

# **CORNWALL CHRONICLE**

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**Going Green** 

You may not have noticed it, but as winter's icy teeth bite into Cornwall, the town is getting greener and greener. And greener. In fact, news has just come that Cornwall leads the state in the percentage of households agreeing to the "green" option on their monthly bill for electricity.

When the Cornwall Energy Task Force first came into being, not that many people had volunteered for the small surcharge. With some prompting, 87 households were soon signed up, enough to take advantage of a state program that provides one free solar panel on one specific building. The choice: CCS, where some green power will soon be fed into the school's electricity grid. As of this writing, 122 households have signed on. More solar panels will come.

The greening of Cornwall really got started a little over a year ago, when Katherine Freygang, who had been offering Al Gore's *An Inconvenient Truth* and other films to the community, attended an official state-wide gathering of the green in Hartford. She came back to report that Cornwall was way behind. Other towns already had energy task forces in place, some for several years. Cornwall willingly complied.

Today, the Cornwall Energy Task Force numbers eight people and is going strong. Alliance with the Connecticut Energy Fund now offers Cornwall \$5,000 to be awarded in mini-grants to people who can come up with new ideas, solutions, and programs. Possibilities include (1) a green web page with other Northwest Corner towns, including an ongoing blog; (2) further work with CCS students, and possibly with HVRHS; and (3) finding solutions to the increasing transportation needs of many residents. What about an organized car-pool to different commercial centers on different days of the week? It might save a lot of people a lot of gas.

The only mini-grant utilized so far resulted in a real achievement: the Cornwall Energy Fair in late November. Sponsored in cooperation with the Cornwall Association, the event drew over 200 people to CCS for a gym-full of learning experiences. (For instance: Connecticut has the highest electricity costs in the nation. So you should be concerned when the "green" option on the CL&P bill adds another 6 or 7 percent. But changing only 16 light bulbs in your house will more than cover the cost.) At the fair experts spoke and vendors demonstrated. Kids did kid things, and some adults sat down to watch notables like Al Gore on a big screen. Others took advantage of vehicle demonstrations and house tours.

As befits a town of inveterate snoopers, the house tours were very popular. In North

IANIIIADV 2000

Cornwall, Tom and Alice Wolf's house showed the possibilities of living off the mid-

bilities of living off the grid. Bruce and Debby Bennett's house showed how solar panels can provide partial power, and Bruce discussed their experience with sun-source electricity from start to present. The Rotko Charrey house in Cornwall Bridge fascinated visitors, who eagerly studied the geothermal and passive solar heating, and the carefully designed measures to promote cooling in the summer and minimize the structure's impact on the environment. —The January Editors

#### **Rell Cuts Cornwall Ribbon**

A small, shivering crowd had assembled in front of the Berkshire Country Store on the morning of November 28, and at exactly 11:11, a sleek black Lincoln Town Car drew up and pulled to a stop. Out stepped Governor M. Jodi Rell, herself in sleek black, and for a brief period of time, Cornwall seemed at the very center of things.

The occasion: a ribbon-cutting photo-op to celebrate the first retail outlet for biodiesel fuel in the state. Introducing the governor, State Senator Andrew Roraback said that as Connecticut leads the nation in environmental concerns, so the Northwest Corner leads Connecticut—and at the moment Cornwall was where the cameras were clicking and reporters scribbling words in tiny notebooks.

(continued on page 2)

