

CORNWALL CHRONICLE

VOLUME 28 : NUMBER 8 SEPTEMBER 2018



The Bruins

Recently a bear expert gave a talk at the Cornwall Library. She showed slides of bears, mostly endangered, from around the world—but the Cornwall audience was most interested in our own handsome Eastern black bears. These have glossy pelts and heads like German shepherds, long-nosed, prick-eared, friendly, and intelligent. Our bears are not endangered. In fact they are multiplying rapidly, and may soon take over the state legislature. The expert showed us a map of Connecticut, with dots showing bear sightings. There were no dots in Cornwall, not because there were no sightings, but because they are so common that people have stopped bothering to call them in.

Bear stories have become social currency. Don't hope to amaze your dinner partner by announcing that you saw a bear trying to pull down your birdfeeder last weekend. If he's a competitive sort (like the one I sat next to last night) he will say languidly, "We had a bear in our garage as recently as this morning. We have a game camera that records it."

Sightings are now frequent, and you will have to up your game. I offered my story, which was that The Bear—everyone says The Bear, as though there is only one—came onto our back porch, not by climbing the steps but by clambering over the railing,

which is covered by purple clematis. In the process he decimated the mass of flowers and left a telltale trail of petals across the porch to the empty birdfeeder. More exciting is the news that there were two bears on the CHLA dock, down at the lake, while people were there. Another good one is about the woman kayaking along the Yelping Hill shoreline when she heard birds shrieking in the trees. She saw leaves rustling, and out of a tree a baby bear dropped with a thud, having been trying to rob someone's nest. "Where there's a baby bear there's a mama bear," she thought, and paddled swiftly into the middle of the lake.

When I saw my neighbor last week he said, "Hey, have you gotten that bear?" He said he'd been on his deck drinking coffee early one morning when he saw The Bear lounging at the edge of his lawn. "Hey!" my neighbor called, "You can't hang out there!" The bear, who hadn't known this, obediently sloped up into the woods toward



our house. A few minutes later I saw him crossing the lawn, headed for the back porch. Our bear is a young one, probably a two-year old. He's been thrown out by his mama, who's told him he couldn't keep sleeping on the couch. He's rumped and scruffy; no one has taught him about grooming. No one has explained about wiping his feet, either, and he tracks mud onto the porch every morning. No one has explained to him about using the stairs instead of clambering over a porch railing.

He has no manners at all, and I wonder if he was raised by wolves.

That would be a bear story.

—Roxana Robinson

Housing Inequality in Cornwall

Cornwall's housing inequality is not as stark as in cities like New York, where \$40 million condos sit blocks away from substandard rentals. But there is plenty of diversity, to use a kinder word, within our 50 square miles. We have an eclectic mix of stately colonials, hidden estates, notable architectural homes (see story on House VI), funky cabins, and two homes listed on the National Register of Historic Places: the Cornwall Bridge Station and the General

