



CORNWALL CHRONICLE

VOLUME 19 : NUMBER 11 DECEMBER 2009



Local Elections '09

There were only two "contests" in this year's local elections: John LaPorta and Earl Brecher won new terms on the Board of Finance, and incumbent Nancy Calhoun and newcomer Betty Spence took the two open seats on the Zoning Board of Appeals.

Other winners who were either cross-endorsed or ran unopposed were First Selectman Gordon Ridgway; Selectmen Richard Bramley and K. C. Baird; Town Clerk Vera Dinneen; Treasurer John Green; Tax Collector Jean Bouteiller; Celia Senzer and Jack Preston, Board of Finance Alternates; Phil Hart, Irene Hurlburt, and Rachel Matsudaira, Board of Education; Mag Cooley, Becky Hurlburt, Steve Saccardi, and Ron Laigle, Park and Recreation; Jim LaPorta and Heidi Kearns, Planning and Zoning; and Charlie Gold, Assessment Appeals.

Voters also got to pick their favorite homemade soup at the regular Election Day luncheon sponsored by UCC and held at its Parish House. As it turned out, there were six soups and six slots for "best soup," so they were all winners: Pat Blakey's divine corn chowder, Lori Welles's superb ginger squash, Nan Frost's beloved broccoli, tasty navy bean by Tracy Gray, Jill Bryant's fab mulligatawny, and a delicious mild chili by UCC's own Pastor Micki. The mulligatawny

got the most votes, and the Cornwall Food and Fuel Banks got the \$460 contributed by soup-fueled diners.
—John Miller

Ebb Tide in the Economy Part 2

As they have done for the last 18 months, the media continue to regale us with non-stop bulletins about the state of our economy, many of them contradictory. We are told that our national economic health has improved—somewhat. The country is no longer teetering over the abyss of a total meltdown, and there are scattered signs of modest growth here and there.

Financial markets have been booming. Now adjusted to the realities of 2009—more productivity, fewer employees and expenditures, a falling dollar—80 percent of companies in the S&P 500 have reported higher-than-forecast third-quarter profits. But income tax receipts are still declining, foreclosures are still on the rise, banks still haven't written down the value of bad loans, and the consumer—that's you and I—still isn't spending. In other words, we still don't have the economic foundation to support a return to growth. Most ordinary Americans are looking forward to a lean winter, and conversations with Cornwall businessmen illustrate how national conditions are reflected locally.

The Housatonic Rug Shop is an example. Our 26-year-high unemployment rate of 10.2 percent means that consumers are not buying what the statistics refer to as consumer-discretionary items (the things you and I don't absolutely have to have—rugs for instance). Ed Kenniston says business is off 25-30 percent from its peak in 2007. His rugs and carpets come from everywhere, and while the cottage industries that produce these rugs are charging less, Ed, in turn, both charges less and sells fewer. His distributors, who formerly made 24 stops out of the city and back, now make five.

As for housing starts—a typical economic indicator—Building Inspector Paul Prindle says that in ten years he's never seen so few new single-family buildings. In the years 2000 to 2009, the number of new house permits was 6, 4, 8, 10, 9, 9, 4, 9, 5. This year, there are only 2, and one of these is a guest house. "There are none in the works," Paul says ruefully, adding, "There's a lot of bidding going on, as everyone understands that this is a buyer's market."

