



CORNWALL CHRONICLE



VOLUME 21 : NUMBER 10 NOVEMBER 2011

Cornwall's Finest vs. the River

The men and women who comprise the Cornwall Volunteer Fire Department have seen it all when it comes to rescues. They are well equipped and trained in swift water and ice water rescues. Their skills have been put to the test over the past few months as back-to-back tropical storms, followed by numerous rainy days, left the Housatonic River uncharacteristically high during the peak boating season.

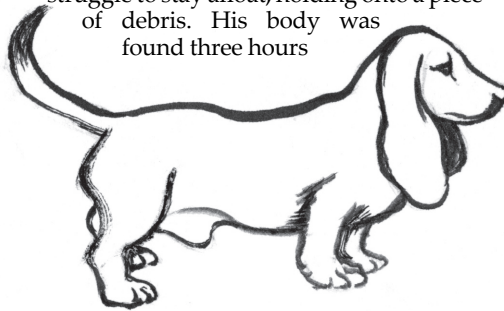
Swift water rescues come in two flavors: shore rescues and boat rescues. The shore rescue consists of throwing in lines or equipment from the shore. The boat rescue requires more resources and people and adds a much higher degree of danger.

The most common call to 911 is from someone who has spotted an overturned boat. The fire department is required to go and find the occupants of said boat, which can be a long and arduous process. The team is often not sure from where the boat was launched, when or where the occupants were separated from their boat, or of their current whereabouts. Fortunately, people in the water are normally quickly spotted, thanks to the proximity of the river to Route 7 and quick response time by the fire department to the scene.

Since the end of August there have been four incidents calling for the swift water rescue team. In the first, two empty boats

were spotted. It turned out that the occupants of the two boats had not secured the boats when they got out, sending the crafts racing downstream. In the second rescue, the boat was overturned and the search for a missing person ensued. The person was found in full gear, with a life jacket and helmet, wet, and walking toward Falls Village where his truck was parked at the hydroelectric plant. His rescue consisted of a ride back to his truck.

The third incident was much more dramatic. Three men were in kayaks that all overturned at the same time in the rapids under the West Cornwall covered bridge. They were quickly separated by the raging water; two of the men had life preservers, but the third did not. None of the men had helmets to protect them. Two of the surviving men watched their friend struggle to stay afloat, holding onto a piece of debris. His body was found three hours



later, drowned, a quarter mile below the Clarke Outdoors shop.

Lastly, three adults and two children were on a raft going down the river. All had on life jackets. Unexpectedly, the raft hit a rock in the rapids and was immediately pinned against it. The children climbed off the raft and onto the rock to safety. The adults worked together to free the raft, a task at which they were successful. Unfortunately, all three adults were aboard the raft at the time it was freed and they found themselves swiftly hurtling down the river, away from the children. The rescue team launched the boat and saved the children. Meanwhile, the adults managed to get themselves and the raft back to shore safely. All were reunited with no injury and proceeded to re-board the raft and complete their journey, perhaps a bit more river savvy.

"When people make bad decisions and get in over their heads, they risk themselves, their kids, and their rescuers," said First Selectman Gordon Ridgway. He is working with State Senator Andrew Roraback to encourage the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection to provide signs warning people to wear life jackets. "The river is not a water park," notes our first selectman, "but it is an opportunity for people to enjoy nature and the beauty this

(continued on page 2)

