

FREE

SHELTON *Life*

COMMUNITY & BUSINESS NEWS

WINTER 2023
VOLUME 29, ISSUE 2



WINTER ISSUE HIGHLIGHTS

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SHELTON COMMUNITY & BUSINESS NEWS

Greetings From the Mayor

Welcome from the Editor



We are all thinking and saying the same thing at this point in the year, and that is "it's hard to believe another year is over." Time really does move quickly and it's

been an absolute pleasure to bring you the ongoing editions of the *Shelton Life* publication in 2023.

It is fascinating to see so many incredible people and Shelton businesses featured in this year's publications. I have written in my 1-On One articles about our historic farms here in Shelton. Understanding the generational history and importance of our Shelton farms has been a delight to understand in depth, and I hope it has been for you as well.

Additionally, companies continue to expand, relocate and move to our City of Shelton in droves because of the quality of life and diversity, our access to skilled labor, our proximity to major roads and
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Front Cover: Jones Family Farm
Back Cover: Shelton Day 2023

Shelton Life Winter 2023 Community & Business News

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In Memory

Fred Musante, Sr., (1922-2009)

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Dear Shelton Residents and Businesses:

We are pleased to present the Winter 2023 edition of our *Shelton Life* newsletter. This city-wide publication continues to be a terrific source of up-to-date city news delivered free of charge to our residents and businesses.

Our community continues to grow in many ways and the city is committed to maintaining a balanced growth in which housing, business, education and open space preservation are equally managed.

Recently, the personal-finance website, WalletHub released its 2023 report on the Best Small Cities in America. In this report, Shelton placed 99th out of 1,321 communities with populations between 25,000 and 100,000 and was named No. 1 small city in Connecticut. Shelton's ratings for safety, education and health were within the top 5% of all communities surveyed with affordability and economics placing Shelton in the top third. These results are indicators as to why individuals, families and businesses continue to make Shelton a top destination.

This issue continues to highlight our residents, its businesses, not for profits and community volunteers all working together to create a healthy and balanced community. I am confident you will enjoy the numerous articles showcasing Shelton's assets.

Finally, I commend all of our volunteers and the work, in particular, of the Economic Development Commission on the *Shelton Life*. Since this edition will be the last for 2023, let me wish all of our residents a wonderful Holiday Season and a prosperous New Year.

Very truly yours,

Mark A. Laretti
Mayor, City of Shelton



Shelton Libraries Offering Something For Everyone

Now that the renovation of the Plumb Memorial Library is complete, the Plumb Library is fully back to offering new books and media, information and programs for all ages.

In addition to regular booktalks and Tai Chi classes, the library has been offering Friday films at 1:00 PM every other week with snacks provided by the Friends of the Library. Also offered are several musical, computer and craft programs for adults along with speakers who present on a wide range of topics from history to literature.

The teens, in addition to having their own Junior Friends of the Library volunteer group, have formed a cooking club that is busy trying out new recipes. The children's department is always offering a variety of storytimes, movies and craft programs for the youngest library lovers.

At the Huntington Branch, Jessica Prutting has been promoted to Branch Librarian. Plans are also being proposed for upgrades to the branch library.

Both Plumb and the branch libraries offer a free notary service (by appointment only). "Tech Time" with Mr. Joe on Wednesday mornings for individual computer problems and chrome books for in-house use is offered at Plumb Library. Playaways, wonderbooks and launchpads that can fit in the palm of your hand are available for loan, and a very popular new seed library thanks to the Olde Ripton Garden Club.

A new gallery area in the Meeting Room at Plumb has been added in addition to the upstairs formal gallery to showcase local artists. Staff encourages any local artists to contact the library to have their art showcased.

The Friends of the Shelton Libraries have an executive committee in place and have been hard at work making plans for the future. They currently have an ongoing booksale during regular library hours at the Plumb Library in the Reading Room. There are donation



hours on Tuesday and Saturdays from 9:00 am– 3:00 pm, and they will gratefully accept gently-used hard cover and paperback books, DVDs, puzzles and audiobooks in the green book drop outside the Meeting Room doors. (Textbooks, encyclopedias, medical, computer or condensed books, magazines or newspapers, music cassettes,

VHS Tapes, toys, games, stuffed animals or any materials that are damaged are not accepted.) All donations become the property of the Plumb Memorial Library to be used at our discretion.

It is an exciting time to be a part of the Shelton Library system. Heraclitus, the Greek philosopher, said, "change is the only constant in life" and the Shelton Libraries have certainly proven that to be so – it has been slow in coming sometimes, but it has been a positive change. In the coming months, surveys will be distributed to see what patrons would like from the libraries, and whether the Library Board, staff and Friends of the Library can make that part of the strategic plan going forward. Any and all ideas on how to improve both buildings and library services are welcome. ♦



The Huntington Branch at the Community Center

Stone Gardens Farm Market Bringing Their Community Fresh, Locally Sourced Food

Stone Gardens Farm Market is not just a grocery store; it's a labor of love and a testament to the unwavering commitment of its owners, Fred and Stacia Monahan, to bring their community fresh, locally sourced food. Opening its doors on June 6th, 2023, in Huntington Center, the Market has quickly become a home-town favorite.

The journey of Stone Gardens Farm Market began back in 1998 when the Monahans started their farm with a humble offering of vegetables and sweet corn alongside Shelton Dairy (Hudak's Farm). In 2007, they took a leap by branching out into farmer's markets

expand their mission, and took it. "It's been amazing to provide our customers everything they need for a meal, and the comfort of knowing that the food they're eating is raised just a few miles away." This sense of commitment to community extends to every corner of the store. Even the customer service desk was crafted by a local carpenter using trees from Shelton.

Angus Mondesir, the General Manager, and Donna Durrschmidt, the Produce Lead, stayed with Stone Gardens Farm Market after Common Bond's closure. "This was a perfect fit for Shelton. It really has a home-type feel," Durrschmidt said.



(LtoR) General Manager, Angus Mondesir; Customer Service Manager, with Jon Leary; Stacia's parents, Tom and Kathy Niezelski; Produce Lead, Donna Durrschmidt

and offering vegetable shares, gradually growing to become one of the largest vegetable share providers in Connecticut. Recognizing their customers' demand for fresh meat, the Monahans worked to meet USDA requirements and establish their first butcher shop.

When the pandemic struck in 2020 and grocery store shelves were stripped bare, Stone Gardens remained a steadfast source of fresh, locally grown food. Word quickly spread, and soon customers were flocking to their farm stand. This influx of customers during challenging times was more than a reaction to the crisis, it was a sign of the strong community bond the Monahans were building.

Their commitment to creating a community centered around fresh, locally sourced food became even more apparent when Common Bond Market announced its closure. The Monahans saw an opportunity to further



Executive Chef: Todd Concillo

This season, Stone Gardens was in the process of raising turkeys for Thanksgiving. Last year, they raised 1,300 turkeys and were on track to sell more than 2,000 in 2023. The market is also excited about their partnerships with other farms and businesses in the community, such as being the exclusive vendor of Rich's Farm Ice Cream from Oxford. Executive Chef Todd Concillo has expanded the grab-and-go section, and he's currently working on a hot soup and bone broth bar, with all ingredients sourced from Stone Gardens farm and butcher.

When asked what the community should know about Stone Gardens Market, Stacia's father, Tom Niezelski, says, "Don't leave without trying the soup!"

To sample the soup yourself or stock up on farm-fresh produce and meats, visit Stone Gardens Farm Market at 40 Huntington Street, Shelton, or check them out online at StoneGardensFarmMarket.com. ♦

LOCAL BUSINESSES

Fairfield County Music Studio Uncovering the Magic of Music



Owner Mike Donnarummo with Alexander Baneat, age 16 (he's been Mike's student for 11 years!)

Mike Donnarummo is striking a harmonious note with music students in Shelton. A lifelong musician and Shelton native, Mike officially opened Fairfield County Music Studio in Huntington Plaza on September 1st of this year, however, the connections

he's forged with his students began over a decade ago.

Growing up, Mike found a home in the local arts scene, including playing in the Shelton High School band and participating in community theater. His roots in town run deep, and he feels grateful to now contribute to its vibrant arts scene. "We're lucky to live in a town that values the arts," he said, "and I'm really lucky that I get to be a part of that." His goal now is to foster that love of music, and bring that sense of belonging to a new generation of kids.

Mike's journey as a music educator began in college at Manhattanville with one-on-one piano lessons. The spark of teaching grew when he met his wife, also a music educator, and they relocated to Trumbull in 2019, building an in-home studio that allowed him to expand his teaching program. After the birth of their son, Mike decided to move his studio to its new location, only minutes from the home he grew up in.

During this time, his students became an integral part of his life, to the extent that some of them actually performed at Mike's wedding. For Mike, it's more than just imparting musical knowledge; it's about fostering relationships. "I want to build a community around music," he expresses, underscoring music's transformative power to create a sense of belonging.

"Music can be a sanctuary for kids who may not find it in sports or academics. It provides that sense of belonging."

Mike's dedication to music knows no limits, and he seeks to instill this same fervor in his students. Over the years, he has had the privilege of guiding some of the same students for over a decade, watching their musical journeys evolve from the age of 5 through college. He believes in music's universal language and its potential to connect people across cultures and backgrounds. "Music is a language that transcends barriers," Mike emphasizes, highlighting music's ability to help kids discover their true selves and connect with something greater.