Since September 2008, Cornwall has seen two foreclosures. On Great Hollow Road, a buyer originally paid \$435,000 for a house the bank later sold to a new owner for \$210,000. On Kent Road, a house originally bought for

(continued on page 2)

DECEMBER 2009

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
		1 Inland Wetlands 7:30 P.M. Town Office	2	3	4	5 Christmas Fair 9:30 A.M.—2 P.M. UCC † <i>The Yellow Submarine</i> 3 P.M. Library † Family Contra Dance 7-9:30 P.M. Town Hall
6	7 Region One Bd. of Ed. 6 P.M. HVRHS Park & Rec. 7 P.M. Library Bd. of Selectmen 7:30 P.M. Town Hall Agricultural Comm. 7:30 P.M. Town Hall	8 Housatonic River Comm. 7:30 P.M. CCS Library P&Z 7:30 P.M. Town Hall	9	10	11 CHANUKAH Art Reception 5-7 P.M. Library †	12 Gifts Workshop 10:30 A.M.—1:30 P.M. UCC Parish House † Community Christmas Pageant 7:30 P.M. UCC †
13 Art Show Opening Lady Audrey's Gallery 2-5 P.M. †	14 Blood Pressure Screening Noon-1 P.M. UCC ZBA Sweet Peet Public Hearing 7:30 P.M. CCS Gym	15 Deadline: January Chronicle Copy	16	17 Bd. of Ed. 5 P.M. CCS Library Bd. of Finance 7:30 P.M. CCS Library	18	19 John Tauranac Talk on NY Subway Maps 3 P.M. Library † Christmas Caroling in Cornwall Village 5:30 P.M. †
20	21 FIRST DAY OF WINTER CCS Early Dismissal 1 P.M. Christmas Break	22 Red Cross Blood Drive 1:30-6:15 P.M. UCC Parish House † Bd. of Selectmen 7:30 P.M. Town Hall	23	24 Candlelight Service N. Cornwall Meeting House 5 and 8 P.M. †	25 CHRISTMAS	26 Tom Walker Reading <i>Winnie the Pooh</i> 4 P.M. North Cornwall Meeting House †
27	28 ZBA 7:30 P.M. Town Hall*	29	30 Cornwall Vol. Fire Dept. 8 P.M. West Cornwall Firehouse	31 NEW YEAR'S EVE New Year's Day Pancake Breakfast Tomorrow UCC Parish House	Every Week This Month: Mondays: Women's Adult Basketball, 7:00 P.M. CCS; Jam Session, 7:30 P.M. Call 672-0229 for Location. Tuesdays: Adult Volleyball, 7 P.M. CCS Gym. Wednesdays: Stretch Class, 5 P.M. Town Hall; Tai Chi, 6 P.M. CCS. Call 672-0064.	

* Check with Zoning Office—672-4957

† Details in Events and Announcements

(continued from page 1)

\$442,036 resold for \$277,000 after foreclosure. In addition, there have been several notices of *lis pendens*, or warnings of impending court action, filed on the Land Records.

"2009 has been a very difficult year for the real estate industry," says Nick Bruehl, "and that's an understatement." There have been no land sales this year, and the four or five house sales (as opposed to twelve or fifteen in a "normal" year), have been distress sales, by those forced to accept much lower prices. Other sellers, those with the fortitude and resources to do so, are simply "waiting it out." Because buyers—and there are some—are making very low offers, buyers and sellers have very different expectations. As a result, there's a large supply of empty dwellings on the market in Cornwall—about 30 homes. "I'm not sure we've seen the worst yet," Nick adds, saying that he, in turn, has reduced his own operating expenditures, including advertising.

So, too, has K.C. Baird. If you've noticed that the shelves in Baird's are looking bare, it's because K.C. has reduced the size of his inventory to match the 15 percent reduction in overall sales that he's endured during the last year. There's even much less activity on Route 7, he adds, although it's partly because of the many rainy weekends during October and September.

Everyone independently reported a slight uptick in business in recent weeks. Whether this is because the stock market has been rising, or whether it indicates the beginnings of sustainable growth in the economy, remains to be seen. None of those interviewed for this article expressed any optimism, but, as a much-honed aphorism has it, "The darkest hour comes just before the dawn."

—Catherine Noren

H1N1 Flu Misses Cornwall (So Far)

Whether you call it H1N1 or "swine flu," the flu virus sweeping the world is hitting Connecticut's young people hard. The federal Centers for Disease Control (CDC) says the flu situation in our state is "widespread," its most serious category. In nearby areas, such as School District 10 (Harwinton and Burlington), two out of every five students were out for two weeks with it, and schools were closed for three days.

