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#### **WINTERFEST**

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 10

#### **VICTORIAN CAROLERS**

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## Seabury is excited to unveil our beautiful new bistro.

The chef-created menu – featuring à la carte choices, gluten-free and vegetarian options, made-to-order specialties, homemade desserts and pizza fresh from the oven – has been designed to cater to our residents' eclectic tastes. The panoramic mountain view, floor-to-ceiling windows and dual fireplace create a cozy environment for residents to enjoy a leisurely lunch, entertain family and visitors or relax with the paper and a cup of coffee.

Construction is underway on the next two phases of Seabury's expansion, including 68 new independent living residences scheduled to open in the Fall of 2017. We are now accepting applications for residence from adults 50 and over. Learn more about how to reserve your future home at our monthly informational sessions on every 1st Thursday at 1:30pm and every 3rd Wednesday at 10:30am. Call (860) 243-6081 or (860) 243-4033 for reservations or e-mail info@seaburylife.org.



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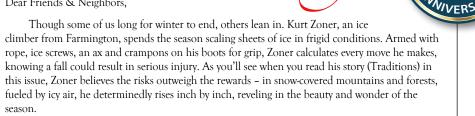
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## Seasons' Greetings Dear Friends & Neighbors,



This issue is a tribute to people and traditions that inspire all of us to embrace winter. In our feature, "The Trick to Being Saint Nick," you'll meet men who portray Santa and discover how they cope with unusual circumstances and difficult requests. Columnist Matthew Dicks recalls the days when he and his brother gathered 'round the radio to hear the list of school closures with high hopes of a snow day (all was not merry and bright in the Dicks household). While you're hanging out by the fire, fuel your warmth with a Velvet Rose or Maple Rush, cocktails featured in our Delicious section.

As we conclude our 10th anniversary year, we want to thank our advertising partners and our readers for their support. Seasons now has a tie-in TV show, "Seasons Magazines Up Close," that debuted on Channel 3 on October 30. If you missed it, you can view the episode through the Seasons website. As you watch the show and peruse this issue, we hope you'll spin some vinyl (our At Home story chronicles the comeback of LPs) and savor all this contemplative, majestic season has to offer.

For a full Seasons experience, please visit our website (www.seasonsmagazines.com), download our free app (Seasons of Connecticut), or connect with us through Facebook and Twitter. You'll find content that is entertaining, informative and local.

Happy New Year, Deb Berry/Editorial Director, Seasons



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What good is the warmth of summer, without the cold of winter to give it sweetness.

John Steinbeck, Travels with Charley: In Search of America



Written by **Steve Grant** 

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ICE-CLIMBING COMRADES: AMC climbers Art Morenz, John DeAngelis and Patrick Jacques in North Conway, New Hampshire. Photo by Kurt Zoner

## Ice Climbing

For Kurt Zoner of Farmington, ice climbing has it all.

Adventure, to be sure. "If you like running with scissors, there is nothing cooler than climbing ice," he says. Aesthetics, too. "You get to climb up and enjoy incredible views. It is quiet and gorgeous in the mountains in winter."

And then there is the concentration that is required. "The challenge of how to get there, how to get up and down safely - there is a distinct mental component," he says.

Zoner, 56, co-chair of the mountaineering committee of the Appalachian Mountain Club's Connecticut chapter, has climbed dozens of 4,000-foot peaks in the Northeast. He began rock climbing in 2009. At the suggestion of two other club members, Mark Sondeen and John DeAngelis, he began ice climbing in 2011, mostly in the state's Northwest Hills.

"I started climbing more and more and hiking less and less," he says.

Safe climbing is imperative. Zoner is tied to a rope that is connected to the ice with screws ranging in length from four inches to eight and a half inches that he places in the ice as he ascends. Not that protective equipment doesn't help. "But the number one rule is, don't fall," he says. Landing on sharp equipment, such as the screws and ice tools, can be dangerous if a climber loses his or her grip on the ice. So can the heavy-duty crampons Zoner wears on his boots; if he slips and the sharp protruding spikes catch on the ice, he could sprain or break an ankle.



INTO THE WOODS: Kurt Zoner nears the top of Landslide Gully in Crawford Notch, New Hampshire. Photo by Paul Hayes

Ice climbers need to concentrate intensely on each movement up an ice flow, while constantly monitoring the condition of the ice.

Falling chunks of ice are common and one reason why climbers usually ascend an ice sheet in groups of two or three at most. "You don't want a lot of people below you," he says.

"I've been hit by falling ice a couple of times. I have a little scar on my nose. Just about everyone gets one eventually," he says.

Like other Connecticut ice climbers, Zoner often climbs in the Northwest Hills, but also travels to New York's Adirondacks and New Hampshire's White Mountains, where the ice climbing season is longer and conditions often more reliable. According to club member DeAngelis, a typical ice climb in New England is about 100 to 300 feet; a round-trip 300-foot climb takes about three hours.

Since retiring four years ago from his computer consulting business in Farmington, Zoner has committed himself completely to the sport.

"I found climbing was a lot more fun than working," he says.

Steve Grant, of Farmington, is an award-winning journalist specializing in adventure and environmental stories. He has hiked 500 miles of the Appalachian Trail and is a certified yoga instructor. For more about Steve, go to www.thestevegrantwebsite.com.

#### Want to get started?

The Connecticut chapter of the Appalachian Mountain Club is sponsoring a beginner's ice climbing class in North Conway, New Hampshire, from Jan. 20 to Jan. 22, with instruction by the International Mountain Climbing School. Cost is \$110 for AMC members, \$150 for non-members; climbing gear rental is included, lodging is not. Information at http://www.ct-amc.org/mountain/MtnListings.shtm







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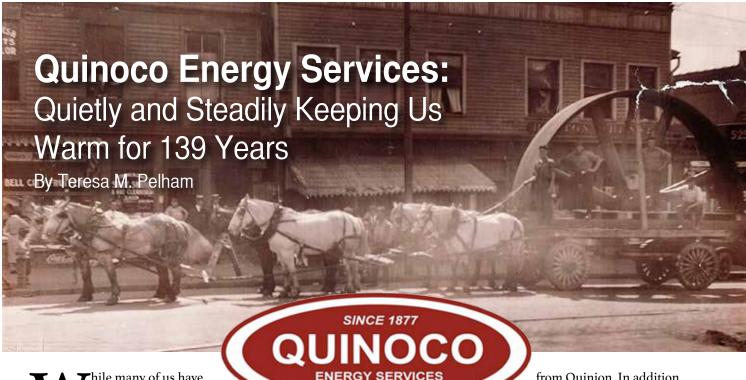
## ANNOUNCING SEASONS' NEW Television Program Seasons Magazines Up Close

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hile many of us have embraced the ease of electronic billing, a

certain segment of society prefers to pay bills in person, sometimes with cash. To accommodate these folks, George Quinion had a drive-through window built to receive payments at his oil company's Bristol headquarters. Even into his 90s, Quinion could be found sitting at the window, building personal relationships with the members

of the community.



Quinoco Energy Services a fixture in Farmington, Bristol, and Torrington and their surrounding communities.

Quinion, whose working-man-in-flannel portrait hangs in the lobby, founded Quinion Coal and Trucking on North Main Street in Bristol in 1877. Ulysses S. Grant was President. The company hauled heavy equipment with horses, delivered coal, and hauled paper from railcars to The Bristol Press.

When current owner Don Phillips first began working for the company in 1976, he was a 19-year-old technician, doing repairs and installations. Phillips, along with Quinion's grandson Brett Quinion, who was also starting out at the company, would pick up their boss at his home in Bristol and drive to work together every day.

