



CORNWALL CHRONICLE

VOLUME 11 : NUMBER 3 APRIL 2001



She's Coming To Your House

Some day in the next few months, a woman is going to knock on your door and ask to look inside your house. It won't be a real estate agent or a distributor of Bible tracts. It will be Lauren Elliott, the town assessor for Salisbury, Falls Village, and Goshen, who has been hired to do the basic work on Cornwall's decennial re-assessment.

Elliott has only been waiting for the March snows to melt before she sets out to measure and inspect the roughly 800 residences and other buildings in Cornwall and the land on which they stand. She plans to complete the field work portion of her task over the next three months, so expect her to visit you soon. After that, she will review past sales to set the framework for assigning values to every parcel of property in the town.

Among the things she will be looking at when she comes to your house are its "style" (cape, colonial, contemporary, etc.), the amount of livable floor space, fireplaces and other amenities, and, perhaps, your view (no decision yet on the value of views). Sales data for recent years, she says, will provide insights as to how to value these features. Also yet undecided is whether to divide Cornwall into "neighborhoods" by value. In Salisbury, Elliott divided the town into 45 neighborhoods for land valuation purposes. The final step in the re-assessment process

will be to make policy decisions on how to apply the field and sales data to establish assessments for each property. Barbara Johnson, Cornwall's assessor, will be a major player in that stage of the process.

My advice, when she knocks, is: be polite and invite her in. That will give you a chance to explain why your house really isn't worth nearly as much as it might seem at first glance.
—David A Grossman

HVRHS Gets Troubling Report

How does Housatonic Valley Regional High School measure up in comparison with similar Connecticut schools? That's what the Region One Board of Education has set out to learn. The initial answer is presented in a recent report titled *Benchmark 2000*.

For the *Benchmark* study five other Connecticut high schools were chosen as an Educational Reference Group (ERG). One is Wamogo, the regional school that serves Warren, Morris, and Goshen. The others serve single towns. All ERG schools have from 400 to 650 students, bracketing the 547 currently at HVRHS.

Benchmark 2000 contains a mass of useful data comparing our region and its high school to their ERG counterparts. Here are a few samples from the report:

- A higher percentage of HVRHS graduates

earned credits in foreign languages than in any of the other schools. The same is true of vocational education credits. On the other hand, HVRHS had the lowest percentage of graduates with credits in lab science.

- In 1998 HVRHS had the lowest percentage of students exceeding state goals on the Connecticut Academic Performance Test in language arts and next to the lowest in math and science.
- In 1998 (the most recent year for which data are available), HVRHS pupils ranked third best on verbal SAT scores, but tied for last on the Math SAT.
- HVRHS pupils had the lowest attendance rates in the six-school group. But only Wamogo had a lower dropout rate.
- HVRHS has a much higher percentage of students (13.6 percent) assigned to special education than any of the other schools.
- HVRHS has a clear lead in spending. In 1998, it spent \$9,861 per pupil, nearly \$2,000 or 25 percent more than the ERG average. This happened even though our teacher salaries were the lowest in the group, based on then-current union contracts.

The Region One Board says this is the first in what will be an annual series of benchmark studies. It promises to be a useful report card, telling board members and high school administrators where they need to focus attention. *Benchmark* findings are also of interest to

(continued on page 2)