Surprisingly, however, the flu danger appears to have by-passed Cornwall and District 1—at least through mid-November. At Cornwall Consolidated School, nurse Martha Bruehl says, "We haven't been hit this fall. At least, we have no student with a confirmed case of H1N1." She says it was a

rather different picture last June. Then, many students were out ill with flu, and it seems certain that it was the swine flu variety. Treatment protocols required them to stay home for seven days after the onset of the illness; as a result, many pupils missed the last few days of the school year.

At Housatonic Valley Regional High School, nurse Patricia Rimany says there have been only three cases of H1N1 so far this school year. But without more detailed testing, she says, you can't be certain that some or all of the other students staying home with flu-like symptoms don't have H1N1. However, as of mid-November, the absence rate at the high school was only 8 percent—about normal for this time of year.

Why hasn't the H1N1 epidemic shown up here? No one seems to know. James Rokos, director of the Torrington Area Health District, says that "it's a mystery." He goes on to note that the situation can change rapidly, and what is true now "probably won't be so in a few days."

Let's hope that our luck holds up. If it doesn't, CDC offers some guidance to help determine whether you or your child has H1N1 flu. Symptoms include fever, cough, sore throat, runny nose, body aches, headache, chills, fatigue, and sometimes diarrhea or vomiting. More serious warning signs—for which you should promptly consult your doctor—are fast or troubled breathing, bluish skin color, being very irritable, not waking up or interacting. Full corroboration that an infection is H1N1 requires time-consuming lab tests. But if anyone in your house has these symptoms, Martha Bruehl says you should remain at home for at least 24 hours after the fever goes down.

To date, the highest rate of attack from the H1N1 flu has been on young people. Dr. David Kurish of Sharon explains that this may be because there was an earlier wave of swine flu back in the 1960s. If you were exposed to the disease then, you may still have some immunity to the current version.

—David A. Grossman

The Herpetophobe's Dilemma

Jerry Doolittle's September story about the loveable snakes of Cornwall elicited an "oh yeah?" from Town Office workers who can recall a title-searcher staggering wide-eyed into the vault in the early 1990s claiming in a hoarse whisper to have seen a car hit a rattlesnake along Route 43. Raised on the comforting myth that no poisonous snakes had the audacity to pitch their tents in Cornwall, we were inclined to scoff. The spirit of scientific enquiry prevailed, however, and off we sped to the crime scene, led by Joyce Hart, native of Arizona, where snakes are Snakes.

There, a scant mile north of the Sedgwick Monument, lay a whack-

ing great rattlesnake, diamond head and telltale tail intact. Besides Joyce and me, witnesses to the sighting include Cheryl Evans, with an entranced carload of small boys, and my father, whose 90-year-old feet provided the human scale in a photo kindly posted on the Cornwall website by Lazlo. Another person (who prefers to remain nameless) took the carcass home to skin and tan, and reports that it had eight rattles and measured 52" from its nasty nose to the last of these.

For me, at least, the event marked the end of a cozy era protected by the "not-on-this-side-of-the-Housatonic" mantra. The scales had well and truly fallen from my eyes, and when lifting old plastic from the garden a year or so later, I am morally convinced that I roused out a minimum of seven different kinds of snakes, uniformly possessed of a triangular head and warlike demeanor.

