, I just proclaimed a "best pie" place in our area. It is Green Acres Farm Market & Bakery on Route 82 in Hudson, NY. Their bakery and market is located just east of the Bell's Pond intersection, you won't miss it: there's always a ton of traffic at the farm stand. Now, here is your PSA: if you plan on getting a pie from Green Acres, you must pre-order it! Or if you're taking your chances, you need to get there first thing when they open. They sell out quickly. But I digress, back to the bread. The bread at Green Acres is just as delicious as the pies – all freshly made and yum. My husband loves to stop at Meisner's Heritage Farm just up the road from Green Acres; their bread is also chef's kiss, and they have pies too, but I haven't tried them – yet.

Oh! And don't forget: to go with the bread you need freshly made, local butter. We're lucky to have options, but I'll advise you to pick up some Ronnybrook (out of Ancramdale, NY) butter. They have a few flavors too, even cinnamon for the holidays!

Desserts

Since we're on the topic of dessert, let's talk about the pies. Thanksgiving, to me, is synonymous with apple pie. It's a must. No Thanksgiving is complete without a warm apple pie and a scoop of vanilla ice cream on top. I love it.

As mentioned above, for the past few years, my go-to is the Dutch apple pie at Green Acres. When I tell you it is world famous, I'm not kidding. They also have a regular apple pie as well as peach, rhubarb, and a few other choices. I'm not sure yet which additional flavors I'll order this year in addition to the Dutch apple, but I know they'll be delicious.

We are lucky though that there are *sooooo* many farm stands and bakeries in our area, and I'm sure that there are some world-class pies at them too. If you find an amazing pie, please reach out and tell us – I volunteer as tribute to go try it!

Drinks

No dinner party is complete without libations. We tend to go to The Sharon Package Store in Sharon, CT; Pine Plains Fine Wines & Spirits in Pine Plains, NY; and Hillsdale Fine Wines & Spirits in, you guessed it, Hillsdale, NY. Of course, we enjoy lots of great wine stores in the region, as well as wineries, so go to your favorites. But what I love about the three mentioned is that they have a wonderful selection as well as friendly and knowledgeable staff who can help with your selections.

During dessert some enjoy a great cup of tea. Harney & Sons Fine Teas out of Millerton, NY never disappoints. They have a ton of options, ranging from your traditionals like Earl Grey (that's for me) to more unique flavors and their very own creations.

Regardless of whether you grace your dinner table this year with turkey or lasagna, being together and giving thanks is at the heart of it. Happy Thanksgiving, and I am grateful to you for reading this. ●



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CRANKY OL' FOSSIL RETURNS

By Jesse DeGroodt
info@mainstreetmag.com

*Hey man, what's the plan, what was
that you said?*

*Sun-tanned, drink in hand, lying there
in bed*

*I try to socialize but I can't seem to find-
What I was looking for, got something
on my mind*

Teacher — Jethro Tull

Up into the attic we go to see what the cranky old guy's whining about this time. With any degree of luck, we'll get through this without the need for multiple stitches or impossibly costly reconstructive surgery.

- Old people health shenanigans. And they say the excitement in life begins to wane as one goes over the hill, but no, not at a time when the seemingly simple act of climbing out of bed can present its own set of challenges. How am I supposed to know if that sudden sharp pang in my leg or the swift but nasty headachy thing is normal Old People Stuff (OPS) or if I should plan on keeling over any second now? Heyyy, why is the doggy looking at me like that?!!

- It may not help that I buy the cheapest ones in the aisle, but you know how when you rip a paper towel off the roll and a partially torn section from the next sheet comes trailing along with it? Why is that so annoying? I mean, in the grand scheme, who in hell cares? But apparently something somewhere inside me does. Do I know why? I do not. Could be it bubbles up from some ancient place way inside that also chimes with nagging dissatisfaction when you mis-measure (on the low side, thus resulting in a congealed blob rather than a useful dish) the amount of water that goes into your bowl of oatmeal?

- Harry and Meghan.

- Professional sports. What has happened to me? This began, insidiously enough, worming its way in when I dropped the CTE League, errrrr, World Wrestling National Football Entertainment, noooo, I mean Goodell's Goons. Dropped it flat. Loved the sport. Decades of New England Patriots season tickets. Multiple annual pilgrimages to Shea Stadium/Citi Field for the New York Mets. But around a decade or so back, it all began to feel less like athletic competitions that had a grip on my hard-earned geetus and more like manufactured pageants, which are easy enough to find on the nearest TV screen while not leaving the comforts of home.

- Confrontation as a default style. Maybe stop watching so much TV, folks. Everything is not a fight for a fight's sake.

- Self-checkout. Don't do it! In fact, try not to do anything specifically designed to separate normal people from a normal job. We can't all be rocket surgeons or trust fund victims, after all.

- Cheese. To be fair, this is not about cheese itself. Cheese itself is perfectly fine (okay, most cheeses are fine). It's the recent propensity of food-preparing folks to over-enthusiastically ladle it onto any dish or sandwich or whatever in quantities that would satisfy even Andrew Jackson on his way out the White House door. Let me guess. "The algorithm" had something to do with this bit of modern lunacy.