Fairfield County Music Studio isn't only a place for mastering piano; it's a haven where students can



Students Jasmine and Jaxon Williams

uncover the magic of music. Guided by Mike, students embark on a musical adventure that starts with the fundamentals and evolves into an exploration of diverse musical genres. To keep them engaged,

students pick a song, and Mike picks a song, "I know a lot of Taylor Swift," he said, "And you know what? That's great."

With Fairfield County Music Studio, Mike extends an invitation to the Shelton community to embrace the joy of music and to support the local arts scene by attending performances, and supporting young artists. For more information about lessons, visit FairfieldCountyMusicStudio.com. ♦

Shelton Historical Society Celebrating the Holidays



The Shelton Historical Society recently celebrated the holidays for members, friends, and the public with festive decorations inside its Brownson House at Shelton History Center for the first time since the pandemic. Natural elements such as evergreens and dried flowers adorned fireplace mantels while candles and vintage ornaments added sparkle to the gathering.

A tree that was planted to honor the late Margaret Coughlin, a former president and long-time supporter of the Shelton Historical Society, was dedicated as it was lit when dusk began to fall. She was instrumental in broadening the ability of the Society to better serve the public through its collections and

programs. She was responsible for establishing the permanent exhibit that outlines the development of the city, Three Centuries of Shelton, in the Wilson Barn on the property. Her husband, Marty Coughlin, has also served an extended period as president, carrying on the momentum she began.

During this season of giving, donations of non-perishable food items will be collected at Shelton History Center, 70 Ripton Road, until December 20 and will be given to Spooner House, continuing the tradition that was begun during the pandemic when many places, including the Shelton History Center, were closed to the public. ♦



LOCAL BUSINESSES



URBN GREENS

connecticut

Offering a healthier and enjoyable alternative to traditional fast food... with the vision to become the go-to destination at 414 Howe Avenue

The Urbn Greens family has a passion for healthy eating and a desire to make a positive impact on the community. The owner’s personal journey of transitioning from unhealthy eating habits to a healthier lifestyle through salads was the inspiration to create a salad bar that not only offers delicious options, but also promotes a culture of wellness and enjoyment. At URBN GREENS, they believe that salads should be a source of pleasure, not just a means to an end.

They strive to make healthy eating accessible to everyone and are committed to using sustainable practices in all aspects of their business.

The menu at Urbn Greens features signature salads like the URBN Greens Jerk Chicken, the URBN Greens Roasted Salmon Caesar and the URBN Greens Fiesta Chicken. Customers can also create their own salads with different varieties of lettuce, proteins and toppings offered. Soups are also offered daily.

The hours of Urbn Greens are Monday through

Friday from 11:00 AM until 7:00 PM, Saturday 12:00 pm to 6:00 pm and on Sunday from Noon until 5:00 PM. ♦



Core Values

Health: Prioritizing the health and well-being of our customers by using only the freshest, high-quality ingredients that are locally sourced and free from harmful additives or preservatives.

Creativity: Constantly innovating and creating unique and exciting salad options that cater to different tastes and preferences, while maintaining a focus on nutrition.

Sustainability: Reducing our environmental impact by using eco-friendly materials, reducing waste, and supporting local and organic farmers.

Community: Dedicated to building a strong sense of community by fostering positive relationships with our customers and local partners, and giving back to the community through various initiatives.

Protecting the Housatonic River Watershed

By Jane Bakker, Housatonic Valley Association Special Projects Manager



Paddlers on the Housatonic in Shelton

The Housatonic Valley Association (HVA) is the voice of the Housatonic River, its tributaries and watershed lands in Connecticut, Massachusetts and New York and works to protect, restore and advocate for its natural beauty and climate resilience through collaboration, education and engagement.

Accomplishments over the years

With HVA members, community leaders, government agencies and conservation partners: 19,000 acres of land within the Housatonic River Valley were protected including 1,500 acres to permanently protect the Appalachian Trail between Cornwall, Sharon and Kent, and the rest conserved in dozens of communities across the watershed through easements and state/federal conservation designations.

With a team of conservationists, interns, and volunteers, and a network of community and conservation



Hikers on the Appalachian Trail

partners, HVA restores and protects vital watershed lands and waters. HVA has a long track record – 80 years and counting! – of conserving and defending this beautiful river valley.

Nearly 100 miles of rivers and streams were improved or better protected through community efforts to designate river greenways, restore riparian buffers, remove dams, replace flow-pinching and flood causing culverts, find and stop pollution, and improve management through watershed plans and state/federal designations. The city of Shelton and neighboring Derby have consistently led riverfront conservation, recreation and revitalization in the

region, and are models for other communities along the Housatonic and Naugatuck Rivers.

In 2011, HVA began assessing Housatonic stream crossings and recently assessed hundreds of culverts in the Naugatuck River Valley to reduce impediments to fish and wildlife and reduce flood risk.

PCB cleanup



Left, poor culvert. Right, good culvert.

HVA played a pivotal role in PCB cleanup of the Housatonic River. It was the only group to publicly demand that GE and EPA re-start stalled negotiations. This ultimately led to a cleanup agreement. In the 1970s, HVA did the first river testing that proved likely PCB contamination. The first PCB cleanup plan for the Housatonic River was signed in 2000. PCB levels dropped for the first time in the first half-mile of river to be cleaned in 2007—from 120 parts per million to 0.24 parts per million!



Dredging the East Branch in Massachusetts

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Allowing fish access

In 2015, HVA installed fish ladder baffles in the Town of Cornwall to allow trout to swim upstream to spawn for the first time in 20 years!



Fish ladder in Cornwall, Connecticut

River Health

Thousands of people and school children across the region have learned about river health, and how to steward our lands and waters. Shelton and Derby were among the first River Valley towns to launch the RiverSmart Campaign, helping residents take actions on their own property to safeguard clean water and river health.



www.beriversmart.org

At the same time, HVA's River Stewards of Tomorrow Fund was established in honor of Philip Crane Jones, a river guide lost too soon. The River Stewards Fund provides funds to help hire and train aspiring environmental leaders every summer. These young men and women are smart, passionate, and inspire hope for the future.



Numerous cleanups take place each year.

HVA has protected and/or restored the health of more than 120 miles of rivers and wetland streams and removed thousands of tons of garbage from the Housatonic River and tributaries. Numerous cleanups

take place each year in the spring and fall.

Hundreds of youngsters in the watershed, came face-to-face with nature as they learned about water quality, river critters and wildlife, stenciled storm drains, made shade for brook trout, removed invasive plants, and had fun, too.



What's changing?

As our climate shifts, HVA is working in two vital ways to establish a healthy and climate-ready watershed by 2040:

Follow the Forest: Conserving a 50,000-acre woodland and wildlife climate corridor from southwestern Connecticut through New York and the Berkshires to Canada, for wildlife habitat, clean water, and carbon and temperature moderation.

Clean, Cold and Connected: Restoring and protecting 500 miles of rivers and streams along with the groundwater that recharges these waterways and our local drinking water.

Education, Collaborative Representation, and Partnership: Engaging people and partners from the watershed's diverse communities in environmental solutions. HVA also fights for common sense policies that help our environment; encourage and mentor young environmental leaders; and help families paddle, hike and explore the watershed.

Results since 2020

Today, with 50 **Follow the Forest** partners working across the watershed and south into the Hudson Valley and north into Vermont, HVA is prioritizing and securing core forest and linkage parcels for conservation. Together they have conserved or secured an additional 6,000 woodland and linkage acres, more than 10 percent, of

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HVA, continued from pg. 8
their 50,000-acre goal, with 2,400 more for this year.

The HVA Litchfield Hills Greenprint Partners Pledge Fund, which helps HVA's conservation partners accomplish significant, strategic land protection and advance **Follow the Forest**, has raised \$1.25M from private donors and leveraged over \$11M to protect 3,000 plus acres. More Naugatuck and Housatonic Valley towns can access new conservation funds via the successful expansion of the Highlands Conservation Act; eight communities are moving ahead with nine more gearing up, to protect the *Follow the Forest* climate corridor.

With 75 **Clean, Cold and Connected** partners, more than 800 stream culverts are assessed and prioritized today across the Berkshires, northwest Connecticut, and the lower Naugatuck Valley; Fish need to swim upstream to spawn; HVA makes that possible and is restoring dwindling diadromous fish populations in streams across the region with its partners. A network of HVA Clean, Cold and Connected partners such as the Pootatuck Watershed Association, Trout Unlimited, Nature Conservancy, Farmington River Watershed Association, Connecticut River Conservancy, Save the Sound, and town leaders in the greater Danbury and Valley regions are uniting to restore rivers.