APRIL 2001

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
1 DAYLIGHT SAVING TIME BEGINS Arts Festival 3-6 P.M. UCC (p.4)	2 Bd. of Selectmen 7:30 P.M. Town Hall Park and Rec. 7:30 P.M. CCS Library	3 Kindergarten Registration (p.3) Bend-and-Stretch Clinic Every Tuesday, 9:30-10:30 A.M. UCC Parish House (p.4) Blue Mountain Satsang 6:30-8 P.M. Every Tuesday UCC Parish House Region One Budget Hearing 7 P.M. HVRHS Inland Wetlands, 8 P.M. Town Hall	4 Kindergarten Registration (p.3) Play Group 10-11:30 A.M. St. Peter's Church Soup and Video, Noon UCC Day Room	5 Kindergarten Registration (p.3) School Building Comm. 7:30 P.M. CCS Library	6	7
8 PASSOVER	9 Blood Pressure Screening 3-4 P.M. UCC Parish House P&Z 8 P.M. Town Hall	10 60-Plus Wellness Screening (p.4) Cornwall Library Construction Preview 5:30 P.M. Library (p.4) Housatonic River Comm. 7:30 P.M. CCS Library	11 Play Group 10-11:30 A.M. St. Peter's Church Soup and Video, Noon UCC Day Room	12 Cornwall Housing Corp. 4:30 P.M. Kugeman Village Bd. of Ed. 5 P.M. CCS Library	13 GOOD FRIDAY Spring Vacation Begins Preschool-K <i>Music Together</i> 10-11 A.M. Library (p.4)	14 Easter Egg Hunt 10:30-Noon CCS (p.4) Slide Show, India and Nepal, 8 P.M. Library (see Art in Cornwall, p.4)
15 EASTER SUNDAY	16 Deadline: May Chronicle Copy	17 Bd. of Selectmen 9 A.M. Town Hall School Building Comm. 7:30 P.M. CCS Library	18 Soup and Video, Noon UCC Day Room	19 Bd. of Finance 7:30 P.M. CCS Library	20	21 Art at the Dump 10 A.M.-4:30 P.M. (p.4)
22 The Palestinian Perspective 11:30 A.M. UCC Parish House (p.4) Dem.-Rep. Forum 4 P.M. Town Hall (p.3)	23 School Reopens Region One Bd. of Ed. 7 P.M. HVRHS ZBA 8 P.M. TOWN OFFICE *	24	25 Play Group 10-11:30 A.M. St. Peter's Church Soup and Video, Noon UCC Day Room Green Party 7:30 P.M. Town Hall Cornwall Vol. Fire Dept. 7:30 P.M. W. C. Firehouse	26	27 Preschool-K <i>Music Together</i> 10-11 A.M. Library (p.4) Bd. of Finance Public Hearing: 2002 Budget 7:30 P.M. CCS Taco Dinner 5:30 & 6:30 P.M. UCC Parish House (p.4)	28 Cornwall Association 9 A.M. UCC Day Room
29 Child Center Auction 1:30 P.M. CCS (p.3)	30					



*Check with Zoning Office—672-4957

(continued from page 1)

the region's elected officials, who have put the subject on the agenda of a planned meeting of first selectmen with the Region One board.

—Hanna and David Grossman



It's A Crime!

Once again, *Connecticut* magazine has ranked the 39 towns in this state with populations under 4,700. It claims the rankings measure the quality of leisure and culture, education, cost of living, economy, and crime. Two years ago, Cornwall was in 19th place. This year, we have moved all the way up to number 18! Once again, our Achilles' heel is our terrible crime rate.

"What's that?" you say. "Crime in Cornwall?" Yes. *Connecticut* says Cornwall has the 38th worst crime rate of all the state's 39 small towns. Too bad. If only we shared the low sixth-best crime rating of our neighbor, the town of Warren, our overall score would have put us in first place, edging out that paragon, the town of Sherman.

Don't worry, though. Just as Gordon Ridgway discovered two years ago, our high crime zone is the Mohawk Ski Area. Neither murder nor manslaughter, but purloined snowboards and misplaced ski boots constitute our felonies. It could be worse, though. Think of the multitudes who might want to move here if we were Number One. You're welcome to them, Sherman. —Michael Gannett

Cornwall's Bulging Budget

Over the past month, the Board of Finance has met many times to prepare the budget for fiscal year 2001-02, which begins July 1. It won't be easy this year.

The Board of Education's proposed budget is \$2.8 million, up a sharp 9.3 percent. A major factor is a whopping 20 percent increase in high school tuition. Our share of high school costs will go up because there will be six more Cornwall pupils at HVRHS next year in contrast to a decline of 11 from other regional towns. This will be coupled with a 6.4 percent increase in the HVRHS budget. Tuition will escalate to \$12,700 per pupil.

The Board of Selectmen's proposed budget is \$1 million, up 3.4 percent. Included is the first allocation of operating funds for the new Library building under the 1998 Town-Library Agreement.

On March 15, Finance Board members met to review these proposals. They voted unanimously to ask the selectmen and the Board of Education to reduce their budget proposals by one percent; this means a cut of \$10,000 for the selectmen and \$28,000 for the Board of Education. The Finance Board members recognized that it will be difficult

to make such cuts, but that in light of the projected increases in Cornwall's budget over the near future they see it as essential to tighten spending.

At a special meeting in mid-February, Finance Board members reviewed an alarming five-year "baseline" budget projection indicating that Cornwall's mill rate is likely to increase by an average of 8.5 percent a year. This would mean a total rise of about 50 percent by fiscal year 2005-06—unless ways can be found to cut costs or raise revenues from sources other than the property tax.