NOVEMBER 2011

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
		1 ♦ VNA Fall Prevention Clinic 10-11 am UCC Parish House ♦ Inland Wetland 7:30 pm Town Hall	2 ♦ Revaluation Workshop 7-8:30 pm Town Hall	3	4 ♦ Story Hour 1:30 pm Library	5 ♦ Fundraiser 5-7 pm UCC Parish House ♦ Family Country Dance 7-10 pm Town Hall
6 ♦ Dem. Meet the Candidates 4-5 pm W.C. Firehouse	7 ♦ Bd of Selectmen 7:30 pm Town Hall ♦ Park & Rec 7:30 pm Town Hall	8 ♦ ELECTION DAY 6 am-8 pm Town Hall ♦ P & Z 7 pm Cornwall Library	9	10	11 ♦ Historical Society Reception 5-7 pm 7 Pine Street	12 ♦ Revaluation Workshop 10-11:30 am Town Hall ♦ Cornwall Conservation Trust Annual Mtg 4 pm Town Hall ♦ John Tauranac "NY From the Air" 5 pm Library
13	14	15 ♦ VNA Fall Prevention Clinic 10-11:00 am UCC Parish House ♦ Bd of Ed 4 pm CCS Library ♦ Deadline: November Chronicle Copy	16	17 ♦ Bd of Finance 7:30 pm CCS Library	18 ♦ Story Hour 1:30 pm Library	19
20	21	22 ♦ VNA Fall Prevention Clinic 10-11 am UCC Parish House ♦ Bd of Selectmen 7:30 pm Town Hall	23	24 ♦ THANKSGIVING	25 ♦ Talent Show 7:30-9 pm UCC	26 ♦ Nunwall Glass Reception 3-5 pm Wish House ♦ Ferriss & Dark Entry Artists Reception 3-5 pm Library
27	28 ♦ ZBA 7:30 pm Town Hall	29	30	Every Week This Month: Tuesdays: Adult Volleyball, 7:30 pm CCS gym Wednesdays: Tai Chi, 6-9 pm CCS; Karate 6:30-7:30 pm CCS; Women's Basketball, 7:30 pm CCS gym Saturdays: Cornwall Farm Market, 9 am-1 pm Wish House Lawn Sundays: Meditation, 1-2 pm, call Debra for location, 672-0229		

(continued from page 1)

area offers to all."

Interestingly, there are no laws to restrict what one does on the river. There are life jacket laws: particularly, before May 15, all persons using the river are mandated to wear life jackets. All persons under the age of 12 are to wear life jackets at all times. There are no laws requiring the use of helmets.

According to Rescue Captain Skip Kosciusko, "The people who get in trouble on the river are those who do not know the river and aren't familiar with the force the river generates." He went on to say, "The higher the water, the greater the danger of fatalities."

It is mind-boggling to comprehend the manpower required to assist one individual in distress. The recent fatality required the closing of Route 7 from West Cornwall to Cornwall Bridge, involved four fire departments, and 50 to 60 people in the rescue effort that lasted over four hours.

All four incidents involved out-of-towners. Those that survived have a much deeper respect for the river and a tremendous amount of gratitude to the volunteers of the Cornwall Fire Department.

—Janet Carlson

Businesses at the Bridge

While many of us may consider the commercial area of West Cornwall to be our collective "Main Street," the retail establishments in Cornwall Bridge offer a diverse selection of products and services as well. A look at several of them reveals a vibrant business community that serves the needs of residents, tourists, hikers, sportsmen, and those just passing through. Visits with several of them revealed that, despite the current economic downturn, many see pockets of opportunity and have strategies to help them weather the uncertain environment.

The Cornwall Package Store is one of the long-standing anchors of the Route 4 and Route 7 intersection. According to Richard Bramley, owner since 1978, business this year is somewhat soft, but measurably better than it was in 2010. He noted that over the past few years many have altered their buying habits, either stopping in less frequently or choosing less expensive labels. While the store may be selling more low-end brands, it continues to stock a broad selection of wines and other types of alcohol for all palates and pocketbooks.

The new Cornwall General Store, successor to Baird's, the time-honored town institution, marked 90 days in business as of September 28. Owners Louise Coogan-Beecher and Dana Beecher sell output from many local farms, including dairy and meat products,

produce, and maple syrup. In addition to in-store sales and catering, in September they instituted a Monday soup and Tuesday grinder lunch program for eighth-graders at CCS, meeting a need for healthy, fresh food. Given the popularity of the program, Louise foresees potential expansion to the rest of the week.

Rick Kearns, sales manager at Northwest Lumber and Hardware, has been with the company for 25 of its 26 years, personally observing the ups and downs of many economic cycles. He acknowledged that the Northwest Corner has seen very little new building in the past couple of years and that most of its residential business is from renovations. In terms of growth areas, the store is seeing strong sales of a new decking material, replacement windows, and roofing.

Moving to the more decorative aspects of home products, the Housatonic Valley Rug Shop, dating to 1946, occupies a niche in the high-end, hand-knotted rug and carpet market. According to Ed Kenniston, owner or co-owner since 1975, the store does business the old-fashioned way, with its typical client being the shopper who favors the tactile and visual experience of "bricks and mortar" versus making purchases over the Internet. Counter to the trend experienced by many other businesses, his shop has seen an increase in sales of 10 percent this year.