Watershed-restoration plans are complete for the Still



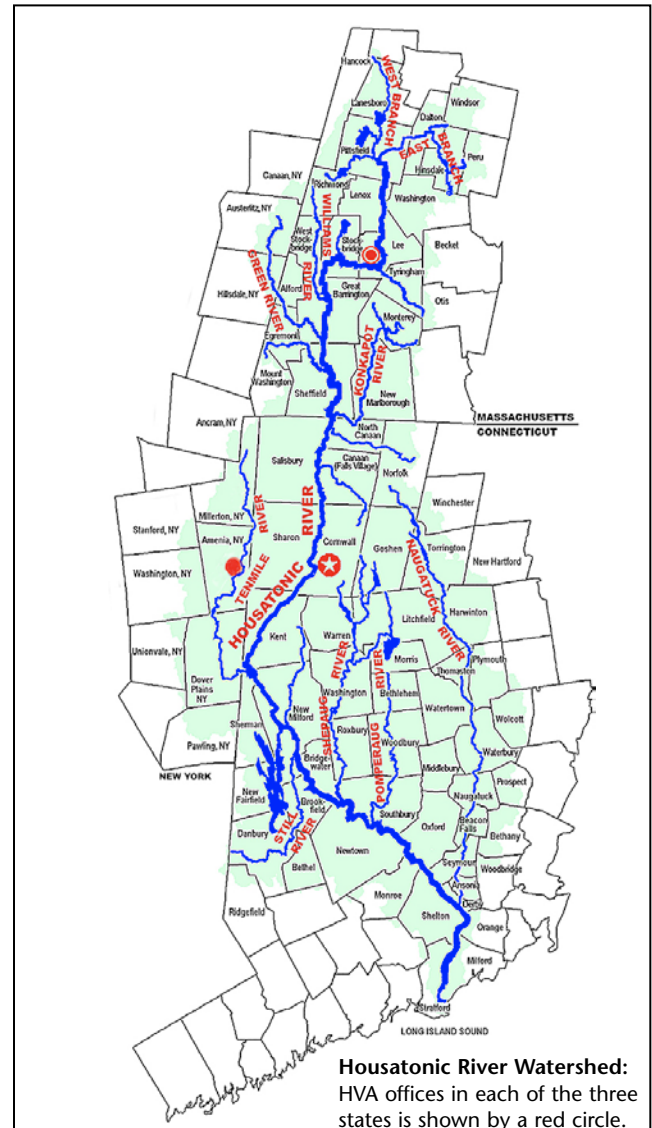
River (seven-town greater Danbury area); the bi-state Ten Mile River (eight towns in New York and northwest Connecticut); and Pootatuck River (Newtown, Connecticut); and underway in the Green River and Southwest Branch basins (Berkshires).

Diadromous fish and other river critters in the Naugatuck River Valley are getting a helping hand from Long Island Sound back to cool freshwater habitats in Prospect, Beacon Falls, Bethany, Thomaston and Watertown where work is on-going to replace stream-pinching culverts and other barriers; HVA is looking at new opportunities in Shelton, Derby, Ansonia and Stratford, as well.

River health is improving in Bethel, New Milford and Newtown thanks to HVA's Still River Connections high school students busy planting rain gardens and buffers. The Pootatuck River and tributaries like the Deep River are "closer to cleaner" with the Pootatuck Watershed Action Plan almost done with the help of partners like the Pootatuck Watershed Association, Trout Unlimited, Newtown neighbors and town leaders.

A future of clean, cool rivers and drinking water, thriving woodlands and wildlife, and livable communities for our children and grandchildren –together HVA can make this happen. It's possible, with the help of caring friends and partners across the tri-state Housatonic Watershed.

Learn more at www.hvatoday.org. ♦



LOCAL BUSINESSES

Located at 762 River Road in Shelton near the SportsCenter of CT, a new restaurant has joined two existing ones, Parker Eatery and Fatty Patty. Owner, Patrick Fahy, who already owns eight eateries in the area, decided to add this new eatery to his two Shelton restaurants.

“There are pizza places everywhere, but this is an experience,” Fahy said. P.izza features a brick oven and self-pour beer and wine taps. Fahy’s goal is to have families enjoy an experience. Adults can sit and enjoy the atmosphere of Parker while the children have the option of getting burgers and shakes at Fatty Patty or P.izza within the same location.

To allow for this experience, Fahy was able to open



walls between the three restaurants enabling patrons to walk from one to the other. “This is three different atmospheres within the same building,” he added.

Although downtown Shelton and Bridgeport Avenue are seeing expansive growth, Fahy is happy to be located on River Road. Currently, there are two proposed developments before the city which Fahy believes will bring business to his restaurants.

At P.izza sit-down dining is offered with menu items ranging from plain thin crust pizza, to spicy Hawaiian, Margarita, three cheese and various meats and veggies. Whatever your desire

may be, stop in and check out all three restaurants. Pat and his staff look forward to meeting you.

P.izza is open daily from 3:00–10:00 PM. ♦



Exploring Housatonic Woods Preserve

Submitted by Teresa Gallagher, Natural Resource Manager

Housatonic Woods is Shelton's newest hiking destination. The 90-acre preserve is located near Indian Well State Park where the hillside rises above Route 110. Although intrepid hikers of the 13-mile Paugussett Trail have been passing through this open space for years on their way from Shelton Lakes to Indian Well, there were no loop options for people desiring a shorter walk or any place for them to park.

That changed when the City purchased an eight-acre tract of land off of Woodsend Avenue, expand-



through the forest for a full mile from the new parking area on Woodsend Avenue to the Paugussett Trail near Sinsabaugh Heights. The new trail is marked with orange blazes and was named Woodsend Trail. The orange and blue trails, when combined with a short connector trail, allow for the two-mile "lollipop loop" hike through the preserve.



ing the preserve and providing much-needed public parking. The new 2-mile "lollipop loop" hike through the preserve gives hikers another way to get out and explore the woods.

Housatonic Woods Preserve is the first of a string of parks located along the steep slopes of the Housatonic River in the north part of Shelton. To the north is Indian Well State Park and Tahmore Preserve, followed by Birchbank Mountain. This is terrain where a hiker can pretend they are in Vermont hiking the Appalachian Trail. They will find plenty of ups and down, frequent brook crossings, and occasional rocky areas, along with rewarding scenic vistas of the Housatonic River several hundred feet below. The blue-blazed Paugussett Trail, established in the 1930s, travels through it all, linking these parks together on its way towards Webb Mountain in Monroe.

Work on our newest hiking trail began immediately after the city's purchase, allowing hikers to ramble

Building hiking trails along the Housatonic River bluff is always a challenge. If the hillside trail is not designed carefully, it will erode quickly



Woodsend Trail near the Tangerine Squeezer

and turn into a gully. Rocky areas with cliffs and boulder fields must be navigated and the best stream crossings located. The biggest challenge for building Woodsend Trail was finding a way through the series of cliffs that rise above Rt 110 at the big bend above Indian Well. The narrow route that was found, with cliffs above and cliffs below, became known as "the Passageway."

One enters this cliff passage by way of the "Tangerine Squeezer," so named because of the orange blazes on a large tree nestled up against a rocky outcrop. The trail squeezes between the two. This was the only feasible way for the trail to gain access to the Passageway.

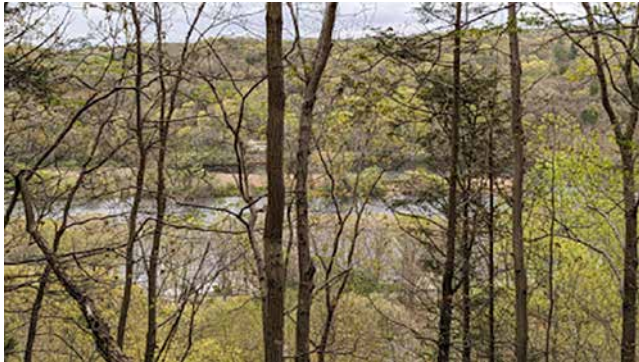
Constructing the south end of the Passageway was especially difficult. The trail descends the steep hillside



Trail crew moving a boulder

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via two switchbacks and then passes through a boulder field before arriving at a brook crossing. A lot of back-breaking work was done by volunteer trail crews in this area moving boulders and digging the trail into the side of the hill.



The focus at the north end of the new trail, below Woodsend Avenue, was to reduce long-term erosion as the trail descends down the sandy hillside. Rather than heading straight down the hill, the trail takes some “S” turns and levels out from time to time, allowing storm-water to escape off the tread. This fragile, sandy soil is common along the banks of the Housatonic River, left by a series of glacial lakes. It’s also why the trails along the river bluff are open for foot-travel only. At the bottom of the hill is a pleasant plateau with seasonal views of the Housatonic River Valley, along with an impressive example of a charcoal mound. Charcoal was made throughout Connecticut to power industries such as the copper mills in the Naugatuck Valley.

The south half of the new trail, as it approaches Sinsabaugh Heights, presented a different type of challenge. The trail had to be cut through impenetrable thickets of thorny Japanese Barberry. A series of drainage channels and brooks added to the challenge.

The Hike:

This is a two-mile “lollipop loop” hike (0.5 mile out, then a mile loop, and 0.5 mile back). Expect hills, uneven footing, and water crossings. Proper footwear will be needed and some will want a hiking stick or trekking poles.

Trailhead parking is at the end of Woodsend Avenue near the junction with Cynthia Drive. For GPS directions, use “49 Woodsend Ave.” The trail slopes gently downhill towards Route 110 and Indian Well State Park. Be alert for twists and turns in the trail through this open area, especially when there are fresh leaves or snow (the curves help prevent erosion). The trail soon arrives at a plateau

perched above Route 110 with good seasonal views of the Housatonic River and hills beyond. People looking for a shorter walk may wish to stop here to enjoy the views before turning around and heading back.

The next section is a bit more challenging. Hikers begin this section by stepping through the Tangerine Squeezer and entering the Passageway between cliffs. It’s a different world up on the Passageway, with seasonal views of the Housatonic River and the cars down on Route 110.

At the far end of this narrow pass, a broad wooded slope opens up ahead. To get there, the trail switchbacks down the steep hill to cross a boulder field and brook. The walk then becomes much more gentle as the trail heads uphill through open woods. Pass the blue/orange connector trail on the left, which marks the beginning of the loop, and continue up the hill.

