



# CORNWALL CHRONICLE

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## Ebbing Tide in the Economy

An ebbing tide lowers all boats, and even though Cornwall runs a "tight ship" (see Gordon Ridgway's State of the Town address as covered in the November *Chronicle*), we are not immune.

Requests for aid at Cornwall's Food and Fuel Bank are up 25 to 30 percent this year, says Jill Gibbons, Cornwall's social services administrator. But, she adds, donors have been particularly generous with cash donations. The Cornwall Food Pantry is well stocked by church groups, the school, and the Girl Scouts.

Some contractors report a cancellation in renovation and construction projects. Second homeowners, many of them financially dependent on the fortunes of Wall Street, are thinking twice and sometimes postponing or entirely forgoing new projects. At the Cornwall Package Store, owner Richard Bramley says his customers, although still buying the same amount, are settling for much cheaper brands.

At the National Iron Bank in Cornwall Bridge, depositors are "sitting on their cash." They're not spending. Applications for loans are almost non-existent. "We have money to lend," says Ed Schuman, the manager, "but no borrowers."

"It's not going to be pretty," declares realtor Nick Bruehl of this real estate market.

"I remember when the *Chronicle* was first published in the early nineties, Tommy Bevans came to me for information on the real estate market. Later, when the issue was printed, I heard, 'Great article, Nick. All doom and gloom.'"

"I've been through this before," Nick adds, quite cheerily. "It's cyclical: the market will come back. If you have cash, good credit, and a long-time horizon, you'll find some great prices out there."

K. C. Baird, at Baird's General Store, says he has had to raise prices about 4 to 5 percent to pace vendor inflation. But the vendor surcharge for gas has not yet been lifted, despite the drop in prices.

That drop in gas and heating oil prices is one of the very few silver linings around this gloomy economic cloud. As of this writing, gas is down for the 17<sup>th</sup> week in a row, with the national average, as of November 12, being about \$2.20 a gallon. Getting to work is now much cheaper—that is, if you still have a job.

Mercifully, heating oil no longer looms as such an ominous specter for the coming winter. Last August, says Peter Grusauskas at Goshen Oil, heating oil was at \$4.69 per gallon. As of November 12, it was about \$2.69, frustrating those who prudently locked in at last summer's prices. —Catherine Noren

## Changes in West Cornwall

A few of you will remember Bierce's General Store or its later transformation into first The Deck and then Freshfields and The Bistro, all restaurants. More of you will remember Yutzler's, where Fred, Dutch, and Carl, all Yutzlers, and then Phil and Jane Bishop, greeted you before K. C. Baird turned it into the West Cornwall Market. No more. Restaurant and market have been replaced by yoga and art!

Well-known artist Jackie Saccoccio and sculptor Carl D'Alvia, who divide their time between West Cornwall and New York City, recently bought the former West Cornwall Market from Dan Cain to use as a studio. So while no one is dishing out ice cream cones or slicing hunks of cheddar cheese anymore, there is a link to the gentle spirit of Dutch Yutzler, the much-beloved storekeeper and local artist.

And you can't get more of a gentle change than introducing yoga into West Cornwall. Several years ago, The Bistro was converted into a residence. On November 8, the change continued with the introduction of yoga classes into the house owned by Marjorie Whiteford and her husband, Bruce. Ms. Whiteford, known as Briggs, lives here part-time and has begun teaching Kundalini yoga with Sandra Perlow. This school of yoga is