Brett Quinion took over the business after his grandfather's death in 1979, and the company name changed shortly thereafter to Quinoco. In 2002, after moving his way up through the ranks, Phillips bought the company

from Quinion. In addition to oil delivery, which began in the early 1900s, Quinoco added

heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) to its list of services, acquired Farmington-based Cadwell, and built a propane terminal in Farmington.

These days, Quinoco has 30 employees, 30 oil and service trucks, a storage capacity of a half million gallons of oil, 7,500 customers in 20 towns, and a strong commitment to the community. A framed photo of a throng of Little Leaguers wearing Quinoco jerseys hangs in the home office.

"We've been sponsoring the team for what - 25 years?" says Phillips. "We're very civic-minded. We have a reputation to live up to and I think we do a pretty good job of that." The company also donates to the Lupus Foundation of America, the Multiple Sclerosis Foundation, and Relay for Life.

The majority of Quinoco's employees have stayed with the company for their entire careers, with the average employee working there for more than 20 years. Thousands of customers have stayed with Quinoco for decades.

"Businesses like ours are kind of rare," Phillips says. "Once people get a taste of what our customer service is like they stay with us. There's a real person answering the phone - a person you know."



Teresa M. Pelham is a writer living in Farmington, and is a frequent contributor to Seasons. She is the author of three books, including two written about her little brown rescue dogs. Contact Teresa at tpelham@comcast.net.



AT HOME

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Written by Mike Briotta Photography by Tony Reynolds

## Vinyl Revolution

#### Seasons talks with area spin doctors about getting their grooves back

't's easy to wax rhapsodic about vinyl. When you drop a needle into a groove, it elicits pops and hisses. As the platter spins, music recorded decades ago spills from a pair of well-worn speakers. Streaming an MP3 is like getting a text message: cold and remote. But playing your favorite record is intimate; it's having a conversation with a good

Pulling out a record connects music and listener. The ritual taps into the collective unconscious shared by generations of Americans. There's even a unique smell to new vinyl.

Moving into a new apartment once meant carrying milk crates full of your favorite albums. Instead of watching music videos, which launched with MTV in 1981, listeners used to admire beautiful album artwork and pore over detailed liner

Today, a trip to Barnes & Noble might be shocking to those who still have old vinyl in their basements. New record sections are cropping up in stores. Record sales are at a 28-year-high, according to several business magazines.

There's a vinyl revolution going on, and it's not just for audiophiles and hipsters anymore. Whether you're into jazz, classic rock, or indie bands, the allure of listening to records is attracting more fans. A passion for records is bringing customers back to music stores in droves, and inspiring us once again to find space in our living rooms for a turntable.

#### **Medium Fidelity**

Modern listeners, streaming music on their iPhones, may be baffled about why anyone would prefer to hear vintage vinyl. But a unique, and perhaps undefinable, quality is prompting people to return to records, both new and used, in the digital age of CDs and MP3s.

"It's the sound, which I understand is not for everybody," says Dan Curland, owner of Mystic Disc, on Steamboat Wharf in Mystic. He operates a funky, eclectic shop featuring

more than 50 feet of record bins, catering to all styles of music. He continues, "Not everyone has a high-end turntable, but it's about the sound. If the music was recorded analog, then I recommend buying the record. It's going to sound better on a turntable."

Sound is only part of the appeal. "This is an 'old-time' way of listening to music. We always want to go 'back to the garden' as we said in the '60s," says Curland, quoting from the Crosby, Stills Nash & Young version of Joni Mitchell's "Woodstock." "But half of my customers are under the age of 25. They haven't seen album art like this before. So there's that side of it. Whether they pick up a Charles Mingus or Neil Young album, they are always amazed at the artwork." He adds, "Now I sell more Frank Sinatra albums to 14-year-old kids than anyone else. It's just cool to have a record player."

Curland says the number one seller of new vinyl nationwide is the millennial-focused clothing store Urban Outfitters. Mystic Disc, which opened in 1983, nearly closed in 2006 due to waning interest in physical media. A decade ago, fewer CDs were being sold, and the resurgence in records had yet to arrive.

"We got rid of all the CDs," he says. "In the 1990s CDs took over like weeds in a pond, but in 2006 I almost closed. A few years later, I sold my house to help the store survive. We were fortunate that business started to pick up three to four years ago. Since then, interest in vinyl is up at least a hundred percent. Foot traffic is up. People are curious about records again."

He says price is another attractive element of record collecting. "You can come in my store and find good condition LPs [long play vinyl records] starting at three dollars and up," he says. "We guarantee they don't have defects. We have a listening station for you to preview the music. On a rainy weekend, coming here is a social thing."



#### No Jacket Required

New London's record retailer The Telegraph is a relative newcomer to the vinyl revival, riding the wave during the past six years. Owner Rich Martin is uniquely positioned for this return-to-records trend.

"We've seen growth every year since opening," Martin says. Although getting music online is undeniably the elephant in the room, Martin says technology opens the doors for listeners who may then choose to experience their favorite songs in physical form. "People are streaming a lot, which is a means of discovery for them," he explains. "They're hearing new and old acts online, then coming into the shop asking about them."

The Telegraph has no particular musical focus, instead preferring to stock almost every genre. "Right now, in new vinyl there's a big emphasis on indie rock," Martin says. "For used records, we have a large selection of jazz, reggae, and punk. We try to have a little bit of everything."

Martin also runs an adjunct business called Telegraph Recording Company, which produces indie rock and punk music on vinyl and other mediums. It was the catalyst for opening the record shop in 2010. He says the longevity of the medium also helps sell records. "Vinyl can last for the ages," he says. "I've got vinyl that's 60 years old and can still play, unlike CDs from a few years back."

Martin adds that even the act of switching songs on an album is indicative that vinyl fans want a tangible connection. "You have to find the song you want to hear. You have to get up and change it," he says of lifting the needle off the record.

"This is a conscious choice to be engaged in the music."

#### **A Love Supreme**

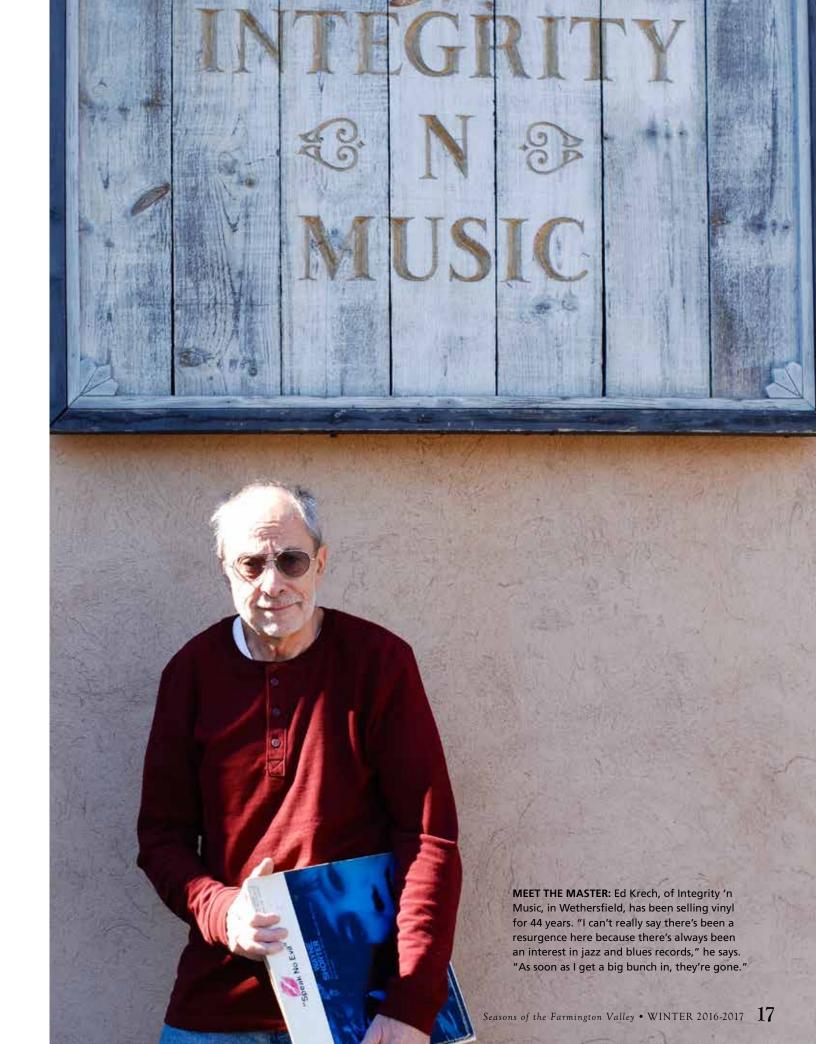
The most venerable place to buy vinyl in Connecticut is Integrity 'n Music, a Wethersfield institution for almost half a century. The shop is truly a hidden gem. Although it disappeared from direct view along the Silas Deane Highway, the record store survives in back of its former location.