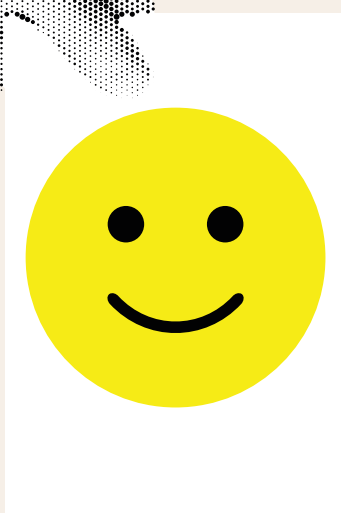
- Algorithms. Really? The answer to my issue at hand is that it's "the algorithm?" I'm picturing telling my World War II Navy vet dad the reason I arrived home at 2am with the back seat on fire is in "the algorithm." Though you didn't know my dad, I'll bet you're familiar with the look of "whut?" at which most parents excel. See next for "back seat smoldering."

- Myself. Face it, my friends, don't you annoy yourself at times?

- Late model cars. This one is going to take a minute. Weaned as a driver on a 1965 Rambler, it'd already been around the block more than once before my dad, no doubt anticipating the possible mayhem that his young-un might cause, or what might be imparted to him, ever-so savvily snagged it as I made the move to being an on-my-own driver, and he seemingly bore an interest in seeing my continued development as a walking-about, functional being of sorts. A brilliant move, as I would later come to understand, when I first enabled my very own progeny to go sailing off onto the highways and byways of our world and learned just precisely how long one could hold one's breath.

Here's why the Rambler was such a resourceful idea. My friends and I referred to that beautiful Rambler,

Continued on next page ...



light blue with one prominent patch of black Bondo, as “The Tank.” And a tank it was. For one, we could achieve a top speed of maybe 55 mph if four occupants focused on rocking back and forth (try it – it works!) down a long, downhill straightaway or maybe 60 with a stiff tailwind, although at 60 the vibration factor came into play. I doubt you could kill the Tank, other than maybe to shake it to death. Secondly, while I’ve never been inside a military tank, I’ll bet they have nothing on The Tank. Now are we going to discuss the night I arrived home from a party with The Tank’s back seat smoldering? No. No, we are not.

Ergo, when climbing into a new set of wheels after 12 years spent thoroughly enjoying the relatively sane 2013 model, I was gobsmacked. What do I consider a relatively sane vehicle? One that does not do things like pop up a “Consider taking a break” notification after I’ve driven about three miles. I love that one. That warning comes complete with a little graphic of a coffee cup, a steaming coffee cup, no less. Then there’s the yellow curve symbol that appears on the display when a, well, curve approaches. This is helpful in what way? For it to be anything other than a distraction, I’d

need to be paying more attention to the display than the road, which has never seemed a terribly useful way to arrive intact. If I need my attention span interrupted by some inane facet of modern life, I’ll switch on the TV news for five minutes.

Okay, y’all have conditioned me to check the backup camera (something useful, for once) when backing out of the garage as a helpful tool for not running over one of the doggies, but that, and the ding-dong thing that wigs out should a fellow motorist stray too close to my precious conveyance, were clearly envisioned by a semi-genius. I could go on all day about modern cars, but instead let me ask this: Who, when they look back at 2026 and their first car, will one day wax poetic about it when chances are daddy-o has handed them the keys to a new or newish luxury vehicle that requires the skill of a NASA engineer to even think about trying to repair?

• Drivers. Whenever it comes time to take my life in my hands and head out in the machine, I make a point of addressing the doggies in my life. “Hope to see you later,” I tell them, and then commence to risking my life in the attempt to successfully reach the grocery store a few miles away. For now, when it comes to fellow drivers, let it suffice to say that hitting the highway and spending the next 25 miles parked in

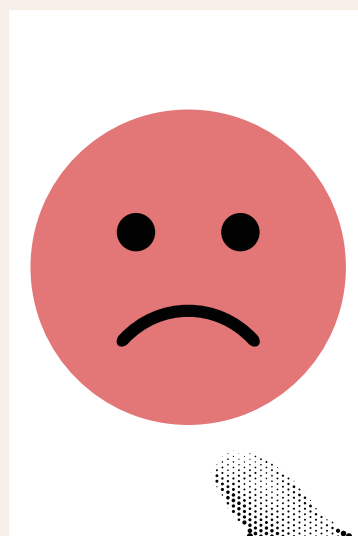
the far left-hand lane while mindlessly sailing along, thoroughly mangling the flow of traffic around you, is not a viable strategy. Quit it! Similarly, the use of turn signals is not some vanity thing. To use one is not unmanly nor unwomanly. I don’t care if you’re exiting the Taconic State Parkway, for instance, in the dead of night with no one seemingly within two miles of you. Surprise! Then there’s the altogether thrilling driving habit of crawling up someone’s tailpipe and remaining there for the duration of the drive. Why?

• GoFundMe. Not the idea of GoFundMe, but what’s behind the idea of GoFundMe and the seeming necessity of it in this stage of our country’s devolution. Oftentimes, a GoFundMe appeal will pop up for someone who’s experienced one calamity or another, be it a house fire or some physical disaster or whatnot. And no, I’m hardly against extending a helping hand. Perhaps this is idealistic of me, but what makes me nuts about the GoFundMe mentality is this: There’s no reason a hypothetical – or even a real – well-meaning, filthy rich country cannot see to it that such fundamental things as health insurance, for instance, fail to adequately cover, if they cover at all, these things, as opposed to some-

one essentially being forced into the position of relying on the kindness of strangers to get past this particularly unpleasant time in their lives without a lifetime of financial ruin ahead of them.