A couple of doors away, A. F. Stone and Tile, owned by Tony and Rose Frith for three years, sells and installs customized stone, granite, and marble products. According to Rose, countertops are currently their best sellers, although overall sales are down from last year. Installations remain strong, however, since Tony works with contractors as well as the shop's own buyers and those who have purchased product elsewhere. Rose observed that while their pricing is competitive, individuals who come in solely for the purpose of gathering information to order from an online source can be a challenge.

Unlike most of the other local merchants, Housatonic River Outfitters is a hybrid of in-store sales, guided trips, and Internet business. Manager Torrey Collins commented that online sales constitute over 50 percent of total business and are a growing segment for them. On the other hand, given the extreme rain over the spring and uneven summer weather, several guided river trips had to be rescheduled to the extent practicable.

Not to leave out our fine furry friends, Cornwall Bridge is home to Housatonic Veterinary Care, perched atop the hill above the Cornwall General

Store. Owned and operated by Dr. Katherine Skiff-Kane for 20 years, the clinic provides a full spectrum of services and surgery for domestic animals. According to Katherine, while the nature of her business may make it less vulnerable than others to economic downturns, she did see a decrease in higher-cost surgical procedures in 2008. She noted that business has improved since that time.

With the National Iron Bank and the U.S. Post Office rounding out the services offered at the busy intersection, one can clearly check off many errands on a "to do" list while not venturing far from home.

—Louise Riley

Goodbye To A Friend

Lilly Hollander

Congratulations

Sarah Beth Better and Kyle Joseph Churyk
Melissa Ann Krusky and Timothy Todd Curtiss

Christine Martha Johnson
and Bryan Daniel Curtis

Land Transfer

Melissa R. Stewart to Alexis & Abigail Penzell,
land with improvements thereon at 31 Stone
Hill Road, for \$442,500.

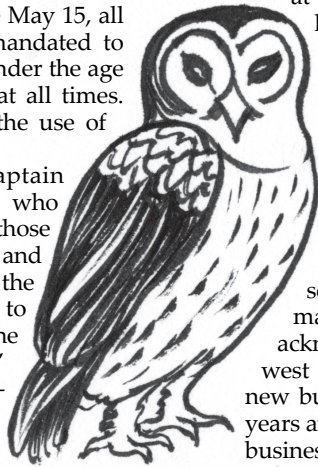


Treasure Trove

Cornwall's attics hold many treasures. Some of them are of value to family only, but occasional items are of interest to a wider world. Among the latter is a collection of letters written by members of the Calhoun family in the mid-1800s. The letters—almost 880 of them, tied with ribbon and bits of string—languished in an old trunk for more than a century until John Calhoun discovered them in his parents' house.

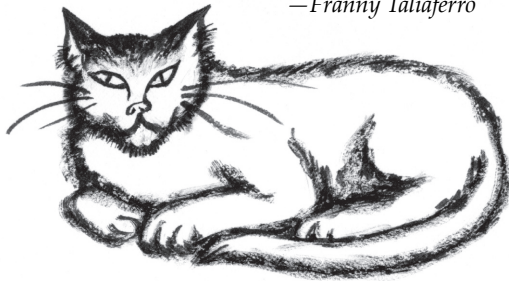
What do they tell us about mid-19th century Cornwall? Politics were widely discussed. In 1842, Abbey Calhoun remarks, "As to news we do not have much except abolition and a plenty of that." Health and its corollaries were a constant concern. Mary Calhoun notes in 1863, "There have been a great many deaths in this town this winter. Mr. Bonney has made ten coffins in six months." As for the economy, the hardships of the Panic of 1837 were lightened by gallows humor: "We do not anticipate any great failures in Cornwall and why? Because I do not know as anyone has wherewithal to break with here." In sum, pretty much the same subjects as occupy Cornwall's thoughts today.

Over 12 years, John Calhoun, Maja Gray



and Ruth Frost Nielson have transcribed the letters; painstaking work, as many were cross-written in order to save paper. Now the Calhoun family has given the collection as a permanent loan to the Cornwall Historical Society; eventually, you'll be able to find the letters online. Professor Robert Forbes of the University of Connecticut/Torrington says this "remarkably important" collection deserves "wide recognition among scholars and students of 19th-century American history."