IANUAKY 2008						(continuea on page 2
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
Every Week This Month: Mondays: Jam Session, 7:30 Men's Adult Basketball, 7 p.M Tuesdays: Adult Volleyball, Wednesdays: Bend & Stretc Stretch Class, 50 p.M. Town H Basketball, 7:30 p.M. COS  Ta Bontinued at End of Calenda	I. CCS Gym 7:30 p.m. CCS Gym h Class, 9:30 a.m. UCC; all; Women's Adult i Chi, 7 p.m. CCS	1 Annual New Year's Breakfast 8:30 a.m1 p.m. UCC Parish House †	CCS Reopens Inland Wetlands 7:30 P.M. Town Office	3	4	5
6	Park & Rec. 7 P.M. CCS Library Bd. of Selectmen TTT 7:30 P.M. Town Hall	Agricultural Comm. 7:30 P.M. Town Office P&Z 7:30 P.M. Town Hall Housatonic River Comm. 7:30 P.M. CCS Library	9	10 50	11 Story Hour 1:15 p.m. Library	12 Motherhouse Old Style Herbal Workshop 10:30 A.M.–1 P.M. UCC † Responsible Tower Siting 1–4 P.M. Town Hall †
Art Opening Reception 3–5 p.m. Library †	14 Blood Pressure Screening Noon-1 P.M. UCC Democratic Town Caucus 7:30 P.M. Library †	15 Deadline: February Chronicle Copy	16	17 Bd. of Ed 5 p.m. CCS Lib. Bd. of Fin 7:30 p.m. CCS Lib. VFW Post 9856 8 p.m. W. C. Firehouse	18 Story Hour 1:15 P.M. Library Iraq Moratorium Potluck Supper 6 P.M. UCC Parish House † Iraq Moratorium Network Film 7 P.M. UCC Day Room †	19 Town Hall Players Memoir Reading 3 P.M. Library † Benefit Potluck Auction 6:30 P.M. UCC Parish House (see p.3)
Traces of the Trade Preview 4 P.M. Town Hall (see p.2)	21 Martin Luther King, Jr. Birthday Observed  CCS Closed  Democratic Town Comm. 7:30 p.m. Library	P&Z 7:30 P.M. Town Hall Bd. of Selectmen 7:30 P.M. Town Hall	23	24	25 Story Hour 1:15 P.M. Library Family Round Singing 7:30 P.M. Town Hall †	26
27	28 ZBA 8 P.M. Town Hall	29	30 Example 20 Separate 20 September 20 Septe	31	Thursdays: Meditation for Mo Debra Tyler 672-0229 to confir Saturdays: Free Family Skatin Sundays: Meditation Group, 1- for location	m <b>g</b> , 7–8 <sub>P.M.</sub> Hotchkiss School †

(continued from page 1)

Governor Rell explained that although biodiesel fuel has not been available to the public, the Department of Transportation has been using this "clean-burning, environmentally friendly fuel" for several years. She praised the store owners, Rick and Beth Cochran, for their initiative in "offering biodiesel at their retail pump."

The fuel offered at the corner of Routes 4, 128, and 43 is called B-20, meaning that 20 percent of the mix comes from what a company spokesman called "American farmers on American soil." Soybeans and other crops remove  $\mathrm{CO}_2$  from the atmosphere, resulting in a "nearly neutral carbon cycle." The other 80 percent of B-20 is conventional diesel, derived from petroleum. Pure biodiesel tends to clog engines and become waxy at low temperatures. The 80–20 mix is safe down to –10°F.

B-20 sells for \$3.79 a gallon at the Cornwall pump. Producers receive a subsidy of 30 cents per gallon in an effort to, in the governor's words, "build a biofuel industry in our state" that will move us on toward her three top goals: "jobs, jobs, and jobs."

—Bob Potter

#### Disposal Proposal

I am a hazardous waste hoarder; my basement—a charnel house strewn with cantankerous computers, temperamental tellies, and silent stereos. I am scarred from my last excursion to the Torrington recycling facility, and not because I found myself heartlessly consigning to dismemberment the electronic devices that had served me so faithfully, had actually laid down their lives for me to the last sputtering volt. That is not why I have let their worn-out replacements haunt my cellar lo these many years.

I don't know what your experience has been at that disposal site, but I would have preferred a quick root canal and be done with it. For nearly four hours I inched along in a bumper-to-bumper serpentine of my fellow re-

cyclers, a conga line of despair, crawling almost a half mile along South Main Street, inhaling nearly pure exhaust smoke, all for the sake of protecting the environment (from one TV set and four fluorescent light bulbs). I could swear I saw Franz Kafka directing traffic. I consider myself the world's foremost authority on the flora and fauna of Bogue Road, despite seeing them through a blue, carbon-monoxide-laden miasma.

