Happy New Year

CORNWALL CHRONICLE

2019

VOLUME 28 : NUMBER 12 JANUARY 2019

The Year Gone By

The theme running through much of the activity this past year in Cornwall was transition as the town continued to struggle with our weakening demographics. While some committees defined the causes, other groups sought remedies.

As the year began, Pearly's Farmhouse Cafe was still open in West Cornwall. Down River Road, Trinity Retreat Center welcomed more donkeys to its herd and encouraged guests to explore the village. February saw the first warnings of closure of the covered bridge in the fall for repairs.

Over the winter the Board of Education hosted a series of well-attended forums discussing the future of CCS. The recommendation: stay the course and economically sustain educational excellence.

In March we thanked Steve O'Neil for his years as dumpmeister of the transfer station at a party in the new recycling center. Ted Larsen took Steve's place.

Many of the stories this year noted with wonder the longevity of town traditions. Art at the Dump turned 18; Tom Walker's Boxing Day reading was 20; the Ag Fair and the *Chronicle* are still ticking after 27 years of management by volunteers. The Town Hall Players revived after a seven-year lapse. And the Rose Algrant Art Show was the winner after 59 straight years!

All the same, there was a whiff of urgency about the necessity of getting ready for the changes the town will experience in the coming decade. The Planning and Zoning Commission (P&Z) organized four study committees to prepare for the 2020 Town Plan of Conservation and Development. They will grapple with balancing buildable land and conservation acreage; changing zoning so that reasonable development and housing options aren't discouraged; and ensuring that all parts of the town are given the chance to thrive.

The West Cornwall Water/Septic Study Group, charged with finding a solution to West Cornwall village's decaying sanitary situation, met often to find a way to build a modern system that will allow new businesses and homes.

Summer finally came, green and lovely after a stern winter. Hammond Beach got new docks and a raft. Molly Hinchman pleaded for solutions to an explosion of chipmunks and other critters in her garden, describing several shiver-inducing ideas (think drowning chippies in a poisoned bath). For other good reads about local fauna from the 2018 *Chronicle*, look in our archives for Jerry Doolittle's August elegy to childhood wildlife (when was the last time you saw a cricket?) and Roxana Robinson on bears in September.

By October we learned that Pearly's was closing, leaving RSVP as the longest-running eatery in Cornwall. The covered bridge's old boards had new life as art projects as the year drew to a close.

We said "Good-Bye to Friends" way too many times last year. Many of them were the flowers of their generation. They left gaps we all must step up to fill.

—Lisa L. Simont

Meet Me in Cornwall

Many of our town committees meet on Tuesdays, so on Tuesday, December 11, I tried to attend as many meetings as I could.

First up was the Economic Development Commission (EDC) headed by Janet Carlson Sanders at 9 A.M. at town hall. Agenda items this month included creating collaborative work spaces for small businesses and entrepreneurs, promoting Cornwall with the newly launched "Discover Litchfield Hills" website, plans for a social media campaign and support for the West Cornwall Water/Septic study. I was impressed with the focus and passion this committee brings to creating opportunities for growth in Cornwall.

The aforementioned West Cornwall Water/ Septic Study Group met in the same room at town hall later in the day. Chairman