—Franny Taliaferro



Cornwall Briefs

• **Listen up,** you know what I mean. Pay attention. This is important. An unknown number of Cornwall residents use only cell phones or cable phones for service and therefore are not listed in the telephone directory. We can't look you up in an emergency or otherwise. So, as a service to the community, the Cornwall Association will soon produce a list of these phone numbers on its website. The service is voluntary. You can add any of your phone numbers and even your email address by visiting their website at www.cornwallassociation.org. There will also be a link to a special Connecticut state site



where you can sign up for the so-called Reverse 911 service which would then provide information to your residence regarding such things as weather emergencies.

• **Property Re-evaluation:**

Barbara Bigos has been doing just that and most people should have gotten notices by now. Barbara will be holding two property evaluation workshops in November, the first on Wednesday, November 2, from 7 to 8:30 P.M. and again on Saturday November 12, from 10 to 11:30 A.M. If your new evaluation went up or down by less than 10 percent your tax will remain about the same even with the expected new, higher mill rate. That according to the first selectman, who added that he expects the grand list to go down about 10 percent.

—John Miller

• **Early October Town Meeting:** On October 8, 22 people attended a town meeting held for the purpose of approving funds to replace a bridge on Lower River Road and to approve an ordinance creating an Economic Development Committee for the town.

Letters to the Chronicle

TELLING THEIR STORY

With the support of the Cornwall community, the CCS Fund for Excellence (CCSFE) has been able to bring enriching programs to Cornwall students and teachers year-round. This season there are two projects that we hope will give the community an opportunity to celebrate the students and give the students a chance to discover professions within the community.

Eighth-grade students at CCS started the school year off with an Adobe Youth Voices Digital Photography Workshop. Taught by Lindsey Stone, these projects emphasize communication skills to empower students to "Create With Purpose," learning not only to express themselves, but also to insure that their voices are heard. This year's exhibit, titled Telling My Story, consists of narrative self-portraits. The works will be on view at the Wandering Moose Cafe with a reception for the young artists on Sunday, November 20, from 3:30 to 5 P.M.

This workshop will lead them into a pilot program at CCS called Explorations. Crafted by Principal Mike Croft and the CCSFE, Explorations will aid the older CCS students in preparing themselves for the independent challenges of high school. Each student will devise a self-directed study in his or her field of choosing, with subjects as varied as architecture, banking, and Cornwall history. English teacher Ms. Roby, Mr. Croft, and the CCSFE will connect students with "community consultants," people

with expertise in the students' fields of study who can meet with them to further their understandings of their topics. Grant and proposal writing will be introduced, encouraging students to connect academic learning with "real world" applications and to become independent, lifelong learners. CCSFE funds supplies, travel, etc. for the individual students.

At the end of the year, students will make presentations, explaining what they learned and exhibiting any products they produce.

—Jackie Saccoccio

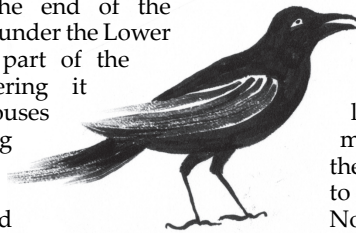
CORNWALL COMMITTEE FOR SENIORS

After a few years hiatus the Committee on the Aging became resurrected under a new name: the Committee for Cornwall Seniors. Consisting of five volunteer members, two who are seniors, it is an advisory committee to represent and facilitate the needs of the elder population of this town.

So far, having launched with a senior tea in May, we are creating a senior book nook in the library, encouraging recreation tailored to senior abilities and interests, and establishing various lines of communication for exchange of the ideas and pertinent information. The committee is asking for ideas from seniors, family members, or their caregivers at any time. Feel free to contact us: by phone to Paul Baren at 672-6637; or email Jane Prentice at jane.handsfour@gmail.com, or write to the Committee for Cornwall Seniors, P.O. Box 97, Cornwall, CT 06753.

—Jane Prentice

Tropical storms at the end of the summer eroded the banks under the Lower River Road bridge and part of the bridge collapsed, rendering it unsafe for vehicles. Four houses lie past the bridge, along with a fire hydrant that services West Cornwall. Because of the impeded access, that stretch of the road is still operating under a state of emergency. Fire hoses have been laid out along the road to allow quick access by the fire department. The stranded residents are able to cross the bridge on foot and neighbors in town are sharing their parking areas.