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SEPTEMBER 2018

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
Every Week This Month: Mondays: Yoga, 8:30–10 am Library; Mat Squad, 6:30 pm UCC ♦ Tuesdays: Pilates, 8:30–9:30 am Library; Zumba, 5:30–6:30 pm Library ♦ Wednesdays: Tai Chi, 5–7 pm Town Hall call 672-0064; Tai-Chi 5:30 pm and Qui-Gong 6 pm UCC; Stitch 'n Spin, 7:15–8:30 pm UCC ♦ Thursdays: Pilates, 8:30–9:30 am Library; Toddler Play Group, 10:30–11:30 am Library; Meditation, 4–5 pm call Debra 672-0229; Zumba, 5:30–6:30 pm Library; Mah Jongg, 7–9 pm Library call 672-6874 ♦ Fridays: Yoga, 8:30–10 am Library ♦ Saturdays: West Cornwall Farm Market, 10 am–1 pm; Cornwall Coop Farm Market, 9 am–12:30 pm ♦ Sundays: Yoga, 9–10:30 am Library; Meditation, 1 pm call Debra 672-0229						1 ♦ Yoga at the Lake 9–10 am Hammond Beach ♦ Labor Day Art Sale 10 am–4 pm Library ♦ Wild Plants Hike 10 am Cooley Preserve ♦ Community Contra Dance 7 pm Town Hall
2 4th Q ♦ Labor Day Art Sale 10 am–4 pm Library	3 LABOR DAY	4 ♦ Covered Bridge Closes for Repair ♦ Inland Wetlands Agency 7 pm Town Hall ♦ Board of Selectmen 7:30 pm Town Hall	5	6	7	8 ♦ Both Farm Markets at the Ag Fair ♦ Cornwall Ag Fair 10 am–4 pm Village Green ♦ Paint Landscapes with Pastels Noon–2 pm Library ♦ Women's New Moon Drum Circle 6–7:30 pm Local Farm
9 NEW ♦ Rain Date for Ag Fair 10 am–4 pm	10	11 ♦ Econ. Development Comm. 9 am Town Hall ♦ Monthly Senior Luncheon Noon UCC Parish House ♦ West Cornwall Septic Comm. 5 pm WC Library ♦ P&Z* 7 pm Library ♦ Housatonic River Commission 7:30 pm CCS	12 ♦ Eureka Cow n' Corn to Bread & Butter 9 am–1 pm Local Farm	13	14	15 ♦ Deadline: October Chronicle Copy ♦ Bd. of Assessment Appeals 9–10 am Town Office ♦ Paint Landscapes with Pastels 12:30–2:30 pm Library ♦ Valorie Fisher Author Event 3–5 pm Wish House
16 1st Q ♦ Ellen Moon Artist's Reception 11:30 am UCC Parish House	17	18 ♦ Board of Selectmen 7:30 pm Town Hall	19 ♦ CCS Board of Education 4:15 pm CCS	20 ♦ Cornwall Conservation Commission 7 pm Library ♦ Board of Finance 7:30 pm Town Hall	21 ♦ Town Hall Players Performance 7:30 pm Town Hall	22 ♦ Town Hall Players 7:30 pm Town Hall ♦ Keeping a Family Cow Workshop—FULL ♦ Clean-Up/Green Up Event 9 am–Noon ♦ Paint Landscapes with Pastels Noon–2 pm Library ♦ Joelle Sander Artist's Reception 3–5 pm Library
23 ♦ Town Hall Players Performance 3 pm Town Hall	24 FULL ♦ Family Full Moon Drum Circle 6:30–8:30 pm Local Farm ♦ Zoning Board of Appeals 7 pm Library	25 ♦ Coffee, Confections, Conversations 9 am Parish House	26 ♦ Region One ABC Committee 7 pm HVRHS Central Office	27 ♦ Red Cross Blood Drive 1–6 pm UCC	28	29 ♦ Covered Bridge Social 9–11 am Pearly's Cafe ♦ Paint Landscapes with Pastels Noon–2 pm Library ♦ John Tauranac Author Talk 5 pm Library
30						

*Check with Zoning Office—672-4957

(continued from page 1)

John Sedgwick House on Hautboy Hill Road. We also have many modest homes; an unfortunate number are in poor repair, lowering the value of our grand list.

What has happened to the value of your home during the 10 years since the Great Recession? That depends on its condition, views, privacy, weekender appeal, etc. But the data suggest a surprising trend.

• **July 2005 – December 2006**

(Height of real estate boom):

45 properties sold

Total sales: \$25,303,000

Median sales price: \$500,000

• **January 2008 – December 2009**

(Depth of recession):

32 properties sold

Total sales: \$13,700,000

Median sales price: \$300,000

• **January 2017 – June 2018**

41 properties sold

Total sales: \$18,449,000

Median sales price: \$280,000

Consequently, we show no signs of recovery in prices since the recession.