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JANUARY 2019

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		**1** ◆ New Year's Day Pancake Breakfast 9 am–Noon UCC	**2** ◆ Inland Wetlands 7 pm Town Hall ◆ Board of Selectmen 7:30 pm Town Hall	**3**	**4**	**5** ◆ Winter Film Series: NEW *Open City* 4 pm Library ◆ Community Country Dance 7 pm Town Hall ◆ Ice Skating at Hotchkiss for Cornwall 7–8 pm
6	**7** ◆ Region 1 Board of Ed. 6:30 pm HVRHS	**8** ◆ Econ. Dev. Comm. 9 am Town Hall ◆ Monthly Senior Lunch Noon UCC Parish House ◆ West Cornwall Septic Comm. 5 pm Town Hall ◆ Planning & Zoning Committee 7 pm Library	**9**	**10**	**11**	**12** ◆ Aerobics for the Mind, Eye, and Hand Noon UCC Day Room ◆ Speaker/Film: *Art is for Artist* 3–5 pm Library ◆ Ice Skating at Hotchkiss for Cornwall 7–8 pm
13 ◆ Lazlo Opening Reception 11:30 am UCC Parish House	**14** 1stQ ◆ Free Blood Pressure Clinic Noon–1 pm UCC Day Room ◆ Park and Recreation 7:30 pm Town Hall	**15** ◆ **Deadline: February *Chronicle* Copy**	**16** ◆ Board of Education 4:15 pm CCS	**17** ◆ Cornwall Conservation Commission 6 pm Library ◆ Board of Finance 7 pm Town Hall	**18**	**19** ◆ Sally & Peter Pettus Artist Reception 5 pm Library ◆ Ice Skating at Hotchkiss for Cornwall 7–8 pm
20	**21** MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. DAY FULL	**22** ◆ Coffee, Confections, Conversations 9 am Parish House ◆ Board of Selectmen 7:30 pm Town Hall	**23**	**24**	**25** ◆ Robert Burns Day Food and Drink 7:30–8:30 pm Library	**26** ◆ Planning & Zoning Special Meeting 10 am–Noon CCS ◆ Winter Film Series *Born Yesterday* 4 pm Library ◆ Ice Skating at Hotchkiss for Cornwall 7–8 pm
27 4thQ	**28** ◆ ZBA* 7 pm Library	**29**	**30**	**31** ◆ Last Day to pay taxes to avoid interest	**Every Week This Month:** **Thursdays: Pilates,** 8:30–9:30 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; **Toddler Play Group,** 10:30–11:30 am Library ◆ **Sundays: Yoga,** 9–10:30 am Library; **Meditation,** 1 pm call Debra 672-0229	

*Check with Zoning Office—672-4957

For additions and updates, visit www.cornwallchronicle.org

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Todd Piker, also a member of the EDC, brought the meeting to order just after 5 P.M.

This group is officially charged with dealing with septic "challenges" in West Cornwall. On this night the committee voted in three new members who, once approved by the selectmen, will join the group at its next meeting in January.

This particular meeting was focused on paying for engineering work required to understand costs and benefits for installing a septic system near the covered bridge. When the focus turned to potential sites, the discussion heated up as several very interested neighbors let their voices be heard. The group believes that without a septic system, West Cornwall's prospects for business activity are dim. However, residents of the area are generally not interested in a septic system in their proverbial backyard. The group aims to get a recommendation to the selectmen by mid-2019.

Next up was the monthly Planning and Zoning Commission meeting at 7 P.M. in the library. With no new or pending applications for zoning permits on the docket, this meeting focused on preparations for the upcoming 2020 Town Plan of Conservation and Development. Jocelyn Ayer, community and economic development director of the Northwest Hills Council of Governments, led the discussion, emphasizing that the process should be inclusive and fun.

Although the plan sets out the direction our town will take for the next decade, members of the commission were focused on soliciting resident feedback rather sooner than later and incorporating these ideas into P&Z well before 2020. Some of those ideas included EDC recommendations allowing home-based businesses and encouraging the development of affordable housing and multi-family dwellings—not necessarily owner occupied.

As I headed home I paused to reflect after a long day of meetings. Each was attended by dedicated, selfless, hard-working, energetic neighbors working to make Cornwall a better place. We owe them a debt of gratitude and our support. See you next Tuesday! *—Bob Meyers*

Donkey and Me

(Editor's Note: This text is adapted from the forthcoming eBook by Lazlo Gyorsok and Roxann Roche, At R&D Farm*.)*

Donkey is ever present in the happenings at our farm in Cornwall Bridge. He is a social creature with strong tendencies toward introversion. Too much confusion or too many visitors will sour his mood quickly. To Donkey, small pigs and poultry seem most welcome, people and cows are a hearty second, and sheep a distant maybe, often no.

Why this aversion to sheep? Could it be their slightly dim and flighty nature? On days when social requirements become tiresome, Donkey can be found in the distant back pasture near my mother-in-law's sheep field, deep in fantasy about terrorizing the woolly creatures beyond the fence.

Donkey is picky about the people he likes. But once he decides on the fitness of your character, his loyalty to you does not waver. He is steadfast in protecting his courtyard where small pigs, growing chickens, and grazing turkeys are safe from the always threatening wildlife.