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## DECEMBER 2008

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
	<b>1</b> Park & Rec. 7 P.M. CCS Library Region One Bd. of Ed. 7 P.M. HVRHS Bd. of Selectmen 7:30 P.M. Town Hall	<b>2</b> Inland Wetlands 7:30 P.M. Town Hall	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b> Annual Christmas Fair 9:30 A.M.—2 P.M. UCC † Opening Art Reception & Discussion 4–7 P.M. iO Gallery † Family Contra Dance 7–9:30 P.M. Town Hall
<b>7</b> PEARL HARBOR DAY	<b>8</b> Blood Pressure Screening Noon–1 P.M. UCC	<b>9</b> Housatonic River Comm. 7:30 P.M. CCS Library P&Z 7:30 P.M. Town Hall	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b> Photography Show Opening 2:30–5:30 P.M. Northern Exposure †
<b>14</b> Iceland & Energy Efficiency 11:30 A.M. UCC †	<b>15</b> Deadline: January Chronicle Copy ZBA 7:30 P.M. Town Hall*	<b>16</b> Bd. of Selectmen 7:30 P.M. Town Hall	<b>17</b>	<b>18</b> Red Cross Blood Drive 1:30–6:15 P.M. UCC Parish House † Bd. of Ed. 5 P.M. CCS Library Bd. of Finance 7:30 P.M. CCS Library VFW Post 9856 8 P.M. W. Cornwall Firehouse	<b>19</b> CT Care Meeting 10:30 A.M. Library Iraq War Moratorium Meeting 7 P.M. Library †	<b>20</b> Annual Christmas Pageant 7:30 P.M. UCC †
<b>21</b> WINTER BEGINS HANNUKAH	<b>22</b>	<b>23</b> CCS Early Dismissal for Winter Holiday 1 P.M.	<b>24</b> Library Closed Candlelight Service 5 P.M. and 8 P.M. N. C. Meeting House †	<b>25</b> CHRISTMAS DAY Library Closed	<b>26</b> Library Closes at 3:45 P.M. Candlelight Reading 4 P.M. N. C. Meeting House †	<b>27</b>
<b>28</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>30</b> Cornwall Vol. Fire Dept. 8 P.M. W. C. Firehouse	<b>31</b> NEW YEAR'S EVE Library Closes at 5 P.M. for New Year's Eve	<b>Every Week This Month:</b> Mondays: Jam Session, 7:30 P.M. Village Meeting House; Men's Adult Basketball, 7 P.M. CCS Gym Tuesdays: Adult Volleyball, 7 P.M. CCS Gym Wednesdays: Stretch Class, 5 P.M. Town Hall; Women's Adult Basketball, 7:30 P.M. CCS; Tai Chi, 6 P.M. (Beginners); 7:15 P.M. (Existing Class) CCS Thursdays: Meditation for Mothers, 1:15 P.M. St. Peter's Sundays: Meditation Group, 1–2 P.M. 672-0229 to confirm		

\* Check with Zoning Office—672-4957  
† Details in Events and Announcements

(continued from page 1)

found all over the world and can be done by anyone. It consists of linking movement with breath and using mantras and mental focus to create a communication between mind and body. Currently classes are held on Saturday, Sunday, and Monday. For more information, call (860) 248-3082. Briggs says that Kundalini yoga is healing and can "help through challenging times." Now that is change we can all believe in. —Norma Lake

## Sanitation Sanity

In the good old days when you needed a septic system, some knowledgeable neighbor on a backhoe like Denny Frost, Gordon Cavanaugh, or Martin Kubish would dig the trenches, lay the tile, and the town sanitarian would supervise as the plumber hooked it all together. It could be pricey if the system were on shallow or clay soils, across the road, or uphill from the house, but, even so, probably not ruinous.

Twenty years ago Cornwall joined an increasing number of Litchfield County towns in choosing the Torrington Area Health District (TAH) as the monitor of its compliance with state health codes, and the procedure has become more rigorous. For all new zoning and building permits, TAH must certify that the lot has sufficient space for both a correctly sized system and a reserve area in case the original fails. Statutory distances between well, septic, and house must also be observed. In order to establish these facts, TAH requires that an engineer oversee the digging and testing of deep percolation holes and then design a site-specific system.

To see whether the current regulations make us safer, poorer, more compliant, or all of the above, various players in the interlocking worlds of water, effluent, construction, and public health were interviewed. All of them agreed that the narrow rules governing septic system installation are part of a much wider community health picture, and this is the overarching concern leading towns to hire TAH.

In earlier years, a town like ours used a part-time sanitarian, but with the threat of greater town liabilities, there is no going back. As First Selectman Gordon Ridgway says, "We could only offer a sanitarian a small job with a fairly huge risk"; towns need some full-time backup to call on for the health heavies, like MRSA or a pandemic flu.

In Sharon, the only county holdout, town officials would rather fight than switch, but this may be due to the fact that they boast an experienced sanitarian-health official team of long standing. First Selectman Malcolm Brown is a retired doctor, and Sharon Hospital is right there as a backup. Brown feels that the Sharon team is able to inspect and certify new septic systems more efficiently than TAH and can decide when an engineer is not required. This echoes the criticism

of TAH most commonly heard in Cornwall: that through understaffing or overextension, routine permits take forever to obtain.