By the time I reached the head of the line, I was ready for the men in the white coats to come and take me away, and there they were (not in coats exactly but cocooned from head to toe in snowy hazmat coveralls and protective hoods). They carted off my burned-out bulbs and the venerable old bedroom Sony, whose buttons and dials my family had fondled and caressed for a decade, as if they were carrying ingots of glowing radium while I, with a song in my heart, retraced my path breezing at 30 mph past the queue of latecomers.

But help is on the way, and I may get my

basement back again from the electronic corpses that now glut it. In the new year, the Cornwall Recycling Center will begin accepting fluorescent bulbs free of charge. The town is also working with the state on a broader plan for disposal of electronics. This would involve a shed or container on the present site where the discarded items could be stored for eventual disposal. According to First Selectman Gordon Ridgway, this could be put into effect as early as the spring.

–Matt Collins

#### **Original Sin**

The Puritan founders of New England have usually been portrayed as spiritual, righteous, and godly souls; stolid yeoman farmers who, pausing only for daily worship, tilled their fields by the sweat of their brows while their goodwives baked bread and savory Indian pudding at the hearth. This is not a wildly unreasonable characterization of those first hardy zealots who braved the treacherous seas in search of a land beyond the constraints of the established church.

But as one of our townsfolk discovered while delving into his roots, there was a darker side to the generations that followed. For many, the pruning hooks and plowshares soon gave way to whips and fetters as they joined the thriving slave trade, abducting luckless African bondsmen to a life of drudgery in the New World. For, if the South was the predominant employer of slaves, it was a huge, Northern-based industry that met the demand.

Laughlin was aware that he is a lineal descendant of Rhode Island's DeWolf clan, the foremost profiteers of the infamous Triangle Trade, which bartered potent New England rum for African slaves who were sold in Cuba for Caribbean sugar to make the rum. James DeWolf, the family patriarch, was a U.S. senator and, during the family's heyday, the second wealthiest man in the country, thanks to the slave trade, cotton mills, and privateering during the War of 1812.

Though he knew few details, Ledlie

Novice filmmaker Katrina Browne contacted Ledlie along with another 260 of her fellow descendants of the DeWolfs with a proposition. She planned to film a journey retracing the voyages of their ancestors' windjammer slave ships, from the last surviving family mansion in Bristol, Rhode Island, to the "kidnapping fields" and slaver fortresses of Ghana, then on to the ruins of the DeWolf sugar plantation in Cuba. Ledlie and eight others signed on for this troubling voyage in the footsteps of their ancestors. Along the way they met with such diverse individuals as the president of Wellesley College and the poet laureate of Ghana.

For Ledlie, whose first ministry with the Episcopal Church was with a black congregation in Jersey City, the journey helped illuminate the long progression that has brought

America's black community to the present day through generations of struggle.

The resulting film, *Traces of the Trade: A Story from the Deep North*, which chronicles their odyssey, has been selected to compete in the prestigious Sundance Film Festival in 2008, coinciding with the bicentennial of the U.S. abolition of the slave trade. In advance of this, Cornwall residents will have an opportunity to view a partial sneak preview. A 45-minute excerpt will be screened at the Town Hall on Sunday, January 20, at 4 P.M.

—Matt Collins

#### Welcome

Simon Michael to Jennifer and Joseph Markow

### **Good-Bye to Friends**

Rolly Algrant
Anne Ball
Jacqueline D. Strobel

#### **Plant Benefits**

Going green in winter is not only the "in" direction to go, it also adds to our health! A visit to the Selectmen's Office can be for town business. An added benefit is to enjoy warm, fresh air improved by a group of varied plants. As First Selectman Gordon Ridgway says, all the "hot air" generated in the big room is actually environmentally helpful—the plants convert CO<sub>2</sub> and provide fresh oxygen to improve Cornwall air quality.

The 20-plus plants that Secretary Joyce Hart encourages all have special origins. Several live in the Town Hall because they outgrew their original home: the Norfolk pine reaching up the spiral staircase (Vitalis); the slim, 15-foot palm (Leich); the robust agave, a century plant relative that might produce a flower some year (Laughlin); and the long hanging donkey tail (originally in Town Clerk Barbara Dakin's office). Not currently in bloom is an orchid from Cheryl Evans, and showing off lots of single red flowers are two heritage geraniums, descendants of plants Harriet Clark gave to Lori and Bill Beecher. Varieties of cacti have been given to Joyce in recognition of her origin in Arizona; some are grouped in a pot together, and others are gathered around the palm

So breathe free when you visit Gordon and Joyce, and thank the plants!