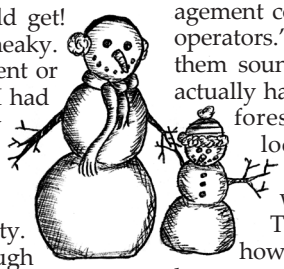
Donkey is not allowed grain, in *any* form: it reacts badly with his already slightly peevish personality, making him spiteful and calculating. Alas, he has a tendency to rip apart any vessel that contains grain. Several times I've gone into the barn to do chores, only to find him knuckle deep in spilled grain, munching away, peering at me ornery as a white-faced hornet.

I sense that Donkey, even in his stoicism, resents the close ties among the cowherd. While donkeys are solitary creatures by nature, I will see him on the edge of the herd, observing the goings on, dolefully aware somehow of his disconnection. Of all the barnyard creatures, he is the most complex. His intelligence is that of a grumpy six-year-old child, he brays and sulks when he feels forgotten, bites you when it's time for attention and holds grudges for perceived slights.

I imagine him as a person when he peers at me suspiciously with his thick brow bones: usually it's as an IRS tax auditor, following set rules because, useful or not, that's the way it was always done. But then he surprises me. I find him grazing by moonlight; while everyone else is asleep, he roams his court, basking in the milky night, pensive in the lull and calm of his security detail.

Donkey used to follow me around during chore time to all the various pens. I would carry metal buckets filled with the different feeds for pigs and chickens and such. Invariably when I would set a bucket down and turn away for a split second to free up a hand, to unplug the electric fence, fill a water bowl, etc. Donkey would be in that bucket.

Oh, how frustrated I would get! He's smart, you see, and very sneaky. He responds poorly to argument or punishment or a lost temper. I had to think up something really clever to keep him from stealing the bucket every time I did chores.



Now, Donkey hates electricity. I hate it too, being shocked enough times myself. And my metal buckets are great conductors of electricity. So, I place my bucket on a Styrofoam throne and thread a stray piece of electric fencing through the handle—just enough for contact. Donkey looks at the bucket, then looks at me, disgusted. I leave him the bucket.

Next chore time I fill my metal buckets and when I set one down to free up a hand I look around and Donkey peers at me from his stall, disgusted. We've never argued about the buckets again. *—Roxann Roche*

Welcome

Kairav Levant Wilson
to Winfield Wilson and Veena Srinivasa
Poppy Tauranac Bardot
to Maggie Tauranac and Evan Bardot

Good-bye to Friends

Henry William Baldwick
Nina von Moltke Kaletsch

Land Transfers

US Bank, NA, Trustee for RMAC Trust to David Shumbris, land with all appurtenances thereto belonging at 4 Frederick Drive, for $138,000.

Susan H. Cramer to Andrew S. Peterson, land with all buildings and improvements thereon at 46 Valley Road, for $150,000.

Joan K. Edler, by Susan E. Wyeth, to Allan Bahn and Hai Qin Zhang, land with buildings and improvements thereon at 56 Todd Hill Road, for $280,000.

Stephen Kilroy and Grace Jaihee Yoon, to Jarlath Mellett, land with improvements thereon at 25 Cherry Hill Road, for $595,000.

Warren A. Wood, Jr., John Wood and Judith MacNeil, to Andrew Sedgwick and Ewa Barnes, land with buildings thereon at 350 Sharon Goshen Turnpike, for $115,000.

Cornwall Conservation Trust to Town of Cornwall, 1.43 acres of land on Kent Road.

Ledlie I. and Sarah C. Laughlin to Todd A. Klein, land with all buildings and improvements thereon at 59 Pierce Lane, for $425,000.

Cornwall's "Covert" Conservation Corps

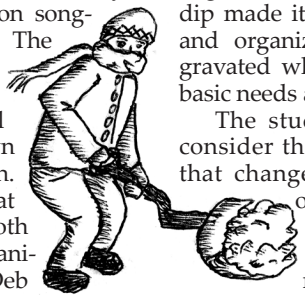
Last September Deb Bennett and Kate Kane participated in a three-day woodland management course and became "Coverts Co-operators." Though this designation makes them sound like undercover agents, they actually have joined a network of amateur foresters intent on improving our local woodlands. (A covert is a thicket providing shelter for wildlife.)