Cornwall Building Inspector Paul Prindle appreciates the breadth of coverage the town gets from a large professional health district whose region-wide scope includes everything from monitoring asbestos removal to inspecting restaurants. Paul accepts that it is harsh to spend lots of money on something you never see and tries to focus on the fact that having a code-compliant dwelling is like putting money in the bank against a future sale. He observes that soils in our area are amazingly variable, so that help from an engineer—only a small part of the overall cost of a new septic—is still a modest tradeoff against the greater good of high water quality and community health.

Not surprisingly, TAH's Jim Rokos and Tom Stansfield also hold a long and broad view of their mandate and take great pride in the fact that "Northwest Corner air and water are the cleanest they've been in the past 100 years." They explain the need for more complex systems as due to several factors: an increasingly demanding health code and a decrease in easy building sites. Jim estimates that now over 90 percent of land proposed for new building lies in so-called "areas of special concern" where engineered systems are automatically required. In addition, almost all systems must now be above ground, built up with costly "select fill," lab-tested material that has to meet strict criteria.

None of this looks good for keeping housing affordable, but both Gordon and Paul find some encouraging signs. Paul feels that new technology exists for getting safe systems into smaller spaces. Gordon points to regional efforts to allow shared septic and water supply systems without the current heavy regulation. Since large-acre zoning is based chiefly on the area required for well and septic systems, the implications of this idea could be immense. As Gordon says, land and building prices are unlikely to come down, so lowering the cost of any other variable is crucial to keeping housing costs as low as possible. —Maggie Cooley

## On a Clear Day

It's no longer necessary to climb to the top of Mohawk Mountain to enjoy the fine views. The Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection's visibility hazecam provides photos north every five minutes on its website, [www.ct.gov/dep](http://www.ct.gov/dep) (type in "air monitoring sites"). On a nice day when the air quality is good, you can see Canaan Mountain 12.8 miles away without walking a step. On a hazy day (caused by summer heat or, most important, air pollution) you're lucky to see Cream Hill just four miles away. This is one of the DEP's two hazecam sites meant to give the general public a

visual picture of the effects of air pollution.

Mohawk is also an air pollution-monitoring site with instruments that measure everything from the ozone to fine particles to carbon dioxide. Specific Mohawk readings are not available on the site but are mixed into a more general reading found under the air index.

That our little town hosts such a station is another reminder that Cornwall is a small part of the bigger world around us and that its issues (air pollution, to name just one) are our issues as well. —April Stevens

## Congratulations

Bonnie Bevans and Russell Rhea

## Land Transfers

Cornwall Enterprises, Ltd., to Hummingbird Stone, LLC, two parcels with buildings thereon at 406 Sharon-Goshen Turnpike for \$225,000.

Stanley J. Pochron and Margaret Smith Rawson to Matthew R. and Virginia Jacobus, land and buildings thereon at 295 Great Hollow Road, for \$440,000.

## Holiday Shopping in Cornwall

*Resolved: To do as much holiday shopping as I can this year in Cornwall.*

You know the saying—BUY LOCAL! Here are just a few ideas for you to consider. Check [www.cornwallct.org](http://www.cornwallct.org) for a more complete list of Cornwall businesses.

- Let's begin with the annual **Christmas Fair** (see insert in this issue) at the UCC Parish House. Interesting works by a variety of Cornwall's talented artisans. Lots of good stuff and reasonably priced.

- **Milkhouse Pottery:** The showroom (30 River Road, Cornwall Bridge) has Susan Fox's beautiful bowls, platters, and casseroles, but also smaller items like candle lanterns, custard cups, baby sets, and berry bowls with holes for draining (672-6450).

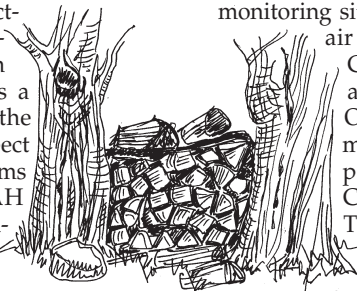
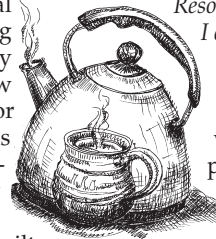
- **Cornwall Bridge Pottery:** The store in West Cornwall has a nice selection of lamps, new sets of attractive dinnerware, three sizes of berry bowls with saucers, three sizes of square plates, and six unusual kiln-fired chess sets. Plus lots of items modestly priced and an upstairs with Shaker furniture assembled or as kits.