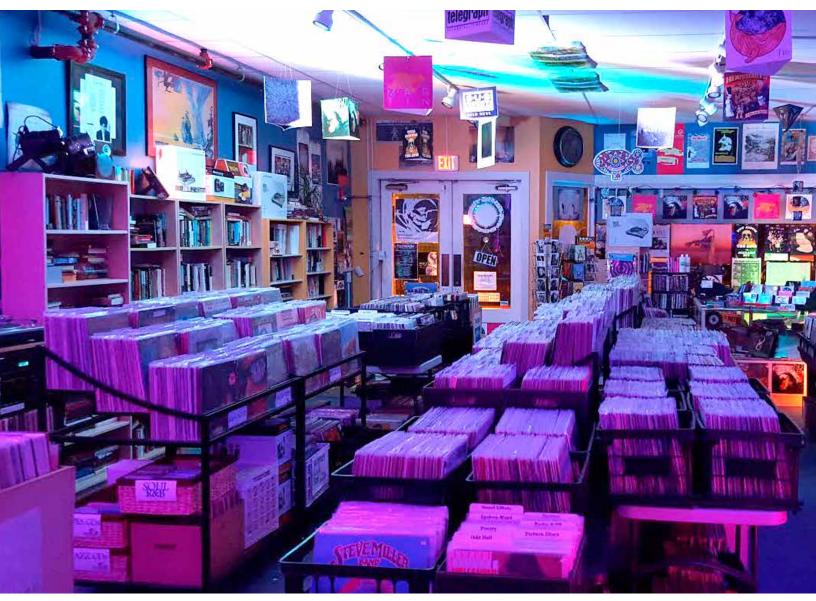
It's tucked away unceremoniously behind a beauty salon and a needleworks shop. Only a weathered wood sign tells record aficionados they have arrived. A black-and-white photo collage in the foyer shows you exactly what to expect. It's a "who's who" of performers specializing in the style Integrity is known best for: jazz.

"I first opened shop in 1972," says owner Ed Krech. "We've been down here since 2001, and we were upstairs for 25 years." The store mascot is an English Sheepdog. His current canine is named "Satchmo," the nickname of famed trumpeter Louis Armstrong. On any given Saturday, a current of customers courses through the record bins, exiting the store with stacks of vintage vinyl.

Krech hasn't seen a renewed interest in records because his customers' passion for them never waned. "I've been selling vinyl for 44 years," he says. "I can't really say there's been a resurgence here because there's always been an interest for jazz and blues records. As soon as I get a big bunch in, they're gone. I have deejays coming in from New York City to buy from me. I've bought collections of five thousand and six thousand pieces and sold most of it within a couple weeks.'







PURPLE HAZE: Black lights set the mood at The Telegraph, one of the newer vinyl shops on the Shoreline. It opened in New London six years ago.

The records at Integrity, while known for jazz, can run the gamut. Used classic rock records, such as those by The Who, typically sell for just 99 cents. Rock and pop records from the 1980s by artists like Def Leppard and Adam Ant are relegated to the 50-cent bin. Not far away sit much more expensive, and brand new, reissues of European jazz records that can fetch as much as \$30 each. Krech is a big fan of New Orleans jazz. Lately, he's noticed younger fans of genres other than jazz. "Kids are coming in to buy the older rock and R&B albums," he says. "The Beatles, Led Zeppelin, and Chicago are

Buying records is not just nostalgia for bygone days. There's a reason why Facebook recently rolled out a video celebrating online "friendships" featuring the image of an old turntable:

We exist in an analog world that digital media can only try to approximate.

A re-issue of a Charles Mingus album on display at Integrity sums it up. The album proclaims on the cover that purchasing vinyl is "The nicest thing you can do for your stylus - and your ears." A lot of Krech's customers agree. One customer remarks, while holding a tower of records at the check-out counter, that this is how music is meant to be heard.

Looking over the old wooden bins full of American music history, Krech shares what he believes to be the siren song of

"I love good music," he says. "Good music is good, whether it's on vinyl, cassette, or CD. Other people say they can hear a difference, and that may be true. What I'm sure of is that I



know guys who have collections of 10,000 records. They still come in here looking for more." 🛐

Mike Briotta is a freelance writer who grew up with such vinyl masterpieces as the "Grease" soundtrack and The Muppets Christmas album with John Denver. He moved on to Michael Jackson's "Thriller" and "Pyromania" by Def Leppard. His musical tastes have evolved very slightly since then. He enjoys listening to records on his father's old Technics turntable.

Tony Reynolds, a "storyteller with a lens," creates a personal vision script with inquisitive and open eyes. See more at www.pilgrimphotos. smugmug.com

#### **TURNTABLE TECH**

Here are a few tips for buying a turntable from the owners of area record shops.

#### Dan Curland, Mystic Disc, Mystic:

"I tell people to stay away from the [inexpensive] brands," says Curland. "They sell turntables that are selfcontained or plug into your computer. The problem is, they are cheaply made. The tone arm will eventually stop tracking your record."

He suggests buying a record player from the company U-Turn, located in Boston. "If you buy from them, you'll get a great entry-level turntable," he says. "You can pick one up for \$170-\$180. You'll still need to get an amp for about \$80. It must have a phono input to power the turntable motor."

For repairs, Curland refers all his customers to an area repairman who is schooled in replacing needles, tone arms and other moving parts. "You can walk out of my store with a great system for around \$250," he says. "It's better to spend about that much, if you plan on keeping the system long term. Don't go to Kohl's or Target. Buy the system that will last you a lifetime."

#### Rich Martin, The Telegraph, **New London:**

Martin suggests home stereo gear made by Audio Technica, which he sells in his store.

"The LP60 is a nice entrylevel machine," says Martin. "It can cost between \$125 and \$175 and it's made with quality components. It is built to last longer than some of the cheaper brands out there." He suggests partnering it with powered speakers or a receiver and speakers. The speakers he suggests are Audio Engine A2 Plus, which run about \$250 for the pair. "For a \$300-\$500 total investment, this setup will last a lifetime of use," he says. "It's much better than replacing everything in a few years."