Cornwall voters will get to see the completed budget at a public hearing on April 27 and to vote on it at Town Meeting on Friday, May 18. Region One will hold a hearing on its budget on April 3; it will go before the Region's voters in a referendum early in May.

—David A. Grossman

Editors' Note: As a result of an editing error, last month's *Chronicle* mistakenly reported that the 50 percent tax increase projected over the next five years was solely due to rising school expenses. In fact, 50 percent is a total figure, reflecting the potential tax increase to meet all municipal costs.

The Invention Convention

On March 1, CCS Principal Peter Coope opened an all-school assembly by declaring that it was "a day of science for our school." Students in grades five through eight had been given a challenge to identify, describe, and solve everyday problems using the scientific method. In addition, they had to display and explain their solutions. Judging from the results, there were many "Eureka!" moments.

Keeping their "stuff" tidy and organized was a problem that was imaginatively and practically solved by Stephanie Lynn Kearns' "Don't Get Wet Bookcover," Tyra Lindholm's "Bookanizer," Emery Gray's "Forever Folder," and Shawna Pattison's "Locker Keeper." Samantha Bate's "Shoe that Carries Makeup," and Caroline Kosciusko's "Fabadelic," a headband with suntan lotion, bug spray, and Chapstick embedded in it took care of problems faced by busy students on the go.

Leaning too far back in chairs and tipping over is a perennial classroom problem solved by Charlie Fox's "Amazing Chair," which sports a fifth leg. Also, the problem of getting the right tool when under a car was neatly solved by Steve Hedden and Thomas Kennedy's "Jack's Friend," a toolbox on wheels.

A grand prize and awards for each of the four grades were given out by the project organizers Lucy Prendergast, middle school science teacher, and Lynn Meehan, fifth grade teacher, to a cheering throng of students, parents, and community members. And the winners were: grand prize to Ellen Hart, for her "Handy Stand-Up Christmas Tree Waterer"; first prizes to Hannah Colbert,

Charlotte Buck, Padraic Murphy-Saunders, Jessica Savan; second prizes to Caroline Kosciusko, Meredith Gray, Lucia Martin, Alyssa Ackerman; third prizes to Jonathan Coe, Tyler Cheney, Kyle Julian, and Jamie Pastre.

—Norma Lake

Good-bye to Friends

Frank G. Trager

Mabel L. Besozzi

Welcome

Zoë Ellis Wilson to Jennifer Ellis and Seth Wilson

Jessica Faith Constantine to Donna Sager and William Constantine

Saoirse Deanna McCauley Fischer to Deirdre and Adam Fischer

Land Transfers

Ruth E. Ohmen to Patrick and Kim Redmond, house and 2 acres at 2 Swifts Bridge Road for \$150,000.

Anthony Ficalora to National Society of Compliance Professionals Inc., commercial building on Kent Road for \$180,000.

Estate of Nicholas Rondinone to Adam W. and Deirdre A. Fischer, 18 acres on Great Hollow Road for \$104,000.

CCS Mastery Scores Fall

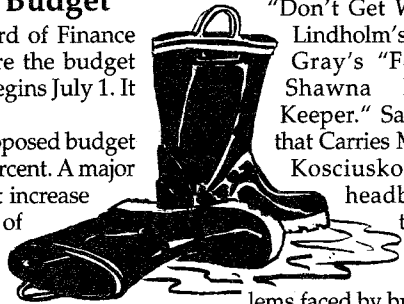
"So what went wrong?"

Many townspeople recently asked themselves that

question when they opened their newspapers to see the showing of Cornwall Consolidated School on the 2000 Connecticut Mastery Tests. Long accustomed to being high in the state standings (just last year in the top spot), CCS had plummeted to 124th among 163 school districts.

So what did go wrong? One factor, certainly, is that in a small school the scores will jump around from year to year (as Cornwall's always have) because certain small class groupings will be stronger than certain others. In a huge school this is not true. Also, this year new federal and state rules mandated that at least 80 percent of special education pupils take the test, a regulation that was conveniently ignored in some districts, to Cornwall's disadvantage. Then, too, when this school year started, about half the teachers were not only new to CCS, but had not had the chance last spring to attend state workshops on the revised format of the tests.