In contrast, the median price of all homes sold in the U.S. has climbed steadily since the period just after the recession: from a low of about \$150,000 to a current median of \$228,000.

Does this indicate that Cornwall is on a path to join Waterbury and Bridgeport on the list of ten worst housing markets? I doubt it. Our median sales price is still higher than the state's. And beyond the data lies the bedrock of our natural beauty, good government, community spirit, and tradition of art and literature.

I asked a few others to confirm this impression. Realtor Nick Bruehl said: "The current market in town is pretty active. I just had a bidding war on a property. But Litchfield County has lost some population, and that may account for less demand and lower prices."

Priscilla Pavel of Bain Real Estate concurs. "It's still a sellers' market, and I've been very busy lately. But you can't compare prices in rural areas like Cornwall to the rapidly rising prices you see in cities or suburban Connecticut."

Assessor Barbara Bigos offered one concrete reason for low prices. "Many folks in town didn't have to sell after the recession; they waited for the market to come back. But it never came back, and so they finally woke up and are now selling."

Real estate values seem part of a picture that affects Litchfield County and all rural New England: an aging, declining population that needs an influx of young workers. Cornwall is well aware of the trend and is taking steps through its new town plan and efforts of the Economic Development Commission to reverse it.

To conclude that declining prices mitigate the need for affordable housing would

be wrong, according to the Housing Corporation's Mag Cooley. "Prices in the \$300,000 range are out of reach for the young folk we'd like to attract and keep," she said. And most current listings are well above \$300,000.

Jill Cutler, chair of the housing subcommittee working on the town plan, agrees. "We're looking at ways to help with financing, as well as condominiums or multi-dwelling units, smaller lots, and other strategies that might make Cornwall a real possibility for younger residents."

Currently, there are about 42 properties for sale in town, ranging from a two-bedroom cabin in Cornwall Bridge for \$159,900 to Cobble Hill Farm, a Georgian manor house with 187 acres set on the hill that rises above the intersection of routes 125 and 128, for \$9,995,000.

Candidates for the wretched excess hall of fame are: Ivan Lendl's former estate for \$19,750,000, which is about \$1 million per bathroom, and Pinnacle Farm: a 65,000-square-foot, \$17-million stable with 50 luxury stalls and an apartment. It has only two bedrooms, but add a little hay and your guests will be quite comfortable in one of the stalls or in the breeding room, the details of which are beyond the scope of this article.

—Ed Ferman

Enrollment Increases at CCS

"Leadership. Fascinating. Game plan to move forward. Focus to continue quality education here in Cornwall." These are some of the words used to describe the start of the 2018-19 school year at CCS.

Principal Mike Croft reports that expected student enrollment is 90, up from last year's 76. Contributing to that increase are two groups. Eleven children are starting a large kindergarten class. In an effort to attract out-of-town students, the Board of Education lowered tuition from \$6,000 to \$2,000 and promoted it on social media. This resulted in seven additional students from Kent, Sharon, Salisbury, and Torrington; one was a home-schooled student.

Adjusting to these changes will be new groupings of grades: K, 1, and 2, and another of 3 and 4. Older grades will have classes in reading and math, and then specialist teachers for other subjects.

From fifth grade up, students will be learning to plan their work, set their assignments, study goals, and tests, and determine their progress under the A B C Not Yet Proficient standards which they will need for their high school programs in Region One. Mr. Croft states they "will be leaders in their own learning."

"It is this unique opportunity offered by our small school that is so much valued," said BOE Chair Catherine Tatge. It was a theme expressed in the four community conversations held to

Welcome

Valentina Francesca Aguilar
to Rebecca and Pedro Aguilar

Good-bye to Friends

Anne Hammes Baren
Barbara Farnsworth
John R. Glover
Lee Moore
Robert S. Rubin

Congratulations

Jocelyn N. Davies and Jeremy D. Kestenbaum
Sarah L. Watson and Daniel J. Winkley
Anya Zilberstein and Peter J. Rosenfeld

Land Transfers

Estate of Marion A. Blake to Anna Christine Gray and Maja Catherine Gray, land with buildings thereon at 45 Valley Road, for \$230,000.