After the trail levels out, it enters a scrappy section of former pastureland filled with invasive Japanese Barberry and crossed by stone walls and a series of small seasonal drainage channels. This part of the preserve has a different feel to it.



After passing near Sinsabaugh Heights, Woodsend trail ends in a “T” with the blue-blazed Paugussett Trail. Loop hikers will take a left and follow the blue blazes gently down the hillside towards Indian Well State Park, keeping an eye out for the Woodsend Connector trail on the left. It’s marked with blazes that are part blue and part orange. This connector trail soon reconnects with Woodsend Trail. Following the sign, take a right turn at this junction to recross the Passageway and ascend the hill back to the parking area.

This trail was made possible by volunteers with the Shelton Trails Committee. Information on upcoming work parties and recent events can be found on their blog at sheltonconservation.org/trails. Hiking maps for all 31 miles of trails in Shelton are posted on the Conservation Commission’s website (sheltonconservation.org). ♦

Valley Community Foundation 2023 VCF Responsive Grant Recipients



The Valley Community Foundation (VCF) and its Board of Directors allocated more than \$297,000 in grants to 25 area nonprofits, including a multi-year grant to help local first responders purchase lifesaving equipment. These grants fund organizations that serve the Valley in various vital sectors including food assistance, youth services/sports, education, healthcare, sexual assault services, arts and culture, public safety, and more.

“These grants are not only a reflection of VCF’s commitment to the community but a testament to the hard work and dedication of our Valley nonprofits,” said Sharon Closius, VCF’s President and CEO. “We’re immensely proud of the impact these grants will have on the region and everyone who lives here.”

There was one multi-year grant this year, a \$60,000 two-year grant to Storm Engine Company Ambulance & Rescue Corps in Derby, will help purchase new “Jaws of Life.” The Jaws of Life is a life-saving hydraulic rescue tool used to extract car-crash victims from vehicles.

Every year, from January to March, nonprofits and programs from Ansonia, Derby, Oxford, Seymour, and Shelton can apply to VCF for Responsive and Community grants. These grants are designed to support activities or projects that contribute to the Valley’s improvement or assist residents in tangible ways.

The Responsive Grants application process is rigorous, with VCF staff and board members evaluating each application to determine if the organization qualifies for a grant and the appropriate amount it should receive.

“The nonprofits in our region are the heart and soul of our community,” Closius said. “Through our grants, we are joining in their mission and investing in the future of the Valley.”

Established in 2004, each year VCF distributes approximately \$2 million in grants that support local nonprofits and the people they serve. In addition to grantmaking, VCF works in strong partnership with The Community Foundation for Greater New Haven (TCF) to promote philanthropy in Ansonia, Derby, Oxford, Seymour, and Shelton.

2023 VCF Responsive Grant Recipients

Boys & Girls Club of the Lower Naugatuck Valley – To support programs that help Valley youth, teach civic engagement and good citizenship, and help them

cope with anxiety, bullying and other post-pandemic issues in school. \$35,000.

cARTie – To help confront inequities in education and arts classes by tailoring programs to meet the specific needs and interests of underserved Valley youth. \$15,000.

Center Stage Theatre – To provide general operating support to increase entertainment opportunities and a community theater experience for Valley residents. \$25,000.

Central Connecticut Coast YMCA Valley Branch – To promote health and wellbeing by increasing membership and continue to serve the needs of Valley youth and adults. \$20,000.

Housatonic Council, Boy Scouts of America – To support the council’s ongoing mission to help scouts learn life-benefiting skills, promote healthy outdoor activities and help the scouts become a more racially diverse organization. \$30,000.

Life Health and Wellness Center – To increase staff support to increase community outreach, awareness and help underserved populations in the Valley community. \$30,000.

Massaro Community Farm – To support general operating expenses so it can continue to provide locally grown healthy food for Valley residents, allow for ongoing sustainable agriculture and donate at least 10-percent of its harvest to hunger relief organizations in the region. \$10,000.

Rape Crisis Center of Milford, Inc. – To support its mission and provide victims of sexual assault with life-saving services and help with increased demand for services in the region. \$6,000.

Shelton Historical Society – To support the society’s efforts to preserve and promote Shelton and the Valley’s history, especially to reach out to new immigrant residents so they can learn about the Valley and its rich past. \$23,000.

St. Vincent de Paul of the Valley – To assist in its mission to help people of the Lower Naugatuck Valley with hunger and food insecurity. \$32,000.

Storm Engine Company Ambulance & Rescue Corps – To help update and buy new life-saving equipment

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LOCAL BUSINESSES

Maximum Nutrition

Stressing the Importance of a Healthy Lifestyle

Gina Monasterski is originally from Ecuador in South America. She arrived in this country at the age of 20 full of dreams as many immigrants do. One dream was to have her own business.

However, for 11 years Gina developed unhealthy habits resulting in being overweight, having no energy, being financially unstable and having low self-esteem. Finally, at the age of 31, Gina decided to join an international health and wellness company. This decision transformed her life.

As a result of 17 years of hard work and determination, her dream came true with the opening of Maximum Nutrition at 884 Bridgeport Avenue in Shelton. Gina is not only the owner but also a health coach and will tell you that the United States is the #1 country in obesity. Gina is determined to support the community in transforming lives stressing the importance of a healthy lifestyle through conscious nutrition.

Maximum Nutrition opened its doors on February 22, 2023 offering healthy shakes, energy teas, iced coffee and a variety of nutritional herbal supplements. The shakes are the “number one” meal replacement in the world consisting of vitamins, minerals, proteins while low in calories and sugar. Maximum Nutrition also offers a vegan line-up.

Whether it's to lose weight, gain weight, or just to improve energy levels, Gina believes Maximum Nutrition is your “one stop” shop to improve your wellness and also offers a 21-day Transformation Challenge. This challenge allows people to have both



Owner Gina Monasterski and her son Matthew with Mayor Lauretti at their Grand Opening.

face to face and online support about healthy eating, recipes, shopping lists, workout routines, snack guides, accountability, supplements, positivity and motivation. Gina said health shouldn't be negotiable, it should be a priority in our lives.

Gina who lives in Shelton has two children. Her son, Matthew, can be found working alongside her at the store.

Stop in and meet Gina. The store is open from 7am until 4pm, Monday through Friday and on Saturday from 9am until 2pm. You can also call ahead at 203-317-7881. ♦



Molly's Deli & Catering Where Authenticity is Key

In May, a familiar spot along River Road was reborn as Molly's Deli & Catering. Under the helm of former Piccolo's Deli employee Debbie Perry (and her husband Frank) the transition to Molly's Deli brings a vibrant, refreshed atmosphere. With a renewed purpose, Molly's shines brightly, boasting a fresh and inviting space that reflects the Perry's love for their good food and customer service.

Debbie's journey is one that resonates with the spirit of family and embracing new beginnings. Having spent her career working in a power plant office in Milford, Debbie was drawn to the freedom of working in the deli, which allowed her to care for her father with unwavering dedication after she'd been laid off in the pandemic.

When circumstances shifted, and change beckoned, the idea of returning to an office lost its appeal. "I loved the freedom of the deli," Debbie said, "I just couldn't go back to the office life." Considering Debbie's freedom to infuse her passion for good food and to nurture a space where locals gather, the Perry's jumped at this opportunity for a fresh start, and decided to purchase Piccolo's. As Debbie considered the name for her new deli, her German Shepard, Molly, jumped up and kissed her face, cementing Molly's Deli's new identity.

The revamping of Molly's extends beyond aesthetics, breathing new life into the kitchen and dining space. The introduction of a coffee bar promises a comforting start to the day for customers seeking a morning pick-me-up. The newly remodeled dining room is also available for rental.

At Molly's authenticity is key. Every dish is crafted in-house, a testament to the Perry's commitment to



Owner Debbie Perry

fresh, homemade food. From hearty breakfasts to home-cooked lunches, their menu boasts deli favorites and signature classics like stuffed cabbage and stuffed peppers. Molly's has also introduced a catering menu, both in-house and off-site. Don, the cook, and Kim, the sandwich-maker, both former Piccolo's employees, preserve the essence of a place that has held a special spot in the hearts of Shelton's residents for decades, while infusing it with fresh menu items for a new beginning.

In a world that incessantly moves forward, Molly's Deli stands as a testament to the beauty of embracing tradition while embarking on a new chapter. For more information on renting their dining room, for catering options, or to check out their menu, visit them online at MollysDeliShelton.com, or visit them at 425 River Road, Monday through Friday, 6am - 3pm, and Saturdays, 7am to 1pm. ♦



LOCAL BUSINESSES



When sisters, Shannon and Molly, decided to open their pet spa, Shelton was where they wanted to have their business. They found a place in Huntington Plaza across from the Huntington Green and opened their spa in June 2023. “We chose Shelton because we both moved here after college. We loved the location, the events offered and most



(L-R) Chris Ottowell, Shannon Ottowell, Molly Davies, Rob Davies

of all the community members who made us feel like Shelton has always been our home,” the sisters said. “There are so many amazing things about Shelton—mostly the love and appreciation for small business. We could not think of a better place to start our grooming salon!”

BoomaDoodle Spa is a small, non-traditional family-owned dog spa dedicated to providing quality care to their customers and pets. Owned by Shannon and Molly along with their husbands, Chris and Rob, they assure their spa is in “no way” traditional. They are committed to having a safe facility, making sure all of their furry friends are well taken care of and promise to provide a comfortable experience for each pup they treat as if they were their own.