–Ginny Potter

# "The Rest of the Story"

The year 2007 now recedes into history, trailing bits of unfinished business chronicled in these pages. Here are some updates as we start the new year.

The Dunn Cleanup Problem: Liane Dunn's sad and seemingly endless struggle with an allegedly exorbitant bill for the state-ordered cleanup of gasoline-contaminated property on Route 7 has been settled out of court on undisclosed terms. More than two years ago, Environmental Management Services Inc., the firm that reportedly removed 1,000 tons of soil, presented Dunn with a bill of \$194,000, a sum that she contended was

replete with overcharges of various kinds. Liane was forced to take a reverse mortgage on her property to begin making payments. The dispute seemed headed for judge and jury when the company, learning that the state DEP questioned many of the charges, proposed a lower bill in exchange for withdrawal of a Dunn counter suit. A special DEP fund that can reimburse people caught in such circumstances paid Liane \$119,000, leaving her with a net loss of \$45,000.

The Hughes Memorial Library STEAP Grant: Progress has been slow but steady and secure on this \$200,000 grant from the state's Small Town Economic Assistance Program. Plans include a small addition on the rear of the building, first-time kitchen and bathroom facilities, and interior alterations that will allow more public use of the space. At this writing, the town is assisting with perc tests for a projected septic system capable of handling possible public restrooms. Ground breaking on the project is expected next spring or summer.

The Cornwall Historical Society STEAP Grant: Preliminary work is nearly complete with design plans and budget development. The capital campaign to augment the \$250,000 grant has received strong community support. The project will make major improvements in exhibit, work, and storage spaces in the now-jammed-to-the-rafters Pine Street building. Construction is expected to start in April.

The Mohawk Observation Tower: Attacked by chainsaw vandals about a year ago, the tower, erected about 1974, still stands roofless and inaccessible to all but the very nimble. The good news is that the state has cut down most of the trees that formerly made the tower an advantage. When one is already 1,683 feet above sea level, an extra 30-some feet does little to improve the gor-

Rumsey Hall: Little has changed since the May Chronicle reported that work "may start sooner than expected." Owner Drew Hingson states that his long-term plan is to restore Rumsey at a propitious time, when it meshes with other projects in other places (e.g., Georgia). Meanwhile, Rumsey is pinpointed on Google Earth's view of Cornwall as "huge, old abandoned house." No other building in Cornwall Village has been identified.

Optical-Scan Voting: Although the reliable lever voting machines still stand solidly in the Town Hall, a new law required citizens to use the new Optical-Scan equipment to vote in the Region One referendum, the Democratic primary, and the November municipal election. The equipment allows voters to mark a paper ballot, then slip it into a scanner that instantly keeps count and drops it into a locked box for a paper trail if a recount is required. By random choice, Cornwall was asked by the Secretary of the State to perform an audit of the primary; elec-



# Letters to the Chronicle

OFF ROAD HELP

Yes, Cornwall is unique. Its people, its October mountainside artist's palette, or the brown symphony we had this year, are all unique. I would not want to live anywhere else.

But when driving home at 5:30 P.M. in a dense fog I missed my Pritchard Road, got lost on Flat Rocks Road, and my car went 15 feet down a steep slope in a ditch. I was ready to trade the uniqueness of Cornwall's procrastination in allowing a tower to be installed, whatever its looks, for the safety of a cell phone that would function anywhere in Cornwall.

—Natasha Eilenberg

#### OFF ROAD PLEASURES

*The Cornwall Conservation Trust (CCT)* wants to encourage everyone to check out the new Rattlesnake Preserve trails on the east side of Rattlesnake Road in North Cornwall. A downloadable trails map is on our new website: www.cornwallconservationtrust.org. There is parking at both ends of the trails, and these spots are marked on the map. Trust volunteers spent

the summer cutting and marking the trails, which offer great photographic opportunities as well as a pleasant and easy hike of nearly a mile (or longer, if you follow the loops).