Jeffrey Ward and Kathryn Sandmeyer Ward to Sandra Lea Johnson and Ralph W. Sandmeyer, Jr, Trustees, 6.23 acres of land at 49 Pierce Lane, for \$130,000.

Jeffrey P. Lynch to Tracey R. Hill and Robert U. Seward, land with buildings and improvements thereon at 110 Pierce Lane, for \$505,000.

discuss the future of CCS. This summer, BOE members met in a retreat, and met further with teachers and staff to set a game plan.

At its August meeting, the board then voted to maintain the school as a "comprehensive, high quality, K-8 school," with the focus on continued quality of education while being aware of the cost of that quality. Ms. Tatge asks the community to continue to communicate their concerns and support.

—Ginny Potter

The House as Sculpture

Many Cornwallians never knew how to react or relate to what is arguably the most significant home in town, architect Peter Eisenman's House VI, known in Cornwall as the Frank House.

Commissioned and lovingly cared for by Suzanne and Dick Frank, the house is located on Great Hollow Road, south of the ski area. It was completed in 1975, but the contractor did a poor job of realizing Eisenman's uncommon design, and it was reconstructed in 1987 by Cornwall's Will Calhoun.

On approaching the Frank house for the first time, sociologist Robert Gutman wrote: "There is no front or back, no sides to this house, but a plethora of surfaces."

Intersecting angles, planes, horizontals, verticals, openings with no clear purpose, and the absence of definitions one usually expects in a house, were startling. Conceptually, it could be imagined top-side down. Once called "the



opposite of “home sweet home,” it was difficult to understand by non-architects and demanded visitors relinquish all spacial preconceptions.

Upon entering, intersecting stairways—poinsettia red ones upside down and forest greens right side up—quickly defined that this was a radical departure from what one normally thinks of as a home. It certainly was an Eisenman statement, which the Franks adapted to fit their lifestyle, even with the addition of their baby, Elizabeth. “The house had its constraints,” Suzanne recalls, “but I managed all right. I vacuumed once a week, and when I finished I was proud of the clean lines that I had honored.”

For over 40 years, architects and students made pilgrimages to the house to embrace both its gray and white calm and dynamic effects. The Franks had visits from Frank Gehry, Philip Johnson, and *New York Times* architectural critic Paul Goldberger, who wrote a long piece for the *Times*, calling it “as much a sculptural object as a place of residence.”

Birdseye Brook borders the north side of the thin, six-acre site, with a New England stone wall on the south. A row of flowers and shrubs at the western side of the house serves as a vegetative softener to the architecture. The schoolhouse, at the entrance on Great Hollow Road, is a Civil War-era counterpart to the contemporary home in the rear.

In 2016, House VI was sold to two Cornwall residents who work in fields related to architecture and design. The house is now undergoing a restoration to the original concept with modifications to ensure its longevity, e.g. the main structural elements are now made of steel.

As it becomes a renewed home, one imagines that it will once again be treasured by the art world as one of the few Eisenman-designed and -built homes, an iconic architectural destination in Cornwall. Gutman also wrote this about the house: “As one comes upon it set among evergreens and open fields, House VI is literally breathtaking—one of the superb visual experiences of modern design.”

—Carol Goodfriend (with Suzanne Frank)

Quinquennial Dog Report

Town Clerk Vera Dinneen’s computer barked these dog registration figures:

Today, 161 of us own 231 dogs:

120 female, 111 male.

Five years ago, 258 dogs:

134 female, 124 male.