The coverts course demonstrates how good stewardship can earn long-term financial returns and improve the health of forests and wildlife, benefitting both the woodland owner and the wider community. Deb Bennett took the course because she has a keen interest in the natural world, and realized that people in Cornwall care deeply about our abundant forests and wildlife. She also thought it

would support her roles on the Inland Wetlands and Conservation commissions. Kate Kane actively manages her property and saw room for improvement. "As a landowner I heard really positive things about the course, and since my land is already part of the federal Forest Legacy Program, monitored by Connecticut DEEP, I felt I should know more."

Since 1983 the coverts project has reached out to woodland owners and taught them sound management and stewardship practices. Hosted by the Connecticut Forest and Park Association and UConn, the three-part class is held at Great Mountain Forest in Norfolk. In the first part, participants learn Connecticut forest history, basics of forest and wildlife ecology, and growing and harvesting of wood products. Part two covers assessment and planning for forest and habitat management, specifically how to enhance habitat for New England cottontail, grouse, woodcock, songbirds, turkey, and other wildlife. Part three is all about outreach to other landowners and promoting ideas about which topics to address town wide.

According to Deb Bennett, "One great thing I learned was that simple choices on even small properties, under five acres say, can make a positive impact on songbirds and other wildlife." The course seeks to create a cadre of trained people who are available for basic assistance all the way to developing your own woodland management plan. They can also shed light on what resources are available from both government and private organizations such as Audubon. Deb and Kate hope to educate our community by embracing programs in town like tree identification walks, invasive plant removal seminars, and talks on promoting game bird habitats.



While Cornwall residents love the rural character of their town, our new "Coverts Cooperators" can help us manage invasive species and learn how easements or active forest management affect taxes and income. If interested, contact Deb Bennett at rockwoodfarm@optonline.net, or Kate at PO Box 208, Cornwall Bridge 06754. The coverts course is offered once a year; information is at ctwoodlands.org.

—Emilie Pryor

CCS: Designing the Change

If you wondered where the push-pin grid and surveys in the Cornwall Library this fall came from, answers were provided on Thursday, December 7, in the Cornwall Consolidated School Gathering Room. As part of the joint collaboration between Catherine Tatge and Dominique Lasseur's Civic Life Project and Adam Lang's "Design for Social Change" class at Hotchkiss, a group of 11 Hotchkiss students who spent a semester exploring the problem of declining enrollment at CCS presented their mid-year findings. (True, 2018–19 enrollment rose by 20 students; nevertheless, the trend over recent decades has been one of decline.)

Ten of these Hotchkiss students reported on their findings. Over the past several months, these students held an open meeting at the Cornwall Library, visited CCS to shadow classes and interview eighth-graders, conducted detailed interviews with a range of town residents, and collected data through various tools at the library (thus, the push pins, cups, and written surveys!). Each exercise was designed to identify the unique characteristics of Cornwall of value to its citizens and explore potential adaptations needed for Cornwall's future success.

In their interviews, residents cited the importance of the network of relationships and individual attention fostered by a strong, compact CCS. Janet Carlson, founder of OneEleven and a parent in town, spoke to the draw a school provides for new businesses and families. "Without a school," she maintained, "there is no town, just a nursing home with lots of acreage." At the same time, interviewees acknowledged that the town's current population dip made it difficult to field sports teams and organize activities, a challenge aggravated when shops to fulfill a family's basic needs are a significant distance away.

The students challenged citizens to consider the financial and social impact that change might have on Cornwall's overall growth and pointed to several issues that will be explored by a new group next semester: fostering a strong economy and job opportunities encouraging families and businesses to stay or settle in Cornwall; securing high-speed digital connectivity; and constructing tangible resources like housing and sewers.

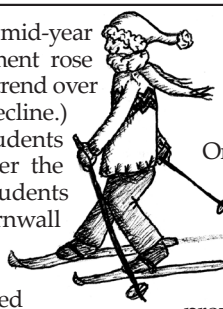
The evening ended with groups of facilitated activities and conversation. At one table, students had cards with items having significant value to Cornwall residents: job opportunities, natural beauty, strong school, etc. Participants arranged the cards in priority order, understanding that every change impacts other factors in the town's life.

Stay tuned for more surveys in the library, and a second presentation this spring. We have an opportunity to shape the educational changes that will affect us as well as future generations.