• Go into an inconvenience store. Buy something. Clerk never says a word. No thank you, zip, other than perhaps the recognition you forced them to look up from their phone for a split-second. A grunt if you’re fortunate. “No problem,” you may be told. Clearly, there’s a disconnect between their paycheck and what helped generate it in the first place. Or did mom and dad omit that whole distressing, angst-ridden, soul-crushing thank you-you’re welcome thing? I know, I know, OK Boomer, or whatever other attempt at disparagement we can think of delivered to folks who had the audacity of being born numerous decades prior and have since lapsed into irrelevance. Occasionally, I find myself reflexively saying “thank you” when change is handed back, followed by the immediate head-flash, head-scratching inquiry of myself. For what?

But now it’s naptime and, let’s see, chances are that’ll wear me out, which in turn will call for extended naptime. Experience pays. •





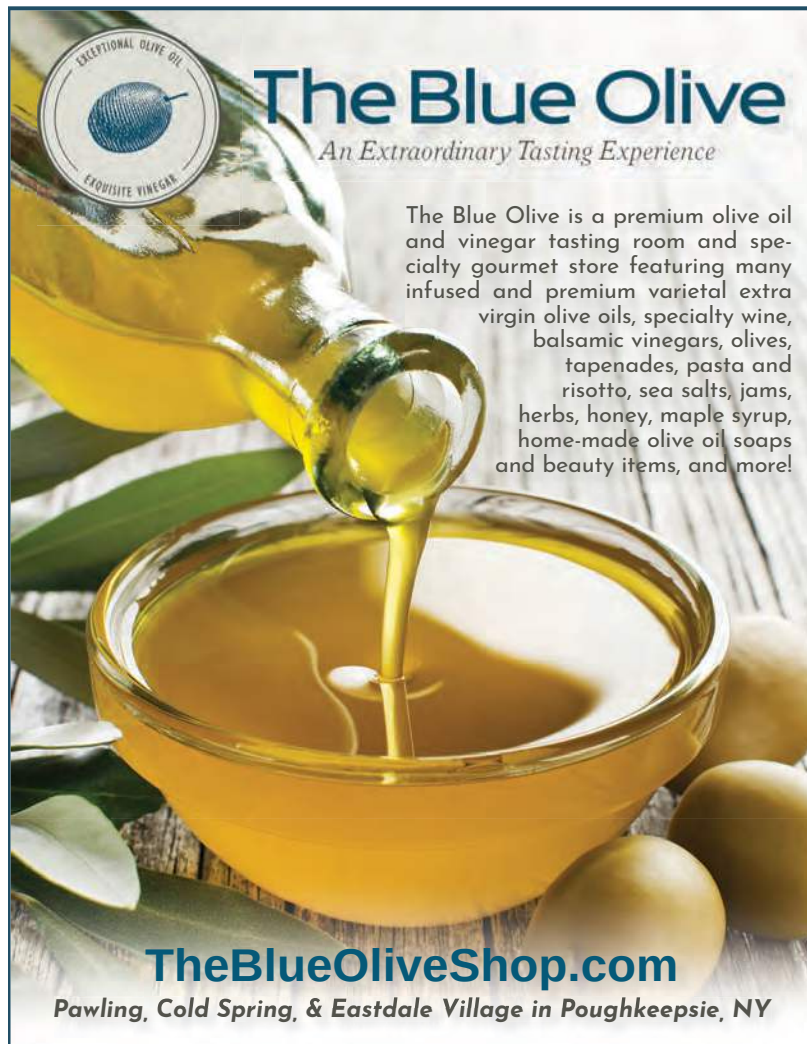
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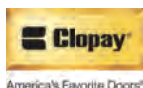
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**GILDED MOON
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NO LEFT TURN ON RED

By CB Wismar
info@mainstreetmag.com

That's logical, isn't it? At most intersections, if stopped at a red light with no oncoming traffic, a cautious right turn is acceptable, unless a traffic sign prohibits it. It's a simple rule of law, designed to keep traffic moving while protecting the safety of those on the road. Right turn, not left turn. That's the law.

Until the law becomes optional, and anarchy overtakes common sense. Two things happened within days of each other this past week that somehow generated a resolving chord in the universe. Now, we've assiduously avoided dragging family into these monthly musings – admittedly there have been the occasional references to dear, talented friends, but family has been spared reference. This Bach-like chord resolution, however, offered a prominent place for the youngest grandson, whose name will not be part of the narrative because a 16-year-old ego can be quite fragile.

No left turn on red, sir!

But, back to turns on red at traffic lights. The intersection in focus is the connection of Warren Turnpike and Lime Rock Station Road at Route 7 just as Falls Village becomes Lime Rock, CT. It's the light that regulates the bus traffic coming and going from Housatonic Valley Regional High School. If you're a regular on that

stretch of 7, you know it well. Just as you're cruising north or south, the light next to the river bridge suddenly turns yellow, then red, and you're sitting impatiently waiting for the opportunity to proceed.

On this particular day, while coming up Warren Turnpike on the incline from the high school, the light that had been green turned red, and we coasted to a stop. Approaching from the opposite direction, a pickup truck rolled to a stop, paused a moment, then proceeded to turn left through the red light and accelerate across the bridge.

Gobsmacked!