Also, please check out other website pages for information about CCT's mission and activities and for exploring links to other conservation organizations. —Hector Prud'homme

President, CCT

#### POTLUCK FOR HENRY

The Cornwall Agricultural Advisory Commission will be holding a potluck auction for the benefit of the Henry Russ Family. Henry was seriously injured in a construction accident in October and is faced with a long recovery and many expenses. The benefit potluck will be held January 19 at 6:30 P.M. at the UCC Parish House. Come one and all with your favorite dish or dessert to share with family and friends. (Snow date: January 20, same time and place.) Donations can be made to: The Henry Russ Family Fund, c/o The National Iron Bank, P.O. Box 87, Cornwall —Bill Dinneen *Bridge*, CT 06754.

tion workers determined that the counts made by scanner and paper ballots were exactly the same. Election officials report that tabulation procedures are much more complex and time consuming than formerly. The new system does work, but the lever machines worked very well. -Bob Potter

#### **Stone Beauties**

Landowners with stone walls take heed. According to First Selectman Gordon Ridgway, anyone who has beautified tumbledown walls may have altered their own boundary lines.

Stone walls are often used as boundaries on old properties. Ridgway said he heard of a recent incident in which the landowner dismantled a wall and rebuilt it in another location, essentially compromising his own

This is especially true along town roads. By state law, the town owns the roadside half of all walls within the town's right-of-way, usually 20 feet from the center of the road. Ridgway said he plans to call a halt to roadside wall revisions that come within the right-of-way.

And half of any wall belongs to the neighboring landowner. Perhaps it's better to reconsider facelifts for those old lovelies. They may be legal boundaries.

-Lisa Simont

#### **Events & Announcements**

Children's Programs at the Library: The winter pre-school/kindergarten Story Hour sessions start January 11 and will run for eight Fridays, starting at 1:15 P.M. Hot Chocolate Hour for third to fifth graders will start on February 6. Children may take the bus to the Library after school to listen to a book being read as they sip hot chocolate. Permission slips will be sent home with CCS kids in January.

Responsible Tower Siting: A panel of experts will discuss the safety and legal issues regarding cell tower siting and other wireless devices at the Town Hall on Saturday, January 12, from 1 to 4 P.M. The free event is sponsored by several land-use groups. Subtitled It's More Than Aesthetics, the program will cover what some studies have shown about the effects of increasing radio-frequency radiation, what federal guidelines exist, what a town can legally do, and other related topics. The program will be moderated by Executive Director Jean Cronauer of the Northwest Conservation District, Torrington, and speakers from the region include B. Blake Levitt, author; Starling W. Childs, environmental consultant; Whitney N. Seymour, lawyer; Adam Brown, Appalachian trails manager; and Raymond Kasevich, scientist. For information call 626-7222. Refreshments will be served. Snow date: January 13.

A New Year's Pancake Breakfast will be served in the UCC Parish House on January 1 from 8:30 A.M. to 1 P.M. to benefit the La Casa Project.

Winter Skating: Every Saturday in January and February Park & Rec. will sponsor free family ice skating for Cornwall residents at the Hotchkiss School from 7 to 8 P.M. All people on the ice must wear hats.

Congratulations to John Waldman, who came closest to identifying all of the "non-Cornwall" animals depicted in the December Chronicle. For the record, they were (in order of appearance): iguana, aardvark, marabou stork, sturgeon, anaconda, slender loris, gibbon, and basilisk.

Local Memoirs To Be Shared: The Town Hall Players will read work done by members of the recent "Writing Your Life" series at 3 P.M. on Saturday, January 19, at the Library. Serious, funny, sad, the reading is free and will be followed by discussion and refreshments.

A Sundance Documentary Film: Traces of the Trade: A Story from the Deep North, will be given a preview screening at the Town Hall on Sunday, January 20, at 4 P.M. Presented by the Cornwall Historical Society, the film follows the story of descendants of the DeWolf family as they learn about their ancestors' trade in slaves, and their own search for comprehension. Ledlie Laughlin, who participates in the film, will give an introduction. Refreshments will follow, and donations are welcome.