—Virginia Gold

CVFD Count for Last Two Months

28 emergency medical calls
8 false alarms
1 electrical wire down
1 mutual aid
1 vehicle fire



New Dance Band, but Still Homegrown

On December 1, Still, The Homegrown Band retired as house band for the monthly Cornwall community dance. For 14 years the band has donated its time and talent, cleaned up the hall, and provided refreshments, advertising, and publicity. The dance will continue every first Saturday under its continuing sponsor, Motherhouse, which is now recruiting local musicians of all kinds—at any level and on any instrument for a new group, Betsy's Band, named in honor of a cow from Local Farm. Informal rehearsals will take place starting at 6 P.M. on most Mondays at the home of Debra Tyler, with a mandatory dress rehearsal on the Friday night before a dance. To participate call Debra at 672-0229 or email debra@Motherhouse.us.. Strike up the band! *—Paul DeAngelis*

Town Taxes Are Due

The second half payment of taxes on the Grand List of October 1, 2017 is due January 1, 2019. Supplemental Motor Vehicle Taxes are also due at this time. Payments must be postmarked by February 1, 2019 to avoid interest. Any tax bills not paid by February 1, 2019 will be considered delinquent, and interest will be charged at the rate of one and one half percent per month and fraction thereof (including January). This means that even if you pay on February 2 you will be charged for two months interest. No additional bills will be mailed for second installments. Please use the bill you received in July.

Taxes may be paid at the Tax Office on Mondays from 1–4 P.M. and Wednesdays from 9–12 P.M. and 1–4 P.M., or sent to: Cornwall Tax Collector, P.O. Box 97, Cornwall, CT 06753. Payments can also be paid by credit card or e-check by visiting www.cornwallct.org, but there is a 2.95% charge for this service.

—Jean D. Bouteiller, CCMC, Tax Collector

Cornwall Briefs

• **If you're wondering** whether someone forgot to pull the docks out of the water at Hammond Beach, rest assured that they are being left in the water all winter on purpose. The new plastic docks, credited by town officials as one reason for the significant increase in usage this summer, are intended as year-round lake furniture. Their sister docks have lived for 15 years in Bantam Lake without interruption.

• **Hardly two months after its reopening,** West Cornwall's Covered Bridge had to be shut down for several days in November while its brand-new planks were trimmed to prevent the buckling that had set in with

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cold weather. The close fit of the new parallel planks made them impervious to the winter salts that were corroding the bridge's steel substructure, but left no room for expansion. Now that the planks have been trimmed, the metal's main line of defense is a rubbery blue membrane that undercoats the wood. A ribbon cutting for the re-renovated landmark was held December 7.

• **The following appointments** have been made by the Board of Selectmen: Debby Bennett and Patrick Mulberry to the Conservation Commission; Kate Sandmeyer Ward, Priscilla Pavel, and Janet Sanders to the Economic Development Commission; Wendy Kennedy to the Cornwall Grange Trust Fund Advisory Committee; Barton Jones, alternate to the Housatonic River Commission; Steve Saccardi to the Park and Rec Commission; and Dody Clarke Wolfe as town historian. Volunteers are wanted to fill vacancies remaining on the Conservation, Economic Development, Park and Rec commissions, as well as the Zoning Board of Appeals.

• **Applications are being accepted** at town hall for the position of social services director. *—Paul De Angelis*

Events & Announcements

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

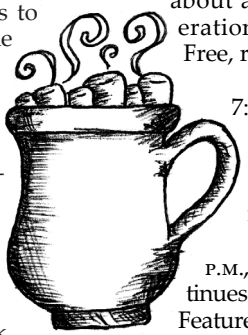
New Year's Day Pancake Breakfast will be held in the UCC Parish House, 9 A.M. to noon. Buttermilk pancakes, sausage, Cornwall maple syrup, orange juice, coffee, cocoa, and tea will be served. Donations benefit the fire department. Everyone is welcome.

At the Cornwall Library

The library will be closed January 1.

Saturday, January 5, at 4 P.M., the Winter Film Series begins with *Open City* (1945) by Roberto Rossellini. $5 suggested donation.

Saturday, January 12, from 3 to 5 P.M. *Art is for Artist* film and speakers about artists with macular degeneration. Featuring Bob Parker. Free, refreshments provided.