He says that retro setups are admittedly much bigger and pricier than listening to music on your phone. However, the rewards are worth it. "A turntable, receiver, and speakers can take up a lot of real estate," Martin says. "But this is the best sound you're going to get."

#### Ed Krech, Integrity 'n Music, Wethersfield:

Krech says he's not that into the technical side of listening to vinyl, and is not that picky when it comes to stereo setups. His shop turntable and speakers were pieced together throughout the years. Krech frequently spins LPs in the shop. He suggests that home stereo aficionados visit The Stereo Shop on Farmington Avenue in Hartford for turntable repairs and home setup recommendations.



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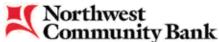




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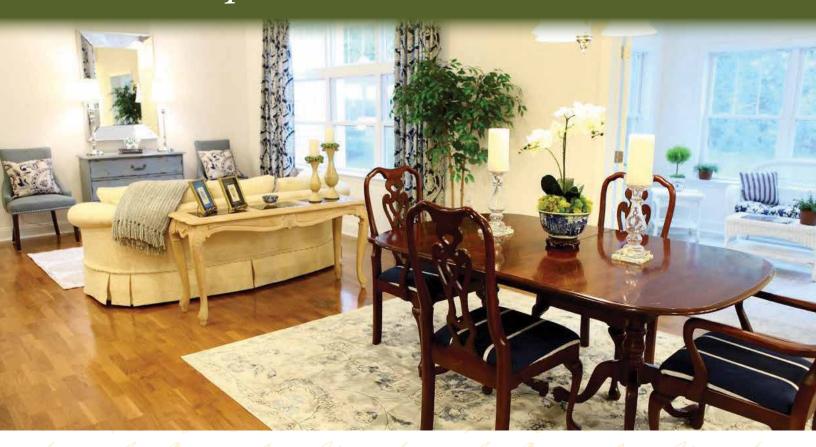


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Written by Theresa Anzaldua

rowing up in Windsor, during the turbulent '60s, Bill Selig explored politics, environmentalism and various forms of art. When he learned to make jewelry in his early 20s he instantly fell in love with the craft. A fortunate man, Selig has been able to make a profession of his passion, and for the past 40 years he has owned and operated Bill Selig Jewelers. Carrying exquisite diamonds, emeralds, and other precious and semiprecious jewels, the store, at 712 Hopmeadow Street in Simsbury, is a local institution. "We

that child comes to us for wedding rings. We love seeing people come in for the major events in their lives."

Store manager Annette DiClemente, who has worked with Selig since her now grown twin sons were in kindergarten, enjoys selling baptism gifts to parents and then watching their kids grow up. Recently, the 4-year-old daughter of clients broke a plastic "princess" necklace and asked to go to the jewelers to have it fixed. DiClemente was delighted to be able to help her. "We're the family jeweler," she says.

In addition to running the traditional jewelry shop, Selig is closely involved in a variety of local activities. Just over a year ago, he succeeded in combining his interests in art, jewelry and community by restoring part of a nationally recognized

reflect what's needed in a nice town," Selig says. "We enjoy

helping a family choose a college graduation gift and then

#### SIMSBURY'S TOWN JEWELER, BILL SELIG

historic building and transforming it into a combination art gallery, gathering space and gift shop called The Studio & Gallery. The Studio is located in the sun-drenched garden room of the Robert and Julia Darling House, a twenty-five room mansion built in 1927, located just a couple hundred feet from the jewelry store in the heart of Simsbury.

The Studio is a beautiful place to shop for high-quality, curated gifts, art, decorative items and unique jewelry. Selig handpicks the artists whose work is featured. The newest artist to team up with The Studio is jewelry designer Jane Taylor. "Jane uses gemstones as her paint strokes," Selig says. "She has a wonderful use of color and she chooses only the best quality and cut of stones, focusing on multi-colored sapphires among many other beautiful gemstones." Selig is excited to be collaborating with Taylor. "Designing jewelry with other artists has always been a love of mine," he says. In addition to jewelry, The Studio features glass, ceramics, metal sculpture, paintings and drawings by artists such as Peter Greenwood, Vicente Garcia, Jen Violette, Naomi, and Elyse Ryan.

The Studio is also the perfect place to pick up a special hostess gift or stocking stuffer. "We need a store like this. This is Main Street shopping, where you can see and feel special, eclectic pieces and have them beautifully gift-wrapped," explains Ellyn Ziplow, the manager for The Studio. Ziplow enjoys describing how she and Selig choose each item in the store – the throw blankets from Great Britain, the Louis Sherry chocolates, the Sugarfina champagne gummy bears (Selig's favorite), and the list goes on. Prices range widely, starting at \$5 for fossilized sharks teeth, which kids really get a kick out of, says Selig.

Selig's commitment to Simsbury was the inspiration for The Studio. "We restored a piece of Simsbury history," explains Selig, who lives in town with his wife, Sandy, and their dog, George. Restoring the garden room took four months, including two months just on the floor, and the place sparkles. It is a beautiful spot to shop and to gather. Selig and his team host gatherings









for groups such as the Chamber of Commerce and the Simsbury Garden Club. A Jane Taylor trunk show is scheduled for early December.

Some of Selig's offerings directly benefit local causes. For instance, artist Debbie Leonard crafted a fern-shaped pendant for The Studio, and for each sale the store Selig donates \$25 to the Simsbury Land Trust. The Studio carries other, similar items, such as a river-shaped pendant to benefit the Farmington River Watershed Association and the Flower Bridge pendant for the Old Drake Hill Flower Bridge foundation. In addition to helping the community, these items make wonderful, thoughtful gifts, says Ziplow.

Selig believes his commitment to giving back stems from his early life experiences, and that side of him is often apparent. Selig says jewelry is "the original recycled material." "There's a mystery to precious metals," he explains. "The same metals have been around for centuries, bought, sold and traded, melted together. You don't know what you're wearing. You could be wearing a part of Cleopatra's ring." In addition to custom jewelry making, Selig enjoys repurposing jewelry, especially heirloom and vintage items. "We can take your grandmother's cocktail ring, something you might not wear, and work with you to turn it into a piece you can enjoy every day, so you can carry your memories with you," Selig says. The Studio – a lovely, artistic and inspiring spot - is the perfect place to meet with artist Bill Selig to do just that.

Theresa Anzaldua, of Farmington, is an award-winning writer and author of We Had a Job to Do: A Basic History of World War II Through the Eyes of Those Who Served. Purchase the book at harvard.com or amazon. com. For more about Theresa, go to www. theresaanzaldua.com.

THE PERFECT GIFT: Shoppers can visit two premiere shopping destinations located a few hundred feet from each other, Bill Selig Jewelers, a Simsbury institution for 38 years, and The Studio, in the Robert and Julia Darling House, featuring hand-crafted jewelry, decorative items, artwork, high-end chocolate and custom gift-wrapping.



STRAIGHT FROM THE NORTH POLE: George McCleary, 62, of Thomaston, estimates he makes up to \$10,000 and more annually from Santa appearances between Thanksgiving and Christmas. He's portrayed Santa since 1972.

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Written by Matthew Broderick Photography by Amber Jones Photography

## The Trick to Being Saint Nick

Fielding difficult requests (such as a wish for divorced parents to reunite) dealing with crying toddlers, and attending to grooming matters, such as beard bleaching, are realities for the jolly gents who play Santa





retired sergeant from the Hartford police force, Charles Allen, was not looking for a new job. But 10 years ago while visiting Fantasia of Lights in

Hartford's Goodwin Park with his family, Allen, then age 77, got a job offer from an unlikely source: Santa Claus.