The business name came from their very own pups. ‘Boom’ comes from Molly and Rob’s Black Lab, Boone, who is often called Boomie by all the nieces and nephews. ‘Doodle’ comes from Shannon and Chris’s Golden Doodle, Darby. Boone loves



being off leash running through the trails. You can spot Boone in the warmer months on the Shelton Trails around town. Darby loves being outside with people and swimming in his grandparents’ pool in the summer time!

BoomaDoodle is a full-service grooming spa. Their custom facility designs offer ample spacing for all sizes of dogs and outdoor potty breaks and an indoor waiting room with comfortable snooze sections.

BoomaDoodle Spa is a fun, safe and loving place for pups to gather while getting pampered.

BoomaDoodle Spa has amazing staff, Carley, Kirsten, and Melissa who dedicate their days to making all of the dogs coming in and out of the salon perfect! On nights and weekends you can find them going to grooming expos, volunteering on a local farm, or enjoying time with their own family and pets!

Various services are offered and more information can be found on their website at www.boomadoodlespa.com. Shannon and Molly are excited to get to know the community and groom your pets at their luxury spa. Trained on all breeds of dogs, they guarantee your pet will be in great hands.

You can stop by and see first-hand what the spa offers. They are open Tuesday- Friday and every other Saturday. Their hours of operations vary based on appointment time slots. You can call to make an appointment or get more info about the spa at 203-538-5354. ♦



“The EDC Chairman Steps Out to Visit” By Bing J. Carbone A Conversation with Terry Jones

NOTE: This will be the final 1-On One series article in Shelton Life for 2023. I hope you have enjoyed learning and “meeting” several of the local and historic people and families that have immensely helped shape the City of Shelton over many generations and continue on with the amenities they bring to this community.

Jones Family Farm

“Be good to the Land and the Land will be good to you.”

Bing: In this final article, I must admit, I am struggling where to even begin. Writers block, no, I don’t think so. Too busy to work on this article since the on-site interviews I conducted with this man and his family? Nope, not that either.

A lot of information to digest, to understand what makes this man tick, and to realize that there is an indescribable beauty in characteristics like humbleness, appreciation, kindness, respect, gratefulness, empathy, the ability to listen to others and the gifted ability to tell a story, and to do it in such a compelling way that left me virtually awestruck.

The man I am talking about is none other than Terry Hubbell Jones, a 5th generation owner of Jones Family Farms, here in the White Hills of Shelton, Connecticut.

I have known Terry for a bit through our attendance in various social and community networking gatherings but I really started to know him on a beautiful sunny October day where we sat outside at a table by the Jones Winery.

I arrived before the farm was open to begin my interview with Terry. What struck me first was the eerie quietness of walking into the farm as I headed straight to a hillside where the grapes were growing. I looked around and saw pumpkins, fall decorations and, as a painter myself, I observed scenery that I could never come close to expressing in a painting no matter how hard I tried.

Finally, out of nowhere, Terry was walking towards me with his “signature” cowboy hat on, jeans and a plaid shirt. I stood up and eagerly asked before we even shook hands, *What is it like for you to wake up in*

the morning, have a look around and think about your family’s history and all the hard work that has gone into this farm over so many years?”

Terry: Well first of all, it is good to wake up! (He



went on to tell me about the LEOPOLD CONSERVATION AWARD that he recently received.) What struck me was often at memorial services you hear about people’s accomplish-

ments after they have passed, but what a blessing for me to be ALIVE and surrounded by by 75 friends and hear praises of my work in various chapters of my life particularly working in farmland and open space conservation. What a thrill just to be living on this land, and I think every day that I stand on the shoulders of the previous generation, the four generations before me, now how exciting it is to have our children and grandchildren inspired to carry on the farm, so I am bookended by future promise and by the care and wisdom of past generations.”

Bing: *As we were talking about how the farm has evolved over the years with its products including a magnificent winery that is the brainchild of his son Jamie, I had a moment of audacity and boldness I suppose and I said to Terry, “Do you know what you sell here?”*

COMMUNITY NEWS

He just looked at me. I said, “Terry, what you sell are memories. What you sell are experiences.”

He paused, and then told me a story of a woman who wrote to him that very same sentiment.

Terry: What we try to create are family farm activities for our guests that are real.

Bing: *And so, my interview of Terry Jones began.*

Terry: Each generation changed this farm a little bit to keep up with the times from the 1860’s until now. I think that has set our family apart; change is welcome. As I said, if a door is opened, we would go through it. Also, the women that have married into the Jones family with each generation have become vital business partners and continue to help grow the vision of the farm. The daughters of my ancestors – Aunt Helen, Aunt Barbara, and Aunt Carol – loved this farm and wanted it to stay whole, never to be split up.

It all began when Philip James Jones came over from Ireland in the 1830s by sailing ship to visit his brother in Stratford, Connecticut. He was fond of livestock and horses and wanted to farm. He almost bought a farm in Stratford (near the current airport) but found the land kind of swampy with lots of mosquitos. Then he found a parcel of land in the White Hills of Huntington which reminded him of Ireland,



and he bought that in 1858. He raised sheep and cattle which he butchered and grew apples and potatoes. The Jones farm women made butter and raised chickens for eggs. He carted the farm products by horse and wagon to sell at the thriving port of Derby.

Philip James was also an investor in the Ousatonic Water Company that built the Shelton/Derby Dam, completed in 1870. He thought it was a great project to help the growth of the Shelton borough section of Huntington.

Bing: *I asked Terry if the family pretty much lives on the property today?*

Terry: Yes. Our daughter, Gwyn and her family, and our son Jamie and his family, live on the farm. Jamie and Christiana and family live in the home built by his great great grandparents, William and Theresa Jones, across the road from the Winery. Terry pointed out the dark green house that his father built for his new wife, Elisabeth, all from farm lumber in 1948. Terry grew up in that house and when he married Jean, he moved next door to the farm Victorian Homestead built by Philip James and afterwards the home of his grandparents, Philip Sr. and Joan. After acquiring property at the back of the farm off Eagle Road, Terry and Jean built a home in the woods in 2002 to be further away from the hustle and bustle of current agricultural operations at the farm’s center.



Jamie, Christiana, Jean and Terry Jones

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Bing: *I discussed my family business since 1945 and how family businesses can be challenging for many reasons and that the third generation of a family is usually the one that messes things up, but I said, "Terry, you have seemed to buck that trend with your family business. Why and how did you handle it when the reins of the business were turned over to you?"*

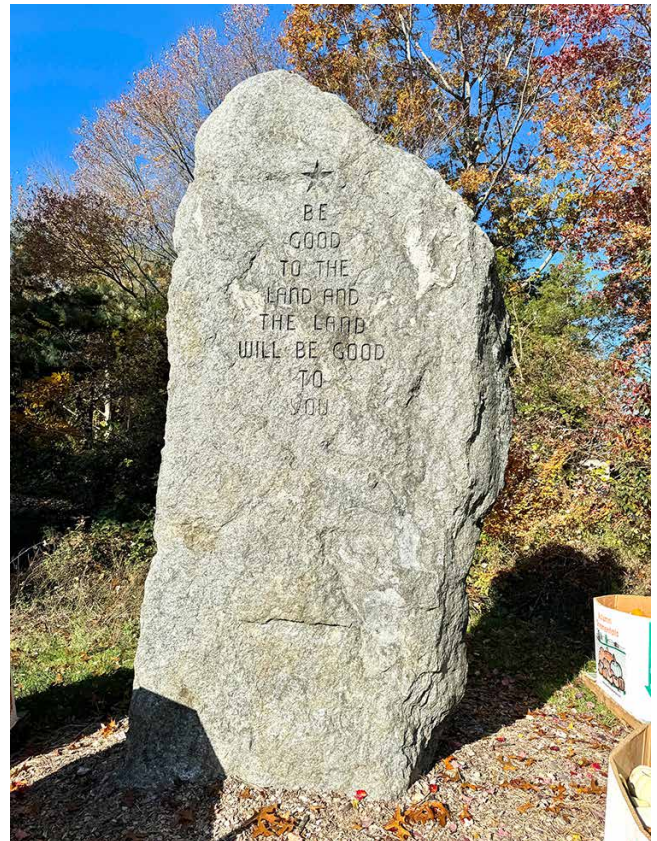
Terry: I was generation five and there was always the understanding that if a child wanted to do another pursuit, then so be it. My father did not enjoy tending to the cows when the farm was a dairy, but he loved trees and forestry. In 1936 when he was a senior in Shelton High School, he got some trees from the state and planted them. He thrived watching them grow. He had hoped to go to college at the University of Maine for forestry but his algebra skills were not up to par. Instead, he went to the Bartlett School of Tree Surgery in Stamford and learned to be an arborist. In 1938 a hurricane blew into New England so for the better part of the next two years he spent doing tree arborist repair work between Long Island and New Haven. "Fixing these trees, however, was labor intensive - done all by hand, climbing ropes - and maybe that was the reason he wanted to come back to the farm," Terry laughed.

In 1939 my great grandfather lent my father money to plant some spruce trees to tend and by 1947 some of them were as high as seven feet. That same year (the year that I was born) my father decided to cut trees for friends who wanted a fresh Christmas tree and 12 trees were sold. By 1949, 250 trees were sold. Then in the mid-1950's a few people from church asked him if they could go out and cut their own tree. So, my father became a true pioneer in the "cut your own Christmas tree business". Fast forward to the present, the farm sells between 12,000 to 15,000 trees every season.