A review of the records shows:

Most popular breeds:

Labrador Retriever: 24

(11 yellow, 8 black, 5 chocolate)

Terrier: 15

(6 Norfolk, 4 Jack Russell, 2 Border, 1 each Tibetan, Welsh, West Highland)

Australian Shepard: 10
 Dachshund: 7, (2 mini)
 Golden Retriever: 6 (five years ago, 19!)
 We also have 2 Goldendoodles, 2 Puggles,
 1 Chorkie, 1 Cockapoo, 1 Labradoodle, and
 71 of the Heinz 57 Variety.

Most popular names are: Belle/Bella 7;
 Molly 5; Bear 5, including Teddy, Lucky,
 and Sun; Charlie 3; Max 3.

Stinkie, a Jack Russell, is our oldest at almost 17.

The #1 tag, given to first on line on first day of business in June went to Ted Larson’s Lab, Addie.

Forty-seven dogs are not yet registered (deadline was June 30); delinquent owners are urged to visit the town clerk’s office. Dogs six months or older must be licensed annually—it’s a state law.

—Audrey Ferman and Vera Dinneen

Unsung Heros

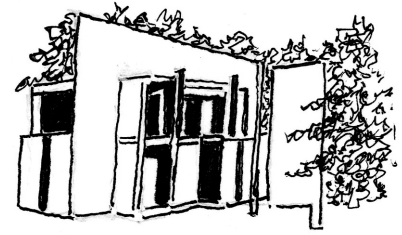
“It all started in the 1970s,” Pat Blakey recalls, “when we gave my mom’s hospital bed to the church.” Since then, Pat and Jerry Blakey have run a remarkable and unsung medical equipment loan program at UCC, which, under their leadership, now has over 700 pieces of equipment in circulation; everything from walkers and hospital beds to power wheelchairs and scooters that are worth over \$6,000.

At first the collection of items for loan grew slowly and the service was just used locally. In 1998 Pat and Jerry retired and, “we took it on as a 24/7 mission. It grew rapidly and in all directions, from Cornwall to most of western Connecticut, New York and Massachusetts.

“We started out delivering the equipment and one year travelled over 2,000 miles. That was a service we could not continue,” Jerry said. Patrons now pick up most equipment. There is no charge or eligibility requirement.

Pat kept a log of items as they went out and were returned and made follow-up phone calls to determine if items were still needed. Very few loaners went astray; some were passed along to neighbors or family as a need arose.

The Blakeys have many stories of the lives that have been enriched by the program: a young woman in Williamstown, Mass., who had lost mobility and was about to lose her job, but was able to continue working with the use of one of their electric scooters; a CCS eighth-grader who hurt his leg, but made his class trip because of a



wheelchair provided at the last minute; a disabled vet in New York who, denied equipment by the VA, was loaned a power scooter and now is able to get to his mailbox and stores.

After decades of answering phone calls, arranging for pick-ups and deliveries, and maintaining equipment, the Blakeys recently retired. “It’s been very rewarding for us and we learned first-hand how much the program is needed. We could not have done this without the generous help of friends and family.”

Pat and Jerry provided enough notice so that UCC was able to get grants from the Cornwall Foundation, the Foundation for Community Health, and the Northwest CT Community Foundation to continue the program.

Debbie Labbe has been hired as the program coordinator. If you need medical equipment, have equipment to donate, or would like to volunteer, contact her at: 860-671-4201 or MedLoanEquip@uccincornwall.org
 —Audrey and Ed Ferman

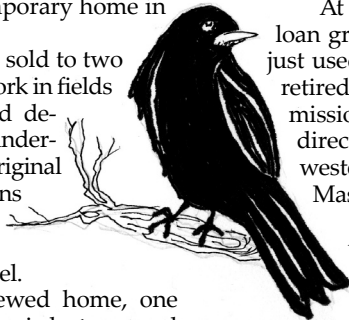
Cornwall Briefs

• **Bridge Work:** No, not a visit to an oral surgeon but “bridge” as in Golden Gate or GW or, in this case, the Covered Bridge, which will be closed to traffic the day after Labor Day for most of the month. (Notice I did not use the overused word “iconic” to refer to our historic roofed span.) That means no access to West Cornwall via Route 7. If you are planning a meal at Pearly’s or want to see what’s new at the Wish House, come by routes 4 and 128 or by Cream Hill or River Road from the north. As the song goes: “Try to remember, No bridge in September...”