Turning left against the light? What if ...? That section of Route 7 is often the site of vehicles making the speed limit optional, and there's a bit of a blind spot when coming south. That could have been nasty. And before any smart alics chime in that it is legal to turn left on red from one-way street to one-way street, let me clarify: these are both two-way thoroughfares!

No moving the marker, young sir!

No, our grandson was not driving the errant vehicle. His infraction was miles away on a golf course where he competes as the captain of his high school golf team. He's a solid kid – sometimes a bit goofy, but good enough to play number one on the

team as a junior.

It was a Tuesday match, and as the foursome approached the third tee, his team was two up already on the match. He'd done well on the preceding hole, so he was first to tee off. For those who're not golf aficionados, please bear with us on this.

At the place where golfers tee off on each hole, there are two markers that establish the invisible point where the ball should be placed, usually on a small elevating wooden or plastic tee, to begin playing the hole. The ball is teed up between the two markers. On this occasion, the decision was made to pick up one of those markers and move it several feet farther from its opposite. Having placed the marker, grandson put down his ball, took his shot, and watched his ball sail toward the green.

The only problem with that scenario is that the rules do not allow a player to move the tee markers. Not only is it wrong, it carries a two stroke penalty, meaning that however he did on that hole, he would be forced to add two strokes to his scorecard.

They knew better

Did he know it was an infraction? In a casual conversation after the match (in which I struggled to keep my signature cool), he admitted that he did. "But, who cares?" he asked. We

countered, "if you knew it was against the rules, why did you do it?"

Did the driver know that turning left on a red light was against the law? Most likely, he did. But, he did it anyway, presuming he wouldn't get caught and, besides, gaining that five seconds on his trip must have seemed more important than driving/playing by the rules.

Scanning the morning headlines these days often seems like an exercise in futility and frustration. Rules, precedents, morality, common courtesy, and court decisions seem to be ignored as blithely as the tee box marker was moved or the left turn was made on red. Admittedly, we've been around for many decades, so we cherish the memory of a time where rules were made and enforced and laws were generated as both protection of the citizenry and to make sure that a relatively stable society continued to function in balance.

Voices of protest are becoming louder. Commentary has turned into rage. The use of satire, hyperbole, and outright accusation swirls around us in every form of communication available.

Let's get straight to the point. Don't turn left on red ... or move the tee marker. Civilization needs you. ●



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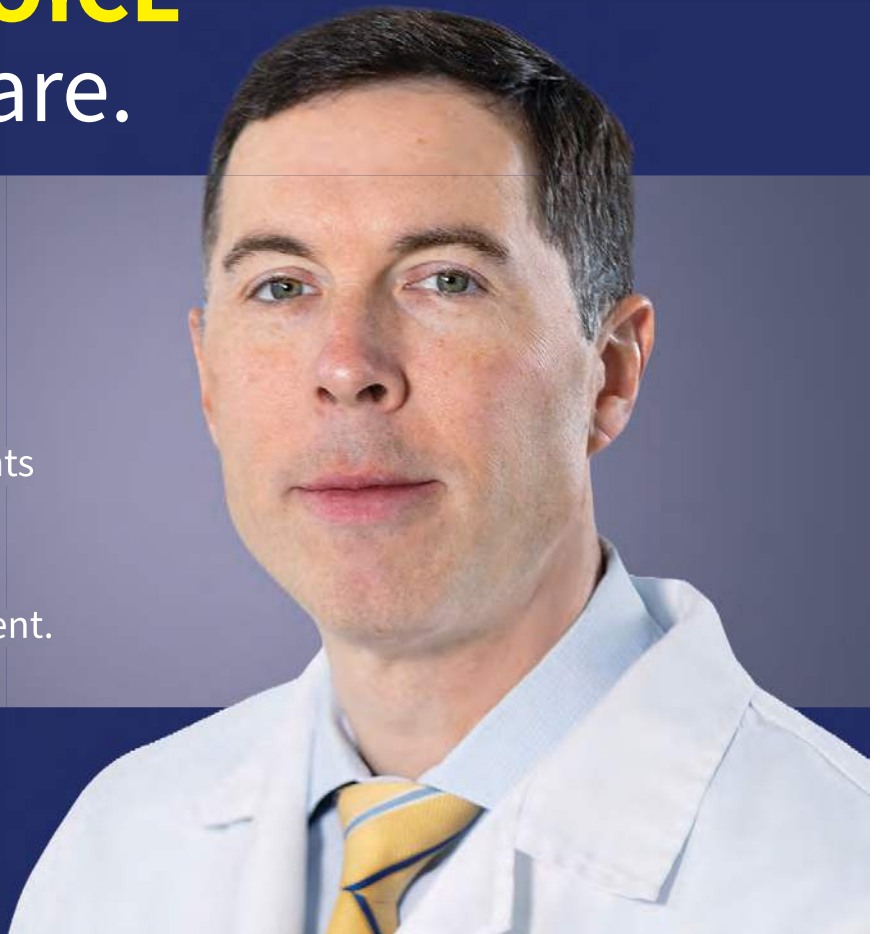
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WE'RE TALKING ABOUT MOXIE



By Thorunn Kristjansdottir
info@mainstreetmag.com

For those of our readers who aren't necessarily in the know, we here at *Main Street* also have a podcast called Main Street Moxie. (It is available everywhere you listen to podcasts as well as on our website.) So far this year, we've released three episodes, but hope to have at least one more before the end of the year. That said, our podcast focuses on moxie. We talk with people from all walks of life and discuss their moxie, however they define it.