Bing: *I mentioned to Terry that for my childhood, growing up in the 1960's I don't remember ever having a live tree. In fact, I do remember one grandmother having a white aluminum tree and the other a ceramic small decorative tree. I asked were live trees prevalent back then?*

Terry: Oh yes, they were, and they were largely scotch pine trees. With each successive year, more and more people wanted to cut their own tree.

Another thing to note was that my father had a realtor license for a decade and he was actually involved in the sale of Elim Park, a retirement home on River Road. He also served in the General Assembly in Connecticut and was a State Representative along with the Honorable Judge George Finn (father of former Alderman Jack Finn).



Bing: *When I interviewed Royal Wells (Fairview Tree Farm), I discovered so much amazing history here in Shelton. I learned about your family and the other families who have been here for so many generations and how all played a critical role in the development of the City of Shelton.*

Terry: Interesting you say that. I got a call in December of 1984 from John Vitka, a Shelton builder, real estate agent and friend (who recently passed) informing me that the Bachkowsky Farm, which is now home to Jones "Pumpkinseed Hill", was for sale. My father urged Jean and me to buy the farm. He said it was once in a lifetime opportunity to grow our farm and to keep the rural view our cut your own tree visitors cherish. So, we bid the asking price of \$1.5 million not knowing how we could actually afford it. With my parent's backing and support, we were able to secure the purchase of this land.

Not many years later, Iroquois Gas wanted to put a gas line through that property. I knew in 1991 when the war started in Kuwait this gas line was going to be "fast tracked". Instead of being adversarial, we worked with Iroquois and provided the necessary right of way on the property. We suggested partnering with the Shelton Land Conservation Trust, Aquarion

COMMUNITY NEWS

Water Company, and Iroquois Gas (headquartered in Shelton) along with the City of Shelton to purchase the nearby 55-acre Nicholdale Farm for the Shelton Land Trust located in the heart of the Means Brook Valley. Nicholdale Farm was slated to be sold for development. However, the transaction took place and Nicholdale Farm became a nucleus for additional Shelton Land Trust acquisitions; Pumpkinseed Hill starting this sequence.

Now, you can argue this would not have happened if I did not get that phone call from John Vitka back in 1984. The other thing, let's talk about integrity. He had the exclusive listing of those 83 houses if they were built; do the math. He knew when he called me that if we bought it, we would farm it and he would lose a whopping windfall. This is a story that deserves to be told. I believe the preservation of Pumpkinseed Hill and Nicholdale Farm would not have happened without the kindness of John and that phone call.

Bing: *At this point I had spent about three to four hours with Terry at the farm, and he asked if I wanted to meet him at Pumpkinseed Hill the following week. I said, sure, but since I had borrowed so much of his time already, I didn't push it. Sure, enough though, Terry remembered what he said and called me, hence we met at Pumpkin Seed Hill on another glorious warm October Saturday morning.*



Terry Jones with Bing Carbone

We started the day with Terry taking me into his truck and exploring parts of the farm not open to public visitation (total acreage of the Jones operations is about 550 acres). To actually see the depth, size and “artifacts” along the way was a privileged opportunity for me.

One highlight was seeing the still standing military base of the Bridgeport “Nike” BR94, a historic cold war relic. Developed by the United States Army and Bell Laboratories in the early 1950s, the Nike program was an anti-aircraft missile system meant to protect key American defense industries from Soviet attacks. In the mid-1950s, a back portion of the farm was purchased by the Army from the Joneses, reluctantly and sadly. Their property was to be used for barracks and mess hall, high elevation radar detection (on the highest hill in Shelton), and offices for surveillance operations. The rocket missiles were located at another base off Mohegan Road, a mile away.

After many years of struggle, we were able to repurchase our land and now use the base buildings for wine production (old mess hall) and for farm supply storage. The fields produce bountiful crops of pumpkins and cover crops.

Terry also took me over in his truck to a different piece of land the former McEwen Farm and scraped away grass and weed growth in a ground field to reveal a still present concrete arrow. Believe it or not, this was a “flight” guide to help the first airmail carrier flights in the 1920s on the path from New York to Boston. I just stood there in awe when Terry explained this to me.

As I looked around at the landscape, the views and Terry himself while driving, I just couldn't help but sit there in quiet wonder—quiet respect for this man, his humility, his kindness and his gentleness. Terry's worn out cowboy hat was sitting on the car dash and I asked him if I could put it on. He chuckled, and said, “Sure, Bing.”

I finished by asking Terry one of those tough interview questions for me and that was what he wanted his legacy to be?

Terry: A passion to work together for the good of the community.

Bing: *I knew what he meant by that because working together with just his family was never the full story. It's working together with all the people in his life, the business people and often very large and historic companies that*

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Jones, continued from pg. 20

played a role in the farm's success, the residents of Shelton and Mayor Mark Lauretti who he credits with doing a spectacular job of land conservation and acknowledging the importance of the farming community in Shelton.

Terry: It's about "fierce cooperation" and you leave the politics at the door and you try and understand what your colleagues are thinking, their viewpoints and to leave the woodpile a little higher than you found it.

Bing: *Something was very special about those two days with Terry Jones for me, acquainting myself with his family, walking that historic land on foot, appreciating the Jones Family Farm impact in Shelton and wearing his cowboy hat, well, those are memories and feelings that will stay with me for the rest of my life.*



In closing, Bing asks Terry:

1. What superpower would you like to have?

Terry: To get everybody working together. We can do so much as a nation if we just put our minds and efforts to it.

2. If you were stranded on an island, which two items would you like to have with you?

Terry: (laughing), A good book and food –oh yeah, my wife Jean too!

3. If you could travel any place on earth, where would you go?

Terry: We were very fond of Ireland, it's the emerald island and reminds me in many ways of Shelton.

4. What is your greatest fear as an entrepreneur?

Terry: It would be a tragedy to lose our free enterprise system and ability to self-govern and work together.

5. Looking back what things would you have done differently in terms of the business or anything in life for that matter?

Terry: Somebody said to me once it must be gratifying to see this masterplan come to fruition. I never really had a masterplan, but you have certain credos that you live by. One thing I do regret and that really not a day goes by where I think, why didn't I ask my grandparents about their thoughts on a masterplan? I am blessed, though, because every day I see a contribution my grandfather Philip and grandmother Joan made here.

6. White clam pizza or sausage and mushroom?

Terry: White clam pizza! ♦

Terry Jones Recognized For His Conservation Achievements

On October 4, 2023 elected officials, agricultural industry leaders, and community members joined to honor and celebrate Jones Family Farm and Winery for receiving the Sand County Foundation's prestigious Leopold Conservation Award. The award "recognizes and celebrates extraordinary achievement in voluntary conservation by agricultural landowners." The Leopold Conservation Award widely shares the stories of these conservation-minded farmers, ranchers and forestland owners to inspire countless other landowners to embrace opportunities to improve soil health, water resource and wildlife habitat on their working land. Finally, the program builds bridges between agriculture, government, environmental organizations, industry and academia to advance the cause of environmental improvement on private land.



(LtoR) Stratford State Rep Joe Gresko; Senator Kevin Kelly; Terry Jones and State Rep Jason Perillo

~ The Sand County Foundation

LOCAL BUSINESSES

Cafe Italia

The Heart and Soul of Italy Comes to Shelton

Nestled in the heart of River Road, Shelton, Caffe Italia is more than just a coffee shop. It is Shelton’s newest haven for those seeking the genuine flavors and warm hospitality that Italy is renowned for.

Owner, Lenny Manchisi, a long-time Shelton resident and restaurateur, ensures that everything is authentic. The menu offers coffee, pastries, paninis, including Italian tuna and chicken cutlet, as well as cakes by the slice, gelato and Italian ice. There is also a full-service bar where customers can order various cocktails, wines and beers. For those that may want to cook at



{L-R} Bill Purcell, President of the Valley Chamber, Rob Lesko, Dominic Manchisi, Owner Lenny Manchisi, Leo DiSorbo and Dr. Bruce Sofferman at Caffe Italia



home, Caffe Italia sells olive oils, balsamic vinegars, and fresh pasta from one of Arthur Avenue’s finest, Teitel Brothers.

Growing up working alongside his father at Jerry’s Shakespeare Pizza in Stratford and also owning Tazza Osteria & Bar in Fairfield, Lenny is happy to now own a business in his hometown.

“I felt like this was the best location for what I wanted to do,” said Manchisi, who runs the café alongside his finance, Michele and 13 year-old son, Domenic.

Lenny and family welcome you to stop by. Caffe Italia is open seven days a week at 7:00 AM and closes at 9:00 PM except for Thursday through Saturday. You can call ahead at 203-513-8441. Buon Appetit! ♦



Maria Zampano Shelton Teacher of the Year 2023-2024



Maria Zampano with Superintendent Ken Saranich after announcing her as Shelton's Teacher of the Year 2023-2024

A song from the Sound of Music entitled "How Do You Solve a Problem Like Maria" surely could not be about "Shelton's Teacher of the Year", Maria Zampano. Rather it should be how could Shelton resolve a problem without Maria!

After a rigorous application and interview process, Maria Zampano was named Shelton's Teacher of the Year for 2023-2024. Although Maria was born in the United States, her parents were immigrants from Portugal and spoke their native language in their home. By the time she reached high school she became fluent in English but never forgot the roadblocks she encountered while learning. She now uses her own life experiences to help struggling students overcome learning a new language.