"There was a Santa at the entrance greeting everyone," recalls the white-bearded Allen, of Rocky Hill. "He saw me and came over to our car and mentioned quietly that he had

more [Santa] business than he could handle if I was interested."

Intrigued, Allen, who had never considered being Santa as a business, did some online research and found himself enrolling in a webbased Santa training program.

Allen is one of an estimated 70,000 people across America who will don the red suit this holiday season at shopping malls, parades, and holiday parties. Being the man in red can generate some significant green, according to New Hampshire's Dan Greenleaf, 65, a co-founder of the New England Santa Society, a volunteerbased organization designed to help train aspiring Kringles across the northeast. "In Connecticut, a Santa with some training can earn well over \$150 an hour," says Greenleaf, who typically makes more than 50 appearances during the holiday season. "In the Boston area, it's closer to \$250 an hour."

George McCleary, 62, of Thomaston, has played the role of Santa more than 600 times since 1972. He estimates he can earn more than \$10,000 annually, between Thanksgiving and Christmas, from 50 clients, including Eversource Electric, Microsoft, New England Sports Center and Bass Pro Shops. Last year, he booked more than 70 events. Like many would-be Santas, McCleary sees the financial upside of becoming Saint Nick as secondary to the joy he experiences. "There is a magical connection between Santa and a child," McCleary says.

Sometimes that magic is tested. "The hardest,

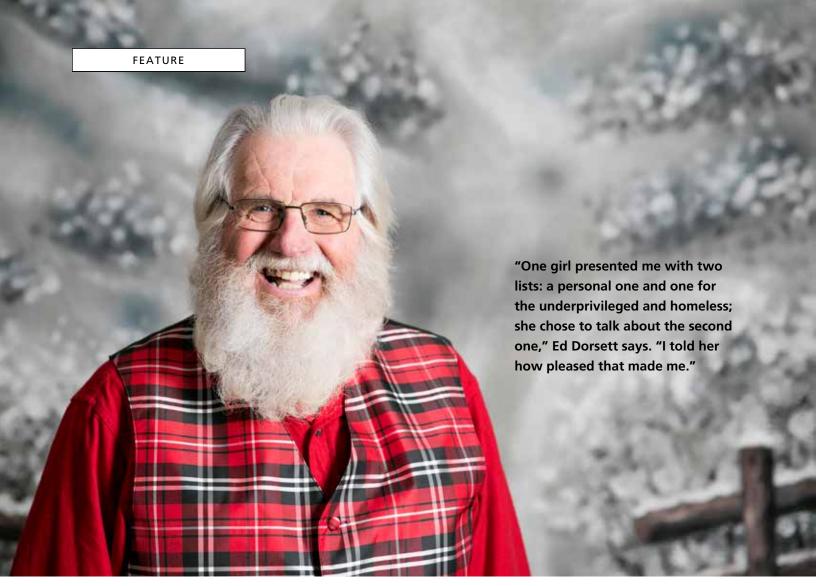
most challenging situation I ever had [as Santa] was going with Mrs. Claus to Newtown, three days after the [Sandy Hook] school shootings," McCleary says. The children, he recalls, were understandably subdued, but he followed his normal routine. The first child he saw, McCleary says, wanted nothing. "The next boy, when I asked what we wanted, said a football," McCleary recounts. "I reached into my bag, grabbed a present, and as luck would have it, it was a football." The child smiled.

The difficult requests that can reach Santa's ear - a wish for divorced parents to get back together, or for the return of a deceased relative, or for a parent on a tour of duty to come home - require finesse. "You never want to promise something to a child you can't deliver," McCleary says. "I've been fortunate to attend trainings that feature table discussions and practical tips on how to address sensitive topics and accommodate children with special needs."

Groups like the New England Santa Society and the Connecticut Society of Santas conduct educational workshops throughout the year, most heavily in autumn. "We have trainings for both novices and more seasoned Santas," Greenleaf says. For newcomers, training covers the basics - learning the history of Santa Claus, grooming tips, dealing with difficult children, and finding Santa jobs. Santas with more experience under their wide black belts might learn magic tricks or balloon crafts to add a new twist to their events.

For many toddlers, visiting Saint Nick can be a scary experience and a trying one for an unprepared Santa. Greenleaf says he trains his students, when dealing with a frightened child, to connect with parents first. "Once you get the seal of approval from mom or dad, the child usually opens up," Greenleaf says. "Sometimes it takes a prop like a book, toy or puppet; there are a lot of approaches we teach."

Ed Dorsett, 74, of Morris, was one of nearly 20 Santas trained in the state last year by the Connecticut Society of Santas. He was inspired to try his hand at being Santa when strangers commented on his physical similarities to Mr. Kringle. In his first year, he booked more than



HIGH DEMAND: Ed Dorsett, 74, of Morris, booked more than 25 appearances last year, his first season portraying Santa.

25 appearances, including one at Foxwoods Resort Casino. Dorsett learned it's not always Santa who teaches the meaning of Christmas. "One girl presented me with two lists: a personal one and one for the underprivileged and homeless; she chose to talk about the second one," he says. "I told her how pleased that made me."

Greenleaf says a big part of connecting with children is building trust. "You need to have a love of children and accept them where they are [in that moment] in a way that is believable," he says. It's also important, he cautions, to authentically look the part. A good quality suit, boots, belt and buckle, and, in some cases, beard-bleaching, are essentials. "It can cost a couple thousand dollars just to get the basics," Greenleaf says. "And that doesn't include things like business cards, background checks and insurance." (Yes, even Saint Nick needs liability coverage.)

While annual costs can run well into the upper hundreds of dollars between training classes and grooming, the market demand for Santa during the holiday season outpaces the supply. That's made it easier, even for novice Santas, to cash in. "I get booking requests earlier each year," says Greenleaf,

who uses online Santa sites and social media to generate business leads. "Many clients started to called this past March and April for events this December."

During the holidays, one of the biggest challenges for local Santas is fitting in all their appearances. Typically, the weekends – which can provide \$2,000 in income, according to Greenleaf – book quickly. "I try to reserve mid-week events for places like schools or nursing homes," he says, noting he's appeared in parades, at children's hospitals, stores and tree lighting ceremonies during his nine years in Santa's shoes.

And it's not just children, Greenleaf's found, that rejoice when he's in character. "When I interact with the parents or the elderly I can see [on their faces] the childhood memories [of Santa] coming back," he says. "It's not just a role you play; there's a much more important connection for people."

Charles Allen, now 87 and a decade into his postretirement career as Santa, agrees. "I decided when I started [as Santa] that I wanted to do more than 'meet and greets'," he says. "Because being Santa provided a greater power of influence with children."

He developed a program called Life Experiences and uses

his time as Santa to teach children tolerance, respect and the importance of a positive attitude. "The first rule I teach is the golden rule - treat others as you want to be treated," he explains. "When I tell kids how proud of them when they know that rule, their ego goes through the ceiling."

The power and satisfaction Allen feels being Santa surpasses anything he experienced in his previous careers. In addition to being a police officer, he's been a teen counselor, florist, wedding videographer and wedding consultant. "Being Santa is the best thing that ever happened to me," he says. "The happiest people are those that make others happy."

This season, many Santas across Connecticut will earn a sleigh's worth of money at malls, parades and holiday parties across the state, but for many, like Charles Allen, that will never be their primary motivation. "As Santa, when you look into the eyes of a child, you see their true love," he says, "because you [as Santa] are their hero."