The Board of Assessment Appeals will hold hearings by appointment in March 2008. Applications to schedule a hearing will be available at the Town Clerk's Office beginning January 2. Applications must be filed by February 20, following which applicants will be contacted by a board member to schedule hearings.

## Fun(d)raising!

Some readers have told us that these pages contain less humor than in "the good old days." That may be true. Perhaps people send us fewer and fewer laughs. Perhaps the Chronicle pashas can't see what's funny in Cornwall because they're bowed down by unfunny fundraising. At any rate, we'll always welcome a playful poem or witty observation. If you also enclose a check, we'll be doubly pleased. Hilarious, even. Ecstatic. Delirious. The comeback of the Cornwall comics!

Art in Cornwall: At the Cornwall Free Library, Cornwall Captured, a show of photographs of special places in Cornwall, continues through January 6. Beginning January 8, Ray Olsen will exhibit his etchings and pastels in a show entitled New England Landscapes Plus. An opening reception will be held on Sunday, January 13, from 3 to 5 P.M. The case will hold Carol Hart's changing exhibit of natural fiber baskets. Both shows run through February.

At the iO Gallery, Wall 2 Wall, a revolving show of diverse artists, both local and listed, will continue through the winter months.

#### **Motherhouse Activities:**

Old Style Lifeskills Series offers the workshop "Herbal Salv-ation" with Jean Pollack of Mystical Rose Herbals at the UCC Parish House from 10:30 A.M. to 1 P.M. on Saturday, January 12. Make your own herbal salve and learn about other traditional home remedies. Plan on a potluck lunch. The cost: \$35 per family. Pre-register with Debra@Motherhouse.us or call 672-0229.

Family Round Singing: in the Town Hall on Friday, January 25, at 7:30 P.M. Call Jane Prentice for information at 672-6101.

Family Contra Dance: in the Town Hall on Saturday, February 2, at 7 P.M. Bill Fischer calling, the Homegrown Band playing. Suggested donation: \$5 adult, \$3 child. Call Rachel Gall for information at 672-6328.

The Cornwall Iraq Moratorium Network will host a potluck supper at the UCC Parish House on Friday, January 18, at 6 P.M. A documentary film, Howard Zinn: You Can't Be Neutral on a Moving Train, will be shown at 7 P.M. in the adjoining UCC Day Room. All are welcome. For further information call 672-6089.

Don't Miss Your Chance to Vote: Absentee ballots for the February 5 presidential preference primary will be available beginning January 15 at the Town Clerk's Office. Electors may use an absentee ballot only if they will be unable to appear at the polling place on the day of the election for one of the following reasons: active service in the armed forces, absence from town of Cornwall during all the hours of voting, illness, physical disability, or religious tenets.

No-Parking Notice: The Board of Selectmen reminds all concerned that vehicles cannot be parked where they will interfere with snow plowing. Cars and trucks should be at least six feet off the road. Plowing can occur at any time, even set-back plowing in clear weather. State law empowers the town to remove vehicles parked in violation.

Request: Fire Repeated Alarms! Homeowners who have automatic alarm systems installed must register a neighbor as a "key holder"—a person who has a key to the alarmed property. If the owner is absent, the key holder should be able to admit

> ten minutes of the alarm. The Cornwall Volunteer Fire Department is required to enter and inspect for fire following every alarm. Forcible methods of entry are a last but necessary resort. Key holders can be registered with either the alarm company or the town's fire

firefighters to the property within

marshall at 364-0909.

Taxes Due: The second half of real estate and personal property tax bills is due January 1; also supplemental motor

vehicle bills. Payments must be postmarked by January 31 to avoid interest of 1.5 percent per month including January. No additional bills are mailed; use bills that were mailed in July. The tax office is

open Mondays from 1 to 4 P.M. and Wednesdays from 9 to noon and 1 to 4 P.M. Call 672-2705 for further information.

The Democratic Town Committee will hold a caucus on January 14 at 7:30 P.M. at the Cornwall Free Library for the purpose of electing members to the committee for the 2008-10 term. All registered Democrats are invited to attend.

#### CORNWALL CHRONICLE

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