Maria started her career at Shelton High School as an English teacher and

later became the first TESOL teacher (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages).

At one point she was the sole teacher working in the district with over 150 students who entered the school system speaking other languages. It is an amazing fact because Maria does not speak multiple languages, but rather finds effective strategies to communicate to her students in order to help them succeed in school. "I am an English learner myself" she states citing her first language as Portuguese, "so I see myself in the kids I work with." And she is so proud of the transformation and growth that she witnesses when the kids aren't speaking any English the first year and then the next year they're chatting away as if they've been here all the time.

Presently, Shelton has 350 EL students which involves 33 different languages. It has only been within the past several years that the program has grown where there is a TESOL teacher at every school in Shelton. This has enabled Maria to continue to go above and beyond her regular schedule and develop innovative and stimulating lessons that incorporate visual support, demonstrations and gestures. She also organizes multicultural events to help celebrate diversity in the schools. Maria has won the respect of all of her colleagues and administrators that work with her as they proclaim her to be "tops in her field".

Mohegan School Principal, John Coppola, reflected on Maria as a dynamic teacher as he explained that "to be a teacher of the year, you can't just be good, you have to be great!" He explained the differences between a "good teacher" and a "great teacher" and supported his belief by giving specific examples:

- "Good teachers want their students to learn but great teachers make sure they learn and go to any length to help them....
- Good teachers get to know their students' names but great teachers get to know their families...
- Good teachers make sure students have what they need to be successful in school but great teachers make sure that students have what they need to be successful in life...
- Good teachers like their students, great teachers love them...
- Good teachers have students who remember their



Program for Maria's celebration

continued next page

SEDC Celebrates 40 Years of Accomplishments

On Thursday, October 12, 2023, Chairman William Partington welcomed over 80 local leaders at Brownson Country Club to acknowledge and celebrate 40 years of accomplishments of the Shelton Economic Development Corporation (SEDC). Current president Paul Grimmer recounted the past and current program successes while former president, James E. Ryan recognized the many individuals who contributed towards these successes.

Mayor Mark Lauretti remarked how closely the city and the SEDC worked over these past 40 years supporting the activities that led to the revitalization of the Shelton’s downtown. Mayor Lauretti further remarked that the partnerships with the SEDC, along with various state and federal agencies, and private developers, have contributed to making the City of Shelton one of the finest small cities in America.

Organized in 1983, the SEDC is a nonprofit 501(C)3 organized to promote economic development for the city and also was named as the city’s implementing agency overseeing the work of brownfields remediation. ♦



(LtoR) Alan Haas, James Ryan, Ken Schaible, Mayor Lauretti, William Partington

names years after they’ve gone on to high school...

- Great teachers have those students come back and visit them after school hours and share successes about college acceptances and job placements...
- Good teachers fulfill their obligations and go to Open houses and parent conferences, great teachers volunteer their time and coordinate Multicultural nights, help at Parent Literacy Nights and support all the events at the school—Maria is all these things and more!”

Superintendent Ken Saranich echoed the sentiment by stating, “Maria Zampano is a shining example of a Shelton Public School teacher. Her talents on teaching transcend to all students, helping them reach success. We are so appreciative for her work and commitment”.

It is evident that Maria deserves the celebration and recognition of being selected as Shelton’s Teacher of the Year. She is surely a dynamo who goes above and beyond what is needed, always offers a helping hand, has a loving heart, is passionate, strong and compassionate. For all of these reasons Shelton is fortunate to have Maria be the solution for the students who attend Shelton schools speaking another language. To Maria



Maria Zampano celebratory dinner with colleagues and Mohegan school principal John Coppola

we say: Merci...Danke...Toda....Grazie...Dziękuję... Gracias....Mahalo...Obtigado....or in English—“THANK YOU!” for all that you are and all that you do for the students in Shelton Public Schools! ♦

The “Secret Sauce” of Success at Sunnyside School

The hallways and classrooms at Sunnyside School were buzzing with excitement as it prepared for a special visit from representatives from the Connecticut State Department of Education. The visit was not only to celebrate the recent recognition of being named a School of Distinction, but also to discuss the successful growth of the students, their learning experiences as well as to share and form partnership strategies for the future.

Being recognized as a Connecticut School of Distinction is only given to schools in the top 10% of the state for their performance and/ or growth as measured by the Connecticut Next Generation Accountability System. Sunnyside School was recog-



Representatives from State Dept of Education with Principal Darla Lussier and her Leadership team holding the banner recognizing Sunnyside as a state of CT “School of Distinction”

nized for high growth in both Math and ELA (English Language Arts).

The Next Generation Accountability Standards rate schools based on how well a school is preparing its students for future success. The system moves beyond test scores and graduation rates and provides a

more diverse picture of school performance, looking at not only assessment results, but also graduation rates, attendance, physical fitness, arts access, and academic growth over time.

The representatives were specifically interested in the school’s growth in ELA, both in the All Students category and the High Needs category. The

continued next page



Deputy Commissioner Hewes sitting with students completing a task



State Dept of Education rep discussing the task with students

SCHOOL NEWS

visiting guests included Charles E. Hewes, Deputy Commissioner of Academics and Innovation, Irene Parisi, Chief Academic Officer, Ajit Gopalakrishan, Chief Performance Officer, Melissa Hickey, Director of the Center for Literary Research and Reading Success, and Keith Norton, Chief Strategic Planning Officer. Principal Darla Lussier conducted the meeting along with Math Specialist Melissa Manning, Literacy Interventionist Heidi Ferrigno and Reading Specialist Amy Corris. Superintendent Ken Saranich also attended and welcomed the group of attendees.

The Agenda first included a meeting with the Leadership Team in which an overview of Sunnyside School population, growth data and ELA Curriculum Information were discussed. After that, a school tour and classroom visitations took place in which the visi-



Kindergarten students working on letters during a Foundations lesson



State Reps monitoring Mrs. Evanko Weber's 3rd grade students working on research skills

tors were able to observe teaching strategies as well as interact with the students performing various learning tasks. Following this, the group reconvened in the Conference Room to debrief, discuss and assess their observations. When Deputy Commissioner Hewes asked the team, "What is Sunnyside's Secret Sauce?",

Principal Lussier answered, "Tiered interventions, small group instruction, lots of professional learning opportunities and their Data Team meetings and programs." Literacy Interventionist Heidi Ferrigno added "the teachers and the students are to be commended for their hard work and consistent tier 1 intervention. Our Academic Support Team works collaboratively with the teachers and pull out students who are in need of support in Reading and Math. Our team looks forward



4th grade teacher Margie Everett working with students in a small group instruction setting

to our weekly data team meetings where we discuss actions to move our students forward." When asked about student success, fourth grade teacher, Margie Everett, shared her thoughts on her students' success: "when students enter my classroom in September, it is my goal for each and every student to make at least one year's growth, no matter their level or ability. Small group is integral component and an opportunity for me to individualize instruction. Effective small groups are based on the needs of my students, and are always evolving."

Superintendent Ken Saranich added that he is so proud of Sunnyside School and their "Secret Sauce" and stated that "they are an example of the great instruction taking place in all of our schools in Shelton". ♦

Weirdo Wonderland Anything But Ordinary

The newest shop in the Conti building is anything but ordinary. Weirdo Wonderland, a haven for horror enthusiasts, vintage aficionados, and anyone who relishes in the delightfully creepy, is a perfect fit for the historic building. Eric, the owner of Weirdo Wonderland, (part gallery, part bookstore and part giftshop) is a life-long collector of horror memorabilia, VHS tapes, and everything wonderfully weird. The Conti building is the ideal home for Weirdo Wonderland, Eric says, given the numerous haunted tales that surround it.

In May of 2023, Weirdo Wonderland opened in Shelton, having relocated from Devon where it had gathered a dedicated following over the years. Eric's fascination with the offbeat and creepy stretch back to the '80s, a decade he fondly refers to as a "great era for gross." It was within these relics of nostalgia that Eric found his calling.

Eric describes the vibe of Weirdo Wonderland as "the best sensory overload." Visitors are immediately transported to the past, complete with pinball machines and a visual feast of curiosities. It offers an eclectic range of items, from vintage books and VHS tapes, to autographed collectibles, horror memora-



abilia, pins, patches, prints, specimens, toys, gifts, and the offbeat works of some incredible local artists. For example, make sure you use the QR Code on the "Weird Connecticut" map by artist Lisa Hernandez to learn more about local creepy folklore (Shelton's is the infamous legend of the Melon Heads). There is even a "little ghouls" section, a curated selection of books and toys that cater to a younger audience while still honoring the strange and unusual (the ABCs of Halloween is stocked year-round).

Beyond the weirdest wares and creepy collectibles, Weirdo Wonderland hosts a variety of events. This fall's



schedule included a pumpkin carving demonstration by a professional pumpkin carver, a book signing, a visit from former pro-wrestler Brimstone, and a caricaturist.

Amongst the many treasures you'll find at Weirdo Wonderland is a collection of Boglins, the iconic Henson-like toy puppets from the '80s, brought to life by creator Tim Clarke and sold by Mattel. Eric came full circle when he hosted Clarke at Weirdo Wonderland's previous location a few years ago, allowing fans like himself to connect with the creator.

On December 16th, Weirdo Wonderland and Market 415 will host their second Creepy Pop-Up event in the Conti building, featuring a dozen vendors with a shared love for all things eerie, weird, and local.