Matthew Broderick is a freelance writer who lives in Simsbury with his three children.

Photographer Amber Jones, of Avon, is a frequent contributor to Seasons and owns Studio Pura in West Hartford. For more about Amber, visit amberjones.com.



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#### SUITING UP

If you're inspired to launch a career as Santa, consider these qualifications, courtesy of Dan Greenleaf, co-founder of the New England Santa Society, a volunteer-based organization that helps train aspiring Kringles.

**OPENNESS:** Many think Santa needs a big round jelly belly to don the red suit. But Santa comes in all shapes and sizes. What he can never have too much of is heart a boundless spirit of love, giving and joy. His spirit should spark joy in everyone regardless of their age.

**IMAGINATION:** For optimum connection, Santa needs to see the world from a child's perspective. Whimsy, mischievousness, innocence, optimism, playfulness, acceptance and wonder are important qualities.

**POSITIVE ENERGY:** Santa must always be a jolly old elf even when fatique, boredom or frustration kicks in.

**VERSATILITY:** The best Santas are multitalented. Santa could be called on to read a story to toddlers, lead a rendition of "Jingle Bells," help assemble a new toy, visit a child in the hospital, help decorate Christmas cookies, or greet thousands along a parade route.

**INCLUSIVENESS:** Santa needs to be able to read and respond appropriately to people of all ages and types, from hesitant youngsters and rowdy teenagers to office workers and senior citizens. When things don't go as planned or conflict occurs, Santa is the one who needs to maintain order and stability.

**AUTHENTICITY:** One must think as Santa, answer questions as Santa, interact as Santa and present oneself as the real Santa. Allowing children (and adults) to interact with the real Santa Claus is the number one priority.

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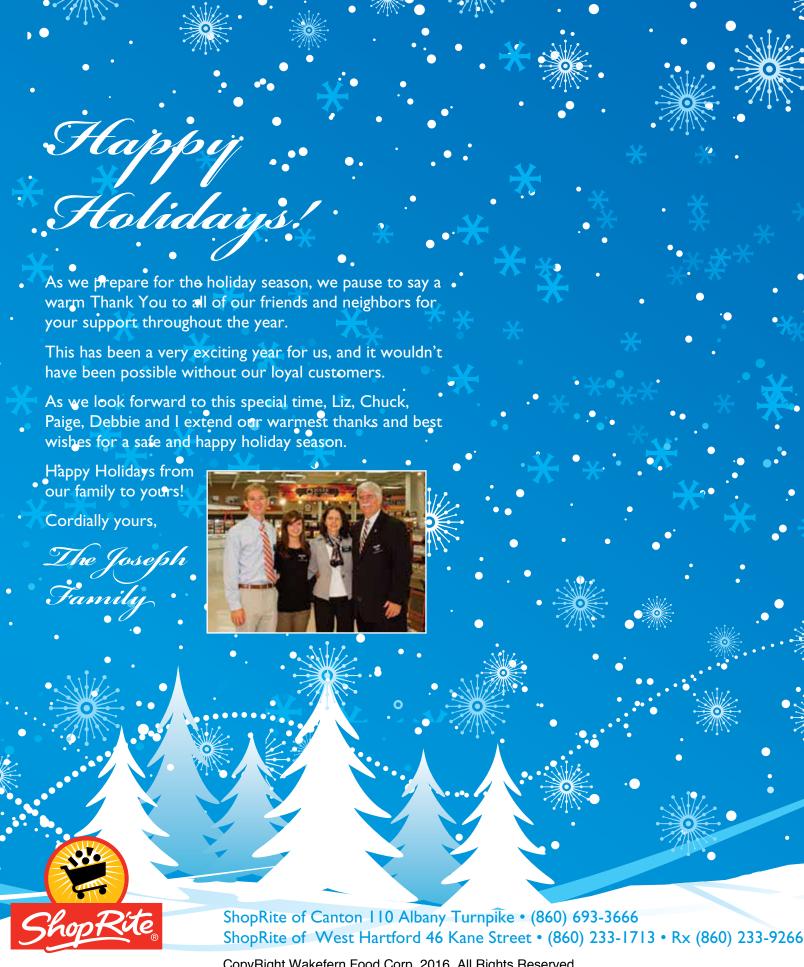
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# 

Put grandma's mulled cider recipe on hold and shake up a real-deal cocktail with complex flavors and natural garnishes that make winter something to celebrate

Winter cocktails should warm your soul. I'm talking that sit-in-front-of-a-fireafter-a-long-day-of snowboarding-and-pour-a-drink-that-makes-your-insides-burn kind of warm. That come-in-after-a day-of-shoveling-snow-and-light-a-little-fire-inside-you kind of warm. Thankfully, liquors like bourbon, whiskey, rum and dark tequila provide the antidote to bitter temperatures.

In my search for the ultimate winter cocktails, I asked the bar managers at some of my favorite restaurants around the state to weigh in. They provided recipes for cocktails that are the real deal through and through. Don't shy away from ice just because it's winter; the ingredients in these new classics will keep you toasty. S

Alycia Chrosniak is the founder of CT Eats Out, your guide to the best eats in the state. For more information, visit cteatsout.com.

Written and Photographed by **Alycia Chrosniak** 





#### **DRUNKEN APPLE COCKTAIL**

Grants Restaurant by Taylor Hyde

Thanks to apples and cinnamon, this cocktail is a great transition drink from fall to winter

#### Ingredients:

1½ ounce tequila ½ ounce agave

1/2 ounce fresh-squeezed lime juice

34 ounce grapefruit juice

1¾ ounce apple juice

½ ounce cinnamon syrup, recipe follows

½ ounce simple syrup

#### Cinnamon Syrup:

20 cinnamon sticks 2 cups of water

#### Instructions:

For cinnamon syrup: Bring 2 cups of water to a boil. Add cinnamon sticks and take off heat. Let steep overnight like tea. Remove cinnamon sticks.

#### For cocktail:

Place all ingredients in a shaker and shake over ice. Pour into a glass and garnish with a cinnamon stick and apple slice.

For information about Grants, in West Hartford, go to www.billygrant.com

At press time, Seasons learned Taylor Hyde is no longer at Grants. We wish to thank her for the recipe.

# Perfect Pairings

#### **COLD-WEATHER CLASSICS**

The change in temperature is a good indicator that it's time to put away lighter, fruitier summer cocktails and indulge in elixirs that are more complex and substantial. Scott Clark, of Liquor Depot, shares his expertise on the liquors, techniques and tips that can enhance winter celebrations.

### Which spirits get folks into the holiday spirit?

**SC:** One tried and true way to welcome in the holidays (and your quests) is to whip up a fresh batch of eggnog. Numerous recipes abound – pick your favorite, using brandy, bourbon or rum.

A dash of Irish whiskey and a smidge of brown sugar makes for a great post-meal libation.

### : What are ideal wines for parties?

SC: The festive mood of the holidays makes it the ideal time for a little bubbly. Whether you're a fan of traditional French cuvees, trendy Italian Proseccos, or a delicious Spanish Cava, popping a cork signals it's time to celebrate.

## : Any tips for popping corks?

SC: When opening any bottle of sparkling wine, carefully remove the foil and metal cage, hold the bottle at a slight angle with one hand firmly around the cork, and slowly twist the bottle back and forth. Twisting the bottle while holding the cork steady allows the cork to loosen slower, and the bottle opens with a much less force. This technique helps prevent the precious liquid inside from spraying all over the place.