This year we have spoken with three amazing and very different individuals who were gracious enough to share their stories, experiences, and to give advice about how one can cultivate their own courage, strength, and moxie. Here is a little bit about each of our guests from this season.

Silda Wall Spitzer

Our first episode of 2026 dropped in January where we spoke with the former First Lady of New York State, Silda Wall Spitzer. Silda's moxie comes from a lifetime of engagement, a willingness to evolve, creativity, and a deep trust in the power of people to catalyze change when they are seen, supported, and brought together. She has a strategic approach to moxie that is purpose and service-driven.

Silda has spent her life working at the intersection of civic responsibility, community, and conscience. Trained as a lawyer and shaped by decades of public service, she has long been driven by a commitment to environmental stewardship, social justice, and the belief that strong communities are built through shared responsibility and mutual care.

As First Lady of New York State, Silda championed initiatives that elevated dignity in work, expanded opportunity, and highlighted the essential role of public institutions in supporting people and places. Her advocacy has always centered on listening closely, amplifying voices that are too often overlooked, and creating spaces where meaningful change can take root.

That same impulse led her to found New York Makers, the first digital magazine dedicated to celebrating the artisans, growers, and entrepreneurs shaping the state's creative economy. The magazine was born from a simple realization. Extraordinary makers were doing inspiring work across New York, yet had no shared forum to learn about one another or to be seen as part of a larger ecosystem.

Silda's Jam grew naturally from that mission. For years, Silda had a family tradition of making jam for friends and loved ones each holiday season. What began as a personal ritual became a way to support the magazine and the communities it uplifted. She turned that tradition into a small business rooted in care, craftsmanship, and connection.

Made in small batches in the Hudson Valley and sweetened with local maple syrup, Silda's Jam reflects her values. It honors local sourcing, thoughtful production, and the joy of sharing food as an act of generosity. More than a product, it is an extension of her belief that building community can start with something as simple and human as gathering around the table.

CB Wismar

It takes a particular kind of moxie to show up every day for someone you love, while watching them decline and diminish, and your life takes on new

responsibilities and roles.

CB and his wife, Kathy Wismar, were living a full life on their family farm in rural Northwest Connecticut – she painting and throwing ceramics, he writing and producing, both of them deep into a rich second act after raising two thriving kids and tag-teaming their way through over five decades of marriage. Then Kathy received a diagnosis of Alzheimer's, and everything changed. CB became her full-time caregiver, joining the 63 million Americans navigating that same unexpected role in 2025.

In this episode, CB talks about what he calls caregiving moxie – the quiet courage it takes to get up each morning and do hard things out of love, partnership, and loyalty. He shares what he's learned about leaning on family, friends, and healthcare professionals, sitting with a wide range of emotions, and trying to make sense of a chapter neither of them planned for.

CB brings a lifetime of storytelling to this conversation. His five-decade career in communications spanned radio, television, and film. He led the events team at AARP and co-founded a creative agency that worked with Fortune 500 companies. He continues to write for *Main Street Magazine* and produce content for the National Partnership for Healthcare and Hospice Innovation.

Kelly Finley

Kelly Finley's moxie comes in hot. As "The Queen of Spice," she's built a readership on shameless love and heroines who refuse to be intimidated – and she wears that crown, black leather and all, with pride.

By day, Kelly is a Senior Lecturer and Undergraduate Advisor for the Women's & Gender Studies Program at UNC Charlotte, where she's taught for over two decades and guided one

of the largest WGS programs in the country. Her research and courses dig into female adolescence, virginity, body image, and women and work – the same threads that run straight through her fiction.

In 2020, Kelly turned to writing fiction, using her knowledge and training in gender studies to underpin her romances featuring bad*** women and grown-a** men. Nineteen books later, she's built a catalog of FMCs and MCs readers champion: complex, brave, whip-smart, and never, ever weak.

In her books, Kelly flips the script. Not satisfied by heroines who need saving, she writes women who are strong, layered, and unintimidated, who embrace their autonomy and communicate their needs, and men who can be real partners in the relationship.

That same instinct to amplify girls' voices led her to found the Charlotte chapter of We Rock (formerly Girls Rock), a nonprofit that helps youth ages 10–16 find their voices through music, film, and community. It's the same mission wearing a different hat: give someone the tools, and get out of the way while they become who they already are and use their voices to make change happen for themselves and those around them.

Kelly's moxie is consistent – she's spent her whole career making room for women and girls to be loud, complicated, and completely unapologetic. •

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Tech & AI: Friend or Foe?

By Thorunn Kristjansdottir
info@mainstreetmag.com

How many of you are like me and wondering what in the world is going on with AI? Yes, yes, I'm talking about AI – again. I'm sick of hearing about it too, yet here I am writing about it.

But just bear with me. This is a little bit different, and this hits much closer to home.

I was recently listening to Madison on Lithium on SiriusXM radio. For anyone familiar with Madison, you know that for the most part she keeps the conversation focused on music, but this time, in between playing Nirvana and Hole, she started talking about the impact of AI on jobs. This piqued my interest, because whatever article she was referencing mentioned that a lot of our job force, as we know it today, will be severely impacted with the trajectory that we are currently on. She went on to cite an article predicting that certain professions, including nurses and physical therapists, will be “safe,” for the most part, from any major impact.