If you're curious to hear Eric tell the tale of the Conti building's own "Lingerie Ghosts," or to explore the wonders on display and for sale, check out their "Regular-ish" hours of operation before heading down. To keep up with their packed schedule of events and to learn more, follow them on Instagram at [Weirdo_Wonderland_CT](#). ♦

LOCAL BUSINESSES

Bushi Ban Shelton Offering Martial Arts Classes

Located at 762 River Road Bushi Ban Shelton opened in February 2022 but the owner is not new to Bushi Ban having been involved for over 20 years in various locations.

Bushi Ban Shelton offers martial arts classes for all ages three and up. They specialize in self-defense and mixed combat, while maintaining a focus on the traditional aspects of martial arts, such as respect, discipline, and self-growth. The name Bushi Ban derives from the words Bushido and Bando. Bushido is the moral code of the Samurai. Bando is a martial arts system that stresses the importance of defense and discourages aggression – instead teaching students to apply skill and technique with fastidious care, speed and accuracy.

Bushi Ban is a mixed martial arts system developed by founder and Grand Master Zulfi Ahmed. This unique system incorporates techniques of many disciplines of martial arts from throughout the world. Senior Master Hassan Saiyid expanded the footprint of Bushi Ban to Connecticut and the East Coast in 2002. Senior Master is a 7th Degree Black Belt and a member of the Bushi Ban Council of Senior Masters and specializes in Tai Chi and weapons.



Black Belt Excellence

Owner, Sensei Stephen Fitol, has trained under Senior Master Hassan for over 20 years obtaining his 2nd Degree Black Belt and being honored with the Warrior Spirit Award. Grand Master Zulfi has since granted him the title

of Sensei. Steve has continued his training and also received a Tai Chi certification and wishes to expand his knowledge every day in martial arts and in life, continuing to grow in understanding and concept.

Staff will agree there are many benefits to living a Martial Arts lifestyle including confidence, focus, discipline, self-control, stamina, coordination, balance to name a few.

Bushi Ban Shelton is conveniently located on Route 110 (River Road). Close to the Sports Center of Connecticut, this location allows for easy access from both the Merritt Parkway, Rourtr 8 and Interstate 95.

This location is open on Monday through Thursday from 4:30 PM until 8:00 PM and on Saturday from 8:30 AM until 11:30 AM.

For further information you can email bushiban.shelton@gmail.com, call/text (203) 997-6858 or visit their website at bushibanshelton.com. ♦



SHELTON COMMUNITY & BUSINESS NEWS

COMMUNITY NEWS



Hosts Annual Shelton Day October 1, 2023

The skies might have been a bit dreary and windy, but Shelton Day proceeded as planned – minus the hot air balloon rides due to the high winds. This was the first year Bad Sons Brewing Company and Jones Winery participated.

Always a multi-faceted event, The Derby-Shelton Rotary Club produced the 38th annual Shelton Day on October 1st with Rotarian Joe Shapiro chairing the event. Shelton Day is held on the first Sunday of October. ♦



VCF, continued from page 13

called “The Jaws of Life” that will allow rescuers to get victims of accidents to the hospital faster. \$60,000.

Traveler on a Mission – To assist the program with its ongoing mission to provide basic human necessities to Valley residents in need. \$10,000.

VCF’s Responsive Grantmaking program is done with its partner in philanthropy, The Community Foundation for Greater New Haven (TCF). The program is funded by a generous annual grant from a group of TCF Valley preference funds, and other VCF field-of-interest and unrestricted funds.

2023 VCF Community Grants VCF’s community grants are geared to help Valley volunteer and nonprofit organizations that have less than two full-time, or four part-time employees. These grants range from \$250 to \$2,500 and can be for new or recurring programs that support civic and community engagement.

Afrique Prospere Education – To support French-speaking immigrants who have recently settled in the Valley. \$500.

All-American Valley Basketball Club – To support the club’s participation in an 11-week tournament. \$2,500.

Annual Thanksgiving Basket Committee – To help purchase food and supplies for Thanksgiving baskets for Valley families in need. \$2,500.

Derby Boy Scouts Troop 3 – To support the Troop’s

Derby Spring through Fall planting and harvesting season. \$2,500.

Boy Scouts Troop 25 – To support Valley scout families that need tents for camping. \$2,500.

Boy Scouts Troop 51 – To help purchase a trailer to transport equipment for trips. \$2,500.

Cub Scout Pack 51 – To support pack/troop recruitment and retention. \$2,500.

Heaven’s Harvest – To help recover 6,000-lbs of food and redirect to Valley families in need. \$2,500.

Oxford High School Make a Difference Club – To support crocheting blankets for local animal shelters and help students and seniors collaborate and learn. \$2,500.

Shelton History Center – To support the rehabilitation of the teaching garden at the Shelton History Center. \$2,000.

Southford Falls Quilting Club – To support and promote the legacy of quilting in the Valley. \$2,000.

Traveler on a Mission – To support expanding the Wellness Wagon program to add literature encouraging personal care routines to products distributed through Valley food pantries. \$2,500.

Valley Refugee Resettlement Project – To support the Valley Refugee Resettlement Project. \$2,500.

For more information, visit valleyfoundation.org. Valley Community Foundation, 253-A Elizabeth Street, Derby CT, 06418. Office: (203) 751-9162. ♦

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

Community Calendar

PARKS & RECREATION

Community Center Hours:

Monday-Friday 6:30 am - 9:30 pm

Saturday 7:30 am - 3:30 pm

Pool Hours:

Monday-Friday 6:00 am - 8:45 pm

Sunday 8:00 am - 3:30 pm

Saturday 7:30 am - 3:30 pm

Information is posted on the city website: www.cityofshelton.org.

Information/Cancellation Hotline
203-331-4120 • 41 Church Street

SHELTON SENIOR CENTER

The Center provides a wide range of social, educational, health, financial, and recreational programs for residents 55 years of age and older. The Center sponsors parties, BBQ's, special events, day/overnight trips and casino trips.

Transportation to the Center is provided for Shelton residents (FREE MWF) including free shopping bus to local stores for members on Wednesdays. For more information regarding any of these programs, please call the Center at (203) 924-9324.

SHELTON YOUTH SERVICE BUREAU

The Youth Service Bureau was established in 1988 by the City of Shelton for the purpose of developing, planning and coordinating services for the youth of the city and their families. The Youth Service Bureau works cooperatively with the schools, police, youth, parents and other community resources to encourage our youth to strive for their full potential. The Bureau provides programs for both youth and parents on issues of importance in today's society. It also provides information and referrals for parents and youth in need. For more information, please call the Youth Service Bureau at 203-924-7614 or email: SYSB@cityofshelton.org

**SHELTON LIBRARY SYSTEM
Plumb Memorial Library**

65 Wooster St. 203-924-9461

Huntington Branch Library

In the Community Center,
41 Church St. 203-926-0111

CONTACT INFORMATION

Shelton City Hall (203) 924-1555

Shelton Board of Education
(203) 924-1023

Shelton Community Center
(203) 925-8422

Shelton Highways and Bridges
(203) 924-9277

Shelton Animal Control
(203) 924-2501

Shelton Libraries:

Plumb Library (203) 924-1580

Branch Library (203) 926-0111

Shelton Police Dept. (203) 924-1544

Shelton Probate Court
(203) 924-8462

Shelton Registrar of Voters
(203) 924-2533

1ST WARD ALDERMEN

Anthony Simonetti (203) 926-0922

Porter C. McKinnon
portermckinnon32@gmail.com

2ND WARD ALDERMEN

Eric McPherson (203) 924-5862

Ben Perry bperryward2@gmail.com

3rd WARD ALDERMEN

John Anglace (203) 929-1515

Cris Balamaci (203) 922-1639

4th WARD ALDERMEN

Lorenzo Durante (203) 623-3060

Bernie Simons (203) 925-8499

STATE LEGISLATORS

State Senator Kevin Kelly

(860) 240-8826

State Representative Ben McGorty

(800) 842-1423

State Representative Jason Perillo

(800) 842-1423

CONGRESSIONAL REPRESENTATION

Congresswoman Rosa DeLauro

(New Haven office) (203) 562-3718

Congressman Jim Himes

(Bridgeport office) (866) 453-0028

U.S. SENATORS

Senator Richard Blumenthal

(Bridgeport office) (203) 330-0598

Senator Chris Murphy

(Hartford office) (860) 549-8463

Welcome, continued from page 1

highways and a tax rate that makes Shelton extremely affordable not only for our businesses, but for our residents.

Shelton Mayor Mark Lauretti said something that stuck with me during a meeting I was part of with a company wanting to move to Shelton and it was this: **"The City of Shelton offers this; we are predictable and we are consistent."**

As a business person myself running a Shelton company, that was an absolutely true statement and one that brings a great deal of comfort and "stability" for companies and residents here in Shelton.

I want to thank several people for the contributions they have made to Shelton Life publication this year starting with Aleta Miner, Assistant to the President, Shelton Economic Development Corporation for her writings and relentless editing of all of these articles in Shelton Life along with my fellow Commissioners, Pat Carey, Kate Marks and Karen McGovern.

I want to wish all of you Merry Christmas, Happy Holidays and a very joyous, safe and wonderful New Year.

We will see you in the spring of 2024 with our next Shelton Life publication.

Cheers,



Bing ♦

SHELTON COMMUNITY & BUSINESS NEWS

Economic Development Commission
City of Shelton
54 Hill Street
Shelton, Connecticut 06484

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Standard Mail
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Shelton Day 2023 See Page 29