• **Substation:** The Eversource structure at what we refer to as the Four Corners, where routes 4, 128 and 43 come together. Some neighbors complained that it’s an eyesore. The power company has made some recent attempts at beautification and screening which will continue. We may experience fewer outages and will definitely see increased tax revenues. Eversource is our largest taxpayer, and our assessors are eyeing its impressive new equipment.

• **Rummage Results:** This from Mag “the Magnificent” Cooley, president of the Woman’s Society: “We grossed over \$39,000, another record. Expenses will probably come in between \$12,000 and \$15,000, for a new tent, dumpster, insurance, and paying the younger strong backs that

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CVFD Count

26 emergency medical calls
 1 motor vehicle accident
 4 downed wires
 1 smoke removal from residence
 1 tree blocking road
 5 false alarms

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supplement the more venerable volunteer workforce. Nothing is charged by UCC or Mohawk, which supply the spaces, tables, utilities, and other services." Mag added, "The money made is spent right away, last year \$10,000 in gifts to Cornwall kids and about the same to local nonprofits."

• **Farming regs:** New zoning regulations encouraging "agritourism" such as weddings, harvest dinners, and breweries were reported on in our June issue and presented at a June 12 public hearing. These met with some resistance and are being revised. P&Z will discuss the revised regs at one or more of its regular meetings before setting a new public hearing. —John Miller

Events & Announcements

Also: check our Facebook page for event reminders and Cornwall updates

Art in Cornwall

Labor Day Art Sale at the Cornwall Library: sale consists of artwork donated by the library's friends. Opening reception Friday, August 31, from 5 to 8 P.M. Sale runs Saturday, September 1, and Sunday, September 2, from 10 A.M. to 4 P.M.

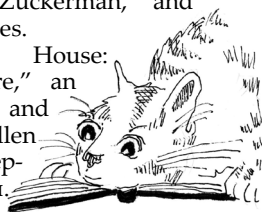
Wish House: Saturday, September 15, 3 to 5 P.M. Book signing with Valorie Fisher for her children's book *Now You Know How It Works* to benefit the Cornwall Child Center.

Art Reception at the Cornwall Library: "Comfort Me with Color," a show and sale of oil paintings by Joelle Sander. Opening reception on Saturday, September 22, 3 to 5 P.M.

Souterrain Gallery: Madeline Stenson's "Young, Fresh, Contemporary Art" exhibit runs through September.

Toll House Gallery: Exhibit of works by Donald Bracken, Lennart Swede Ahrstrom, Scott Zuckerman, and Susan Rand continues.

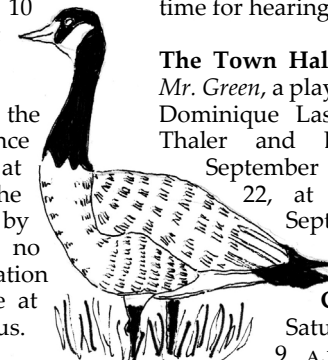
UCC Parish House: "Translating Nature," an exhibit of fiber arts and watercolors by Ellen Moon, opens September 16 at 11:30 A.M.



Stock Market Tip

Cornwall wildlife is trying to tell you something. We are on the precipice of a bear market. Are you listening? After you sell, think about directing some profits to your favorite non-profit newspaper.

All are invited. The exhibit will run until October 16. Hours: Monday to Friday from 9 A.M. to 1 P.M. Sundays from 10 A.M. to noon or by appointment with the artist, 672-6726.