This last reason may be the most important, according to Principal Peter Coope (also new to CCS). Long before the test results were announced, he and the staff developed five school goals for 2001-2004. Realizing these goals, Coope believes, will have a real impact on future CMT scores. —Bob Potter



New Park & Rec. Director

Polly Tobin has been hired by the town to coordinate activities of the Park and Recreation Commission. She succeeds Brian Leonard, who resigned in January. Polly grew up in Cornwall, and returned here two years ago after spending time out West directing outdoor education programs. She has a degree in Outdoor Recreation Management from the University of Maine at Machias, and a degree in Recreation and Leisure Administration from California State University in Fresno. Polly joined our Fire Department in January, and is now undergoing the rigorous firefighter training program.

After her first few weeks on the job, Polly notes that Park and Rec. has strong offerings for kids. However, she would like to see more programming for a greater variety of ages. She plans to have office hours in the upstairs room at the Library on Saturday mornings, 10 to noon, and weeknights by appointment. Her office phone is 672-4070, and her home phone is 672-6911.

Polly is now the third Tobin sister on active duty in our town. Connie is Assistant Fire Chief, and Lib is our Recycling Coordinator. You go, girls! —Annie Kosciusko

Heliport Buzzing Again

After considerable controversy, installation of a private helicopter pad at the "Castle" in Coltsfoot Valley was approved by Cornwall's Planning and Zoning Commission in 1982. Lately, the heliport issue has arisen again because the property is being sold, and the current owners asked whether the special permit is still valid.

When Alexius Conroy bought the Castle in 1988, he divided the property into two lots, owned by separate corporations he controlled. In the same year, heliports were eliminated as an allowed use during a revision of the zoning regulations, i.e., no new heliports.

Recently, the owner asked P&Z to clarify the validity of the 1982 special heliport permit. The minutes of P&Z's meeting on December 11, 2000, noted that "technically, the ownership of the property by two corporations does violate the conditions of the permit." But, if the owner was willing to remerge the properties, P&Z indicated that the intent of the restrictions would be maintained, and that the permit would still be valid.

Theodora Bury has now written to P&Z on behalf of Dark Entry Forest, Inc., protesting its action in allowing continuation of the heliport special permit. (See *Letters*.)

—Ann Schillinger

Sharing the Cost

The Cornwall Volunteer Fire Department will share the cost of its new rescue/command vehicle with the town. The new vehicle is expected to cost about \$200,000. The Fire Department has agreed to pay one-half of the cost between \$100,000 and \$200,000

Letters to the Chronicle

NO HELIPORT, PLEASE

At the request of the Board of Directors of Dark Entry Forest, Inc., I have written to the Cornwall Planning and Zoning Commission expressing our profound dismay and objection to its recent decision to restore the special permit for the heliport at the Cornwall Castle (see page 2). P&Z's decision lacked adequate public notification and precluded an opportunity for citizen input. We would certainly have raised objections to the reconsideration had the P&Z agenda been adequately publicized.

Operation of a helicopter facility at the Castle will not only disrupt the peace and tranquillity of our community but may also pose a threat to the fragile wildlife of our nature preserve. Noisy and disruptive flights will undermine our unique rural area.

We hope that the owners of the Castle understand that their neighbors do not want a helicopter in their midst and will choose other means of transportation.

—Theodora Bury, Chair, Regional Affairs Committee, Dark Entry Forest, Inc.

LET'S TALK TAXES

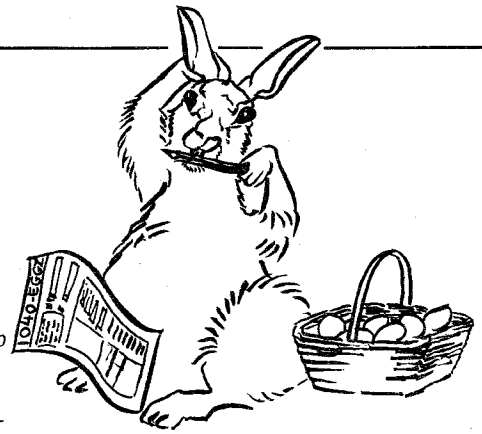
Re: "Easing the Tax Burden" (March 2001). Hats off to the Chronicle for sensibly shifting the tax debate from the merits of a particular project to this more fundamental question: Can every taxpayer in Cornwall actually afford the tax increase that we are likely to see in the immediate future? And, if not, how do we as a community ease the hardship on individuals whose budget simply will not absorb such a hike?