Anyone seriously interested in rattlers on the loose should dally a while in front of Joyce's screen saver in the Selectmen's Office. Harmless snaps of attractive relatives in pleasant Arizona landscapes are succeeded without warning by writhing images of more poisonous snakes in one zip code than you have seen since *Raiders of the Lost Ark*. Perhaps similar ghastly gatherings are occurring just under the radar in Our Town? —Maggie Cooley

Good-Bye to Friends

Florence Gomez

Maria Sterzl

Welcome

Josephine Li Chubb and Kalista Li Chubb to Daphne Li and Oliver Colgate Chubb

Congratulations

Stacey Fox and Richie Dolan

Gina Giamanco and Zachary Tyler

Land Transfers

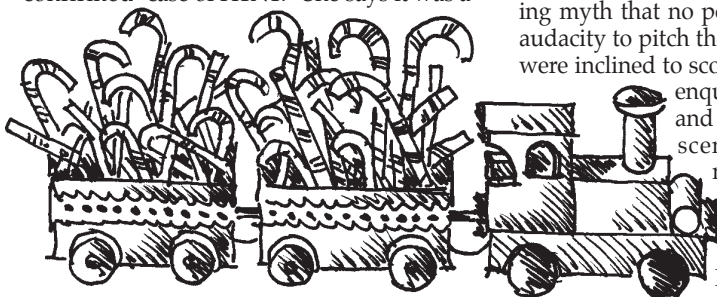
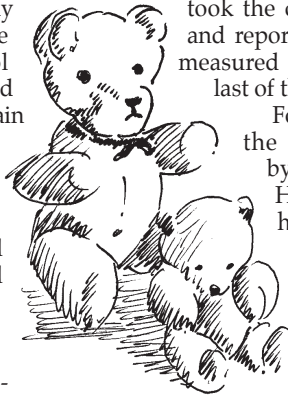
John D. and Christina P. Tobin to David Nadel and Nicole M. Feliciano, property at 94 Whitcomb Hill Road for \$610,000.

Cornwall Housing Corporation to Steven Heaney and Danielle Meenan, house only at 33 Pierce Lane for \$160,000.

Are the Bugs Winning?

Uh-oh, here comes another one. Insect, that is. The Asian Longhorned Beetle, *Anoplophora glabripennis*, or ALB, is the newest threat to New England's hardwood forests. Thought to have hitched a ride into the United States as long ago as 1996 on wooden packing material used for cargo imported from Asia, this tree-boring insect has a particular taste for maple trees. But it's not terribly picky about its host, which also makes birch, willow, elm, poplar, sycamore, and black locust among the trees susceptible to its deadly boring.

ALB is only the most recent threat to our native tree population. While fungal diseases killed off almost all of Connecticut's stately American chestnut and elm trees during the



last century, the Woolly Adelgid infestation has left acres and acres of starkly stripped hemlocks standing in our rural landscape, and the Emerald Ash Borer is advancing into forests and yards, attacking ash trees in the same manner as the Asian Longhorned Beetle.

Cornwall tree man Mike Root, who is a licensed arborist, points out that "fortunately, this new bug has yet to be found in Connecticut, but it's good to be vigilant." According to Mike, infestations are as close as Worcester, Massachusetts, where authorities are destroying thousands of hardwoods infected with the bug in an attempt to contain it.

The Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station recognizes the huge threat ALB poses to Connecticut's economy (think no maple syrup or spectacular fall foliage) and is working on legislation that will provide the means to quarantine affected areas and institute eradication procedures once ALB hits our state.

Detection of the beetle is difficult because it makes its home in the trees' canopy, but exit holes about 3/4" in diameter—sometimes oozing sap—can be seen in the bark (check out www.ct.gov/caes for an easy test to help identify the bug and instructions on how to report it if you do find it). Unfortunately, there is no cost-effective way to save the trees, although Mike says systemic insecticide may help specimen trees. Infected trees should be destroyed, which could mean they end up as firewood.

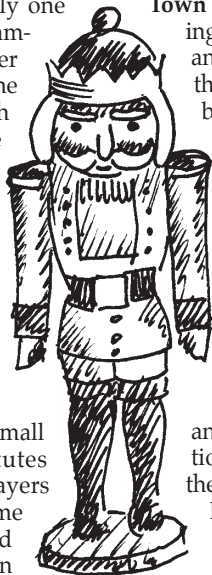
If you plan to heat with wood this winter, know where your wood supply comes from: buy or harvest locally. Inadvertent spread of ALB can take place through the purchase of firewood from an unknown source, as beetles over-winter beneath the bark, and woodpiles provide a safe haven until the insects' emergence in the spring.