I would certainly hope so! I personally don't want a robot or computer going hands-on to read and assess my body if I'm not well. No thank you.

Well, this got me thinking about our local businesses and jobs. How has technology, including AI specifically because no one is immune, impacted where we live and how we work?

Didn't we learn anything from *The Matrix*?

A few days after I heard Madison's segment, and for the duration of September into October, news networks ran multiple stories focusing on the big AI companies, regulations (or lack thereof), and how AI could wipe out humanity within a decade. You know, just light topics for the 7 o'clock newshour.

Bill Maher, on one of his segments, talked about AI with Malcolm Gladwell and then discussed it further with a panel that included Fareed Zakaria and Anand Giridharadas. CNN's Anderson Cooper talked with Bill Gates about how the “turbulent AI era was here.” Cooper also interviewed multiple heads of AI companies as well as whistleblowers. I have found these conversations to be both eye opening and frightening.

I'm sorry but did not one watch *The Matrix*? The film came out in 1999. Have we learned anything in the almost 30 years since? I know it was meant to be fictional and sci-fi, but it certainly doesn't feel too far off from our current reality if we're being totally honest with ourselves. I'm just saying ...

I will fully admit that I cannot stand where a lot of technology is headed. Call me old school, but I am very wary. I think a lot of this tech is detrimental to our well-being, and especially to our children's well-being. There are also many other parts of tech (big and small) that I can't stand, for example when my phone autopredicts words for me in my texts, DMs, and emails ... I'm sorry, but stop. Those autofills are nine times out of ten incorrect anyway and I never asked you to autofill for me in the first place! Like ... just stop.

My experience with tech and AI is similar: they get it wrong a lot of the time, so why would I want to make myself dependent on something that's wrong, making myself dumber, more dependent, and less competent at the same time? No thanks.

On the flip side and hence the conundrum for many, I understand that there are amazing benefits to not just technology but also AI. I am referring specifically to sectors like healthcare in which technological advancements can help with things like early detec-

tion of illnesses, which is amazing! We can all stand to benefit from that. There are also advantages with streamlining, efficiency, and speed, like if you have one of these AI thing-a-mijiggies take a photo and change out the background for you or you ask it to give you an alternative layout for your kitchen.

But here's the flip side of that coin: You do realize that what AI is doing as it spits out this alternative kitchen layout in a matter of a few seconds is taking a job away from an educated interior designer and or architect? Because it is. So do we consider this technology to be a good or bad thing? The jury might still be out.

Is AI stealing jobs?

In my opinion (even if no one asked me), a lot of our jobs as we know them today are in jeopardy, or at least in a place of major transition. And I believe it is our duty to be very careful about how the future will look like for humanity. I wholeheartedly agree that AI needs to be regulated, and I believe that we need to take a closer look at the pros and cons of certain types of tech as it pertains to our physical, mental, and emotional wellbeing as well as to jobs and the environment.

By all accounts, technology as a whole is really and truly impacting a lot of jobs. I'll give you a personal example: In addition to being the owner and publisher of this magazine, I also own and run a graphic design and marketing firm. In the last few years I have noticed a tremendous change in my clients' needs as well as in queries for work. There are now many options for your average Joe to create their own graphics with

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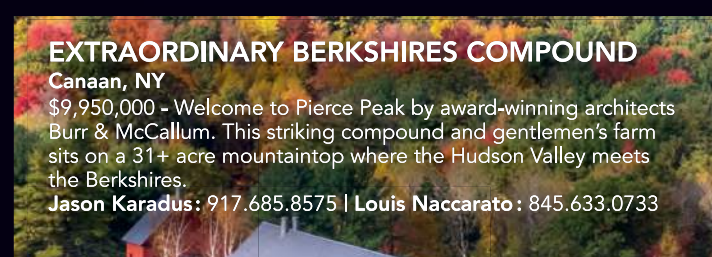
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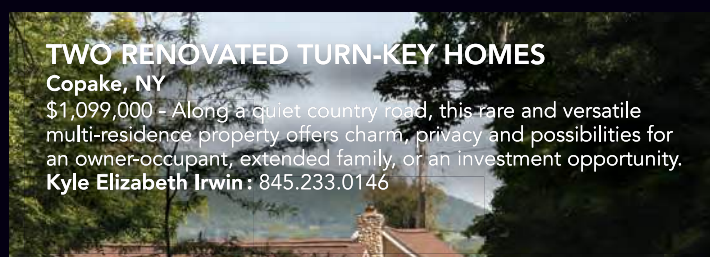

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the likes of Canva, social media, and other apps. One can edit videos and create content with just your phone. Not too long ago, you would have needed a person who actually went to school for this stuff and made it their profession – like me. Now everyone with a smart phone, some apps, and an Internet connection is a graphic designer, photographer, videographer, editor, and social media marketer.

So, is my job in jeopardy? It might just be. But I'm not alone in that.

Sure, some of the content created and the work produced is amazing, beautiful, and effective, but for every great piece there is an equal amount of bad work being created. Let's just keep it real.

The upside to all of this access and tech is that there is more availability and flexibility, and it's all immediate. And I'm all about efficiency! Believe me. But I beg us to stop and consider one question: at what cost?