I was aware of neither Salisbury's tax abatement program nor the system in place in Vermont, two items this article brought to light. Either might be an appropriate starting point for a wide-ranging discussion of the extent to which a tax problem may exist within our ranks and

and anything over \$200,000. The rest will be financed by the town's capital budget. The firemen have already raised their share of the engine's cost from contributions and the Bridge Dance. —David A. Grossman

Events & Announcements

Moose in Cornwall: Russ Sawicki, former chef at Cadwell's Corner and Hedgerows, has returned to West Cornwall, taking over the premises most recently run by Bob Laigle as the Café by the Bridge. Russ has renamed the restaurant The Wandering Moose and will be serving breakfast and lunch Monday through Saturday, brunch on Sunday, and dinner on Thursday, Friday, and Saturday.



how it might be approached.

Let's hope this is the beginning of a healthy dialogue on this issue. And, as always, I'll look to the Chronicle in the coming months for a free-ranging discussion of all aspects of this question. —Tom Bechtle

SING HO!

I was so moved by Ken Keskinen's poem honoring the tenth anniversary of the Chronicle that a brief expression of gratitude seems in order. Please note: A "Shmoo" was a magical creature in the old "Li'l Abner" cartoon, which produced all manner of good things when suitably pressed.

Here's a toast to Ken K.
A fanciful fellow

Whose writing is witty
Whose manner is mellow.

He's an old-fashioned Shmoo.
For the rest of us nerds—

Just squeeze him a little
And out come the WORDS,
Like a bounty of jewels
In a priceless collection
And each of them polished
And shaped to perfection!

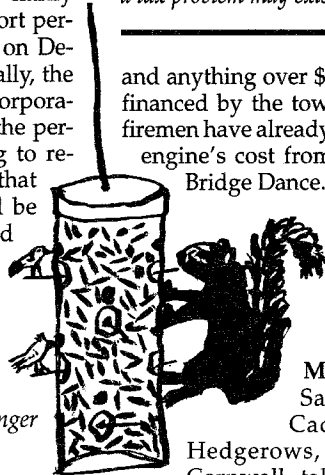
We are thankful for Ken
Though we don't always show it
So let's all raise a glass
To the Chronicle's poet!

—Jean Ferriss Leich

Tenth Annual Benefit Auction for the Cornwall Child Center will be held at CCS on Sunday, April 29. Silent auction at 1:30 P.M., live auction at 3 P.M. Please note new location. Donors of items please call Jean Vitalis (672-6880).

Come Hear Our Legislators: Roberta Willis and Andrew Roraback will be at the Town Hall at 4 P.M. on April 22 to tell us about legislation affecting our town. Sponsored by Republican and Democratic Town Committees. Refreshments served. All welcome.

Kindergarten Registration for the 2001-02 year will be held on April 3, 4, and 5. Any child turning five on or before December 31, 2001, is eligible. Parents should call the school office at 672-6617 to schedule a time for their child to visit the kindergarten room and meet Mrs. Wadhams, the kindergarten teacher. Parents need to bring their child's official immunization record and birth certificate.



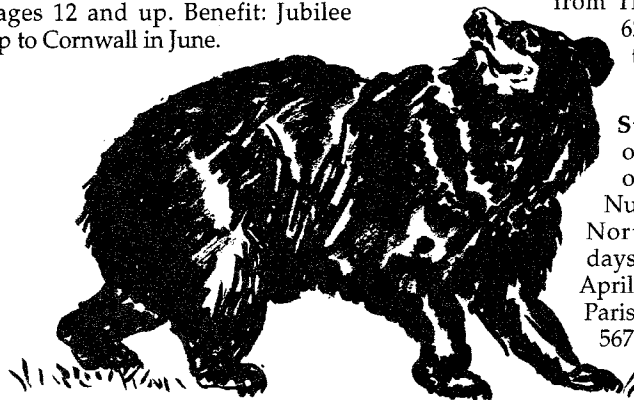
Art in Cornwall: At the Cornwall Library, the fourth annual show of CCS students' work will continue through April 14. Also on April 14, at 7 P.M. there will be an opening of an exhibit of watercolors by Ellen Moon, of Lawudo Monastery at the Solu-Khumbu area of Nepal, which will continue through May 12. The opening will be followed at 8 P.M. by a slide show, sponsored by Friends of the Library, documenting the two-month trip David Colbert, Ellen Moon, and their daughter Hannah took to India and Nepal last fall. Dessert and coffee will be served before the slide show.

At the National Iron Bank, Lee Rogers' show of photographs of Connecticut landscapes will continue through April.

The Cornwall Arts Collection will host a reception on Saturday, April 28, from 4 to 5 P.M. at 7 Railroad Street in West Cornwall, showing works by Cornwall artists and artisans. Wine and hors d'oeuvres will be served.