—Cheryl Evans

Kicking Their Way to the Goal

The Cornwall Consolidated School's gym will soon flaunt a new blue-and-gold banner proclaiming yet another regional championship. The CCS girls' soccer team put its best feet forward to capture the title this fall. The team's record of 7-1-2 reflected only one loss (to Kent). This is the second championship season for fifth-grade teacher Kristi Pramuka, who has coached the team of sixth, seventh, and eighth graders for the past three years. She oversaw great leadership from captains Heather Kearns, Autumn Classey, and Anna Geyselaers. The team will sorely miss these three-year veterans as well as the other four eighth graders.

Soccer practice started early for the fifteen players as they hit Foote Fields in the second week of school. As goalkeeper, Autumn was key to the team's success, and with such a small team, CCS had only four substitutes to call on. At season's end, the players selected for the regional all-star game were Heather, Autumn, Anna, and seventh graders Brianna Thompson and Savannah Martin.



Letter to the Chronicle

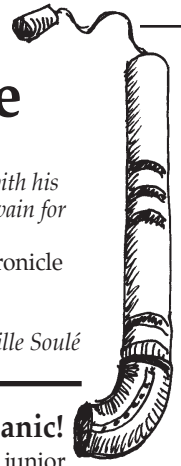
MISSING

I enjoyed John Miller's article in the November Chronicle. It was replete with his usual clarity, worthy content, and humor. But I read it three times, looking in vain for his take on underwear which was promised in his caption, "Cornwall Briefs."

Did the editors excise his handling of this delicate topic in the belief the Chronicle readership was not mature enough to handle it? If so, "Butt out."

Sophistication is our watchword.

—Scoville Soulé



Principal Bob Vaughan said he was "very proud of the hard work the team put in to become regional champs." Along with the principal's first sports season at CCS came his extra duty as the volunteer athletic director for the six grammar schools in our region.

Not to be outdone (or at least not by much), Aaron Boucher coached the boys' soccer team to a second-place tie behind regional behemoth North Canaan.

—Tricia Collins

Cornwall Briefs

Cell Towers: The saga rolled on as letters and e-mails flew among Attorney General Richard Blumenthal, Verizon's lawyers, and First Selectman Gordon Ridgway. Blumey to Verizon: the Popple Swamp Road sites are too close to a residential area and might "adversely affect the health of the surrounding community." Verizon came back with an idea for a new site to the north of the two sites proposed earlier. Gordon and the selectmen asked to see topo maps and queried Verizon's "dartboard approach" to choosing a site. So it goes on and on and on, and Verizon hasn't even gone to the Connecticut Siting Council yet.

Solar Panels: The panels earned by the town will go up soon at CCS. Stay tuned for a small celebration as the switch is flipped. And there's more. The little Town Office building, thanks to \$29,000 of federal stimulus money, may soon be entirely run by a small solar panel facing uphill to the east.

Town Roads: The early word on road oiling for next summer is that Cream Hill and Dibble Hill Roads, plus others in the northwest quadrant of town, will be treated with a new "eco-friendly liquid surface treatment." Goodness, we used to call it tar. Lots of sand will go down, too, some of it for the third time, thanks to the Highway Department's sand reuse program.

Holidays and the Dump: The selectmen ask that townspeople go easy with the post-Christmas trash at the Transfer Station. Stagger the loads of ribbons and paper and boxes. Consider temporary solutions like making origami birds with the paper. Or interesting curtains? Shelf liners? Just don't bring it all at once so that Fred and Steve aren't buried under an overwhelming tide of holiday detritus.

—Lisa L. Simont

Not an Auto Mechanic!