Then there is Cornwall's own tea mogul, Sebastian Beckwith (**In Pursuit of Tea**), who packages and sells dozens of varieties. The Pottery carries it, or call 672-4768.

**Ridgway Farm** maple syrup with a sweet little pitcher is also available at The Pottery, which is open weekends from 11 A.M. to 5 P.M. and every day from December 17 to Christmas.

- **The Wish House:** Bianca Griggs has assembled an impressive variety of stylish clothing, jewelry, body-care products, baby wear, a menagerie of stuffed animals, and many affordable knickknacks. Dare we call it a mini department store? Hours are 11 A.M. to 6 P.M. every day.

- **Matthews 1812 House:** Ninety-nine percent of their business is via catalogue, but at their store/office on Kent Road, you can get 99 percent of their delicious candies, cakes,



and cookies.

• How about a lunch break when shopping in West Cornwall with some of Russ's medium-hot chili at the **Moose**? Or if you're in Cornwall Bridge, try some of the homemade soups and hot dishes at **Baird's** deli.

—John Miller

## E-Waste: More Junk with Value

What's on TV? Well, maybe another TV, and another on top of that, or a monitor or a printer or fax. The E-stuff is stacked high and deep in the 8' x 20' building at the Cornwall Recycle Center, AKA The Dump, a name honestly reflective of the catharsis associated with finally disposing of clutter from a closet, garage, or wherever your excess calls home. Microwave ovens, cell phones, stereo equipment, computers, VCRs, video games, and two-way radios (how did all this stuff happen to us?) are welcome there. Even as I speak, a portable battery charger arrives from Earl Brecher. Dumping it at this site is much handier than storing it and making an annual trip to Torrington for Electronic Waste Day, and cheaper for the town.

There is commercial value in castoff E-equipment: screen glass, parts, and precious metals. All hard drives are destroyed. At present CRT Recycling of Brockton, Massachusetts, provides a free walk-in container for the E-debris and hauls it back to Massachusetts for sorting: useable, as is, reusable with repair. The rest is disassembled and processed. According to Peter Kopych, general manager of CRT, exports go to Canada, Malaysia, and India, and all are regulated and tracked by the EPA. Nothing is shipped to China.

Thanks to the work of Steve O'Neil, recycling coordinator, we now have this local option. He did the research and made the arrangements with CRT, and the first container arrived on April 3. Items are stacked on pallets or put in large boxes, and a random neatness prevails. At present the only cost is five dollars for TVs of any size—no progressive pricing here. All other E-detritus is accepted freely and taken away without charge to the town. Initially, Steve said, a great river of derelict cast-offs flowed in but has now abated to a lazy stream of replacements instead of long-stored items. E-waste arrives worn out, outmoded, too slow, incompatible, or physically damaged, such as a TV launched with an agonized scream through a window into a starry night.

The toxic potential of E-waste has turned its disposal into a social and environmental flashpoint, an issue requiring thoughtful purchasing and responsible follow-through.

—Phil Hart

## Sex, Dogs, and Rock & Roll

The *Chronicle's* roving reporter sat down at her computer and solicited ways to keep warm from Cornwall's well-known wits. Here are a few of their suggestions.

*Ed Ferman:* Go to Flexpets.com and arrange to rent three dogs for those three-dog nights. Don't forget to order a dachshund for



## IS IT 1 MOOSE, 2 MOOSES, OR, IF MORE, MEESE?

While raking my front lawn this morning I discovered very fresh moose tracks in the dirt around my well. I know it was a moose that meandered through, as I have seen moose and their tracks many times up in Maine. So, the question is, how many moose, mooses, or meese do we have here in Cornwall? We all need to keep close watch and pay particular attention to our speed on our country and main roads now. Moose run pretty fast and do not look good as hood ornaments. And no, I didn't call the DEP because they would just tell me they were deer tracks. No deer I know of around here leaves hoof prints of a little over five inches long! So Sam Neubauer,

you keep watch at your end of town and I'll keep watch up here on Hall Road. I'll let you know if I see that mountain lion you are hoping to see too. If I do I'll send it down your way. Yes, Sam, they are around here.

—Barbara Victorien

## DOG WALKER'S DILEMMA

Since my two miniature dachshunds and I walk the Cornwall roads, I've a request. Could people walking their big dogs kindly hold on to them when they see us (we are easy to spot because I'm very tall and the dogs are very small). When a big dog comes to greet them, they get scared and the female screams and the male barks uncontrollably. Alone, I can't pick them up. I would so appreciate your help with this.