You can argue the positives to this too, I'm not saying you can't. But it seems that our constant desire for needing things *right now* is actually becoming a slippery slope, and as a parent, I can see the impact on my kids. And it has me gravely concerned.

That's my opinion. But I was curious what other local folks and businesses had to say about all of this, and how they felt about the impact of technological advancements, including AI. Here is what some of them

had to say.

The beauty industry

"I hate what AI is doing to my profession. It gives fake expectations about hair. Clients are misled by AI-generated photos with hair colors that are unrealistic and unachievable," states Loren Whiteley, owner of The Hair Lounge in Millerton, NY. Loren went on to explain that her clients will often bring in "inspo pics" that they'll get on places like Pinterest, not realizing that they are AI. She continued to explain that a lot of times the hair colors in these images aren't colors that exist in this world, so there is no way that she can replicate them and give her clients the hair colors that AI has generated.

"However, I think that when clients use a picture of themselves and have AI put bangs on them, or if they are going from blonde to black hair, and AI spits out an image for them to see before they make a drastic change, that can be helpful. By doing so they are able to see if they like this look on themselves before they commit to it, and that is helpful. But AI-generated content can give people totally unrealistic expectations."

She added, "Even though I'm not a fan, I don't mind using AI as an aid. It can be useful to ask it a question or seek out additional information on a doctor's report to better understand something. But I have to take

its answer with a grain of salt because I have found on multiple occasions that when I have asked ChatGPT something, the answer it provides is just straight-up wrong. It's hard to tell how much AI-generated content is incorrect."

The health industry

I was curious to hear what Peter Donohoe of Donohoe Training in Lakeville, CT, had to say on the topic. Peter is a strength and movement specialist with a background that spans structural engineering, competitive athletics, and high-level performance. He is a two-time Olympic bobsledder and spent 15 years at Boston Ballet, where he applied an athlete-based approach to training dancers – from developing artists to world-class principals.

"Today, as fitness director at Hydrow and founder of Donohoe Training in Lakeville, I combine strength, movement, performance, and exercise science to help people become stronger, move better, recover from injury, and perform at their best. My approach is grounded in purposeful, progressive training and the continual integration of new research and technology. Current fitness-industry research shows AI is already being used heavily for programming, marketing, communication, and administrative work, while the areas that remain difficult to automate include real-time judgment, movement correction, accountability, trust, and understanding an individual client."

I was also curious to hear Richard Mack's thoughts on the subject. Richard is a psychotherapist based in Sharon, CT. He shared, "In my world of psychotherapy, technology had an immediate and profound impact, starting with the pandemic. Using Zoom and other online video-meeting software, we were able to seamlessly continue our work with patients when the pandemic struck. And still today this is a valuable tool. There is talk of AI and other computer software replacing live therapists, but such activities could be nothing but a mirage

– the essence of good psychotherapy is the one-on-one personal relationship formed between the therapist and the patient. So, psychotherapy is counter-cultural in that way – even if delivered over Zoom."

The field of education

Younger Millennials, Gen Z, and Gen Alpha have grown up with the most recent technological advancements. Curious to learn about the impacts being felt in the education sector, I talked with Carita Gardiner, who is an English teacher and dean at The Hotchkiss School in Lakeville, CT.

Carita shared, "In our English classes at Hotchkiss, we're reverting to more paper-and-pencil writing and assessments in the classroom. We try to instill in the students that they need to learn how to complete every step of the writing process themselves rather than relying on AI to feed them ideas, organize/outline their thoughts, craft claims and thesis statements, provide evidence, or fix wording." She explained, "I advise my students that the best use of AI for English is to ask it to tutor them as they memorize vocabulary and/or grammar. ChatGPT will never get tired of giving them practice sentences and quizzing them on new material. Other than that, I tell them it's better to stay away."

The publishing and printing world

The publishing world is one that I am quite familiar with, case in point: publishing this magazine for almost 14 years. This is first and foremost a *print* publication, but we have had to adapt and adjust many times since we first began publishing. Sure, we have embraced certain technologies, including growing our website and using that as an additional place to create and publish content. The same goes for social media: we're able to create a different kind of content and reach more people.

The flip side, however, is that with the advancements of technology in the last decade-plus, we are now competing with *sooooo* many more content-creating platforms, companies, and



Image: istockphoto.com
contributor Khanchit
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Continued on next page ...

individuals. But one can argue that competition is good. Sure, it can be. It also inspires us to stand out from the rest with our original content. But the fear is that with the plethora of content available, our intended audience might be so overstimulated and overwhelmed by being constantly bombarded with content that they're just no longer interested nor want to engage ... with anything.

I reached out to Dean Snyder, owner of Snyder Printer in Troy, NY. Snyder Printer has printed this magazine from our very first issue. I was curious to hear Dean's professional perspective.

Dean shared, "AI hasn't really affected our production yet. It has affected prepress though and my estimating software. I can just type in the size and quantity(s) of an item, and it immediately lets me know the best sheet size to run it on. I'm sure when we start to upgrade our equipment (folders, cutters, etc.) that AI will be built into the firmware, which is crazy!"

As part of my design and marketing firm, I work with a lot of indie authors, and in the last few years they have been talking more and more about the negative impact of AI on their industry. One of them (a very prominent author based in England) shared an article with me that stated that 100,000 ebooks used to be published per month, but now it's over 300,000. The additional 200,000 books? According to this report, they are all AI-generated.