When Ellen Moon was in junior high school, she took a career aptitude test. The result? She should become an auto mechanic. But when she was three, her grandmother told her, "Be an artist," and that was the path she chose.

After majoring in art at Connecticut College for Women, she took an MFA in multi-media at the University of Iowa. "I was making big costumes and performing strange rituals in the woods." However, when she got to New York after graduating, she found that there weren't many jobs that involved performing strange rituals in the woods, so she started making one-of-a-kind jackets and sweaters, which she sold to Bendel's and Madison Avenue boutiques. In 1982, broke from paying New York rents, she moved to her grandmother's house in Cornwall, where she found different kinds of work. She "bent wire" for Tim Prentice and then moved on to being his "tracker," scouting out possible commissions. She made costumes and sets for the Grumbling Gryphons. And she kept on making embroidered jackets. Now they are more elaborate: She sells them through a Boston gallery, and her last show two years ago sold out at an average of \$5,000 a garment.

When she first met Dave Colbert in 1982, he said, "Come up to my room and see my eagle's claw." What a line, she thought. But he did have a dead eagle's claw, and she married him.

Later, when she was on vacation in exotic places with him, she would paint vast mountain ranges and expanses of water. Then, five years ago, she became fascinated by the intimate landscapes of Cornwall. She began going out every day with her watercolors, painting and repainting particular scenes that attracted her. The result is the show running at the Cornwall Library through December 5.

"I've never had a steady job," she says. "I'm always wondering what to do next." But she likes it that way.

—Hendon Chubb

The Delicate Balance of Hot and Cold

Long gone are the days of stoking the fire, blowing out the candle, calling the dogs onto the bed, and turning in until the sun came up again. Or are they? Gone soon may be any sense that turning up the thermostat on the oil or propane boiler is anything but a

luxury—an opulent self indulgence.

How will we stay warm in our cold climate? There are basic things to consider. How good is our “thermal envelope”? How well do we keep the heat we’ve created? Have we addressed the leaks around doors and windows, through foundations and attics? Are the heat ducts insulated? Is the basement insulated around the foundation? This is regarded as “picking the low fruit” in conservation speak. In the end, it’s a balancing act of time and resources spent to keep the cold OUT and then to keep the heat we labor and pay so dearly for IN.

It’s about the R-value of our insulation, the quality and efficiency of our heating system and fuel, and how much heat we feel we need to be comfortable. The more heat we need, the more fuel we use. Period.

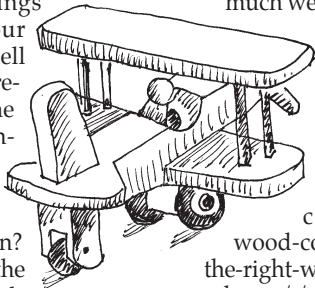
The prevailing wisdom is that we should wean ourselves off fossil fuels and diminish our carbon footprint by turning to solar energy solutions, wind power, and geothermal systems. In Germany and Scandinavia, there are over 15,000 zero-carbon homes with no visible source of heat. The houses have fantastic insulation, windows, and doors. The heat comes from typical appliances, the sun, and body heat...this in countries that share our latitude. Anything we do in that direction has got to be the right thing.

It’s important to note that wood (a renewable resource plentiful in our corner of the world) is considered a carbon-neutral fuel when burned in large community-scaled burners serving multiple dwellings and buildings. Smaller wood-burning stoves are not as clean, although some are far better than others.

Comparing various fuels to see which is most cost effective is a bit of a fool’s errand because of the variables of thermal envelope, cubic feet heated, quality of fuel, quality of heating unit, and the temperature desired. In the end, investing in passive energy sources is going to bring the greatest return. Improving the insulating value of our homes and diminishing our energy demands are the best first steps. From there all investments in

Here’s to Our Readers

Many of you responded to the fund-raising letter or to the insert in the October *Chronicle*. We’re afloat again, thanks to all of you who contributed to the welfare of this community newspaper. In case you haven’t done so already, please send in a check with the coupon below. And thanks!



greater efficiency and energy independence are forward steps. We have lots to learn and much we should do. Refer to the websites below for some fascinating information on these topics.