Friday, January 25, from 7:30 to 8:30 P.M. Robert Burns Day. Celebrate with tastings of scotch, shortbread, and haggis. Space is limited. $10/person.

Saturday, January 26, at 4 P.M., the Winter Film Series continues with *Born Yesterday* (1950). Features Judy Holliday in her classic role. $5 suggested donation.

The monthly Cornwall Community Country Dance will be held Saturday, January 5, at town hall. Square, circle, and contra dancing at 7 P.M. with caller Bob Livingston and premiering live music by Betsy's Band. All ages welcome. Donation suggested. For information call 860-671-7945 or contact Debra@Motherhouse.us.

Ice skating Saturdays in January and February from 7 to 8 P.M. at Hotchkiss School Dwyer Rink. Bring your own skates.

Senior Events

Tuesday, January 8: Park and Rec monthly luncheon, UCC Parish House, noon. RSVP, $8.

Tuesday, January 22: Morning Coffee, Confections & Conversations, UCC Parish House, 9 A.M. No cost.

Aerobics for the mind, eye, and hand: Group now forming. Meet once a month or more to select a word, then create a drawing, painting, poem, prose, song—any medium you like. Return the next month to share creations and get new word. No fees or dues. Saturday, January 12 at noon in the UCC day room. Questions? Call Connie Steuerwalt at 672-2861 or csteuerwalt@gmail.com.

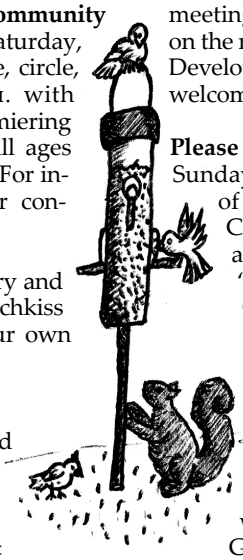
Art in Cornwall

At the library, show and sale of paintings by Sally Pettus and pottery by Peter Pettus opens with a reception on Saturday, January 19, at 5 P.M. The show runs through February 23.

At the UCC Parish House, Lazlo Gyorsok will exhibit photographs of the beaches of Provincetown, MA—"Summer Dreamin'"—from January 13 until March 10, with an opening reception on Sunday, January 13, at 11:30 A.M. The show may be viewed Monday to Friday from 9 A.M. to 1 P.M., Sunday from 10 A.M. to noon, or by appointment with Lazlo (672-6729).

Through the month of January, the Toll House Gallery in West Cornwall will continue to showcase the paintings of Lennart Swede Ahrstrom, landscape photographs by Ian Ingersoll himself, and newly added work by Don Bracken. These pieces will be on display Monday through Friday from 9 A.M. to 5 P.M. and Saturday from 10 A.M. to 4 P.M.

Special P&Z Commission Meeting: January 26 (snow date February 2), from 10 A.M. to noon, CCS Gathering Room. This meeting will update residents on progress on the new Town Plan of Conservation and Development. Input from the community welcome; refreshments served.



Please mark your calendar for 3 P.M. on Sunday, February 3, when Elizabeth Foley of the Connecticut Green Burial Council will give a presentation about the process and meaning of a "green burial" at the Trinity Retreat Center conference hall.

Discover Litchfield Hills is the recently launched website publicizing events and promoting businesses and job opportunities in Connecticut's Northwest Corner. It is produced in collaboration with the Northwest Hills Council of Governments, Civic Lift, and the NW CT Chamber of Commerce. Anyone can submit an event; businesses are encouraged to list their information. Go to discoverlitchfieldhills.com.

A Toast

Let's lift a glass of whatever you like to 2019. It's an ordinary-sounding year but in Cornwall it will be full of decisions about the town's future health. Make a resolution to be part of it...come to meetings, hear the arguments, and if you can't be there in person read the *Chronicle* whose own health depends on your donation. Thanks!

CORNWALL CHRONICLE
cornwallchronicle.org

THIS MONTH
Iris Hermann, Illustrations
Bob Meyers and *Paul De Angelis,* Editors
Paul De Angelis and *Caroline Kosciusko,* Facebook Posts

NEXT MONTH
Annie Kosciusko and *John Miller,* Editors
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