## : What wines make great gifts?

SC: A good age-worthy red wine, such as a cabernet sauvignon from California, Bordeaux from France or Barolo from Italy, are guaranteed to make the recipient smile. A nice bottle of Champagne is always thoughtful. Nothing marks a celebration like the popping of a cork.

For your holiday beverage needs, visit Liquor Depot, in New Britain and West Simsbury, www.liquordepotinc.com

#### **VELVET ROSE**

Krust Pizza and Bourbon Bar by Neil Robinson

Perfectly balanced and frothy, this cocktail is perfect after a day on the slopes

#### Ingredients:

1½ ounce Hennessy cognac 1 ounce sour mix

1/2 ounce Luxardo Maraschino Liqueur

1/2 ounce Velvet Falernum liqueur

1 egg white

#### Instructions:

Pour all ingredients into a shaker and dry shake (no ice in the shaker) for at least 15 seconds until egg whites are incorporated and frothy. Add ice and shake again for at least 15 seconds.

For information about Krust Pizza Bar, in Middletown, go to www.krustpizzabar.com

Pour over ice and garnish with a cherry.

#### **MAPLE RUSH COCKTAIL**

River Tavern Restaurant by Wesley De Sousa Costa

The acidity of the Madeira wine and lemon juice perfectly balance the sweetness of the maple syrup

#### Ingredients:

1 ounce rye whiskey

1 ounce dry Madeira

1/2 ounce maple syrup

1/2 ounce lemon juice

#### Instructions:

Place all ingredients in a shaker and shake over ice Pour over ice and garnish with a lemon peel.

For information about River Tavern Restaurant, in Chester, go to rivertavernrestaurant.com





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# Dr. Victoria Costello

o be a good geriatrician, you have to be a good listener. So proclaims Saint Francis Hospital and Medical Center geriatric specialist Victoria Costello, MD, who is not only privy to the fascinating life stories of her elderly patients, but believes that hearing what they have to say is a critical step in evaluating their health. "Older patients' medical histories are so complex: You have to give them some time to tell it to you," she says. "And you have to listen, because there are so many different diseases and medications that can be influencing their present condition."

Not only do geriatric patients tend to be a more frail population, notes Dr. Costello, but they are more likely to suffer from numerous illnesses at the same time. The challenge, she says, is to tease out what is causing a patient's symptoms. Is it one of multiple medications the patient is taking, or an acute or chronic medical condition?

Once an illness is diagnosed, she says, it's not just about figuring out the best treatment for that illness - how that treatment fits into the older patient's lifestyle is also a factor. "Is the treatment so complex that they'd have to move to a nursing facility?" asks Dr. Costello. "Are its side effects going to negatively impact their physical function? That's the main thing I love about geriatrics - it is more a process of managing all of the facets of an older person."

#### Improving quality of life in older patients

Costello, who joined the Saint Francis staff in November 2015, first became interested in geriatrics as a second year medical student at University of Texas-Houston Medical School. "I happened upon a meeting of the geriatric student interest group, and during that meeting, many of the attending physicians in that department spoke about

what they did and why they liked their jobs," Costello recalls. "They talked about improving quality of life in older people, and looking at the patient as a whole rather than a specific disease entity. They were just so enthusiastic about their practices and their lives." Costello found their enthusiasm contagious; two elective clinical rotations in geriatrics further fueled her interest in the field.

Costello, who grew up in Arlington, Texas, left her home state to do an internal medicine residency at St. Vincent Hospitals and Health Services in Indianapolis, and went on to a geriatrics fellowship at Duke University Medical Center in Durham, North Carolina. She worked for several years as an inpatient physician in Indiana, but didn't have the opportunity to return to geriatrics until coming to Hartford. Though it was her husband's teaching appointment - as a psychology professor at the University of Hartford - that brought the young physician and her family to Connecticut, she says that there were two big bonuses to the move. "One is that we were closer to his family in Philadelphia, and the other is that I was able to get a job here that was better suited to me."

Dementia is the most common reason primary care physicians refer patients to Dr. Costello. While she does "treat" dementia, Dr. Costello says, the goal of treatment is not to cure memory loss. "With rare exception, there isn't a way to do that," she says. "Instead, treatment is primarily supportive. You work with patients and families to alter their living environment to make their day-to-day life easier. For example, she says, a patient can use pillboxes with separate compartments for each day of the week, so they can better keep track of whether they have taken their daily medication. "If someone with memory troubles is less interested in sitting



down and eating a complete meal," says Dr. Costello, "I might suggest putting out healthy finger foods they can eat whenever they're hungry. This makes life easier for the caretakers, too, because they don't have to be stressed out when their loved one doesn't eat at the prescribed time."

Because children are often involved in the care of their elderly parents, notes Dr. Costello, "you aren't just treating the patient - you are treating their family." In this way, she says, geriatrics is similar to pediatrics. "It's very anxiety-provoking when your parent has memory loss," she adds. Dr. Costello attempts to allay some of the anxiety by educating families about how to support loved ones experiencing cognitive decline.

Dr. Costello conducts cognitive screening for patients struggling with memory problems; this typically involves written and verbal questionnaires, and may also include blood and brain imaging tests. Though Alzheimer's, a progressive disease of the brain, is the most common cause of dementia, other degenerative conditions such as Parkinson's can also lead to a decline in cognitive function, as can vascular disease or stroke. Dr. Costello typically performs depression screening on new patients as well, as it is fairly common in older patients and can present itself as memory loss. "If you can treat depression successfully," says Dr. Costello, "it can not only improve their mood and their quality of life, but it sometimes helps memory."

#### Maintaining health and function

One way to preserve mental function as you age, Dr. Costello says, is to continue learning. "Engage in education, stretch your brain to work in new ways," she suggests. In addition, she says, taking preventive health measures can not only reduce the risk of Alzheimer's and other types of dementia, but can also decrease the risk of many of the chronic diseases that plague the elderly, like heart disease, cancer and diabetes. This means consuming a healthful diet (one low in saturated fats and sugar, and high in fiber), getting adequate sleep, and exercising regularly, though fitness activities should be tailored to one's physical condition and ability. Tai Chi, for example, which works on balance and can reduce the risk of falls, is often a good choice for the elderly, Dr. Costello says.

It's also important for people to manage existing health conditions, according to Dr. Costello. "We know for people who have high blood pressure and diabetes, for example, that if they are able to keep their blood sugars and blood pressure at a normal range, that will decrease their risk of developing dementia later in life," she explains.

Many of Dr. Costello's patients are at an age where they have had to deal with emotional loss - of family members, friends, and possibly even their homes as they have become less independent. And even those not dealing with memory loss and cognitive decline are learning to cope with physical decline as their bodies age. Geriatricians help their patients to navigate this part of their life journey, with the goal of maintaining quality of life and improving

Dr. Costello tries to help her patients preserve function by recommending physical therapy and exercise classes, and by keeping an eye out for medications that may have detrimental side effects. "Part of the challenge and joy of geriatrics is that we in the field enjoy working with patients through their illness and through difficult times hopefully getting them over a hump and into a better state of emotional and physical health."

Dr. Costello's advice to her patients - and older people in general - is to know their medications. Many of the elderly juggle multiple prescriptions and see many different doctors. "I educate patients to know their medication list, to write it down and have it with them at every doctor's visit," says Dr. Costello. She also recommends that older patients - especially those with dementia - come to appointments with a caregiver. "It's helpful to have another pair of ears at your doctor visits, because it's easy for anyone to get a bit overwhelmed by what's being said - or there can be diagnoses given that are surprising or disturbing."