Sashay into September at the Community Contra Dance Saturday, September 1, at 7 P.M. at town hall. Music by Still, the Homegrown Band and calling by Peter Stix. All ages welcome, no partner necessary. Donation requested. Questions, call Jane at 672-6101 or go to motherhouse.us.

Wild Plants: Friend or Foe: Join noted botanist Peter Del Tredici on Saturday, September 1, at 10 A.M. as he leads us through the Cooley Preserve to identify non-native plants. Meet at trailhead: 91 Cherry Hill Road. To download a map visit cornwallconservationtrust.org.

27th Annual Agriculture Fair: Celebrate agriculture on the Village Green on Saturday, September 8, from 10 A.M. to 4 P.M. Rain date is September 9. Questions? Call Bill Dinneen at 672-0035. See insert.

Farm Markets: Both the Original Farm Market and the Co-op Farm Market will be on the Village Green at the Ag Fair on September 8.

At the Cornwall Library

Paint Landscapes with Pastels, a Saturday afternoon four-week course with Collette Hurst. \$100 for all four lessons. Contact the library for details. September 8, 22, 29 from noon to 2 P.M., September 15, from 12:30 to 2:30 P.M.

Author talk: John Tauranac will read from his new book *Manhattan's Little Secrets: Uncovering Mysteries in Brick and Mortar, Glass and Stone* on Saturday, September 29, at 5 P.M. Books will be available for sale and signing.

Cornwall Park and Recreation:

Senior luncheon Tuesday, September 11, at noon at the UCC Parish House. RSVP Jenn Markow at 860-480-0600 or email prcornwall@gmail.com

"Morning Coffee, Confections & Conversations" on Tuesday, September 25, at 9 A.M. at the Parish House. No cost.

The Board of Assessment Appeals will meet Saturday, September 15, between 9 and 10 A.M. at the town offices for the purpose of hearing appeals regarding

motor vehicle assessments. No appointment is required. There will be no other time for hearing such appeals.

The Town Hall Players present *Visiting Mr. Green*, a play by Jeff Baron, directed by Dominique Lasseur, and starring Fred Thaler and Dean Saccardi. Friday, September 21, Saturday, September 22, at 7:30 P.M. and Sunday, September 23, at 3 P.M. Tickets \$20. See insert.

Clean-Up Green-Up Day: Saturday, September 22, from 9 A.M. to 12 P.M. Meet at Cornwall Conservation Trust office at 7 Railroad Square. For sign-up and details visit cornwallconservationtrust.org. See insert.

Red Cross Blood Drive: Thursday, September 27, from 1 to 6 P.M. at UCC. The need is great. Please call 1-800-GIVE LIFE to make an appointment.

Covered Bridge Social: Saturday, September 29, from 9 to 11 A.M., Pearly's Farmhouse Café. To RSVP by September 15 email either info@cornwallfoundation.org or info@cornwallassociation.org. See insert.

Covered Bridge Floorboards: If you'd like to purchase one of these oak floorboards or obtain one (or more) free of charge to make an item to be displayed and sold at the Cornwall Association's Newcomers' Tea, go to its website, cornwallassociation.org or contact Peter Demy at pdstulldemy@gmail.com.

CORNWALL CHRONICLE

cornwallchronicle.org

THIS MONTH

Cindy Kirk, Illustrations
Ed and Audrey Ferman, Editors
Ben Gray, Jr. and Caroline Kosciusko, Facebook Posts

NEXT MONTH

Jill Cutler and Ella Clark, Editors
jill.cutler22@gmail.com or ellac373@gmail.com

MANAGING EDITOR Ruth Epstein

CALENDAR EDITOR Chris Gyorsok
calendar@cornwallchronicle.org

CIRCULATION Hunt Williams, Nan and John Bevans

DIRECTORS

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