At the town meeting, residents approved the appropriation of up to \$450,000 from undesignated funds for the repair of the bridge. FEMA is expected to reimburse the town 75 percent of the cost, and its approval for this project is in hand. However, the latest estimates (and things are moving quickly) are that the new bridge is expected to cost as much as \$600,000, once the costs for engineering, project management, test boring, and a survey are factored in. Another town meeting will be held later in the month to approve the additional funding.

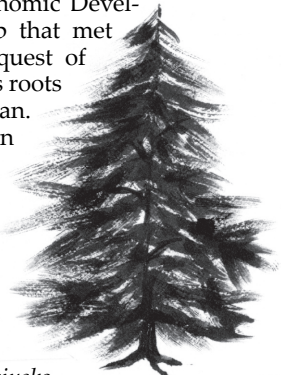
The company that won the bid is Mohawk Northeast out of Plantsville, Conn. Its bid of \$497,000 was significantly

lower than the others. The plan to use mini-pilings will allow the work to progress much faster and less expensively, yet provide a much more suitable design for the site. The project is expected to be completed by the end of November.

In other business, the ordinance to establish the Cornwall Economic Development Commission was approved. This nine-member commission, appointed by the selectmen, will serve as an advisory board. Its goals are to help identify, sustain, and grow the varied types of businesses in Cornwall, and to work on creating a supportive environment. The recommendation for a CEDC comes from a report by the Cornwall Economic Development Study Group that met last spring at the request of the selectmen, with its roots in the current town plan.

The commission has not yet been officially appointed by the selectmen. Anyone interested in serving on this commission should contact the first selectman's office.

—Annie Kosciusko



Events & Announcements

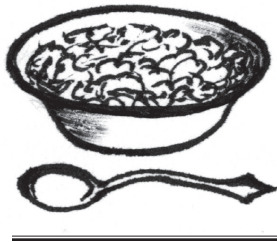
At the Library: Children's Story Hour will take place on Friday, November 4, and Friday, November 18, at 1:30 P.M., with kindergartners and second-graders taking the bus from the school. Other young children are invited—please contact Amy Buck if you would like your child to attend.

The library will be closed on Friday, November 11, in observance of Veterans Day. It will close on Wednesday, November 23, at 5 P.M. (no evening hours), and be closed on November 24 and 25 for Thanksgiving. It will reopen on Saturday, November 26, at 10 A.M.

On Saturday, November 12, at 5 P.M., the library presents John Tauranac discussing the making of his newest project, *New York from the Air: A Story of Architecture*, with photographer Yann Arthus-Bertrand. John was responsible for the text and the maps. Identifying familiar buildings from aerial shots at times proved difficult. Hear the stories of this expert on NYC's subways and architecture. Books will be available for sale and signing.

On Friday, November 25, at 7:30 P.M., the Cornwall Library's 14th annual talent show will be held at the United Church of Christ Cornwall, Bolton Hill Road. There will be promising new talent as well as the return of beloved past performers. They are local or from a distance, but all have Cornwall connections. It is a wonderful way to complete a family Thanksgiving. Tickets are \$15 for adults and \$6 for children 12 and under. You may purchase tickets at the library or by calling 672-6874 before November 22. MasterCard, Visa, check or cash are accepted. Pre-purchased tickets will be held at the door.

Foodraiser Dinner: The UCC will hold a dinner on Saturday, November 5, from 5 to



The Old Earth

The long, warm autumn with its shortening days has tilted Cornwall toward winter. The wind and cold are coming, so why not cheer yourself up by writing a nice check to the *Chronicle*. It will warm you right up!

7 P.M. at the Parish House. The dinner will include a main dish (family-friendly), salad, bread, dessert, and beverages. There is no monetary charge for the meal—just bring up to 11 healthy food items as your “ticket” to dine. Cereals, pasta, sauce, soups, tuna, peanut butter, jelly, frozen veggies, coffee, and tea are just some suggestions. The goal is to raise 1,111 items for the Cornwall Food Pantry. Call the church office for more details.

Meet the Candidates: The Cornwall Democratic Town Committee is sponsoring a Meet the Candidates event at the West Cornwall Firehouse on Sunday, November 6, from 4 to 5 P.M. Come with your friends to meet, get reacquainted with, or get to know better, the people running for town office.