Dr. Costello imparts her wisdom - along with her clinical experience and enthusiasm for her field - to residents who rotate through Saint Francis and with medical students who accompany her to Saint Francis Medical Group's Geriatric Medicine Clinic. "I so enjoy sharing with them my love for geriatrics," she says. "I find that older patients tend to be more appreciative of their doctor's recommendations. They are such a grateful group of people, which is really humbling from a physician perspective - and also what makes our job so enjoyable."

Lori Miller Kase is a freelance writer living in Simsbury.

Photographer Seshu Badrinath, of Avon, specializes in intimate, natural portraits of families and children; seshuphotography.com



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# Snow Days in the Dark Ages

ack in the Dark Ages, long before there were text message alerts and apps designed to convey information rapidly...

Before the Internet or email... Before personal computers propagated in homes...

Before school closings were even reported on the television...

Somewhere in the distant past, small children wearing inside-out pajamas for good luck, whose homework lay incomplete on the dining room table, a gamble on the power of Mother Nature and the prescience of the weather man, gathered 'round transistor radios as snow piled up outside, waiting as static-filled voices read off alphabetic lists of the school districts that had wisely chosen to cancel classes for the day.

There was no rhyme or reason for when the lists would be read, typically by old white men who inhabited the odd and indiscernible world of AM radio. In between news of traffic-filled bridges,

irrelevant Senate votes, and someone named Dow Jones, radio announcers would suddenly tick off the towns on the cancellation list, necessitating even the smallest of children wait by the radio for hours at a time less they miss said announcement, forgoing breakfast, bathroom breaks, and even the rarely aired Brady Bunch's "Hawaii Bound" rerun, all in hopes that they might hear their school's name spoken aloud.

These gravely voiced men read their lists dispassionately, seemingly unaware of the hopes and dreams that hung in the balance, for the name of each school district offered something that no other human being on the face of the Earth was capable of offering:

The gift of a snow day.

A snow day, which essentially amounted to the gift of time, which children at even the most tender of ages understand is the greatest gift of all. Later in life, as children decay into adults, the gift of time will be replaced

by such absurdities as handbags and gift certificates and hideous ties, but for children, there was nothing better than time.

And yes, it was true. A snow day in February meant an extra day of school in June when the sun was bright and the grass was green, but children understand one truth above all:

We could all be dead by June. An asteroid or a nuclear missile or a rip in the space-time continuum could end us all in the blink of an eye. There are no guaranteed tomorrows. We will take our days when we can get them.

So we waited by the radio as these lists of school districts were read, methodically, monotonously, absent of the fanfare they so deserved. And when they passed your town's predetermined alphabetical location without its name being called, still you waited, for occasionally, at the end of the list, the broadcaster, this demon of dispassion, would mention that one or two more

school districts had called in since he began his recitation, and he would tag these latecomers to the end, regardless of the first letter in their name.

Maybe, hopefully, unbelievably, your school district could be one.

And after your school's name has been read? What to do upon discovery that your snow day is secure?

Listen again. Listen just as closely as the list is read a second and third and fourth time, because hearing your school's name called, even after you have heard it once before, produces almost as much joy in your heart as the first time.

That is the power of a snow day. It's all fun and games unless, of course, you are my brother. If that be the case, the opportunity to inflict unconscionable pain and suffering on you is so great, it rivals my desire to know if I have a snow day. On these days, I possess an almost superhuman ability to delay gratification, to await word on my future, and to postpone the clarion call

of my potential freedom. On these days, the torture of my brother is even more appealing than the prospect of building a fort or throwing snowballs at passing cars from the branches overhanging the road.

So as the soulless radioman approaches the alphabetic location of our school on his ever-growing list, I switch off the device, or lower its volume, or toss it deep into a closet, or lock it in the family car. I grab pot and spoon and pound the two as our school's name is read or not read. We will never know for certain because the sound of kitchen metal on kitchen metal is louder at 6:45 a.m. than any other time in human history.

I make every effort to prevent my brother from hearing or not hearing our school's name announced over the radio because the whining and groaning of my brother is far better than any music found on the FM dial.

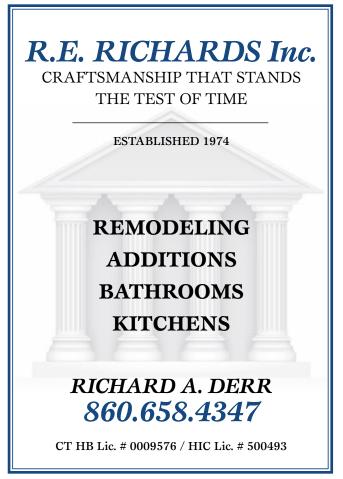
These were dark days before .com and IOS and touchscreens. These were the days of the analog zombies, transistor prayers, and information deprivation. They were hard times, but they were good times, too. These were the days of unbridled anticipation, unrelenting suspense, and the joyful abuse of siblings younger and more powerless than you.

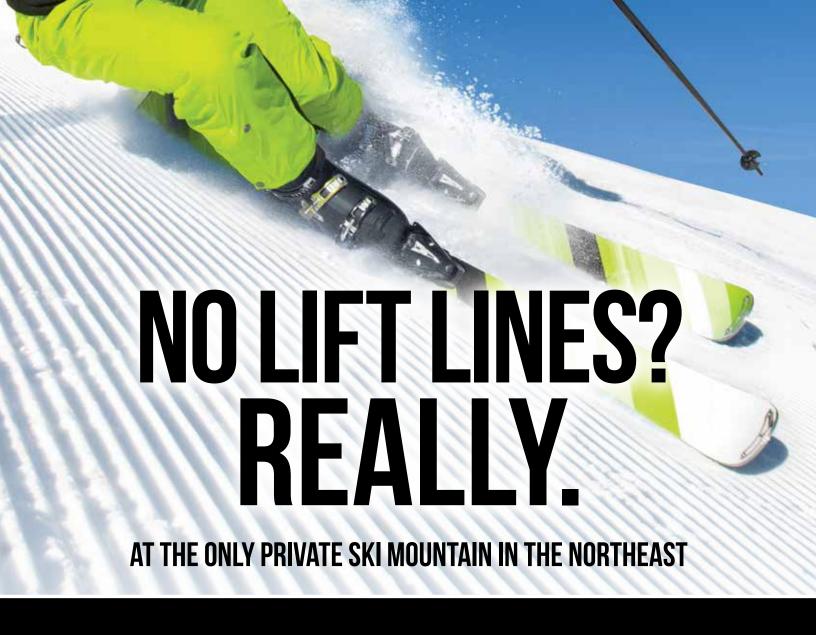
The dark ages were lovely, dark, and 

Matthew Dicks is a West Hartford elementary schoolteacher and author of several novels, including the 2016 Nutmeg Award nominee Memoirs of an Imaginary Friend. He's also a 23-time Moth StorySLAM champion and the co-founder of Speak Up. For more about Matthew, go to www.matthewdicks.com.

Sean Wang, a MIT architecture graduate, is author of the sci-fi graphic novel series, Runners. For more about Sean, go to www.seanwang.com







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# We're #1!

# **Coldwell Banker Residential Brokerage Leads with the Highest Sold Volume and Sales in Simsbury in 2016!**



\*Based on information provided from CTMLS January 1, 2016 - October 27, 2016. Statistics based on Closed Single Homes Residential - Simsbury based real estate offices. All information herein deemed reliable but not guaranteed.



## RESIDENTIAL BROKERAGE

Coldwell Banker Residential Brokerage 700 Hopmeadow Street, Simsbury, Connecticut 06070 860-658-2241 coldwellbankerhomes.com