The Cornwall Exchange: There's a new swap place on the Cornwall website (www.cornwallct.org) called the Cornwall Exchange. It's where any Cornwall resident can list things to give away, swap, or ask for. Want to swap a sled for cross country skis? Want to rent storage in someone's barn? Got a computer you've outgrown? List it on the Exchange. Sorry, no commercial sales or transactions.

Arts Festival: Sunday, April 1, at UCC. Concert at 3 P.M. by Miles of Swing, HVRHS Jazz Band, CCS Jazz Band. Art Show and Auction at 4:30 P.M. featuring Cornwall artists. Refreshments. For concert, \$12 suggested donation for ages 12 and up. Benefit: Jubilee School trip to Cornwall in June.



Tax Cut

It looks like it's coming, though we don't know yet if it will be elephant- or donkey-sized, or something in between. You can always achieve your own personal tax reduction by increasing your tax-deductible donations to the *Chronicle*.

Trainee Wanted: Cornwall's Finance Office seeks a qualified trainee to learn the town's financial systems, banking arrangements, payroll and accounts payable. Knowledge of basic accounting and experience with a range of computer programs is necessary. Time very flexible but applicants should be prepared to fill in for Finance Director when needed. Compensation \$13.55 an hour (\$13.96 after 7/1/01). The Town of Cornwall is an Equal Opportunity Employer. Please call Lisa Lansing Simont, 672-2707.

Musical Story Hour: As part of its Friday morning story hour for preschoolers, starting April 13, the Library will host a "Music Together" program every other week through June 8. Led by musician and actress Kath Bloom, children and their parents or caregivers will explore songs, chants, drumming, movement, tonal and instrument play. Infants and toddlers are welcome. Fridays, 10-11 A.M., free. Call the Library at 672-6874 for more information.

Wanted—Beach Staff: Cornwall is looking for people to work at the beach this summer as lifeguard, swim instructor, and beach director. If you are interested, get in touch with the Selectmen's Office, 672-4959.

Scholarship Application Forms for the Woman's Society Education Fund Scholarships are available to any Cornwall senior graduating from public or private high school. Forms may be picked up at HVRHS Guidance Office or from Thalia Scoville, 672-6288. Deadline for return is May 1.

Free Bend-and-Stretch Clinic for older adults will be offered by the Visiting Nurse and Home Care Northwest, Inc. Tuesdays, 9:30 to 10:30 A.M., April 3 to May 8 at UCC Parish House. Register at 567-6000.

A Palestinian Perspective: Dr. Justine McCabe, cultural anthropologist and clinical psychologist practicing in New Milford, will speak on "Reflections on a Recent Visit to Israel-Palestine: A Palestinian Perspective on the Current Israeli-Palestinian Crisis" on Sunday, April 22, at 11:30 A.M. at the UCC Parish House. For more information, call the church office, 672-6840.

Easter Egg Hunt for preschool through fourth grade will be sponsored by Park and Rec., Saturday, April 14 from 10:30 to noon at CCS. Be sure to bring a basket.



Library Construction Preview: There will be a community meeting on Tuesday afternoon, April 10, at 5:30 P.M. at the Library to talk about the construction of the new library, scheduled to begin later in April. Dan Sexton from Casle Construction will explain what will be happening during the summer and how it might affect life in the Village. Everyone is welcome. Bring all your questions. Refreshments.

Art at the Dump will be shown at the Cornwall Transfer Station on Saturday, April 21, from 10 A.M. to 4:30 P.M. The show will consist of work fashioned from recycled items. All are encouraged to participate. Items are to be dropped off and hung the morning of the show from 8 to 10 A.M. Questions? Call Gail Jacobson at 672-6639.

Sixty-Plus Wellness Screening will be available April 10 for Cornwall residents 60 and over, regardless of income. You can get a wide range of tests. A \$25 donation is suggested. Call Jill Gibbons at 672-2603.

Taco Dinner: Cornwall Junior Girl Scout Troop 63 is holding a make-your-own Taco dinner at the UCC Parish House on Friday, April 27, with two sittings, 5:30 and 6:30 P.M. This event will raise money for a camping trip to Maine in June. Tickets are \$3.00 for children under 12 and \$6.00 for 12 and over. Seating is limited. Call Patience Lindholm at 672-0609 or Tracy Dakin Gray at 672-6015.



CORNWALL CHRONICLE

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