So you can only imagine the impact that AI is having on authors in general, but specifically on independent authors, when they are now not only competing with other authors who sit down and write their own books without the help of AI, but also with two-thirds of their market being flooded with AI-generated content. Writing is about using your mind, imagination, and talent to *create*. How is it creating when you just tell AI to write a book for you? This shouldn't be allowed.

Another big change within the book world as of late regards influencers and readers who post promotional content for authors; some authors are now specifying that they do not allow or endorse AI-generated graphics or content, some even going so far as

banning it.

An article published by NPR earlier this year posed this question: "All this is marking a turning point for the publishing industry. How can authors ethically use this technology? And do readers really need new AI-authored books in a market already saturated with options?"

Professional services

Kirk Kneller of the Kneller Insurance Agency is a man who wears many hats. In addition to owning Kneller Insurance, Kirk is a farmer, and for many years has sat on various local boards including that of Columbia Memorial Hospital. I asked Kirk what he thought of tech and AI.

"The impact of AI/tech on the insurance industry has been quite interesting. From an employment standpoint, there should be no major impact since we are in the service business. As insurance policies become more complicated to construct and interpret, our clients will need personal service even more. This raises the question of adding staff to ensure appropriate response times for client questions as well as underwriting questions from carriers. From a claims standpoint, AI is helping us check carrier claim decisions. We have recently succeeded in overturning claim declinations by using AI to pull case precedent and/or coverage determinations within minutes. Using AI's findings, we can substantiate our case for payment instead of denial. All in all, at this point, we are happy with the benefits of using AI/tech to service our clients more efficiently and professionally."

In the October issue of *Main Street*, our resident real estate professional and realty writer, Christine Bates, penned an article titled "Real Estate and Artificial Intelligence." (You can find the article on our website under the real estate section.) In it she discussed how AI is affecting the real estate industry – both positively and negatively. So I asked Christine the same question as everyone else: how does she feel that technological advancements and/or AI are impacting her job as a real estate agent.

"AI is a terrific assistant in assessing the condition of a house and then



Image: istockphoto.com contributor Smileus

estimating how much repair, renovation, or replacement might cost. And then listing quality contractors in the area. As an objective source, it also helps navigate the delicate conversation with clients about preparing a house for listing. AI is also useful for document contract checking. You just have to remember to ask and ask again and then check the information. My least favorite part of AI is vendors pushing AI referral and targeting services to realtors."

I then asked her about the AI-doctored photos that some real estate companies are using. These photos can range from simply removing eye sores like telephone poles or clutter in a living area to full-on "imagine what this house could look like" photos. I posed the question of whether she found these photos misleading for potential buyers. Christine replied, "If a photo is digitally staged, it should be indicated. People need to know what they are looking at. It can be helpful to buyers to see a room empty, painted a different color, or with different furniture. Most buyers can't imagine a different space."

I posed the same questions to an area attorney who observed that AI lacks the ability to exercise professional judgment, or fully account for contextual nuances, which can affect the reliability of its outputs.

Drawing on their professional experience, the attorney noted that clients and members of the public increasingly use AI tools to interpret legal documents. According to the attorney, this practice can generate questions or concerns that are not always grounded in the substance of the document itself. While AI may increase access to information and encourage engagement, the attorney cautioned that its outputs may be misunderstood or

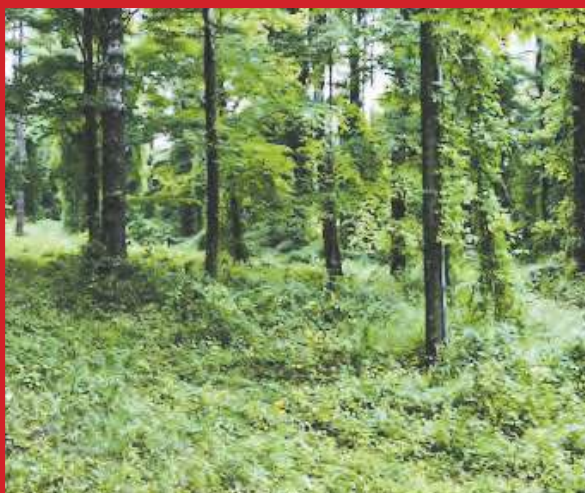
over-relied upon when not evaluated critically or in conjunction with professional guidance.

So what say you?

By a lot of accounts, there are certainly great advantages, but there are also many downfalls and dangers. I find hearing the different perspectives to be very helpful to create a rounded opinion on the matter. We each have to look at our own life specifically. From there we can decide what makes sense for us and our families today as well as tomorrow and in the coming years. Of course a lot of this is totally out of our control as individual citizens of this world, we don't control technology nor policies after all. Further, most of us don't even think twice about the technology that surrounds us in our daily lives if we're being totally honest. That's not to say that we shouldn't raise red flags where we see them. This is our future, too. This is the future of our children. And these technologies are shaping our everyday lives and that of future generations. We have a responsibility to do right by them and do right by our planet.

I don't know what the right answers are. I just know what feels right and wrong to me. And as I look at this world and our society, I have to admit that I am worried. Call me a skeptic, call me old fashioned, but I believe there are bigger issues at play and that we need to look at the greater good. We have to think about the future of Planet Earth and what is the right thing to do – for everyone who calls Earth home. •

If you have thoughts and viewpoints on the subject that you'd like to share, please reach out to us at info@mainstreetmag.com.



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