—Will Calhoun

<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/12/27/world/europe/27house.html>

[http://isiria.wordpress.com/2009/03/15/burning-](http://isiria.wordpress.com/2009/03/15/burning-wood-could-be-carbon-neutral-if-done-the-right-way/)

[wood-could-be-carbon-neutral-if-done-the-right-way/](http://www.haileycityhall.org/ClimateProtection/Snug_Up.pdf)

http://www.haileycityhall.org/ClimateProtection/Snug_Up.pdf

<http://www.energy.gov/news2009/8005.htm>

[http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/bdquery/z?d110:h.r.00006:](http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/bdquery/z?d110:h.r.00006)

<http://www.yale.edu/sustainability/necsc/climatechange.html>

Events & Announcements

Art in Cornwall: At the Cornwall Library, Ellen Moon’s show *Landscapes and Time* continues through December 5. A show of paintings by Magaly Ohika entitled *A whimsy spill* will begin on December 8, with an opening reception held Friday, December 11, from 5 to 7 P.M. Robert Charity’s holiday village and dollhouse will decorate the Library during December.

Meet the artists and see where the ribbons are when Lady Audrey’s Gallery presents the art competition *Winter’s Waltz* at a reception on Sunday, December 13, from 2 to 5 P.M. Deadline for entries is December 1.

Artwork created by CCS students K-8 will be on display at the National Iron Bank through December.

World War II Veterans from Cornwall and their families are invited to a commemoration ceremony at Geer led by Secretary of the State Susan Bysiewicz on Monday, December 7, at 11 A.M. Rides will be available from the Selectmen’s Office. Call 860 672-4959 for more details.

An Old Style Life Skills workshop, led by herbalist Alicia North, will be held December 12 from 10:30 A.M. to 1:30 P.M., at the UCC Parish House. Make scent-sational gifts of Thieves’ Oil hand sanitizer, herbal salve, sachets, and more. Pre-register with Debra@Motherhouse.us or 860 672-0229.

A Parking Ban on town roads is in effect from December 1 to March 30 so that town crews can clean up after winter weather.

At the Cornwall Library

• Producer Al Brodax will show and discuss his film *The Yellow Submarine* on Saturday, December 5, at 3 P.M.

• John Tauranac will be at the Library on Saturday, December 19, at 3 P.M., to talk about his newest book on New York City subway maps.

Christmas Traditions at UCC

• The Christmas Fair will be held Saturday, December 5, from 9:30 A.M. to 2 P.M. at the Parish House.

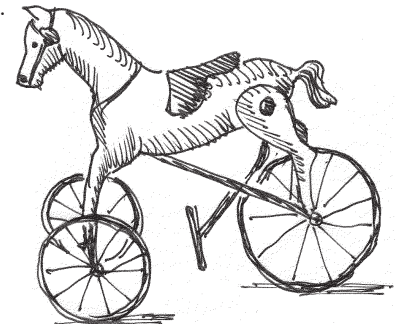
• The Community Pageant will be held on Saturday, December 12, at 7:30 P.M.

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

St. Bridget’s Church members will be caroling through the streets of Cornwall Village on Saturday evening, December 19. Anyone wishing to join the group is welcome—listen for the melodious strains to begin about 5:30 P.M. on Bolton Hill Road.

A Red Cross Blood Drive will be held at the UCC Parish House on Tuesday, December 22, from 1:30 to 6:15 P.M. To register or request information call 1-800-GIVE LIFE.

Tom Walker will read from A.A. Milne’s *Winnie the Pooh* on Boxing Day, December 26, at 4 P.M. at the North Cornwall Meeting House.



CORNWALL CHRONICLE

DECEMBER ISSUE

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