—Anne Zinsser

a neck pillow. Or call your broker and ask to take possession of your stocks and bonds. Burn for heat.

*Gordon Ridgway:* Blushing purple, he said, "Well, obviously a good marriage helps."

*Jane Bean:* Dance to rock and roll music when no one is home. Sit by fire with tea and a book. Stay there until April. Eat soup often and stay away from ice cream.

*Larry Van Valkenburgh:* I will be extending the flex pipe clothes dryer exhaust by 300 feet so I can walk around the house with it going up my pants leg.

*The Roving Reporter:* Duct tape the electric blanket to yourself and make sure you sit by an electrical outlet.

—Norma Lake

## News & Updates

• Winter preparedness is on the front burner at the Town Hall. First Selectman Gordon Ridgway reminds us to check smoke alarms, clean fireplace chimneys, and post 911 numbers where they are visible above the snow line. Check tire treads, too.

• A parking ban on town roadsides is in effect from December 1 to March 30 so that road crews can efficiently clean up after winter precipitation.

• The Selectmen's Office maintains a call list of citizens who want to be checked on when extended power outages or immobilizing storms occur. Call 672-4959 to add your name.

• Jill Gibbons, social services administrator (672-2603), can provide guidance and help with medicine costs, Social Security, and Medicare, as well as food and fuel assistance.

• Gordon Ridgway, Rick Lynn, Paul Prindle, and Cara Weigold have been named to the oversight committee for the business façade STEAP grant. They will formulate guidelines and an application for business grants, and are optimistic that these will

be ready some time in January 2009.

• The Chapel of All Saints-Episcopal made \$4,656 from food sales at the Ag Fair and has distributed it to the Hunger Project and OWL's Kitchen.

—Cheryl Evans

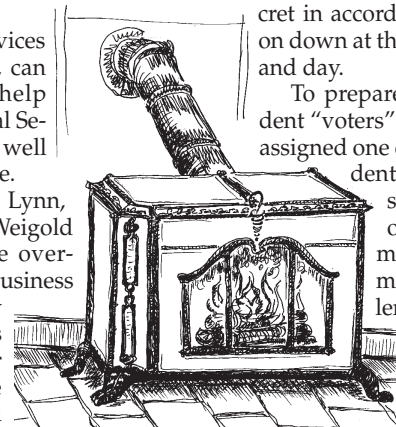
## Tomorrow's Voters Today

If the 2008 presidential election had been up to the students of Cornwall Consolidated School, Barack Obama would have swept the vote in a nationally embarrassing landslide. A school-wide straw vote held on Election Day had a robust 77 percent of the student body voting for Obama vs. an anemic 12 percent for John McCain.

In election years, Bob Kanehl, the social studies teacher at CCS, sets up voting booths in his homeroom for K-8 participation. He reports that although the straw vote of four years ago turned out to be a "ho hum" for many of the students, the race to the White House this year had the kids totally fired up and eager to get to his polling station. He ascribes this difference primarily as a reflection of parental interest (some would say obsession) in what promises to be an historical course change in our nation's dealings with its multiple dilemmas.

As self-appointed registrar of the CCS straw vote, Bob designed and printed up ballots along the lines of the official ones in the Town Hall. All school ballots were cast in secret in accordance with the process going on down at the Town Hall at the same time and day.

To prepare his eighth-grade CCS student "voters" for Election Day, Mr. Kanehl assigned one of the candidates to each student, charging him or her to research that candidate's stand on different issues. Then, as moderator, Mr. K. conducted a mass debate in which he challenged each student to defend his or her candidate on pertinent issues. At least one of his students, he claims, proved to have mastered



the art of dodging unwelcome questions by intentionally misinterpreting and talking around them, a familiar ploy with a long and illustrious past and prominent present on the Washington, D.C., scene. And, as an indication of how deeply the students were into the national election this year, some of them could be heard loudly carrying the defense of their assigned candidate out into the school halls and beyond.

If voter enthusiasm at CCS is any indication of its candidate's promise, our nation could be in for a much-needed, regenerative four years.

—Scoville Soulé

*Editors' Note:* Cornwall voters of the more senior variety cast 732 votes for Obama and 218 votes for McCain.

## Disappearing Signs

The *Chronicle*, acting on a tip provided by Nev Dunn, has investigated the case of the local advertising signs gone missing along certain roads in town.