Art in Cornwall: The Cornwall Library will feature works by two longtime Dark Entry Forest residents beginning November 8. Photographs by Homer Page (1918–1985) will line the exhibit wall, while illustrations by Dorothy Lapham Ferriss (1887–1975) will continue to be shown in the display case. There will be a reception in honor of both of these artists on Saturday, November 26, from 3 to 5 P.M.

The Wish House will host a reception for Nunwell Glass on Saturday, November 26, from 4 to 6 P.M. Andy's and Leslie's art glass will be familiar to Farm Market goers; their work will be at the Wish House through December.

The Wandering Moose will host a reception and exhibition of works produced by the CCS eighth-grade class during its “Telling My Story” project. (See letter in this issue.) The reception will be on Sunday, November 20, from 3:30 to 5 P.M.

Elections to cast votes for municipal offices will be held on Tuesday, November 8, at Town Hall, 24 Pine Street, from 6 A.M. to 8 P.M.

Election Day Lunch: Sponsored by the UCC, it will be served on Tuesday, November 8, from 11 A.M. to 2 P.M. at the UCC Parish House. Cornwall voters are invited to enjoy homemade soups, chili, bread, and desserts. Donations to benefit the Cornwall Food and Fuel Bank.

Calhoun Letters Reception: The Cornwall Historical Society will host a reception on Friday, November 11, from 5 to 7 P.M. to celebrate with the Calhoun family the permanent loan of “The Calhoun Letters, 1820–1879” to the society's collection. All

are welcome. Refreshments will be served. For information call 672-0505.

The Cornwall Conservation Trust's 24th annual meeting will be held at Town Hall on Saturday, November 12, at 4 P.M. After a very brief business session, Dr. Michael Klemens, noted environmentalist from Salisbury, will speak on “Ecological Stewardship and Economic Development—Do We Have to Choose?” a lively discussion of priorities for our communities. Refreshments will follow.

Fair Trade Crafts Fair: St. Bridget Church will host a Fair Trade Crafts Fair on Saturday, November 19, from 10 A.M. to 3 P.M., at the St. Bridget Church Hall in Cornwall Bridge. We will have unique handmade crafts, jewelry, textiles, and holiday items made by artisans in Third World countries. Proceeds will help ease poverty in those areas.

Christmas Wreaths and Sprays: Order now for pick-up at the UCC Christmas Fair, Saturday, December 3. Twelve-inch wreaths: \$15 (no bow). Other sizes and bows available. Call Bobbie Tyson, 672-6762, before December 1.

Cornwall Historical Society 2012 Calendar features lovely photos of familiar Cornwall buildings by Alec Frost. It is available for purchase at: Berkshire Country Store, Cornwall General Store, Cornwall Library, Cornwall Package Store, Wandering Moose Café, and the Wish House.

Holiday Toy Drive: A. F. Stone & Tile in Cornwall Bridge will again be collecting unwrapped toys and gifts, gift cards, gas cards, or any other item you would like to donate, to distribute to local families this holiday season in conjunction with the Cornwall Social Services office. We will be collecting from Tuesday, November 29, through Friday, December 16.

CORNWALL CHRONICLE

NOVEMBER ISSUE

Erica Prud'homme, Illustrations
Annie Kosciusko and Louise Riley, Editors

DECEMBER ISSUE

Janet Sanders and Lisa Lansing, Editors
janet.carlson@oneelevensoftware.com or lisalansing@optonline.net

MANAGING EDITOR Ruth Epstein
CALENDAR EDITOR Erin Hedden
Mom917@sbcglobal.net

CIRCULATION Nan and John Bevans
Lucy and Jack Kling

DIRECTORS

Annie Kosciusko PRESIDENT
Paul De Angelis VICE PRESIDENT
Audrey Ferman TREASURER

Tom Barrett • Tom Bechtle • Edward Ferman • Erin Hedden
John Miller • Bob Potter • Janet Sanders • Lisa L. Simont

THE CHRONICLE NEEDS YOUR SUPPORT

We hope you enjoy this on-line edition of the Cornwall Chronicle. Remember that all our revenues come from readers like you, and we need your help to continue producing this electronic edition along with the print edition. If your contribution is \$15 or more, we'd be glad to mail the print edition to any out-of-town address. Please mail your tax deductible gifts to: Cornwall Chronicle Inc. 143 Cream Hill Rd., West Cornwall, CT 06796. Comments, letters and news may be E-mailed to the publishers at: elfhill@aol.com.