Since those roads are maintained by the state, Nev went down to the Highway Garage on Route 4 and found a number of the signs, some of them fine expressions of the sign-painter's art, "in a big pile." He liberated a few to return to their owners, who are probably sadder and no wiser about the rules about signs on state property.

Roger Kane, whose long career with the state DOT included special permits, offered an explanation: The state removes promotional signs of any kind from state property, often for safe sight-line reasons. What is state property? That's hard to say.

The paved road surface lies on a right of way owned by Connecticut, in some cases since Benjamin Franklin was a little boy. The road may be six inches from the boundary or it may be 75 feet.

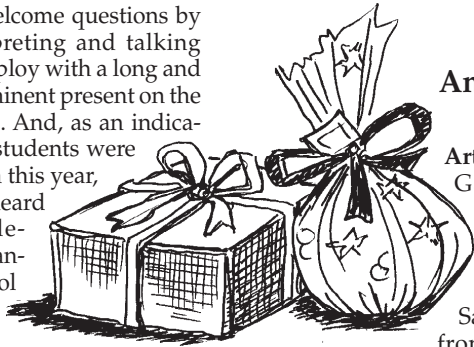
Enforcement of the rule varies, but, as Roger pointed out, the crews have been removing election signs recently. A sweep could happen anytime.

Town roads are a better bet, although placing signs eight or ten feet away from the paved surface is required.

—Lisa Lansing Simont

## Your Support Makes Us Run

The election's finally over and we can let go that big, held breath—whoosh! Now you can start patting your pockets to see what's left for the *Chronicle*. If your pockets come up short, please turn to your checkbook and send the coupon below with your donation. It will keep the news coming. Thank you!



## Events & Announcements

**Art in Cornwall:** The iO Gallery will host an opening and discussion entitled *Bringing the World Together Through Art* on Saturday, December 6, from 4 to 7 P.M. All art

will be represented—painters, poets, writers, etc.—anyone with a voice and a positive idea.

Northern Exposure Photographic Gallery will host an opening reception for its new show entitled *Photographer's Choice: Excellence in Fine Art Photography*, on Saturday, December 13, from 2:30 to 5:30 P.M.

At the Library, Don Bracken's show *Dirt Paintings* will continue through December 13. Beginning December 16, David Colbert will be exhibiting sculpture and photographs that explore color and texture.

**A Red Cross Blood Drive** will be held on Thursday, December 18, from 1:30 to 6:15 P.M. at the UCC Parish House. To register or request information call 1-800-GIVE LIFE.

### Christmas Traditions at UCC

- The Christmas Fair will be held on Saturday, December 6, from 9:30 A.M. to 2 P.M. New this year: a chili-making contest; to enter call 672-6840 or E-mail [cornwallUCC@aol.com](mailto:cornwallUCC@aol.com). There's a \$5 entry fee. For the apple pie-baking contest call Pat Blakey at 672-6516. To reserve wreaths, call Nita Colgate at 672-6797.

- The Pageant will be held on Saturday, December 20, at 7:30 P.M. New toys wrapped in white paper will be collected for children in need. Refreshments will be served afterward. Anyone interested in playing an angel, shepherd, or wise man can contact Jane Prentice at 672-6101.

- Candlelight services will be held on Christmas Eve at the North Cornwall Meeting House at 5 and 8 P.M.



**Icelandic Experiences and Observations** will be the topic of a talk given by Kate Freygang and Nathaniel Flagg at UCC on Sunday, December 14, at 11:30 A.M.

**Unwrapped New Toys** and Target/Walmart/gas cards are being collected by Rose and Tony Frith, to be distributed to local families for Christmas. Drop-off is at A. F. Stone & Tile, next to the Post Office in Cornwall Bridge. All collected items will be given to Social Services Administrator Jill Gibbons by December 15, in time for holiday delivery.

**The Cornwall Iraq Moratorium Network** invites the community to a holiday peace celebration on Friday, December 19, at 7 P.M. at the Cornwall Library. For information call 672-0183.

**The Ongoing Tai Chi Class**, sponsored by Park and Rec., has added a beginners group. It meets Wednesdays from 6 to 7 P.M. in the CCS Gathering Room. Call Dave Colbert at 672-0064 for information.

**Tom Walker** will read from *The Pickwick Papers* on Boxing Day, December 26, at 4 P.M. at the North Cornwall Meeting House.



## CORNWALL CHRONICLE

### DECEMBER ISSUE

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### JANUARY ISSUE

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